

# Document on Peace Education



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Edited by  
Prateeti Barman  
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Peace education is a relatively new concept in the educational system of India. The aim of peace education is to cultivate a culture of respect and peaceful co-existence. The United Nations has declared 2001 to 2010 as an *“International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non Violence for the Children of the World”*. The North Eastern region of India has had a history of ethnic violence and secessionist movements for decades. This book is a product of a year long action research program in the two hills districts of Assam which has experienced violent ethnic clashes in the recent past. Keeping this in mind, the book attempts to look into those issues which are considered to be vital in shaping our mindset for a peaceful society, especially so in the context of the North Eastern region, where there is an urgent need for peace education.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Anuradha Dutta\**

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*"Averting war is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of education".*

—*Maria Montessori*

Peace, in the sense of the absence of war, is of little value to someone who is dying of hunger or cold. It will not remove the pain of torture inflicted on a prisoner of conscience. It does not comfort those who have lost their loved ones in floods caused by senseless deforestation in a neighboring country. Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.

These profound words of His Holiness, Dalai Lama placed before mankind is a reality, which indeed must govern the thought of each and every rational being on earth. However, in actuality 'peace' has different meanings within different cultures, as well as different connotations for the sphere in which peaceful processes are generally applied. There is a difference between inner peace and outer peace. Inner peace

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\*Anuradha Dutta is Professor, Peace Studies, OKDISCD

concerns a state of being and of thinking about others. Outer peace, on the other hand, refers to the natural environment, the culture, international relations, civic communities, families and individuals. So, within each sphere peace has different meanings. In the international sphere - peace refers to peace treaty, a ceasefire or balance of power. For sociologists, peace means cultural norms that legitimize non-violence. In culture, peace is interfaith dialogue and multicultural communication. In a civil society, peace implies a state of full employment, affordable housing, and ready access to health care and educational opportunities. Psychologists deem peace as positive inter personal communication. Whereas for environmentalists, peace is sustainable practice used by a native culture. Thus, peace continues to be the object of unceasing quest in almost all communities and groups.

The real world today, however, depicts another reality about peace, which is rather cruel. It has been found that training of each new generation today centres not on peace, but, more and more on divisive issues of in-group/ out-group differentiations, inter-group conflicts and preparation to fight against real and perceived enemy. As conflict in recent times has overcome peace and has become a part of life, priority has to be given to training and education for conflict management. In recent decades, in different parts of the world, after going through the experience of the devastation of wars, the concept of peace education has indeed gained momentum and is being recognized and accepted as a necessary dimension of a truly democratic society.

### **Peace Education: In History and Reflection**

Peace education like the concept of peace is a contested notion. In order to combat the current culture of discrimination & intolerance in schools the Peace Education programme has been conceived with an aim of cultivating a culture of respect & peaceful co-existence. Betty Reardon,

one of the leading peace education experts from the United States who has analyzed more than hundred curricula on peace from Kindergarten through High School, concludes that, "There are as yet no clear and precise limits to, nor standards for what is to be included in peace education". She identifies nine areas to be included in peace education – conflict resolution, cooperation, non-violence, multicultural understanding, human rights, social justice, world resources and global environment. According to Reardon, the purpose of peace education is to promote the development of authentic planetary consciousness that will enable one to function as a global citizen and to transform the present human condition by changing social structure and patterns of thought that have created it. Peace education, therefore is, the transmission of knowledge about requirement of and obstacles to the possibilities of achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge, and the development of participatory capacities for applying the knowledge.

There have been peace education efforts for over one hundred years now. The understanding of the concept of peace has changed throughout history, and so has its role and importance in the educational system from the very beginning of the institutionalized socialization of children. The end of World War I (1914–1918) brought powerful support for the need of international cooperation and understanding and helped instill a desire to include these ideas in educational systems. The League of Nations and a number of non-governmental organizations worked together on these ideas, especially through the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, the Institute that preceded UNESCO.

In history, peace education began after the civil war rising out of concern for destructiveness of modern weapons. Peace education has taken different shapes, as peace educators have attempted to address different forms of violence. After the

atomic bomb drops in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, peace educators in Japan in the 1950s led a campaign known as A-bomb education. In the poor countries, peace education is known as Development Education where students learn to address the problems of structured violence. In Ireland, peace education is referred to as 'education for mutual understanding'. In South Korea, peace education is referred to as 'education for reunification'. Later, peace movements began concentrating on stopping the threat of nuclear war, halting the arms race, and encouraging disarmament. The issues of environmental protection and development also found their place in peace education programmes.

The contemporary socio-political environment, the fear of terrorism and the increasing gap between developed and under-developed countries has indeed created new challenges for understanding peace and for the development of the underlying principles of responsibility and security. Thus, it has been found that peace education has developed its own culture according to the situation.

A number of educational initiatives overlap with peace education. These include child rights/human right education, education for development, gender training, global education, life skills education, landmine awareness, and psychosocial rehabilitation. Each can provide a perspective to examine how peace can be mainstreamed in basic education.

