

**Teacher Education for Peace & Harmony-A Vedic Perspective\***  
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**Introduction**

A teacher is one who has knowledge of any subject and is capable of instructing the students in that subject. According to Webster, education is the action or process of educating or of being educated, and also the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process. It also refers to the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools. However, education involves a deeper study of a subject leading to knowledge in depth. Correspondingly, teacher education must impart the knowledge and capability of instruction to the teachers. An educated person is one who has a broad knowledge of any subject and is capable of discussing it intelligently.

As an example, let us consider one of the most important topics today, namely environment. One can gain a lot of information about this subject by reading a few general books or newspaper articles, or even seeing television programs. This is environmental literacy, which tells us what is meant by environment, what its importance for the planet is, how it is being mishandled, what are the grave dangers facing humanity, what needs to be done at the short-term or long-term level, and so on. There are lots of literate people who can read and write having this kind of literacy. But that does not make them educated.

There is another group of literate people, who have made a deep study of the technical aspects of environment. They are people who have specialized in certain areas of environment, who teach the subject at advanced levels, who are invited to contribute research papers or articles to magazines or journals, and whose voice is heard with respect. They are the educated experts in that field. Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa used to say; 'There are some who have heard of milk, some who have seen it and some who have drunk it.' Only the last know what milk really is. The literate are those who have heard of milk or may be even seen it. But the educated are those who have actually drunk milk and are in a position to say what milk tastes like.

Peace can be defined generally as a situation free from tension, struggle, dispute or conflict, particularly in socio-economic context. A society free from conflicts and struggles is a peaceful society. Correspondingly, the absence of fight or war between or among the nations is the generally accepted notion of peace. It must be recognized that peace is not a motionless state even according to ancient philosophical thought. The state of peace, however, provides man the grounds for progress in a tension-free atmosphere. The state of peace offers conditions for healthy co-existence in which efforts are made to extend the welfare of the people. Therefore, the state of peace is conducive for the healthy growth of the society in which people are filled with enthusiasm and inspiration to move forward. Peace underscores harmony in day-to-day human activities at individual and social levels.

Harmony is derived from the Latin *harmonia* and the Greek *harmos* meaning "*the just adaptation of parts with each other.*" It refers to a situation where all elements fit perfectly with each other as to complement each other fully well. This also applies to people when they live together peacefully with love and respect in our conduct. This element should be the main characteristic of every society. Webster defines peace as a state of: tranquility or quiet – as freedom from civil disturbance, security or order within a community provided for by law or custom – freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions, mutual concord among people in society or among governments – harmony in personal and governmental relations. Peace is also a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity. In other words, peace is a state of concord, tranquility or harmony. For an individual, it is harmony within oneself and with one's environment; for a society, it is social harmony.

According to Webster, social refers to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society. It also refers interdependent relationship. Social harmony is the mark of a successful and peaceful society. When we are harmony with others, there is no place for doubt or fear for the other. This free environment fosters creativity and imagination for everyone to reach their potential creating opportunities for others. If we are in harmony, we can actively participate in the affairs of the society and contribute our skills and talents for the development of society. We cease to become self-centered with limited outlook and share our ideas with unlimited potential for the benefit for all. It is through harmony in our feelings and thoughts that we are able to experience satisfaction and contentment. Social harmony was the culture of Vedic India. Vedic India is the period of time in the early history of India during which Vedic civilization flourished.

In general, the term 'culture' of a race, nation, community, society, organization, institution or a group refers to its characteristic human knowledge, belief, and behavior (shared values, attitudes and practices). It basically depends upon the capacity of the specific entity for assimilation of knowledge, thinking and social learning in a space-time continuum. The term 'spiritual,' on the other hand refers to belief in the idea that all life, environment and the universe are interconnected by the same spirit. In other words, the ultimate reality is immaterial 'spirit' at the core of the universe, physical phenomena and all life. Spirituality is often experienced by some human beings as a source of inspiration or orientation in life. Whereas, spirituality is traditionally imparted through the various religions, spiritual culture is its assimilation in practice.

Spiritual culture is the collective mindfulness of a community of people of different races and faiths in accepting a common origin for all existence. In a spiritual culture, human awareness rises to a level that human fulfillment does not depend upon material possession alone, but equal satisfaction is derived by caring for the other and serving the other humans beings and the environment. For regard of this point of view, people in a spiritual culture accept and practice those actions, attitudes and behaviors in their endeavors as not to adversely impact the other life

and the environment. The spiritual culture promotes harmony and provides the only basis for universal love, peace and prosperity.

Living in a spiritual culture, we can change someone's life for the better. Our spiritually imbued points of view and courageous actions can lift our friends' and relatives' outlook on life. Our compassion and support can help find a satisfying answer for those struggling with personal problems, such as sickness, disease or poverty. We will spend time and listen to those who need sympathy. We will open up our hearts for others and the environment. **Spiritual culture is the hallmark of a peaceful and stable society.**

Spirituality sees equality of all communities and states. Both material and spiritual pursuits have the same purpose if we put the interest of the society and the nation first, rather than the individual. However, the very reminder of that goal in the execution of a law makes it spiritual. Spirituality guides the free-will actions, in accordance with moral values such as honesty, integrity, and service to make a harmonious society or nation by building good character that will protect and preserve a harmonious nation.

Politics is one of the most effective avenues for social change. It potentially influences the material and economic resources for communities and states. But, the political force ceases to be spiritual if it is swayed by: arrogance to uphold the interests of the party above that of the nation, and greed to promote the interests of the influencing groups rather than the nation. The main stumbling blocks against the pursuit of spirituality in politics are the distortion of truth in favor of a minority of powerful big businesses and corporations and disregard for the unspoken voices of the majority. The answer may lie in making elections fair so that worthy candidates can be elected not because they are able to raise funds, but because they have the interest of the nation at heart.

**The spiritualized politics will create a good conscience, a will to maintain justice and freedom for the good of the people.** The Vedic way of living offers one of the most effective practices to bring about spiritual culture in politics and society.

### **The Vedic Way of Living**

The timeline of Vedic civilization is prehistoric, but according to thinkers it is generally 4500 BC-1800 BC. It flourished on the Banks of the river "Sindhu," whom the Persian invaders mispronounced as "Hindu." The British later named their culture and belief systems "Hinduism." For the practitioners of *Sanatana Dharma* (eternal precept) this fact stays as an anomaly in their course of history. With the point of view that changing the name doesn't alter the contents of the 'material in the package' the inhabitants began to associate with the new name just as easy as they assimilated and absorbed the invading peoples and cultures. Harmony was ingrained in their vary psyche.

The Vedic philosophy of living in harmony with the environment is clear from the statements such as, "*Vasudeva Kutumbakam*" – The whole world is one family; "*Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu*" – May all worlds live in peace; and "*Sarve bhavantu sukhina, sarve santhu niramayaha, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kashchid dukha bhag bhaveta*" – May all living being be happy, free from pain and suffering, and may all see good in others and find peace. Vedic culture maintains a great regard for women, the environment and nature. The vedic verse says, "*Matri devo bhavah* – Respect your mother as god," "*Pitri devo bhavah* – Respect your father as god," "*Acharya devo bhavah* – Respect your teacher as god," and "*Athiti devo bhavah* – Respect your guest as god." The Earth is symbolized as mother as well; mountains, rivers and trees are considered sacred. Every Vedic deity is associated with a particular animal as its vehicle. In fact, each element of the universe is manifested to exist in harmony with its intrinsic nature and its environment.

The Vedic seers had mastered both the science of the spirit and matter and through that knowledge some sages had built masterpiece cities such as *Indraprastha* and palaces such as *Sone ki Lanka*, developed airplanes such as *Pushpak Vimaana*, fire-producing missiles such as *Agni-baana*, and rain producing missiles such as *Megha-baana*, etc. However, the application of sciences was such that the products never caused any environmental damage.

According to the Vedas, there are two fundamental entities in the universe – *Purusha* (the conscious principle) and *Prakriti* (the unconscious principle). The entire universe is a manifestation of *Purusha* in accordance with the associated *Prakriti*. *Purusha* enters into beings through *Shiva* (the life and death principle) and possesses associated *Shakti* (potential) of its being. Each element of the universe possesses its nature (physical attributes and properties, and proclivities of the of mind if part of life) through a specific combination of the three modes of *prakriti* – *sattva* (thoughts, purity, balance of energy and matter), *rajas* (energy, action and mobility) and *tamas* (matter, inaction and inertia) and expresses its nature through *ichcha* (intention, will or desire), *gyana* (knowledge) and *kriya* (action).

