



## ROLE OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY IN PEACE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

Under the present predicament there is a growing realization in the world of education today that, children should be educated in the art of peaceful living. As a result more and more peace concepts, attitudes, values and behavioral skills are being integrated into school curricula in India.

The researchers had made an effort to highlight the renewed interest to develop peace education in this paper and had made an extended effort to centralize the role of Christian philosophy, being one of the Indian philosophies in peace education. In the process of education the onus lies on the educator or the teacher to spread the message or need of peace even while imparting education among students, who originally come from different religion and sects which have their own philosophies. Hence, a harmonious construction of teaching pattern is a crucial part in wake of numerous philosophies being present. It is important that a teacher should know all the philosophies before imparting peace education as a subject.

Educator must necessarily bring about all the aspect of what is defined as peace in various philosophies and then collectively focus on peace education along with highlighting the same in different philosophies. Hence, the researcher felt the need to pinpoint one of the philosophies i.e Christian philosophy and its role in peace education.

### Introduction

All over the world, a great deal of emphasis is currently being placed upon peace education, as the quest for peace necessitates extensive knowledge and unfailing assiduity. The widespread interest in preparing individuals for peace on earth makes us resort to the teaching-learning process. The inevitability of this emphasis upon education for peace has arisen not only from the need to educate the public opinion of the scourges of war, its prodigality or the danger of total annihilation etc, but also from the necessity to promote understanding, acceptance and friendship among all people and nations and to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Learning to make a living is not the sole reason for getting education; there is another, equally important byproduct: learning to make a life, a life that is beneficial, useful and peaceful. After all, humans are social animals; their success in life is largely a matter of successful social relations. Quite evidently, student age is the crucially important period which enriches

one's personal life, nurtures social adjustments, fosters friendship and understanding and affects one's whole life pattern. Seen from this perspective, one could very well understand the critical necessity of teaching students, youth and young leaders the art of living together, in mutual respect, justice, love and peace. We need to instill in them a genuine appreciation of and a profound liking towards our humanitarian traditions and values such as non-violence, tolerance, understanding, co-operation and peace.

### **Few types of Peace Education identified**

Peace education covers a wide territory and has many subsidiaries. Okamoto argues that disarmament education, international education, development education and the like can by broad definition, be included as programs in peace education. The contents denominated by the various titles like world order education, global education, education for international understanding, education for justice, ecological education etc., have been categorized into four types of peace education. The first sees peace education as criticism of war. The basic view here is that peace is the absence of war (negative peace). Content of this type includes teaching concerning the legacy of war experience, a scientific explanation of the causes of war and conditions of peace, the promotion of international understanding as a preventive to war, etc. The second type considers peace education as liberation. Here, a new concept of peace, positive peace (which is defined as that social condition characterized by economic independence, a stable order, social justice, human rights and welfare) is presupposed. Liberation from poverty, ignorance, discrimination and oppression etc. is seen as the objective goal for peace education here. The third type regards peace education as a learning process. In this type, peace education is grasped as a learning process towards inter-personal maturity on the basis of the unity between theory and practice on the one hand and a critical understanding of history and society on the other. The fourth type holds peace education as life-style movements: it rests upon the realization that warfare and war preparations are intimately tied to the fact that the over-production and extravagance of the nations at the center have been gained at the expense of the wealth and development of nations at the periphery. Here, we can refer to a standard of values emphasizing a simple life, human scale, self-determination, ecological awareness and personal growth.

### **Christian Philosophy on Peace**

Many people wonder what the Bible has to say about peace. Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Peace is also a natural byproduct of being in harmony with God. When we follow God's laws, we experience peace. God blesses the peacemakers and encourages us to be at peace with one another. A common claim made by many atheists is that religion causes evil, suffering,

division and war. For example, at the Munk Debate in Toronto, Christopher Hitchens argued this very point against Tony Blair. Religion, Hitchens claimed, causes sectarianism, division, strife, disagreement, war, poverty and a host of societal evils. In his best-selling book, *God is Not Great*, Hitchens even wrote that “religion poisons everything”.