In the light of the above observations, Gavriel Salmon rightly summarizes current peace education activities under four categories:

- i. Peace education as a matter of changing mindset
- ii. Peace education as a matter of cultivating a set of skills
- iii. Peace education as a matter of promoting human rights

- iv. Peace education as a matter of environmentalism, disarmament, and the promotion of culture of peace

Amidst these different issues and activities which peace education strives to address, Ian Harris identifies ten goals specifically for effective peace education:

- i. Appreciate the richness of the concept of peace
- ii. Address fear
- iii. Provide information about the security system
- iv. Understand violent behaviour
- v. Develop intercultural understanding
- vi. Provide for a future orientation
- vii. Teach peace as a process
- viii. Promote concept of peace accompanied by social justice
- ix. Stimulate respect for life
- x. End violence.

All these goals and issues prove that desire for peace is widespread but there is no agreement in this sphere. It is, therefore, important to develop a theoretical base for peace.

### **Peace Education: An Approach**

Hossain B Danesh identifies four pre requisite conditions for Peace education - changing mindset, cultivating set of skills, promoting human rights and matters related to environmentalism and disarmament, and promoting the culture of peace. For, according to Danesh, peace is a requirement for effective peace education and peace education creates higher states of peace.

There exists a desire for peace but approaches to it, are diverse. In 1996, Robin Burns and Robert Sapsago in their

book on Peace Education wrote that the field and theme that are included in peace education are diverse. There is diversity in approaches, underlying philosophies, basic methodology as well as goals. Peace education is full of people with good intentions but without a unique theoretical framework and firm methodology. For peace education, programme specific situations in which programmes held are important. The complex system of society, the circumstance and the context make the field of peace education very active and diverse. Peace education, in fact, rejects the threat and use of force on all levels and is committed to comprehensive means of civil conflict management.

What one needs is a theoretical framework for comprehensive peace education programme. Education has an enormous impact on children, particularly on issues of conflict and peace. Peace education and civilization are two very important components for the stability of any country, which ultimately can lead to human progress. A world where identity, autonomy and displacement are everyday problems, children should be familiarized with these issues. Education hence is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. The primary purpose of peace education should, therefore, be to build people's capacities to recognise, confront, and transform the culture of violence. Central to such a challenge is providing students with the skills, knowledge, and authority they need to inquire and act upon, what it means to live in a substantive democracy...to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systematic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities. Horton and Freire remind one that such social change cannot be forced upon people. Peace education should hence be student-centered, a process of mutual learning among students and educators. Peace education is not only about teaching, it is about helping oneself and others become a peace builder. With peace education, one aims to generate profound

compassion for the whole humanity and nurture a form of all encompassing love that enables young people to transcend hatred and build bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood among all people.

Peace education thus encompasses the key concepts of education and peace. Education is defined as a process of systematic institutionalized transmission of knowledge and skills as well as basic values and norms that are accepted in a certain society. Peace education can be defined as an interdisciplinary area of education whose goal is institutionalized. Peace education thus aims to help students to acquire skills of non-violent conflict resolution. Unlike conflict resolution, peace education has a more pro-active approach. Its aim is to prevent conflict in advance or to educate individuals and a society for peaceful existence on the basis of nonviolence, tolerance, equality, respect for difference and social justice.

### **Peace Education: The Reality**

According to the Integrative theory of peace, truly effective peace education can take place in the context of a unity based worldview. Peace education and civilization are inseparable dimensions of human progress. Today, the new generation of youth and children are trained with a conflict-based perspective. Education at home, schools, community and mass media focus on issues of conflict. History textbooks by and large are the accounts of rivalries, wars and conflicts. The issues of co-existence and cooperation, which are fundamental for the formation and maintenance of life, are not taught. Children are given lessons in issues of power, competition, winning and losing. The children are taught that the world is full of competition and only the fittest would survive. As a result, there is today, a new generation matured with ways of conflict, competition and violence. Effective peace education cannot take place with a conflict-based worldview; it has to be based on peace.

There is a need to bring about changes in views. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1998 recognized education as the key means to spearhead the movement towards a culture of peace. Till date, not much research has been done on the impact of peace education on society. Though one such study reveals that peace education and peace studies can bring about a difference in value orientation. M Harris in his book on Peace Education mentions that peace education classes have a ripple effect, where one person who acts peacefully influences the behaviour of others and those persons in turn, act in such a way as to inspire others to be more peaceful. However, one must agree that these effects are hard to measure. H B Danesh points out that peace education can best take place in the context of the culture of peace. This culture of peace, according to the UN Charter, is respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, promotion of development, education for peace, free flow of information and wider participation of women as an integral approach to preventing violence.

Although a significant number of courses covering these subjects were introduced, effectiveness of these programmes was rather low. It seems that the participating students were unwilling to deal with issues like tolerance, democracy and human rights. Looking back at the failures, one gets a sense that this has happened due to the lack of development of the necessary degree of trust and confidence building required at the social level, which is essential in removing stereotypes, misconceptions and flawed information that many teachers, students and parents have about the 'other' group. The discrepancy between theory and practice always has a detrimental impact on students' learning process as it places them in a state of conflict between what is said and what is done. The primary purpose of peace education hence unquestionably is to build peoples' capacities to recognize,

confront and transform the culture of violence. They need to fight against the deeply rooted injustice in a society.