Once manifested, the universe is sustained on *dharma* (the sustaining principle). The concept of *dharma* lies in *rita*, the law and order of the world and its progression that follows a course of events. *Rita* stems from *Sanatana Dharma* (eternal precept) and is therefore eternal. *Sanatana Dharma* introduces *rita* as the ultimate order for maintenance and preservation of the manifested universe. The application of *Rita* in *vyavahara* (established rules and practices) of human beings (also an outcome of manifestation), in their various stages of life (*Brahmacharya* – student life, *Grihastha* – family life, *Vanaprastha* – retirement, and *Sannyasa* – preparation for spiritual pursuit) and stations in a society (*Brahmins* – the intellectuals and the learned ones in the scriptures, *Kshatriyas* – rulers, administrators and warriors, *Vaishyas* – business folks in science, technology, medicine and agriculture and traders, and *Shudras* – laborers), is *dharma*.

Correspondingly, *dharma* represents practical approaches for adopting *Sanaatana Dharma* in different family traditions, business transactions and trade practices, under all social and political conditions. All *aachaara* (behavior) and *vyavahaara* during the human endeavors for *artha*

(security) and *kaama* (pleasure), in the conduct of governance and rule, law and order, education, business, trade, science, philosophy, law, agriculture, performing arts, and other orders of society, performed according to *dharma* in space–time continuum provide the natural course of living in harmony and with the least impact on the environment.

*Dharma* is the law of being, the orderly fulfillment of an intrinsic nature and its course in time while it exists. *Dharma* sustains the universe when it is followed at all levels: universal, human, social and individual. For example, a teacher's *dharma* is to impart knowledge in the specific field of interest. He must possess theoretical and practical knowledge about his field of expertise and interest. He must teach in the spirit of service and must cultivate the spirit of humility and compassion for his students. The teacher, being a human being must follow other laws pertaining to him being a human being. The teacher has a nature, so he must follow individual law. As he lives he goes through various stages of life, for example learning skills to make a living, so he must follow human law. His profession places him in a particular station in life, so he must follow social law. He belongs to this universe in being an element of this universe, so he must follow universal or spiritual law.

Individual Law (*svadharma*) is personal law of a human being. We come with certain nature of likes and dislikes (human, godly and demonic qualities). Experiencing the fruits of our nature as our being follows the trajectory of incidents (situations and circumstances) in the history of our existence is individual law. The situations and circumstances bring before our being the pairs of opposites, such as joy and suffering, happiness and sorrow, success and failure, hot and cold. Individual law is consistent with and is the collective effect of the all other laws on us. According to the Vedas, our reaction to incidents and actions determines whether we are relieved of our natures or become further bound to our natures.

Human Law (*ashrama dharma*) is our natural expression (or reaction of our body, mind and emotions) and growth as we pursue the four goals (*purusharthas*) of life: the pursuit of *dharma* (righteousness, mindful of the laws of city, state and country of one's domicile), the pursuit of *artha* (security, interacting with resources to accumulate wealth, house and other amenities of life), the pursuit of *kama* (pleasure of the senses, such as enjoyment of delicious food and fragrant flowers, etc.) and the pursuit of *moksha* (seeking liberation from the pair of opposites as we find no satisfaction from the pursuits of mundane disciplines). We follow human law as we move through four progressive stages of life (described above) of student, family, retirement and spiritual pursuit. For example, in a family, children may be in the *brahmacharya ashrama*, going to school to acquire education and learn skills, parents may be in the *grihastha ashrama*, raising children and serving the society, and grandparents may be either in the *vanaprastha ashrama*, slowly retiring from public life or in *sannyasa ashrama*, seeking spiritual happiness. According to the Vedas, proper performance of the duties of one's stage of life is the human law.

Social Law (*varnashrama dharma*) is proper rendition of our duties and responsibilities while being member of a family, community and a nation and as a member, and profession or occupation consistent with our station in life (described above) of the teachers, kings and rulers,

businessmen and traders, and laborers. Being in a specific country, we may belong to a faith. Correspondingly, we must follow religious and moral law consistent with our religion and faith and pay taxes consistent with the tax code of the nation. Every society comprises of a variety of classes, professions and groups. Generally, they can be classified as: the learned ones, scholars and spiritual leaders are *brahmins*, kings and rulers, administrators and military personnel are *kshatriyas*, business persons in science, technology, medicine and agriculture, bankers, traders and merchants are *vaishyas*, and laborers, workers and artisans who provide service to the rest are *shudras*. The society progresses when we follow social law properly. According to the Vedas, a man is born, with a debt to the gods, the sages, the ancestors and to human being and the environment of animals, plants, earth, waters and air.

Universal Law (*rita*) is the cosmic order, the intelligence in nature, the sustaining principle and organizing force. *Rita* is the universal law regulating nature, from the initial expanding gas into the ordered motion of galaxies, black holes, stars, planets and sub-planets to the atoms and subatomic particles. It is destiny and the road to destiny. Whereas nature is amazingly complex and incomprehensible, yet it is orderly following universal law. We follow universal law when we realize that we are an integral part of nature. We follow universal law when we bring our life into harmony with nature, the sustaining force, and we are in tune with our maker. Our physical, astral and causal bodies came from nature and return to nature. Correspondingly, we have responsibilities to nature, which when fulfilled balance its responsibilities to them. The apple seed always yields an apple tree and a rose a rose, not another species. The purest expression of these four timeless laws is called *Sanatana Dharma*. The Vedas proclaim, "There is nothing higher than *dharma*. Verily, that which is *dharma* is Truth."

### Living Individual and Social Life in *Dharma*

Human beings are protected by the law, so long as they follow the law. There is a statement in *Manusmriti*, "*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah* (If you protect *dharma*, it protects you)." *Dharma* is that which supports existence of an object. For one human being, it is individual law; for human beings, it is human law, for a society, it is the social law, bye-laws or charter; for a nation, it is the constitution; and for the world, it is *Sanaatana Dharma*, the basis of *dharma*. Just as a thread that goes through different beads and holds them together as one rosary, so does *dharma* hold together people of different faiths, races and cultures together as humankind. Just as the beads come apart and they cease to be a rosary when the physical thread holding them together breaks, so do human beings come apart and they cease to be humankind if the invisible thread of *dharma* holding them together breaks. The only way to maintain the integrity of a necklace is if the thread of *dharma* is kept strong. Correspondingly, it is by following *dharma* alone that can assure proper maintenance of human race. It behooves on all of us as responsible members of human race to recognize this and maintain the integrity of this necklace of human beings.

An action along the lines of *dharma* can only be good for all. Therefore, justice, righteousness, morality, virtue are the various forms of *dharma* expressed as *Manudharma* (*dharma* for the human race). Practical *dharma* or *acharadharm*a (human behavior and conduct)

relates to the physical needs and problems of human beings at the temporal level. One may ask what must be the way of life! It has to be living in *dharmā*. It is to live ethically, harmoniously, and with stability. People normally refer to various duties, rights and obligations, but this is not living in *satya*, the highest *dharmā*. Duties, rights and obligations are only means, interpretations and regulations of an individual. But, the family and the societies make them complicated. Ultimately *satya* resolves *svadharmā* into the *achaara* and *vyavahaara* of two forces of creation: male principle and female principle. The *purusha dharmā* (*dharmā* for the male) and *stri dharmā* (*dharmā* for the female) take away the ambiguities and interpretations away from the duties, rights and obligations. When husband and wife conduct properly with each other and are in harmony together, they as individuals, part of humanity, society and the universe follow *rita*, the truth [60]. When the basic unit of family follows its respective *dharmā*, it permeates into the society and becomes the guiding post for governance, which in turn can protect the society and its elements.

### Vedic Perspective on Good Governance

The human society at large comprises human beings with diverse physical attributes, natures and skills and with disparity in their social and economical status. Consequently, the need for peaceful coexistence and living in harmony existed since beginning. According to *Sanaatana Dharmā* the highest state of society to live in harmony, all must live in *dharmā* (order). The basis for Raama *Raajya* is to be found in *Sanaatana Dharmā* which offers the highest state of society sustained by *dharmā* alone as described in the following verse:

*Na raajyam na cha raajaaseet na cha daandikah;  
Dharmenaiva prajaassarvaa rakshanti sma parasparam.*

(There existed no state, no king, no criminal and no penalty. All protected one another by virtue of *dharmā*.)

