



WAYS TO PEACE

A Resource Book for Teachers

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND
FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION**

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING
Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016

'There are those who give little of the much which they have and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts un-wholesome.'

'And there are those who have little and give it all.'

'There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward.'

'And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue.'

'It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;'

'You often say, "I would give, but only to the deserving" -

The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture -

They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish.

'See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving'.

— KHALIL GIBRAN



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DAYA PANT
SUSHMA GULATI

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FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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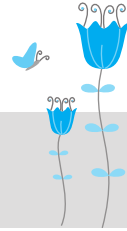
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The Context



Peace makes the task of education easier, but does education promote peace? Some of the difficult problems the world is facing today are linked to education in one way or another. Both at the level of inter-personal and international relations, the role of institutionalised education in the context of peace is highly debatable. We notice in everyday life that success in education is associated with competition among children, among schools and even among nations. Perhaps a mild form of competition can bring about the encouragement to excel, but intense competitiveness can only sharpen isolated egos and push them towards suspicion and frequent clashes. A highly competitive environment also causes stress on those who live in it. This is the kind of environment that we see in our schools today. Children seem to be continuously charged up, and every child is under pressure to leave everybody else behind. This kind of success socialises children from the earliest primary classes to pursue self-interest as the only goal of hard work. The idea of common interest fades away, and the stage is then set for the search for competitive advantage on a large scale, ultimately creating a global situation in which every nation feels constantly insecure that they may be left behind by others or attacked and destroyed.

To establish peace as a necessary condition for reforming education, we need to reflect on the aims of education. If our purpose is to train a reflective mind, such an aim will become difficult to achieve if there is tension in the classroom ethos and the relationship between the teacher and students. Tension can take several different forms and it need not be visible. Many children and youth today live in a sensationalised atmosphere.

Teachers are unable to calm them down, and quite often teachers themselves start behaving in a charged up manner.

Many eminent philosophers have linked some of these problems to poorly designed education. J. Krishnamurthy puts it rather dramatically when he says that modern education poses the single biggest threat to world peace. Apparently, he is referring to the loss of sensitivity and awareness of common interests that the highly competitive ethos of educational institutions often causes and reinforces. Many practices and characteristics of the life-style associated with progress in modern societies are based on values which pose serious challenges to peace. Consumption of resources covers a range of such practices. A culture based on consumerism encourages indifference to others because consuming is ultimately a personal activity. The cycle of consumption does not stop at things and commodities: it extends to human relations and institutions as well. Education has become a part of this cycle and we can already witness its sale and purchase as a commodity. The economic value of education has gained dominance over every other value that it might have. The intense competitiveness we notice in our schools today has its origins in this narrow view of education. Teaching is essentially a relational activity in which an adult attempts to take children's perspective in order to work with them. Teachers are naturally vulnerable to the prevailing environment of competition and consumption, and quite often they themselves become agents of these tendencies. The capacity to introspect can give teacher a means to develop self-awareness. Self-awareness enriches our life and gives us the space necessary for reflecting on the world around us and to analyse the relationships underlying it. Living at a great speed, attending to the daily routine, we often miss the structure of relationships which shape the ethos of the institutions we work for. Negative forces and the factors of conflict and violence lurk in the invisible structure. They strike in moments when awareness is weak or exhausted. Once peace is broken, a cycle of conflict sets in and violence becomes a real possibility.

Teachers have a significant role in breaking this cycle wherever they can in the lives of children and in the ethos of the school. To do so, they need a range of skills and values which might encourage and equip them to intervene and play a positive role. Peace includes all such values and skills, as well as the attitude which denies any natural legitimacy or power to aggression and violence. In this sense, peace offers a comprehensive perspective which permits us to take a position when we are faced with aggressive behaviour and the values which underpin it. It is a perspective which helps us to notice continuity of life and protects us from assigning excessive emotional importance to events. Guided by such a perspective, a teacher can nourish the seeds of peace in children's mind.

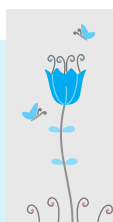
KRISHNA KUMAR

Former Director

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New Delhi



ABOUT THE BOOK

The book has its genesis in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, which stresses upon education for peace as one of the significant national and global concerns. The position paper on education for peace brought out by the Focus Group on Peace Education, as a part of NCF, has enunciated the importance of teacher training for promotion of peace at school level. In line with the recommendations included in the position paper, a curriculum on peace education for teachers' training was conceptualised, and a six-week course was designed. Accordingly, the training courses on peace education for teachers were organised by NCERT since 2005.