How might a Christian respond? Well, I'd differ with Hitchens' argument and would think if I could remove the word “religion” from his statement “religion poisons everything” and replace it with many other words. Politics, for example. Politics causes division, bloodshed, argument, and war. Politics poisons everything. Or what about money? Money causes crime, resentment, bloodshed, division and poverty. Money poisons everything.

We see the problem is that those like Christopher Hitchens have built their worldview on the idea that human beings are essentially good and that the world is getting better a kind of naïve utopianism. But the world isn't like that. Rather it seems to be the case that whatever human beings lay hold off, they use to cause damage. That applies to money, politics, government, science and religion. The problem is not with religion or politics, the problem is not *out there* somewhere, the problem lies in *us*. In the human heart. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian novelist and political commentator who survived the Russian gulags and wrote with amazing insight into the human condition, once famously put it: “The dividing line between good and evil runs right through the middle of every human heart”.

What the world needs, as an answer to violence and injustice, poverty and pain, is not a clever philosophy, not a religious system, not a new polity, not more money, more education none will fundamentally change anything. Rather it needs individual transformation, a radical transformation of the human heart. Only Jesus Christ offers that possibility if we're willing to surrender our lives to Him.

The researchers often find it interesting to point out to an atheist friend that Jesus himself was also anti-religion. He regularly clashed with the religious leaders of his day, the Pharisees, because he saw empty religion as powerless, damaging and enslaving. Ultimately that stance led to his crucifixion. And Christians, of course, cannot talk about suffering and evil, pain and violence, *without* talking about the example of Jesus, one to whom violence was done. His example has inspired millions if not billions of Christians to give sacrificially, love their neighbour, to engage in peace making. One of the most powerful recent examples was the

Amish School Shooting in 2006. Not only did the families of the victims publicly forgive the perpetrator and offer pastoral support to his family but set up a trust fund to help the wife of the shooter, who'd killed himself too. Only Jesus Christ offers the transformative power that makes that kind of choice possible. Mentioned below are the references as to how Bible Identifies peace, what are the Features, the Considerations, the Benefits and the Significance.

### Identification

- Peace is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The Bible defines the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, Peace is one of the "fruits" or results of being in a relationship with God.

### Features

- The Bible tells us that peace is a fruit of righteousness and that the effect of righteousness is "quietness and confidence forever" (Isaiah 32:17). Righteous is another way of being in harmony with God. So, being in harmony with God and loving God's law brings about great peace (Psalm 119:165). Peace is also a result of wisdom which is also defined as following God's laws (Proverbs 3).

### Considerations

- The Bible says that peace comes from God. God is the One who blesses His people with peace (Psalm 29:11). For God to bless us with peace, we must follow His commands. In Isaiah 48:18, the Bible says, "If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea." Choosing not to follow God's commands results in the absence of peace.

### Benefits

- The Bible says that God blesses the peacemakers. According to Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Proverbs 12:20 tells us that there is "joy for those who promote peace." Psalm 34:14 advises us to "seek peace and pursue it." God wants us to "live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16; I Peter 3:8), which results in being peaceful with one another. "God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (I Corinthians 14:33).

### Significance

- Nothing can remove God's peace from us. God says in Isaiah 54:10 that "though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet My unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor My covenant of peace be removed." Peace grows as we trust in God (Romans 15:13). When we are anxious, the Bible tells us to give thanks to God and pray. Then the "peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7) Further the researcher makes an

effort to bring out few principles or the commands which God has given so that people might live in peace. The below mentioned are few of the most important teachings which the teacher can impart while explaining as to how Christian philosophy isn't based on what human does but completely depends on how humans give the position to God so that they are transformed into better humans for living in peace.

### **Is Conflict Inevitable?**

Genesis 3:15; "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed."? Jesus himself saw the inevitability of conflict.