Good governance is assured when the nation and not the partisan interests are considered for discussion, legislation and execution. And that calls for a single party with the main goal of affording ‘one law for all’ to provide for the health, education and welfare of all citizens who contribute based on their natural talents, education and acquired skills. Good governance also assures that ecology and the environment are protected in all business activities and trade. Good governance must also provide for the defense of the nation from bad elements outside and within the country as well. It must organize military and police to uphold law and order, impart justice and maintain peace. In the ultimate sense, only one world order can maintain a world without national conflicts or wars.

The external authority of a king is not needed for a society in which the individuals are bound by the practice of right conduct. During our interaction with the environment, it is the right conduct alone that makes us sensitive to the needs of the other and bonds us with others without any element of selfishness. Care for the other leads to harmonious living in the sense that each person takes for his services only what is fair, consumes what is needed, and therefore, protects the share of the other. Overindulgence in the pursuit of desires degrades human beings to

the level of animals. It is *dharma* alone that elevates us in awareness, which separates us from the animals. An organized society cannot be sustained without *dharma*. *Dharma* is the very strength that binds individuals in a society. Seeing the self in the other, without any distinction of national origin, color, race and faith, is *dharma*.

*Vedic* thinkers were aware of the human mind, its perceptions (and not realization) of reality and also various interpretations of the revealed word. So they proclaimed the maxim, “*Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudah Vadanti*” – “Truth is one but the learned ones express it in different ways.” The statement essentially accommodates all religious interpretations of the same God.

Today’s world is replete with conflicts, sectarian violence, corporate greed and arrogance of power; only the *Vedic* philosophy can bring about a positive change. Therefore, in today’s polarized world of the Haves and Have-nots, and the powerful and powerless, because we have to share our resources in global trade to fulfill our common need for food, water and energy, *dharma* offers the single most effective choice for global peace and a sustainable society.

### **Reflections on Peace from *Vedic* Perspective**

The *Vedic* Concept of Peace is summarized by Swami Bhaskarananda as stated, “The rulers think that punishing the peace-breakers will bring peace. The oppressed think that eliminating the oppressors will ensure peace. The nations think that destroying or subduing the enemy nations will create peace. But the wise say that ever-enduring peace can never be obtained through external means. One who has found inner peace has indeed found peace that abides forever. Through spiritual discipline alone this inner peace can be acquired. One who has found peace within transmits peace to others by one’s own life’s example. Therefore, say the wise, may all try to create peace within, before trying to create any temporary or superficial peace in the world through external means.”

The *Vedic* seers saw the wisdom of affirming peace for any activity, such as at a meeting, a meal or a prayer. It is a common practice to utter the word *Shanti* (Peace) thrice at the end of every prayer. The practice indicates the three dimensions of peace, namely the individual peace (for the soul), peace from the gods (for the mind) and peace from the five elements, namely, the earth, water, fire, air, and the ether (for the body). When all these are in peace, they make a person's life peaceful. The *Vedic* seers did not see life in isolation. They considered themselves as part of the whole. Hence they sought peace in the whole universe. A quotation from the *Vedas* reads, “*Vasudeva Kutumbakam* – The whole world is one family.”

We cannot talk about peace in isolation or without context. The philosophy of inequitable utilization of the Earth’s resources by the military and economic powers is flawed; the notion that humans everywhere may not aspire to equal rights is exacting its full price. The same is true of attacks anywhere symbolized by the events of 9/11 and violation of human values. If there is a war, there would be a consequence; if there is injustice, there would be a consequence; if consumerism is imposed on cultural values, there would be a consequence; if we put a blind eye



on arrogance of the powerful, scandals of politicians and greed of people and corporations, there would be a consequence. It is only in the purview of the powerful person, community or nation that justice can and must be maintained. Otherwise it goes against our creed, "In God we trust." Will we still believe in an almighty God who is unjust?

Satya Sai Baba of Puttaparti in India said, "If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character there will be harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world." He further said, "Through world peace, individual peace too can be cultivated. When food is taken by the hand to the mouth, chewed and swallowed, the essence spreads to every part of the body. So also, if the hands are changed in acts promoting peace, and the tongue engaged in prayers for peace, by these two means the essence of peace will spread to all parts of the world, which is but the body of the Lord. The peace of the world is the basis for genuine peace." The basis of peace he suggested was to develop the mindset with the thought, "Help ever, hurt never."

The development of mind to live in harmony with the environment (family, society, nation, the world and the objects and the events therein) is prerequisite to living in peace. The simple philosophy of "live and let live" alone can change our mindset to look at others just as us. History can testify that no powerful nations, no oppressors, and no religious bigots have been able to achieve their objectives or change the minds of people except satisfying their arrogance, supremacy or blind faith, besides the destruction of life and property. The *Vedic* peace invocation reads, "*Om Dyuh Shantir, Antariksha Shantih, Prithvi Shantiraapah Shantiroshadhayah Shantih, Vanespatayah Shantih, Vishvedevah Shantih, Brahma Shantih, Sarva Gwam Shanti, Shantireva Shantih, Saama Shantiredhih, Om Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!*- May the peace that resides in the solar world, in space, in the earth and waters, nourish the herbs, fruits and grains, thereby nourishing the original power in all beings. May the peace of the whole now and forever more come into us; may there be peace and only peace that may enhance my peace."

The quality of living in harmony or balance with the environment around us in peace is possible by our willingness to do so. While willingness to live in peace may not come natural to all, a certain life-style can assuredly transform any human mind to accept the other and develop an attitude of forgiveness. We live in a world full of deep-rooted ignorance, hatred, jealousy and delusion that the only way to bring order is through military action; that free global-trade without rules and regulations can by itself stabilize economies; that only one way of thinking and belief can bring personal salvation; that amassing unneeded material wealth can bring happiness and to do so one can lie, cheat and break the laws so long as one is not caught. These delusions can only disturb harmony and create unstable societies. These negative thoughts can be mitigated only through certain training that may attune people to their divine origin and arouse the sense of eternal connectivity that is forgotten. That is exactly what is missing in today's world. What is missing is an appreciation for global problems, and inability to resolve conflicts, whether perceived and real, and a peace culture.

Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education states, "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 rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace."

## **The Real World and Conflicts**

We live in a complex world with extremes in the standards of living in the midst of primeval strong beliefs. On one side we witness an awe-inspiring technological progress and weapons of mass- destruction (WMD) with capacity to annihilate cities and nations. On the other we face our willful denial of human values. While we are pushing our ability to adjust in the world of contrasts, commonsense thinking is being brainwashed with provocative selfish rhetoric by politicians. So how are science and technology and politicians impacting an individual and the society?

The application of science to commercial products has impacted individual life in a very profound manner from adding creature comforts to improving human performance in practically all aspects of life and pursuits of endeavor: food, energy, transportation, sports, medicine and entertainment. Simultaneously, in military applications, it has afforded us weapons that individuals, societies and nations can use to cause destruction of infrastructure and property, wipe out vast populations and inflict suffering on the survivors. War monger individuals, communities and countries have created the belief that disputes can be settled only by violence and war.

Effect of the misuse of science on human psyche is immeasurable and seems irreversible. The wars deplete enormous resources and cause unimaginable destruction; their effects persist for a long duration of time. They affect all: the instigator, the warring parties, and the vast mass of innocent people who are not responsible for these decisions, but live in areas controlled by the other two. Therefore, we must not use science and technology to invent such weapons to enforce our ideology on those who differ from us and expose the human species to the threat of extinction. So what are we up against?

All human beings do not think alike or feel alike. Consequently, there is no escape from having to encounter differences. Any difference can lead to intolerance, buried intolerance can lead to confrontation, and sometimes confrontation can become hostile leading to conflict. The objects that put one on the path of confrontation and conflict are therefore very important in understanding 'conflict.' Equally important are the means (tactics and instruments) that one uses to engage in conflict. Both, the objects and the means of conflict affect the individual as well as the society or the nation in which, or on behalf of which one (individual or a country) wants to engage in conflict. Simultaneously, the problems due to differences cannot be solved simply by saying that conflicts are inevitable in the life of the individual and the society.

Many of our conflicts result from: a) Economic disparity that has created wasteful affluence and extreme poverty, b) Technological progress that has created human isolation and depersonalization of mega-cities, c) Computer simulation of virtual pleasures that has created extra-human emotional gratification, d) Religious, cultural, and ethnic hatred and intolerance, e) Sale of technology and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that has created rogue nations, and f) Sharp decline in the practice of human values in favor of greed and arrogance. We need to understand the very basis of conflict, which is difference. The differences that really cause conflict are: human suffering, injustice and religious superiority.