The NCF asserts that education must be able to promote values that foster peace, humaneness and tolerance in a multicultural society. The aims of education enunciated in the NCF, in line with the constitutional values include developing a commitment to democracy and the values of equality, justice, freedom and secularism, and concern for others well being. However, it is not by do's and don'ts that children can be oriented towards the values of peace; rather, its through enabling children to make choices and decisions about what is right and best for the common good, and promoting their ethical development that their capacity for value based decision making can be developed. Integrating these concerns underlying peace is building quality in the process of education.

Prominent Indian philosophers like Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and many others had placed a premium on the role of education in building peace and harmony, right from childhood. In line with the thinking prevailing in the cultural ethos, the Indian Constitution had laid down Fundamental Duties, Article 51 (A) wherein there is a directive for the promotion of harmony, cultural heritage and Nature and, abstaining from violence. Also, UNESCO has set out



its mission to preserve peace and develop universal principles and norms based on shared values in the context of the ongoing global challenges. The United Nations has declared 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the children of the World and designated UNESCO as the lead agency for orienting education to promote peace. Consequent upon these suggestions, a number of initiatives emerged in India and in other countries to promote peace education at the school level. International agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO have produced several materials and documents for integration of concerns related to tolerance, peace, human rights and democracy etc., in education. Resource materials have also been developed under the UNESCO's Associated Schools' projects in various countries. Within India too, there is no dearth of reading materials. Resource materials of various kinds are available. The information regarding books, reading materials and peace stories is available on the internet which can be accessed by anyone interested in furthering their quest for learning more in the different areas of peace education. But the need for specially designed materials for teachers, presenting peace in holistic and integrative perspective, is addressed in the book.

The contents of the book have been organised into six themes: peace concepts and concerns, understanding and dealing with conflicts, towards exploring and enabling the self, pedagogy for peace, peace perspectives in teaching-learning and taking peace education forward.

The first chapter describes the crucial issues underlying peace and its multifaceted nature. The dynamic and holistic understanding of interdependence among all living beings including nature has been explained along with our choices to enhance or destroy peace through our everyday actions and behaviour. The second chapter introduces the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills for conflict resolution; awareness of issues underlying conflicts and skills needed for conflict resolution that transform and empower. The third chapter towards exploring self/identity is aimed at enabling the self to develop its strengths and incorporate skills and strategies of becoming pro-active to develop the habit of looking within and



acquiring pro-peace values and attitudes. The fourth chapter incorporates content which explains the significance of reorienting pedagogy. The barriers to peace have been identified and ways of overcoming challenges and developing healthy relationships and classroom practices have been enumerated. Emphasis has been placed on modelling the requisite behaviour by teachers. The fifth chapter is aimed at enabling them to learn ways of integrating peace in school, the curriculum and in teacher-learning activities, in and out of the classroom. The sixth chapter has content on promoting peace by extending beyond and reaching out to others in the schools to supplement the role of parents and the community and to counter check the negative impact of the media.

The book has been specifically designed to help teachers to practice and promote peace. But teacher educators can also use it for training during pre-service teacher education. Besides educators, other professionals who are interested in the area of education for peace will also find it useful. The book is not meant for teachers of any specific stage like primary or secondary; it rather, is a repository of general principles and strategies, which teachers of all stages can adapt and use for their local situations and problems.

The book has been written in simple language, following the illustrative style, as far as possible. Examples, situations and anecdotes related to the day-to-day interactions and activities of school life make it meaningful and relevant to the real life experiences of teachers. Insights from researches and scholarly debates have provided the basis for developing the content, although enumeration of the theories itself has been avoided to make it more comprehensible and readable. The material is generally written in a self explanatory style, and examples emerge from real classroom situations.

Engaging with suggestions and activities given at the end of the book is likely to enable teachers to further add to their knowledge and understanding of concepts and their applications.