### **Peace education has five postulates**

- (i) It explains the root of violence
- (ii) It teaches alternatives to violence
- (iii) It adjusts to cover different forms of violence
- (iv) Peace itself is a process that varies according to context
- (v) Conflict is omnipresent

Based on these postulates, peace educators, peace academics and peace activists primarily organize their tasks into three interrelated sphere of peace action:

- (i) Opposing & confronting violence in all of its manifestation
- (ii) Conducting learning & research, acquiring & disseminating new knowledge that is produced towards preparing the citizenry for developing a deeper understanding of violence
- (iii) Transforming the cultural, social & political organization that promote and sustain systems of direct & indirect violence

The *social individual* is the final target of the peace education effort. For development of sympathy for others and building trust, developing awareness of interconnectedness with others, is necessary for the development of a positive self. The modern liberal theory puts the individual's equality, values, and rights in the centre of a successfully functioning society. This basic thesis is the beginning of the philosophy and practical protection of human rights. From the individual psychological point of view one thinks in terms of educating a complete person. In the educational system this does not

mean transmitting only the facts, but it includes the complete social, emotional, and moral development of an individual; the development of a positive self-concept and positive self-esteem, and the acquisition of knowledge and skills to accept responsibility for one's own benefit as well as for the benefit of society. The development of a positive self-concept is the foundation for the development of sympathy for others and building trust, as well as the foundation for developing awareness of interconnectedness with others. In that sense, a *social individual* is a starting point as well as a final target of peace education efforts.

### **The Way Out and Forward: Peace Education as Security**

The key problem of peace education is not the interpersonal conflict but the collective conflict between groups, races, nations, or states. Therefore, the issue of transferring the positive attitudes towards members of other groups – attitudes achieved in safe environments such as classrooms, schools, workshops, and the like to all members of the out-group and all other out-groups remains the pivotal issue of peace education. Children learn about peace and the need for peace in safe, protected environments and then return to a wider society where there still is injustice, asymmetry of power, a hierarchical structure, discrimination, and xenophobia. Programmes for peace education must not only strengthen the capacity of an individual for critical thinking but also strengthen the individual's ability to resist the majority, if the majority is one that discriminates. As stated by Ervin Staub in 1999, "For change to happen and spread, there is a need for a *minimum mass of people* who share attitudes, a culture in which they can express those attitudes, and a society that accepts the attitudes".

Since the very beginning of the development of systematic peace education, there has been discussion about whether it

should be added as a separate programme in schools, or if the principles of peace education should be applied through regular school subjects. The variety of approaches and attitudes on what peace education actually is leads to the introduction of a series of titles, such as multicultural training, education for democracy and human rights, and education for development. Many in the field, however, believe that the implementation of principles of peace education into the institutionalized educational system is a better approach, especially within the subjects encompassing the cultural heritage of the dominant society and the ethnic groups belonging to it. But many also oppose the view.

The educational parties involved in the process of peace education may involve

- Government
- Local businesses
- Board of education officials
- School administration
- School teachers
- Community organization
- Community participants
- Students
- Parents.

These actors will be consulted to assess their interest in the PEP (Peace Education Programme), taking into account the specific need of the community in which the programme will be implemented. This programme is participatory and community engagement is continuous and dynamic.

When Peace Studies, a Chair under Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati initiated an attempt in understanding the essence of peace

education, it was found that teachers from various schools in Guwahati city were not willing to incorporate peace education as a separate area of study. According to them, it would be an extra burden for the already over burdened children. They felt that Peace education could be made a part of the already existing programme in schools and colleges only if the existing education programme takes care to incorporate certain values in the syllabi at hand. The Political Science Department of Gauhati University has been rather successful in introducing a two-year course in Peace and Conflict Studies. Of late, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and SCERT (State Council of Educational Research and Training) too have developed policies on value education. In areas like North East India where conflicts have become a part and parcel of life, the importance of peace education indeed needs to be re-examined.

Many scholars have provided evidence that education can play a significant role in initiating personal, communal and even structural development that bring qualitative differences in society, economy and polity. Education is a security issue. All education imparted has a social purpose. But one seldom pays attention to the social purpose of learning. Peace education attempts to cultivate learning that transforms the worldview and inspires learners to actively pursue the transformation of the culture of violence. Peace education strives to demonstrate the futility of violence through the cultivation of peace-related values, knowledge, attitude and behaviour. The task of peace education unlike peace research is dissemination of peace knowledge. And this dissemination can take place via five existing postulates in peace education. In the first postulate students learn about the 'other' in order to deconstruct the enemy image. With the kind of ethnic conflict we have, this is of special importance. Postulate two presents different peace strategies that can be used to address the problem of violence. Postulate

three explains the dynamic nature of peace education as it shifts its emphasis according to the type of violence. Postulate four embeds peace education theory and practice within a specific culture. Postulate five states that the peace educator cannot eliminate conflict but can provide skill for conflict management. If put in to effect, these postulates through peace education, can contribute perhaps with unprecedented results, towards building a truly peaceful society.

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