### **How to resolve conflicts?**

One of the most exploited values in the world is 'human rights.' While the underprivileged are being denied of the basic human rights for mere survival, many in the mainstream take advantage of the system by abusing human rights. Politicians further exploit the term by arousing human emotions by connotation and rhetoric. On the contrary, if we all did our duty, the question of rights does not arise, because individual rights are taken care of through the duties performed by the rest. Citizens render their duties mainly through their natural and acquired skills. Their other duties are consistent with their particular station and stage in life. However, human values of righteousness (right action; honesty in the pursuit of personal endeavors, and *varnashrama dharma*-duty in the performance of actions for one's stage in life and station in society), love (kindness; speak gently, care deeply, and love generously), nonviolence (respect for all life and environment; living in harmony with the environment), peace (state of balance between the pair of opposites; forming no reaction for either of the opposing sides) and truth (sincerity in the performance of actions and transparency of intentions) must never be violated during the performance of duty.

Duty of the head of a household or a country, on the other hand, is to protect their family or the citizens respectively against any aggression (armed or other). A president, for example, may call upon its armed forces to defend the country under situations that warrant defending his country. However, nonviolence or non-harming is the highest human value and the highest duty. How can this be duty if no action is to be performed? The answer lies in developing an attitude of harming no one even those attacking us. Is it passive? Just think, does it not require tremendous effort to resist a reaction if provoked?

Nonviolence draws strength from moral principles by using courage and fearlessness to protect the good. In that sense, one may have to commit violence out of compassion to protect the good, to destroy the evil and to maintain law and order so that justice prevails. That is the right use of violence and is still called nonviolence because the specific action (employing violence) is duty and results in nonviolence. Consequently, there is only one reason for which a war can be fought, and that is-if it is fought for *dharma* (to do justice for the stability of the society). What is justice? It is equal and same law for all people. So, war may be fought to maintain order and justice.

Violence is a reflection of our lower mind, which stores instincts – fear, anger, greed, jealousy and hate. They all have a basis in our ego that separates us from the rest of the world with the thoughts of mine and yours, success and failure and winner and loser. Peace, on the other hand, is a reflection of our common origin (universal consciousness). It happens when our higher mind takes charge of the lower mind and convinces it about our human connectivity with the universe and underlying oneness. Peace is the natural state of our mind, but because of ignorance, we look for it outside considering the others to be different from us. A troubled mind is not suitable to resolve a conflict and achieve peace. Therefore, we must undergo those practices that calm our mind.

Until we have peace in our own heart, we can't hope for peace in the world. Since peace is inside all of us, it needs to be experienced, realized, discovered in meditation, maintained through self-control, and then radiated out to others. The non-injury is the first and foremost ethical principle. It is gentleness and nonviolence, whether physical, mental or emotional. It is abstaining from causing hurt or harm to all beings. In the light of the above discussion, the following factors must be understood to resolve and mitigate conflicts and achieve harmonious living:

1. **There is no difference and no conflict that cannot be resolved through discussion alone.** Would any one of us kill our brother, sister, parents or children if they disagree with us? People, who give their lives for a cause (such as their country, community, or family, or a principle such as justice or peace) are also brothers, sisters, parents and children to their relatives.
2. **Fundamental obstruction to peace is injustice.** Would any one of us be satisfied if injustice is done to us? There are oppressed and powerless people including the poor, illiterate, sick and elderly folks who do not have a voice in the mainstream. If a concerned person, group or a nation picks up their cause, they do not become outcasts or terrorists.
3. **Trust can be built only through love that provides a suitable environment for a dialog to understand conflicting viewpoints.** In every family there are differences and misunderstandings. If we care for each other, we refuse to bring up issues that would further aggravate the situation and wait for suitable times when the anger cools down and we are able to talk to each other without losing temper. In the same manner, larger social and political issues can be solved by easing tensions and then engaging into dialogs, rather than provoking hostility by regarding the other unsuitable for negotiation.
4. **The core human values in all faiths, races and cultures are same.** Human values are expressed through human conduct. We are different, because we are born in different geographical locations, different climates, different faiths, different cultures, and different political and economic conditions. Irrespective of our origin, if we treat the other with respect, the chances are very high that the other will treat us with respect as well. The other core values are: gratefulness, forgiveness, consideration, acceptance, and non-stealing). The golden rule for human conduct is *Samaanya Dharma*, “Do not do unto

*others, what you may not like to be done unto you.”* It is a commonsensical principle without regard to our affiliations.

5. **The United Nations Manifesto 2000, called for this decade to be a “Culture of Peace for the Children of the World.”** It calls for: Respect all Life, Reject Violence, Share with Others, Listen to Understand, Preserve the Planet, and Rediscover Solidarity.
6. **The United Nations big Ideas for Primary Peace Education.** They call for: Being a good friend, caring, sharing, helping, empathy, nurturing, respect for all living things, not taking more than we need, using our words to solve our problems, creating solutions to all problems peacefully, interconnectedness, interdependence, acceptance, tolerance, compassion, and loving.
7. **Ayur-Living Education** Ayur-Living is a mode of living that allows satisfaction in life by attaining perfect health compromised by the man-made environmental effects and living in harmony with one’s environment (people, objects and events) altered by misinterpreted meaning of freedom. In the sense of satisfaction, perfect health implies physical wellbeing, mental balance and spiritual awareness; *living in harmony* suggests achieving one’s potential without destabilizing the environment.

Whereas an appropriate resolution can be offered once the cause is known, *Vedas* offer some basic value system that affords means so that conflict may not even occur. The real answer lies in following: *rita* (natural law and order) and *dharma* (code of conduct in human interactions). *Rita* appears as intent to follow the law and order; and *dharma* is satisfied by rendering individual duties.

*Om maa bhraataa bhraatram dvikshan maa swasaaramutasvasaa,  
Samayam chah saptataa bhootvaa vaacham vadata bhadryaa.*

May we have good understanding with our neighbors and the members of our community! May our intellect lead us along the path of righteousness and generate the attitude of truth, service and cooperation in us. *Vedas* have long professed, *Aatmavat sarvabhooteshu* – Look upon all beings as your own self.

The conflicts originate because of believed differences. It is in the mind alone that the differences are perceived. Therefore, in the mind alone one can reconcile differences. The mind should be prepared to accept the benefits of peace through education. Most people are still living in conditions unsuitable for developing minds to grasp the benefits of living in peace. They are ignorant about their faiths, human values, and the progress made in science, technology and medicine. Only through education, they can become attuned to the spirit of good will, cooperation, and *harmonious living*.

The education must prepare us with a capability to revitalize our faith in the strength of moral principles so that collectively we help restore the social order. The intent of our actions must be pursuit of individual excellence without disrupting the *harmony*. To achieve that goal, we must develop a mind to assimilate only the good, the auspicious and the divine.

## **Purpose of Education**

The institutionalized purpose of education is to gain knowledge in the area of endeavor. Knowledge is gained by the transfer of information in the desired discipline. Information is the source of truth about people, objects and events. So the information on truth is the real purpose of education. According to Swami Vivekananda, The aim of education is to manifest in our lives the perfection, which is the very nature of our inner self. Perfection in education is seeking wisdom. Wisdom leads to oneness, unity and peace. Wisdom is not taught in schools because it is not in the curriculum.

Unlike the days of the distant yore, when children were sent to the *gurukuls* (the house of the teacher) at a very young age around 7, and would not return home until they completed their education (including wisdom), the education systems of today do not incorporate the teaching of wisdom as part of the curriculum. If we could only teach children the universal principles such as love, tolerance, and compassion from day one, both at home and at school, not only by word, but by example, by our conduct and behavior, the citizens of tomorrow would have those principles ingrained in them.

Our conduct and behavior must exemplify human values of the righteous conduct, love, nonviolence, peace and truth, which, according to Sai Baba, are the five pillars of human character. Character is build through **love and security**. While character is tested in dire situations of hunger, poverty and injustice, love and security are the only two viable means to impart any education with understanding. Children raised under the security of loving parents, who reward the children for good conduct and punish them for bad conduct grow up to be good and caring members of society. Just as at home, if reward and punishment are associated with the practice of human values in human conduct in all aspects of their interaction with the environment, people will have a motivation to practice those as well. And that would be real education.