CAVEAT

The following points may be kept in mind while going through the book:

- *Peace education is a complex multi-dimensional concept. The material included must be read with the spirit of continuous reflection on issues of concern rather than hasty rejection if it does not fit into one's conceptualization or behavioural repertoire.*
- *Many a time you may find that strategies offered do not work out as described or outcomes are contrary to expectation. We suggest limited and gradual trials of skills and strategies, as these may work differently if tried out without proper insight and understanding.*
- *Lack of success repeatedly with some strategies is an indicator of the need to look back, reflect and review the different steps involved in implementation.*
- *The expression, 'peace teacher' has been used frequently in the book, it does not imply that peace teacher is different from others. Following the integrated approach to education for peace every teacher is a peace teacher.*
- *Reflective journal as a strategy to record and review efforts made towards building inner and outer peace is discussed in detail in the handbook. It is a technique which is strongly recommended to achieve success during your journey towards peace.*





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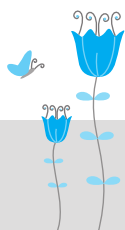


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Introduction

Consider the following story titled “Carpenter of Peace”. After the death of their father, two brothers fought over their ancestral wealth. They split apart and were so upset that they did not want to meet each other. To avoid seeing his brother even accidentally, the elder brother decided to erect a high wooden screen at the canal that ran between their lands. He called the family carpenter, who was a faithful friend to their deceased father, and entrusted the task to him. The carpenter began his work. But instead of erecting a high screen he, on his own, began to build a bridge over the canal. The younger brother noticed this and was overwhelmed at the thought that his brother still loved him enough (as he thought) to want a bridge between them. He rushed to his brother and embraced him with tearful eyes. Peace was restored between the estranged brothers.

Here we have a carpenter who served as a peace-builder. The points to note are:

- we need not be anyone special, – say a professional peace negotiator to be a maker of peace.
- in any given situation, there is scope for serving the cause of peace
- working for peace involves thinking differently from the logic that rules the situation of conflict.
- we do not have to pull off spectacular feats to make peace prevail; it suffices often to make simple but bold initiatives.
- the resources for building peace are available if only we are motivated to build peace and to use them for that purpose.

If a carpenter can be an agent for peace, surely we, the teachers, too, can be.

Comparatively, we are in a better position to build peace. A carpenter works primarily with material things whereas we work

with human beings; and that too, in the formative period of their life. Also, peace is the very purpose of education whereas this may not be as central to the work of a carpenter. Relationship is the essence of peace or peace is the fruit of relating to the given context in a caring and humane way. To educate is, literally, 'to bring up and to bring out'. This must happen all through the life of a human being. And that can happen only by relating to the world around us in a positive, constructive and creative way. The purpose of any relationship—whether between individuals, institutions, groups or societies—is to bring out the best in each other. For this to happen, the outlook, attitudes and goals of the persons concerned need to be truly 'educated'. Peace results from such educated relationships. The carpenter in the story was 'educated' enough to know that a bridge was more relevant to the given context than a screen.

Teachers have a crucial role in laying the foundation for peace. Unfortunately, this is often not recognised. Consequently, the enormous potential, resources and opportunities for peace-building through education go untapped. If the culture of peace in any society gets eroded, it denotes a failure on the part of education. It is the missed opportunities in education—like in the following story from Taiwan entitled "Not our Problem"—that snowball over a period of time into national anarchy.

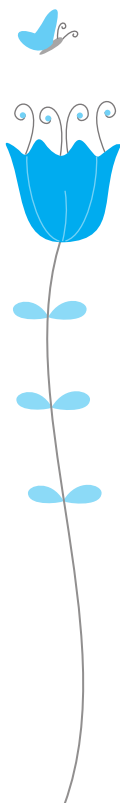
"NOT OUR PROBLEM"

The King sat with his Adviser eating honey on puffed rice. As they ate, they leaned from the palace window and watched the street below. They talked of this and that. The King, not paying attention to what he was doing, let a drop of honey fall onto the windowsill. "Oh sire, let me wipe that up," offered the Adviser.

"Never mind," said the King.

"It is not our problem. The servants will clean it later."

As the two continued to dine on their honey and puffed rice, the drop of honey slowly began to drip down the windowsill. At last it fell with a plop onto the street below. Soon, a fly landed on the drop of honey and began his own meal. Immediately, a gecko sprang from under the palace and with a flip of its long tongue swallowed the fly. But a cat had seen the gecko and pounced. Then a dog sprang forward and attacked the cat.