Does God intend wars and destruction? Is there no place for reconciliation and no hope of peace? The Old Testament clearly shows evidence of a developing awareness of the kind of person God is. But that growing awareness never loses sight of the failure of mankind to do God's will. These basic truths are clear throughout the Bible. People were made by God for God. That means that they were made to enjoy the love and peace of God, which cannot fully be experienced in conflict. But conflict is a reality; mankind has failed to live up to its high destiny, and people find themselves in opposition to God and to their fellows.

Conflict, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. Just as pain encourages us to keep clear of fire or the sharp edge of a knife, so conflict can force us to face up to genuine differences, and can creatively lead us to learn more of God's will. But when communication breaks down and conflict leads to coercion, then it can be harmful. Thus when there is conflict there is always a need to search for a solution. But is it realistic to expect to be able to resolve conflicts? Does the *inevitability* of conflict mean that reconciliation is impossible? Instinctively we say, "No? That cannot be". But are there any Biblical grounds for that instinct? Jesus made the purpose of the Incarnation plain in his memorable words: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10: 10). Abundant life, fullness of life (wholeness Shalom) implies harmony and togetherness, not bitterness and enmity. Paul (the Apostle) suggests that whatever may be our present differences, God's plan is working towards the disappearance of all that goes with division; if God's plan is for full abundant life for His children, and if everything is moving towards the great fulfillment then there must be a place for reconciliation in that plan.

### **Reconciliation is an Act of God**

So reconciliation in Biblical teaching is an act of God, it is pertinent to note that reconciliation is very important for to bring peace. We are called to witness to that act-: we are to be engaged in "the ministry of reconciliation". But a question remains. If you are reconciled to God and I am reconciled to God, what should be the relationship between you and me? Life is too important and the Bible is too practical for us to ignore that issue. Jesus has reminded us that

entry into the Kingdom will depend on how we do the will of God. There is abundant New Testament evidence to prove that God's will entails having the Spirit of Christ towards our friends, our neighbours and our enemies (Matthew 5:44). In particular we read in 1 John 4:20 that "If any one says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar. In other words, if I am at odds with my brother or sister, I am being challenged to get my relationship with God right.

#### **Reconciled in Christ**

However, it would be easy to come to superficial conclusions. These passages call for closer scrutiny, the researchers are not at this stage writing about reconciliation generally. We are trying to say that reconciliation between people is possible when they have been reconciled to God through the Cross. As we come nearer to Christ, we come nearer to one another. And yet there is the other side of this coin - that if we do not draw closer to each other, we estrange ourselves from God also. (1 John 4:20)

#### **Reconciliation between Persons**

We have looked at the Biblical meanings and usages of the words 'reconcile' and 'reconciliation'. With two exceptions they refer to the activity of God. The two exceptions are 1 Corinthians 7 : 10-11: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) " and Matthew 5:24: "...first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift." These two passages clearly refer to relationships between people as such and not, in the first instance, between people and God. So then do they throw any light on Biblical teaching about reconciliation in the modern sense? The general thrust of the word 'reconcile' is clear enough. The Oxford Concise Dictionary has it as follows: "Reconcile: 1. make friendly after estrangement (persons one to another, person to or with another, person to oneself; heal, settle quarrel, etc)".

The two passages quoted above may seem to be the only ones in which reconciliation as such between people is mentioned. But there are others which demand attention. 2 Corinthians 5:17 makes it clear that "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ....". And Jesus himself emphasized that Christian discipleship involves more than profession of faith: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). For the Christian, doing the will of God is "a must", not an optional extra. To know the whole of God's will is beyond all of us; but some of it is clear. The gospels leave us in no doubt what our attitude should be to other people with whom we may not be in agreement. Christian duty is made clear in the New Testament with regard to establishing right relationships with others. Christians are to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) Christians are to love and pray for their enemies (Matthew 5:44). In order to create right relationships they are to do the most unlikely and unexpected things: to turn the other cheek (which Gandhi adopted without quoting Bible), to give away property rather than face a law case, to go 'the

second mile' (Matthew 5: 39-41). Some years ago, Lord Soper gave a contemporary example of doing the unexpected when he said that the first thing he would do if the Russians came marching through London would be to offer them a cup of tea. For a Christian, reconciliation and relationships with other people go hand in hand. This can never be a matter simply of shaking hands or verbal pleasantries. It is more than just saying 'sorry'.