When children are raised with love and care and sensitivity toward others in the family, in the society and the environment, they will exhibit love and care for all they come in contact with. If children are raised with a goal to excel in their natural talents and to compete in the sense of demonstrating excellence in their skills so that their excellence in their area of pursuit is in the spirit of service to the community they will correspondingly imbibe excellence in their endeavor for service to the community. If children are raised with certain disciplines and guidance they will be able to deal with any situation in life which demands the best out of them without unnecessary waste of mental energy. Such children will be more calm and peaceful. A society with such children will be more peaceful.

### Vivekananda's Views on Education

Consistent with Vedantic view, Swami Vivekananda defines education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man.' So, the real purpose of education is to manifest perfection (our very intrinsic nature) in our lives. And this perfection is achieved in every action through intense practice and cultivating dispassion. This perfection is the realization of that which makes us –

same for all of us – every state of existence, every state of consciousness and every state of bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*). Bliss lies in achieving perfection leaving behind the identification with the mind and the body. It is a state of deep meditation possible only through a harmonious development of the body (health), mind (pure) and soul (unattached). Swami further states that ‘Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested, all your life.’ Education means that process by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, and intellect is sharpened, as a result of which one can stand on one’s own feet. In Vivekananda’s method of education, the teacher invokes the spirit of inquiry in the student who is supposed to find out things for himself under the bias-free guidance of the teacher. It is Vedantic view that, within man is all knowledge even when he is a boy; it requires only an awakening, which is the work of a teacher. Just as in the case of a plant, one cannot do anything more than supplying it with manure, water and air and while it grows from within its own nature, so is the case with a human child.

Swami recognizes another important factor, religion – the innermost core of education. By religion, he means its essential character, which is the realization of the divinity already in man. Swami reminds us that religion does not consist in dogmas or creeds or any set of rituals. To be religious means leading life in such a way that we manifest our higher nature, truth, goodness and beauty, in our thoughts, words and deeds. All impulses, thoughts and actions which lead one toward this goal are naturally ennobling and harmonizing, and are ethical and moral in the truest sense. Correspondingly, religion and education share the identity of purpose. Religion forms the very foundation of education, because ‘In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others, and peace to one’s own self, religion is the highest motive power. Therefore, religion ought to be studied from that standpoint of building character. Swami’s education with its religious core can invigorate man’s faith in his divine nature opening the infinite potentialities of the human soul. It is sure to help a child become strong, yet tolerant and sympathetic. It will also help the child to extend his love and good will beyond the social, national and racial barriers.

### Gandhi’s Views on Education

According to Gandhi, education not only moulds the new generation, but reflects a society’s fundamental assumptions about itself and the individuals which compose it. Gandhi was absolutely opposed to modern machinery. In his collected works, he refers to machinery as having impoverished India, and that it was difficult to measure the harm that Manchester had done to them by producing machine-made cloth which, in turn, ruined the internal market for locally produced hand-woven goods.

Gandhi developed his ideas on education within the context of the need for a machine-less society. The core of his proposal was the introduction of handicrafts in the school curriculum. The idea was not simply to introduce handicrafts as a compulsory school subject, but to make the learning of a craft the centerpiece of the entire teaching program. And since many of those were

associated with lower castes, his system was designed to integrate lower castes into the mainstream.

Gandhi's basic education was, therefore, an embodiment of his perception of an ideal society consisting of small, self-reliant communities with his ideal citizen being an industrious, self-respecting and generous individual living in a small cooperative community. Gandhi's conception of basic education was concerned with learning that was generated within everyday life which is the basis on which informal educators work. It was also an education focused on the individual but reliant on cooperation between individuals. The spirit of cooperation promotes the relationships between teachers and students.

In talking to *Khadi Vidyalaya* students, he said, "A teacher who establishes rapport with the students, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. He who learns nothing from his disciples is, in my opinion, worthless. Whenever I talk with someone I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. If you will teach your pupils with this attitude, you will benefit much from them." (Talk to *Khadi Vidyalaya* Students, Sevagram, *Sevak*). With this view, it was an education that aimed at educating the whole person, rather than concentrating on one aspect. It was a highly moral activity.

Gandhi's views on education system were related to the combination of *swaraj* (Home Rule) and *swadeshi* (Home Made). A state system of education within an independent India would have been a complete contradiction as far as Gandhi was concerned.

### Vedic View on Education

The Vedas inspire us to lead higher lives. A fundamental principle of Vedic education was *tapas*. One of the highest *tapas* was control and concentration of mind and senses. Concentration and detachment are two important components for the training of the will. The Vedic student first learned about detachment when he left for the *gurukula* – to live with the Guru's family.

A teacher should have faith in the inherent potentialities of each and every student, for they are the manifestation of the Self in their hearts. Also, he should be able to recognize the differences in their capacity of assimilation because of their diverse backgrounds. Accordingly, a teacher should act as a resource person for all students by catering to their diverse needs. This is possible if the teacher has love for knowledge. A teacher should read new books, acquire new dimension of knowledge, become enriched with new ideas. Simultaneously, he should have the capacity to communicate knowledge to the students.

According to the Vedas, an ideal teacher is a friend, philosopher and guide. He keeps his intellectual ego aside while imparting education and does not outright reject or discourage students' opinions altogether. And he maintains a loving attitude toward students motivating them for participating in the classroom discussion. He encourages them to express their opinions.



Questions are encouraged to stimulate their minds to think new lines of thought affording new insights. Teaching is learning. Correspondingly, the ideal teaching-learning process works both ways. The following Vedic invocation offers an effective means to nurture the intellect of both the teacher and the student, so that together they succeed in their joint undertaking:

*Om Saha Nau-Avatu; Saha Nau Bhunaktu;*

*Saha Veeryam Karava-Avahai;*

*Tejasvi Nau-Adhii-Tam-Astu;*

*Maa Vidvish-Aavahai.*

*Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih !*

(Together may we be protected; together may we be nourished; together may we work with great energy; May our study together be enlightening and effective; May there be no bad feelings between us. Peace, peace, peace!)

The *Vedic* invocation expresses the idea of education as the achievement of knowledge and excellence of character in the context of a harmonious relationship between teacher and student. The giving and receiving of knowledge, leading to the making of man, depends on the stimulus of such teacher-student relationship. The teacher gives and the student receives not only ideas and information, but inspiration as well. In all the true education, teacher and student are not mere individuals, but two personalities.

Education, according to the *Vedic* sages, is the lighting of one lamp from another lamp. All energy is within man, proclaims Vedanta. But they lie in deeper and deeper layers. Kena Upanisad states, ‘*Atmana vindate viryam* – By the knowledge of the *Atman*, man gets infinite energy.’ Education helps man to access greater and greater energy resources within him. An uneducated rustic youth, timid and helpless, changes, through a few years in school, into a youth with a measure of fearlessness and. Education helps the uneducated youth to develop a measure of fearlessness, self-confidence and a sense of individual identity.

The state of individual identity gives man a level of mental maturity, the capacity to take independent decisions, the courage to stand by them and take the consequences, and the ability to deal with the world, and his position in it. This is the whole substance of growing up. *Vedic* thinkers were aware of the human mind, its perceptions (and not realization) of reality and also various interpretations of the revealed word. So they proclaimed the maxim, “*Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudah Vadanti*” – “Truth is one but the learned ones express it in different ways.” The statement essentially accommodates all religious interpretations of the same God.

Today’s world is replete with conflicts, sectarian violence, corporate greed and arrogance of power (due to mental and emotional immaturity); only the *Vedic* philosophy can bring about a positive change. Therefore, in today’s polarized world of the Haves and Have-nots, and the powerful and powerless, because we have to share our resources in global trade to fulfill our

common need for food, water and energy, *dharma* (imparted via education) offers the single most effective choice for global peace and a sustainable society.

Finally, the purpose of education is not only to: teach the student a trade; prepare the student for productive careers; enable a student to earn a good income, compete to stay ahead of the other communities or nations in technology, to preserve a particular doctrine, or to create good citizens, but **to live in peace and harmony with the rest of the environment** (people, objects and events).

### **Peace and Harmony Education**

The purpose of peace education must be to produce socially responsible citizens. A socially responsible person is one who is sensitive toward fellow human beings and the environment so that the society as well as the environment is sustained. The only sustaining principle is *Sanaatana Dharma* (the eternal precept), which does not change with space, time or human mind. One of its offshoots, called *Samaanya Dharma* (the general precept) reads, “Do not do unto others what you don’t want to be done unto you.” Let us take for instance the universal expectations: no one wants to be lied to; no one wants to be cheated; no one wants to be stolen from; no one wants to be hurt; no one wants to be killed; and so on and so forth. Well then, should we therefore not: tell a lie, cheat, steal, hurt, or kill others?