“Sir, there seems to be a cat and dog fight in the street. Should we call someone to stop it?”

“Never mind,” said the King. “It’s not our problem.” So, the two continued to munch their honey and puffed rice.

Meanwhile, the cat’s owner had arrived and was beating the dog. The dog’s owner ran up and began to beat the cat. Soon, the two were beating each other.

“Sir, there are two persons fighting in the street now. Shouldn’t we send someone to break this up?”

The King lazily looked from the window and said, “Never mind. It’s not our problem.”

The friends of the cat’s owner gathered and began to cheer him on. The friends of the dog’s owner began to cheer her on as well. Soon, both groups entered the fight and attacked each other.

“Sir, a number of people are fighting in the street now. Perhaps we should call someone to break this up.”

The King was too lazy even to look. You can guess what he said—“Never mind. It’s not our problem.”

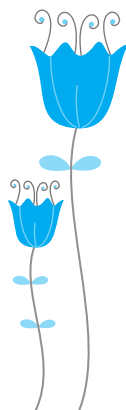
Now, soldiers arrived on the scene. At first, they tried to break up the fighting. But when they heard the cause of the fight, some sided with the cat’s owner. Others sided with the dog’s owner. Soon, the soldiers, too, had joined the fight.

With the soldiers involved, the fight erupted into civil war. Houses were burnt down.

People were harmed. And the palace itself was set afire and burnt to the ground. The King and his Adviser stood surveying the ruins.

“Perhaps,” said the King, “I was wrong! Perhaps the drop of honey WAS our problem.” The story holds at least three important insights for us.

- A small issue, when neglected, can snowball over time into a big mess.
- Each one of us has the power to avert the mess, if we act, and act in time. We have the power to make a difference for the better, if only we care.
- If we don’t do what we can, gradually the situation spirals out of control, and we become victims by default.



In the story, a huge crisis develops on account of 'a drop of honey'. Note the irony in the title of the story, "It's not our problem!" The King was right in one sense. The drop of honey, as such, is not the problem. The problem is the attitude, "Never mind. It's not our problem." The assumption, sadly quite widespread, that "it is not our problem" is the worst problem!

In contrast, consider the story of the hummingbird.

One day, an elephant saw a hummingbird lying flat on its back on the ground. The bird's tiny feet were raised up into the air.

Elephant: "What on earth are you doing, hummingbird?"

Hummingbird: "I have heard that the sky might fall today. If that should happen, I am ready to do my bit in holding it up."

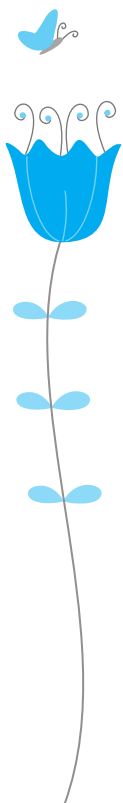
Elephant (laughing): "Do you think those tiny feet could hold up the sky?"

Hummingbird: "No, not alone. But each must do what she can. And this is all I can."

Like the hummingbird, *we too must do what we can*. Why should we, as teachers, promote a culture of peace through education? The answer to this must be sought at three levels: (a) the life of the individual, (b) the health of the family, and (c) the vitality of a society.

(a) **Individual:** Even if we attain a great deal of knowledge, we could turn out to be a failure in life if we cannot live peacefully with others. We may come to own a mansion but living in it will be miserable if we are conflict-oriented.

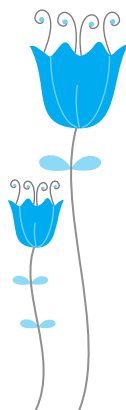
Peace determines the quality of life. Freedom shrinks in peacelessness. With respect to those we are "not on talking terms with", we have no freedom at all. We are not free to express what is good and noble in us, which we need to. Nor are we free to see what is good and right in them. Unless our personality is oriented towards peace, we could find ourselves always and everywhere in unhappy relationships and situations. This ruins the joy of our life and wastes our potential. Peace is basic to the total development of a human being. The mark of a peace-oriented person is that even in situations of tension, she is able to stay focused on what is positive and creative, and to make the best of the given situation. By doing so, she acts as a catalyst for



improvement. Like the carpenter in the story, she will be able to see opportunities to change the given situation for the better.