### **Reconciliation between Communities**

Has the Bible anything to say about community or group reconciliation in situations where divisions, suspicions and hatred are caused by real or imagined grievances? The well-being of any nation depends on the quality of life it provides for all its people. Proverbs 14:34 sums all up: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people". It is crystal clear that relationship with God means right action and fair dealing in relationships between people. If an employer is unjust to his employee, relations between them cannot be fully right. Similarly, if basic justice is denied by a group to a minority or minorities, or, indeed, if a minority ignores the rights of the majority, right relationships between the groups that make up that nation or community become impossible. Irrespective of how willing the aggrieved party may be, it is impossible if the dominant party still has it in its heart to dominate. Conversely no matter how much the party in power may wish or seem to wish for better relationships, these will be impossible if the aggrieved party is *still* aggrieved or *feels* aggrieved. Before meaningful reconciliation can take place, there must be the willingness of all parties, but particularly the dominant one, to seek righteousness and justice.

Biblical teaching may not, indeed does not, set down detailed guide-lines about how precisely to achieve a reconciled community. It has however a great deal to say about. The conditions in which a reconciled community may become possible. There are certain truths to keep in mind. They are, to sum up: (1) The majority or dominant power or party has an obligation to provide justice (Amos 5). (2) The aggrieved party has an obligation to give Caesar his lawful due (Matthew 22), although this does not prevent him seeking for another kind of society, provided he does so with due regard to God and man (3) There is no satisfying future for a divided community (Matthew 12:25)

On seeing this guide a teacher might wonder 'Is it really necessary to teach peace as such? Whole education is for peace. Isn't it already in the curriculum?' She may be right in a sense. But the questions remain: Are we giving adequate attention today to teach peace? Are our schools really interested in producing a peaceful young generation? Is it enough having mere peace concepts in the curriculum?

### **Development of Peace Education**

In tracing the recent development of peace education, we begin to see that in the past it had been an integral part of education at all times and in all cultures. Every culture regards peace as a



noble ideal to attain. Peace education is more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values. It should also be globally relevant.

Through applying peace education and creating a peace culture, it has been observed that Educational Institutions can have the following benefits -

### **Educational Institutions can**

- Develop a more humanistic management approach based on the philosophy.
- Improve human relations between teacher-student, teacher-teacher, student-student, etc.
- Help develop good attitudes in students and teachers as well, e.g. co-operation, mutual respect.
- Help healthy emotional development in students.
- Facilitate socialization through participation in interactive and co-operative learning activities.
- Improve students' discipline and moral behaviour.
- Develop creativity both in students and teachers.
- Improve standard of quality of teaching and learning.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This paper describes that peace education is the need of today's educational system. Though it seems to be a recent development, it has been evolving even before the 20th century. No education system is complete without some form of component similar to peace education. It may take such forms as moral, value or citizenship, democratic or global education. The differentiating feature of peace education is the focus it has on the problem of human violence to which Christian philosophy provided a better approach. In short, the role of Christian philosophy in peace education can be defined as an educational response to the problem of human violence. It has the following basic features: It aims at protecting children's minds from being imbued by violence in the society. It prepares them for building a peaceful world by empowering them with necessary Values, Commitments, Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills that are to be developed. It humanizes the child, teaching and learning, and even the educational institute. Schools can directly benefit by adopting Christian philosophy in peace education. There is ample evidence to show that it improves the quality of teaching and learning, discipline, and helps emotional development in children.

### **Things To Do**

1. Identify and discuss the positive and negative impacts that globalization has on your society. What measures need to be taken to curtail them? What changes should be brought into education to face the present challenges?
2. What positive and negative comments do you hear from teachers and parents about the present adolescents?
3. 'The child is the promise of mankind.' Keep realizing this kindness.