*Samaanya Dharma* is the only principle that can assure peace and a sustainable society assured to last forever. Therefore, teaching of *samaanya dharma* is peace education. The purpose of peace education should be to sensitize the coming generation of students to rise above the artificial divisions of caste, color, creed, faith, race, culture, and others, which form the basis of disputes, and to lay the foundations of a just human order. The peace education must prepare the graduating students to rise above the narrow vested-interest of the various social, political and economic groups they become affiliated with when they join the workforce or become the members of a profession.

*Samaanya dharma* dictates that we should look upon all beings as our own self. The demonstrations and the real results that we’ve witnessed since 9/11 and the measures taken in response bear testimony to the new awareness of the futility and dangers of violent conflict, and the revulsion to war as a weapon to settle disputes. The real learning, therefore, is that we must not let our differences precipitate into violent conflict or war. Once we perceive a conflict, it easily becomes prone to violent conflicts because of poor understanding of the other or the superiority of our own.

People everywhere have become conscious and concerned about the risks that conflicts bring and are interested in resolving conflicts. Conflicts lead to violence that leads to the destruction of life and property. But some powerful nations, extremists and fundamentalists have vested interests, so they instigate differences by brainwashing the masses or the economically marginalized by:

- building the feelings of fear, insecurity and/or hate through clever propaganda
- making available easily the weapons of war
- building the false sense of martyrdom and eternal glory
- 

Any one of the actions listed above can only violate peace and only spread unrest and instability. If we look upon the other as our own self, we would only follow and teach *samaanya dharma*. Peace education, therefore, while it may teach facts about different geographical locations, climates, races, cultures and faiths, sciences, arts, cultures and philosophies, it must teach the truth of human oneness. The concept of hurting the other as hurting oneself marks the foundation of global harmony and the world peace.

### Buddha on Peace and harmony

The Buddha once asked several of his monk disciples how they were able to live together ‘in harmony, mutual appreciation and agreeability, like milk and water mixed, regarding each other with the eyes of love.’ One of them, Anuruddha, replied, ‘I always consider what a blessing it is, what a real blessing, that I am living with such companions in the spiritual life. I think, speak and act with love towards them, both in public and in private. I always consider that I should put aside my own wishes and acquiesce to what they want and then I do that. Thus we are many in body but one in mind.’ Several things are mentioned here by the Buddha and Anuruddha – **love**, **generosity**, having common values, **appreciation** of others, being sensitive to their needs and not always demanding one’s own way. Other qualities that nourish harmony are **forgiveness**, **kindness**, **respect**, **sympathy** and **tolerance**. The six rules of harmony are set by Buddha for his followers to follow in order to bring about unity and harmony.

1. *Unity in cohabitation*: Work together, live together in unity and love each other like brothers and sisters.
2. *Unity in communication*: Do not say harmful things; do not quarrel to bring about anger, which may lead to fighting.
3. *Unity in thought*: Consider every person’s idea and work out a common solution to satisfy all parties. Only can tasks be accomplished.
4. *Unity in observing the precepts*: Always encourage and help each other to practice Buddhism.
5. *Unity in sharing*: Benefits gained by an individual or by groups must be shared equally with others. This not only refers to money but also any kind of recognition.
6. *Unity in view and explanation*: Share your knowledge and understanding with others so everyone can improve together and reach the same level of understanding.

### **What should be included in peace education?**

Peace is a state of when all are happy (justice prevails); there is rule of law (order prevails); all behave properly (righteousness prevails). It is only when we are at peace ourselves that we are able to think about peace of the rest of the society, and vice versa. Therefore, before

promoting peace, we must appreciate peace first. Correspondingly, we need to create an environment of peace that must begin at homes and in schools.

Situations of conflict arise when there is domination of an individual or a group over the other along the lines of class, caste, gender, nationality, religion, race or age. Conflicts also arise because of perceived biases, preconceived prejudices and misunderstandings based on sheer ignorance and unwillingness to know or understand the other. We live in an age of global economy in which people of different caste, gender, nationality, faith, race, culture, age and gender work together in a family or a business setup for a common goal. How should we create a harmonious society in which everyone excels in their nature-born talents and are rewarded in a socially responsible manner? Whereas any education system must create curriculum to make us more civilized, peace education must enable us live in harmony with the rest of the environment. The environment must provide us a sense of community, in addition to our individuality.

Peace education must provide us a sense of human responsibility rather than human rights, which are violated only when we deviate from human responsibility. Let peace be the natural outcome of education. Therefore, peace education must begin with programs conducive for creation of an appropriate environment. The peace education in particular must:

- **Prepare** the students to be sensitive to the needs of the other human beings. It is possible only when students are in good physical and mental health and are focused in learning.
- **Enlighten** the students about the practice of human values in human conduct in all aspects of life, so that they develop the sense of respect for all life. They must be taught similarities and differences among different faiths, races, and cultures, so that collectively they can respect individual freedom in belief, worship and pursuit of the means of living.
- **Afford** the students respect for law and order equally applicable to all independent of individual economic status and position of power. It is possible when they see the reward in following the law. They must also see the reward in serving the community and the practice of human values.
- **Challenge** the students to their responsibility for the environment. It is possible by emphasizing the destabilizing effects of: human greed, arrogance of power and wealth for personal gains. They must also be taught how the media is being used by the businesses to orient their mind toward, sex, violence and consumerism.
- **Empower** the students with the strength of character and integrity to resolve any conflict through the power of discussion alone. It is possible when all conflicting parties are brought together on the discussion table to gather all the facts. It is once again possible by emphasizing the destabilizing effects of arrogance of power and wealth by unilateral actions.

Keeping the above general considerations in mind it is envisioned that the following five programs would lay the foundation for peace education in any system of teaching. However, their implementation in the various grade levels (K-12, and college level) would require planning taking into account the local factors.

**I Programs that mold the children to receive peace education must start with their physical and mental health. Besides their natural inclination for particular sports, maintenance of their general physical and mental health, including relief from any addiction, substance abuse, ADD and ADHD can be assured only through programs such as Ayur-Living:**

1. The daily practice of the various techniques of Postures for physical health in Ayur-Living.
2. The daily practice of the various techniques of Breathing for physical and mental health in Ayur-Living.
3. The daily practice of the various techniques of Meditation for concentration and focus in Ayur-Living.

**II Programs that prepare the children to receive peace education must instruct them on human values that will inculcate good attitudes, good behavior and good actions in their conduct. Simultaneously, they should learn about diversity of faith, race, and culture.**

4. Development of courses in 'human conduct in human interaction' (a) at home, (b) in schools, (c) in social situations, (d) in business, and (e) in politics, and (c) the possibility of resulting personal and interpersonal emotional problems, and human responsibility.
5. Development of courses on diversity issues such as (a) different faiths and cultures and associated customs and traditions including food, clothing and festivals, (b) religious and cultural freedom, and (c) the possibility of personal, interpersonal social problems, and human responsibility.
6. Development of courses on social concerns, such as (a) social (faith, race, culture, and gender) conflicts and human responsibility, (b) social (faith, race, culture and gender) justice and human responsibility, and (c) stress, psychosomatic illness that arise from social conflicts and their management.

**III Programs that prepare the children to receive peace education must provide instruction on rewarding good behavior and service to the community.**

7. Development of courses on how to reward appreciation for human values.
8. Development of courses on competition in serving the community and how to reward those who serve the community.
9. Development of courses on collective responsibility and spirituality in every aspect of life: business, management, administration, and politics and so forth.