- (b) **Family:** One of the most worrisome problems today is the ‘wasting of the family’. A sense of belonging, emotional security and fulfillment and the joy of togetherness are all diminishing. Relationships are proving unstable. Even the parent-child relationship is becoming joyless. Domestic violence is increasing. For many people, even though the material means for living have increased and improved, the quality of life has deteriorated. Home, which could be a garden of peace and security, is becoming a zone of conflict and anxiety. Education, as understood and practised today, has not helped improve the situation. If anything, given the spirit of competition and the worship of success in education, the more educated a person the greater the possibility of his having paucity of time to maintain caring and affectionate relationships at home.
- (c) **Society:** Only in a state of peace can the members of a society grow and attain fulfillment. Societal peace results mainly from three sources:
- The peace orientation of individuals revealed through healthy inter-personal relationships.
 - Commitment to justice, which, in practice, means the availability of opportunities for development and fulfillment to all members.
 - Systems and structures that are just and equitable, and the eradication of all elements of prejudice, discrimination, corruption and ideologies of violence.

Together, they comprise a culture of peace, of which the shaping dictum is, “Do to others what you would have others do to you.” Life works on what is called the “echo-principle.” Life returns to us what we put into it. If we sow seeds of peace, we will harvest its benefits. And, we can have only what we give to others or, it is by giving that we receive. We cannot be at peace if we are not committed to the peace of others. Informed commitment to the health and wholeness of society, especially a keenness to build peace is the hallmark of an educated person. And, if this does not seem to be



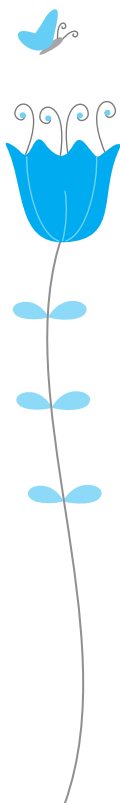
the case today, it is because education has wavered from its basic purpose. As teachers, we are neglecting the larger goals of education. This has, among other things, undermined the spirit and stature of the teaching vocation. A school or college is not a factory outlet of knowledge. It is a nursery of peace where the foundation is laid for the culture of peace. Teachers are the foster parents of peace in any given society.

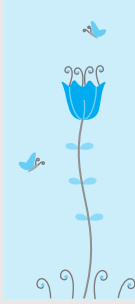
So, we have a choice. We can either be true teachers or we can teach only to earn a livelihood. In the former case, teaching becomes a privilege and an ever increasing means for personal growth, self-worth, relevance and fulfillment. It keeps teaching creative, and the student-teacher relationship, one of nobility and far-sightedness. Salaries cannot measure the true worth of the work that such a teacher does, and no society can be grateful enough for the service rendered by such a teacher. The scope of such work does go far beyond the confines of the given classroom. An inspired, visionary teacher is a national asset! Every teacher has the opportunity to be so, and this handbook shows us how.

From every relevant angle, it is clear that the time is now ripe and ready for a concerted and creative push for peace. It is best undertaken by the teachers of India.

Remember the words of the hummingbird.

“EACH MUST DO WHAT SHE CAN.”



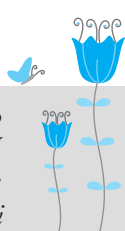


Peace Concepts and Concerns

1

- **KNOWING PEACE**
- **CHOOSING PEACE**
- **SOME FACTS ABOUT PEACE**
 - Peace is Basic to Work
 - Peace is Dynamic and Holistic
 - Peace is Context Specific
- **BUILDING BLOCKS OF PEACE**
- **PEACE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS**
 - Individual
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This section is presented with a view to broadening the notions of peace and peace education, and thinking of peace as a dynamic and comprehensive concept. The issues and concerns underlying peace have to be understood. Awareness and understanding of the relevant issues related to peace will only lead to effective action. The issues of peace appear to be distant and outward and consequently the responsibility of someone else. Understanding our own role and responsibility leads to generation of solutions, which appear within reach. Peace as a chosen course of action can help promote harmony with oneself and with others. This section also puts forward the prerequisites and principles underlying peace and discusses the importance and interdependence of peace at different levels.