**IV Programs that prepare the children to receive peace education must instruct them on human interaction with the environment, a balanced view of human ingenuity and human neglect of responsibility. They must be taught factual knowledge about human progress in science and technology that has brought comforts and effectiveness into human life in addition to its impact on the environment. They must also be taught how the current economic state with false notions about capitalism and free trade (taken over by greed and**

**arrogance) and compensation structure that violates human dignity and degrades human values.**

10. Development of courses on the use of our natural resources in a responsible manner. The courses must include: (a) environmental pollution of the earth, water and air, and human responsibility in creating a safe environment (b) the well known effects of greenhouse effect and global warming and human responsibility, (c) the advent of plastic, the disposal of plastic waste, its impact on urban and marine life and human responsibility, (d) agricultural chemicals and additives in food products, their effect on human health and human responsibility, and (e) the other day-to-day technological products, their impact on the environment and human responsibility.
11. Development of courses on (a) big businesses, their disproportional profits and human responsibility, (b) influence of big businesses on scientific freedom and law, and human responsibility, (c) global trade, its impact on local businesses, and human responsibility, and (d) the use of media to orient the young minds into sex, violence and consumerism, and its impact on human development.
12. Development of courses on (a) meaningful discussion on the understanding of capitalism, free trade and need for rules and regulations (c) meaningful discussion on the disproportionate salary structure for CEOs, actors, fashion models and human responsibility.

**V Programs that prepare the children to receive peace education must instruct them on strategy of all nations to defend and protect against attacks from other nations and human responsibility.**

13. Development of courses on (a) questions of war and peace, (b) need for building weapons of war (conventional, nuclear, chemical, and biological), the cost to build weapons of war, their effectiveness in reducing tensions, causing destruction of life and property and human responsibility, (c), the sale of the weapons of war (their impact on increasing local tensions and provoking reactions), (d) effectiveness of dialog to reduce political tensions.
14. Development of courses on protection against common human enemies (a) human greed, self interest above the other (b) desire to dominate the other, (c) arrogance of power and wealth.
15. Development of courses on rewarding the nations for (a) engaging into dialogs to resolve conflicts, (b) teaching of peace education in their countries, (c) need for building weapons of war, (c) effectiveness of dialog to reduce political tensions, and (d) building a global network of people for peace.

### **How Can the Teachers and the Taught Accept Peace Education?**

In search for an underlying principle or a law about our observations on the various natural or man-made events and phenomena, we classify our ideas (in their various stages of development) as conjectures, hypothesis, views and theories, etc. Once a theory holds universally (still under

some physical bounds), it becomes a law. That's how the objective or the physical laws (such as the Newton's Law of Gravitation, and the Newton's Laws of Motion), the chemical laws (such as the Law of Conservation of mass and the Dalton's Law of Multiple Proportions), the astronomical laws (such as Hubble's Law of Galactic Motion and the Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion) are discovered. The principles and laws are nothing more than an underlying order that the constituent elements obey or follow within the domain of their applicability. The physical, chemical and astronomical laws are objective laws pertaining to the material universe and connote the inherent order for the specific physical, chemical or astronomical phenomenon. It is in following a specific law (by following the underlying order inherent in the specific material domain) that the sustainability of the specific phenomenon is assured. Therefore, it is in following all the known and the unknown laws (by following the underlying orders inherent in the material universe) that the sustainability of the universe is assured.

Just as the objective laws govern the objective universe, so must there be subjective laws governing the subjective universe of human beings. Whereas, harmony is assured because of the inherent order in the objective world, this order must be introduced in the subjective world to assure harmony among all people of different geographies, races, cultures, faiths and genders. The most fundamental of this law is from the Rig Veda, "*Vasudeva Kutumbakam* – the whole universe is one human family." The only way to introduce this law into human beings is if they willingly subscribe to this law. **This can be done through teaching and training.**

Pragmatically, how can thoughts of being different (exploited by the interested groups) would enable human beings to live in harmony? We may have to go to the basics of our being a human. Human beings are inherently social beings - we survive and grow only in relation to other people, community, the world, and the environment. We do not exist only as individuals; we obtain our sense and value of being humans by belonging to a human community that includes practice of moral values and our faith to live a human-worthy life. Therefore, for our sustenance alone, we need relationships with people and environment. And the process of building relationships is through human values.

The origin of human values is the source at the core of our beings. The source being non-physical, non-material, without any attributes and qualities introduces values through *Rita*, the universal order. The order does not delimit importance of one element of manifestation over the other, but provides an avenue for the universe to sustain itself. That order is called *dharma*, the sustaining principle. From that order follow the objective laws that govern the physical universe and the subjective laws that govern human beings. Consider for instance, if the sun decides not to shine any longer, or the earth decides not to revolve around the sun; there would be no world and life that we know of. Revolving around the sun, the earth does not diminish its role, but follows intrinsic value in the performance of the universal order. Similarly, the roles of a child and a wife in a family are not inferior or superior to the father or the husband, so long as all follow their intrinsic values in the performance of family order. The same goes with any relationship: the employer, employee; teacher, student and the like. **All human values follow from the universal order.**

Thus far, the world has not been successful in teaching the very simple precepts of the universal order – peaceful coexistence. The known history is replete with conflicts, strife and wars. We can avoid great suffering if someone stands up and teaches the way of true Peace. There is a way to effect peace in our time, and we must be willing to do something about it. The word ‘peace’ by itself may not mean much, but teaching certain practices may ultimately bring in the desired result. I delineate three effective practices which may help us achieve peace.

### Will and Repetition

In the performance of any order is the underlying human intention. Since human intention cannot be legislated, our actions must be guided by a system of appropriate codes of conduct. A new, intention, however, can be developed, and appropriate steps can be taken to translate it into spoken words that are repeated. Teachers and the taught can achieve peace by learning peace, then teaching certain positive precepts, and teaching them continually through repetition. It has been shown that the mind of both adults and children are greatly influenced by repetition, and this can be continued throughout our lives. The repetition of sight, sound and actions becomes ingrained in our mind and affects us in a number of ways including our thoughts and our emotions, and eventually shows up in our reactions. In the Vedic ways, one takes a *Sankalpa* (resolution, free will) before performing any work is a kind of declaration to ourselves and to the spirit within us. The Vedas say that the whole Universe is evolved through a *Sankalpa* of the Lord.

Resolve may be of the form ‘I believe in peace,’ ‘I will speak gently,’ ‘I will care about others,’ and ‘I will not harm anyone through thought, words and actions.’ When a teacher teaches the child it is wrong to steal, then that child will have a propensity in his mind to choose not to steal. By teaching, I mean explaining through constant positive repetition the reasons why and how stealing may harm their family and them; how stealing may harm their neighbors, and how stealing affects society and the world as a whole.

When a child is taught through diligent continual repetition that killing someone ends the existence of that person and destroys families, leaving those children without a father to lead, teach and provide for their families, and the result among the affected children and families is the building up of great emotions of anger and thoughts of hatred and revenge that cannot ever be eliminated in their minds, that child will have a propensity in his mind to choose not to hate and not to murder.

### Prenatal Education – Spiritual seeding

The higher souls have a freedom to choose their parents. They like to choose to be born in the pure hearted parents. Therefore if a person loves to get a great soul as a child he has to be spiritual. The parents, who are pure hearted and have divine aspiration, are blessed with great souls as their children. But sometimes we see that right children are born to wrong parents. How



it is possible? Sometimes the great souls deliberately choose the wrong parents or wrong clan for two reasons: 1) By choice, so that the clan or parents can be transformed, and 2) The great souls want to reveal that even with the lot of psychological pollution in atmosphere one is possible to grow spiritually. There is also a possibility of a great soul's birth in a wrong atmosphere by mistake. But generally the great souls prefer to be born only to the spiritually qualified parents.

However, ordinary parents can be taught to have children born to them with certain knowledge, e.g., peace and harmony. It has been shown that the minds of children are greatly influenced even while they are in the womb. There are also *mantras* for the wellbeing of the pregnant mother as well as health, security and prosperity in life for the unborn child. Teachers can teach the parents the following preparatory steps:

Preparing the ground - The parents should be in a peaceful mood when they have union to bring about a virtuous child. There should be cooperation on both sides.

Psychological growth – Once the embryo is getting developed in the womb it should be nurtured with the healthy atmosphere which includes serene music and rhythmic recitations of appropriate *Mantras* through which the child can be lulled to meditation. The parents should create a healthy environment in the womb through which the child aspire *dharma*.

Invoking the Divine – The Divine forces should be invoked within to make the child potential and tranquil, just as Kunti invoked the Divine forces like *Indra* for Arjuna, *Dharmaraja* for Yudhishtira, and *Vayu* for Bhima.

Children of peace knowledge in the womb – Peace *Mantras* should be recited repeatedly to make the child's mind peace-loving. These children will be born with peace knowledge and a higher receptivity for peace, just as *Abhimanyu* learned in the womb about entering the *chakravyuh* – a land war formation. Therefore, the parents should be eligible enough to nurture these children with the knowledge they want to impart, such as peace and harmony.

### Ayur-Living, Yoga

Certain life styles are conducive to developing a peaceful mind. Ayur-Living begins from the basic understanding of who we are, recognizes the importance of being in *harmony* with the environment and prepares us to develop a sense of what a healthy body, calm mind and a sharp intellect can do to realize our natural potential. The sense of perfect health is developed through a set of disciplined actions that allow one to activate body's natural healing processes.

When thinking is clear and no universal values are compromised, there is no basis for mistakes or sickness and no impediments for pursuits. The practice of Ayur-Living results in an increase in energy and inner strength to bring out inner beauty. It propels individuals to endeavor into realizing their fullest potential by building character and integrity without compromising

*dharma* and promoting harmonious living with the environment. (For more information, visit: [www.instituteofspiritualhealing.com](http://www.instituteofspiritualhealing.com))

Another life style is Patanjali's Yoga approach which quiets the fluctuations of the mind and brings it to focus on human values. It offers the substance of yoga in the verse – *Yogash chitta vritti nirodha* – Yoga is the cessation of mental modification or the way of being. The four words of the verse define the discipline in a practical way. *Chitta* is the mind field, which is the ocean of perception and reflection. Perception includes even the state of deep sleep with cognitive activity. A mind field connotes a subject and a separate object, which is a center of perception as opposed to the 'rest' which is perceived; it includes everything that can be grasped. *Vritti* is more than a thought. It is a mental activity of the form of consciousness outside of conscious thinking. There is a separation between a perceiving subject and a perceived object. The word *nirodha* carries in itself the complete essence of spiritual realization in the soul. It is the cessation, the silence—not control, which is an effort, a struggle, an uneasiness of sorts. The discipline of yoga is the cessation of something that has hardly ceased until now and which we evoke by the expression *chitta vritti*. Any perception in which the perceived object is perceived as separate from the perceiving subject is designated by the expression *chitta vritti*. Yoga is the cessation of mental activity – not a temporary cessation, a peace depending on particular circumstances. The temporary cessation would be a mental truce, even if the joy felt in it is definitely different than the joy linked to the objects and circumstance of mundane existence. Most popular meditation techniques propose a truce in mental agitation. But then it is perceived only in the absence of thought or perception. Yoga, on the other hand, with cessation of mental activity is its ultimate accomplishment. Performing yoga offers the most practical and uncontested way to accept peace and harmony as your *dharma*.

Vedas state that both the teacher and the taught pray together for togetherness in thought, speech and action by reciting the following Vedic *Mantra*:

*Samane va Akootih, samana Hridayani vah;  
Samanamastu Vo Mano, Yatha Vah Susahasati!*

(Common be our intention, may we be united in offering; may we be united in hearts; may we be united in thoughts; Let there be oneness in your resolutions, hearts and minds, so may there be perfect unity amongst you.)

Based on my Hindu background I can relate the teaching process selected thusly: “An old Brahmin priest spoke with his Lord Shiva (the ‘life and death’ principle) about heaven and hell (which is called *Narakaloka* in Sanskrit and differs from other hells in not being eternal, but a temporary state of souls between births where they undergo suffering). The Lord said to the aging pundit, “Come, I will show you hell.” They entered a room where a group of people sat around a huge pot of wonderful smelling vegetable curry. Everyone was famished, desperate and starving. Each held a spoon that reached the pot, but each spoon had a handle so much longer than their arm that it could not be used to get the stew into their own mouths. The suffering was terrible. “Come, now I will show you heaven (which is called *Swargaloka* in Sanskrit and differs from other heavens in not being eternal, but a temporary state of souls between births where they

enjoy comforts),” Lord Shiva said after a while. They entered another room, identical to the first the pot of luscious curry, the group of people, and the same long-handled spoons. But everyone was happy and well-nourished. “I don’t understand,” said the Brahmin. “Why are they happy here when they were miserable in the other room where everything was exactly the same?” Lord Shiva smiled, “Ah, it is simple,” He said, “Here they have learned to feed each other.”

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**Om Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu:  
May Peace & Happiness Prevail**

Amma has chosen some peace mantras for daily chanting by her devotees and disciples. One of those invocations is *Om lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu*. Although this mantra does not appear in any of the existent Veda sakhas [Vedic branches], it is an expression of the universal

spirit that we find therein<sup>1</sup>. Let's take a look at what context it appears in and what meaning it carries. The sloka as a whole reads as follows:

svasti prajabhyam paripalayantham nyayeana margena mahim maheesah  
gobrahmanebhya shubamsthu nityam lokah samastha sukhino bhavanthu

May there be well being to the people;  
May the kings rule the earth along the right path;  
May the cattle and the Brahmins have well being forever;  
May all the beings in all the worlds become happy;  
Peace, peace and peace be everywhere!

The sloka is an invocation for harmony and blessings for all of creation. In ancient days the social structure and form of government differed from ours in many ways, that is why we need not take the literal meaning of this sloka, but the essence.

For peace and harmony to prevail, the kings--i.e. the politicians and leaders--should have a healthy approach towards their subjects and govern according to principles of dharma. This, we sadly note, is very rare indeed in today's world where power and wealth seem to be the prime motivation for the ruling elite. Nevertheless, the ideal remains as it is, and as Amma's teachings are personally influencing countless politicians all over the world, there might yet be light at the end of the tunnel.

Brahmin is one who has either realised his oneness with Brahman, the Absolute, or one who has dedicated his life to the pursuit of that realization. Such selfless people are the enlightened thinkers who provide society with a healthy understanding of life. They give guidance to all sections of society, including the political leadership. A Brahmin can also mean a brilliant intellectual who is using his talents to selflessly serve society. Thus for a stable and bright society, it is essential that these Brahmins are healthy. The sage who gave voice to this mantra obviously does not assert Brahmin-hood as a hereditary vocation as found today.

There are many examples in history to demonstrate that Brahmin-hood is an inner quality not dependent on the social status that prevails upon one's birth. We need only to look back to the great sage Veda Vyasa, also known as Krishna Dvaipayana because he had a dark complexion and was born on an island. He was born to a fisherwoman but possessed one of the greatest minds of all times and is universally accepted as a great rishi. He codified the Vedas and composed original works that are famed all over the world for their exquisite spiritual content. Among them are popular works like the *Mahabharata* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*, as well as profound treatises on the Ultimate Reality like the *Brahma Sutras*. In spite of his humble origins, Sage Vyasa is one of the most revered among the plethora of India's spiritual giants.

Amma was born in a community of fisher folk. She was educated only up until the fourth standard and speaks only her mother tongue. Also, most striking of all, she has never studied the scriptures. Yet their wisdom flows from her lips unceasingly, rendering the most abstract truths in simple ways that most anyone can understand. Who would then deny Amma's Brahmin-hood?

Amma is directing the world with her wisdom, speaking to large audiences throughout the world, even at the United Nations.

Now, one might wonder about the cattle in this prayer, saying to one's self: "What on earth have I, a city-dwelling modern person, to do with cattle? Shouldn't I rather be praying that my BMW stays in good condition?" We need not be too literal-minded. The ancients didn't use language in such a one-dimensional way as we do. If we contemplate deeply on the meaning of any given mantra, it is likely that it will reveal more and more layers of meaning. "Cattle" signifies nourishment and abundance in general. In ancient time cattle served as a sort of bank account. The number of cattle a person had was the measure of his wealth. Also, the milk was the primary source of livelihood for a large portion of society. Milk and milk products such as ghee comprised the majority of the offerings made into the sacrificial fires used in formal ritual worship. Thus cows are mentioned in many ancient texts as a symbol of plenty. It can be taken symbolically, like "the daily bread."

In today's society, such a prayer, if taken literally, has also a special irony, for cattle ranches around the world have become breeding grounds for diseases like the mad-cow epidemic. When cattle and the rest of the animal kingdom are devoid of well being, humanity will also suffer. Thus harmony between humans and the rest of creation is also stressed in this prayer. Actually cow can be taken as representative of the entire animal kingdom. The Sanskrit word for cattle is "go," which is a most profound Vedic symbol and has many subtle spiritual meanings. Two such secondary meanings are "earth" and "mother," and as such the sloka could also be a prayer for the welfare of Mother Earth. So we need not be worried that God will send a herd of cattle charging through our living room when we pray thus.

<sup>1</sup> Many of the original 1008 branches of the Vedas have been lost. It is possible that this mantra was in one of those lost branches. If not, it surely took birth from or around a Realized Master.

<http://archives.amritapuri.org/bharat/mantra/lokah.php>