**Each one has to find his peace from within,
and peace to be real must be unaffected by
outside circumstances.**

—*Mahatma Gandhi*

Everyone wants to live in peace but not everyone knows how to make it possible. In fact, a great deal is said and done, knowingly and unknowingly, which tends to undermine peace in our day-to-day lives. This happens because we take peace for granted or we wait for peace to happen, and also because we do not really know what it means to be in peace. As teachers, what we need is not a theoretical but a practical understanding of what peace means. As teachers, we have a two-fold task—know peace and make peace.

KNOWING PEACE

The concerns and contexts of peace are wide ranging. Peace encompasses every aspect of human existence. It is, therefore, important for us to understand peace from multiple perspectives. There is no single way to understand it. Peace is multifaceted and involves many dimensions.

It is generally understood as absence of war whereas, it is more than just absence of war and physical violence. If people are not at war, it does not mean that they are peaceful. Even without being at war, death and destruction due to hatred, hunger and disease cannot be ruled out. Humiliation and hurt, too, cause pain, no less than physical violence. If all these conditions are prevalent, peace cannot exist.

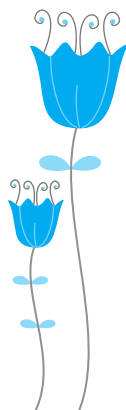
The common thinking about peace is focusing on one's own peace of mind to the neglect of the peace around us. But this is too simplistic, and a limited understanding of peace, which involves not only living in harmony with oneself but also with others, including Nature. In fact, peace cannot happen otherwise. It is true that peace begins with individuals who are calm within.

So, one can begin understanding peace from 'the peace within self' perspective. There is the very famous preamble of UNESCO's

Constitution which mentions – “*Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defenses of peace must be created.*”

One way to understand peace is to understand the meaning from the perspective – ‘*peace with self*’, which signifies inner peace, which is about feelings of contentment. Peace could be understood as a state of mind when pressures are absent and our mind is at ease. It is, however, not a passive and static but a dynamic and powerful state, which needs to be attained and sustained. In order to be at peace with yourself, it is important to develop the inner strength to stay calm. A genuinely peace-oriented person can be at peace even in the midst of a storm, conflict, dissent or deprivation. The source of inner calm lies in the positive *attitudes, beliefs* and *skills* of dealing with the conflicts and issues, which generate reassurance. We shall discuss these aspects in the following chapters.

Another way to look at the concept of peace is ‘*peace with others*’. All individuals have the basic need to live together in harmony. When this is thwarted, tensions and conflicts arise, disrupting peace. Hence, inner peace cannot be imagined without peace with the family, on the job or in social circles. ‘Peace within’ is dependent on peace outside; it could be in the immediate surroundings within society or outside the country. For example, if there have been terrorist attacks and several people are killed, it does disturb us. If there is a shortage of water, rising prices or violence, these leave us disturbed. Not only in immediate surroundings, but disturbances and tensions in other parts of the country also affect us in several ways. When oil producing countries are at war, we are worried as it influences prices of oil and other commodities. On the other hand, when people are productive and inter-relationships are harmonious, overall progress of society-social as well economic, is assured. Interdependence across different spheres of existence can be understood from the example of cold war which divided the world for a long time and kept a large amount of money locked in wars and military weapons, thereby diverting finances away from education, health, infrastructure development and welfare. The social conditions prevailing in a society affect its economic well-being and prosperity. We may not be able to handle larger issues individually but it is important to understand our respective roles in contributing to such issues.



Thus, peace with the self or inner peace is a pre-condition for harmony with others but it should not be misunderstood as a state of 'self-centred apathy or 'willful blindness' to others. The basic premise in understanding peace is that all of us, individually as well as collectively, contribute to peace. Therefore, it is important to

The Farmer and the Angel

There was once a very kind, helpful and joyful old farmer. He worked very hard. One day, because of his goodness, he was visited by an angel who granted him a wish. The angel said that anything he wanted would be his. The farmer could have wished for any of the comforts or luxuries but instead he said "I am happy with the bounty of food upon my plate and the love that surrounds me daily but before I die I should like just once to see heaven and hell."

The angel told him to take hold of her cloak, and in an instant, they arrived at the gates of hell. To the surprise of the good man, when he passed through the gates, he found himself on the edge of a beautiful open green surrounded by tall graceful pine trees. He saw many people seated around a great long table that was heaped high with the most magnificent and delicious foods the man had ever seen. Yet, as he drew near he saw that the people looked sickly and thin, as if they were wasting away from starvation. Then, he noticed that the people's arms were locked straight so that they could not bend them. It was impossible for these people to feed themselves. "Ah," the man sighed, "this is truly hell." Then, they arrived at the gates of heaven. Here, too, the good man found himself on the edge of a beautiful open green surrounded by tall majestic pine trees. He saw many people seated around a great long table that was heaped high with the most wonderful and delicious foods. As he drew near, the man saw that the people's arms were locked straight so they could not be bent. Yet these people were smiling and laughing. Their eyes danced with a merry delight and their stomachs seemed joyfully content. How was this possible? The good man looked closer and he saw: the people of heaven were feeding each other! "Yes", smiled the good man with a knowing nod of his head, "This..., this is truly heaven."



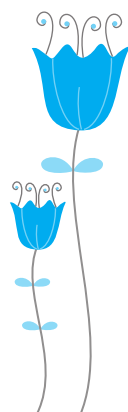
care not only for our own well-being but to also maintain healthy relationships within families, in the neighbourhood and on the job. If peace, on one hand, is about maintaining inner peace, it, on the other hand, is the art of building and sustaining healthy relationships. The story of the farmer and the angel given in the box serves as a good example in this case.

A practical question that is raised is that we are not at peace because others in society or in the system do not let us be at peace. But does that mean that we are totally dependent on the choice of others? That is, if others reject peace, do we have to be peaceless too? It is important to remember that a peace-oriented person can be at peace even in the midst of a storm. That, however, does not mean that the storm will not blow away the roof of his/her house. That is why we have to mind the storm around us – and avert it, if possible, even as we develop the inner strength to stay calm. The point is—even if there is unrest, conflict and the absence of peace around, will we be “unpeaceful” all our lives? Some of you may agree that we need to do something at our own end. We need to deal with problems which disrupt peace, whether related to studies, job, home, family, spouse or children. But if one problem is solved, what after that? Do we become peaceful, and remain so? Probably, some other stresses take over! Does that mean that we will not be peaceful ever?

It is important to remember that peace is not what others give to you; it is what you choose for yourself.

CHOOSING PEACE

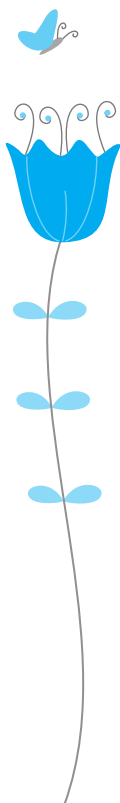
Choosing peace underlies the motivation and hope that we all share, that peace will reduce our internal discomfort or make us feel better. To be more simple, our underlying goal is a happier state of mind through our day-to-day acts. We eat because we know we do not like being hungry. We work hard to seek a promotion because it will make us happier. We may try to do a job well for the satisfaction that it brings. Some listen to music in order to feel at ease. Others seek solitude because they think it will give them peace of mind. People may help others because it gives them a sense of fulfillment. Whatever we do, we are seeking to increase our inner well-being.



Yet, we know in our hearts that none of these can bring peace forever. We all know people who have all the security and are still not at peace; or individuals who have recognition the world over but who have not found inner fulfillment, and those, who have control and power but who are still unhappy. What we so easily forget is that it is not security, recognition or control that we really want but peace of mind. The big question to ponder is that even if we do get what we want, will it really bring us peace of mind? If we do not get what we want, can we still have peace of mind? Answers to these questions require deeper reflection and understanding of our own inner worlds and a sense of what truly matters.

We can choose how we perceive and judge a given situation and hence, choose how we respond to it. If we see things as a threat, we will not be at peace. We could instead, see them as opportunities. This choice of perception is a choice we have at every moment of the day. The more we learn how to exercise this choice, the more we can become masters of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. And, we will be freer to respond peacefully to situations, and maintain inner calm and stability necessary for peace. The situations may be neutral by themselves but they take on significance when we try to match them with our expectations and mindsets as to how things should be. So, it is not just the external situation that is causing the pressure but the conflict between the situation and our judgement of it. The stressful negative reaction is something we create in ourselves. It is our perception of events rather than the events themselves which causes problem. Believing that the events themselves are responsible makes us feel like victims but in reality, we are ourselves responsible for our reactions. Viewing situations and events with a free mindset positively brings peace.

It is, therefore, more important to recognise and handle our inner dimensions – the attitudes, perceptions and values that lead us to respond in the ways we do. Rather than being tossed around by the seas of change, we can learn to ride them with greater inner calm. This stability will enable us to handle change in our lives. If we can remain calm within and become more open to ourselves, we will be able to think and act with greater clarity and creativity, and more humanely.



As long as we are caught in the illusion that we can manage change by managing the world around, we cannot attain peace. We are rather like the wise fool Nasrudin in the following Sufi tale:

A neighbour found Nasrudin down on his knees looking for something.

“What have you lost?”

“My key”, said Nasrudin.

The other man got down on his knees and began searching with him. After a few minutes, he asked,

“Where did you drop it?”

“In the house.”

“Then why, for heaven’s sake, are you looking for it here?”

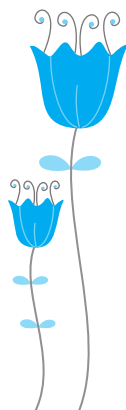
“There is more light here.”



This is more than just an amusing story. The key to peace lies within us, which for many of us, is dim and uncharted territory. We look for the answer outside where ‘there is more light’ rather than look inside.

The inclination for choosing peace also depends on the values we hold. If we enjoy conflicts and can be indifferent when we or others are in conflict, then, obviously we do not value the importance of having good relations, security and stability. However, if we are disturbed on finding out that this conflict will ultimately be harmful for the person concerned or for the surrounding environment, we will think of ways to mediate and help resolve the matter. In this case, we place value on integration and interconnectedness. Our choosing the course to peace will reflect our values and the way we perceive the world and people. Awareness of one’s values will help in monitoring and evaluating ourselves and looking into the change process.

As we all cherish peace, we need to make thoughtful choices that will help build peace within the self as well as around us. Choosing peace means knowing and making the efforts to identify all the available choices in the different areas of life, and consciously acting on those choices which are pro-peace. Further, the pro-peace choice takes care of not only our interests but also of others. Let us call this the “equilibrium of interests.” The underlying logic of peace is the ‘equilibrium between the self and the others’ or the ‘I-thou equilibrium,’ i.e. harmony between ‘getting and giving’. If we are



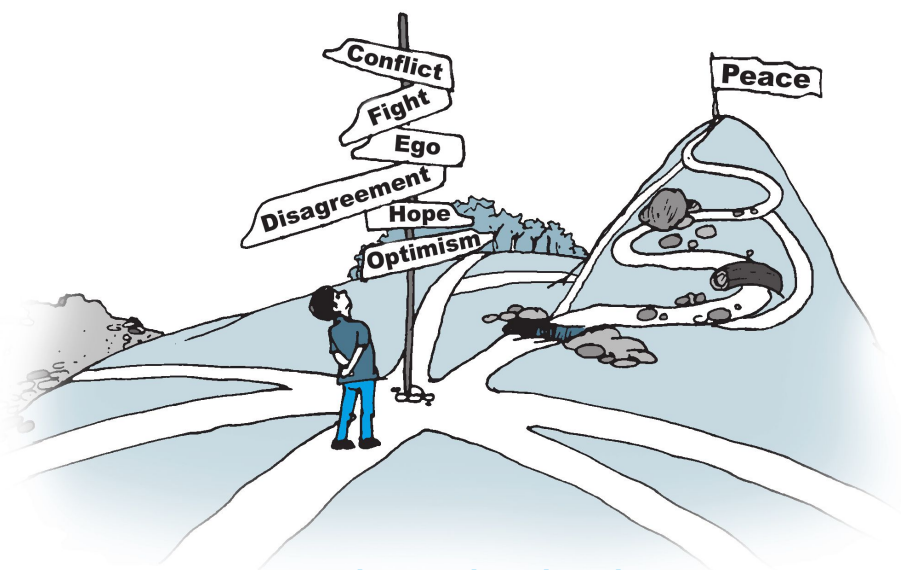


Fig.1 Choosing the right path

interested only in getting and are alien to the joy of giving, our peace orientation must be deemed doubtful. So, peace orientation at the individual level involves a shift from exclusive obsession with oneself to being mindful of others. A self-centred individual is stereotypical and narrow in her range of awareness and responsibilities. A peace-

Principal of Reciprocity

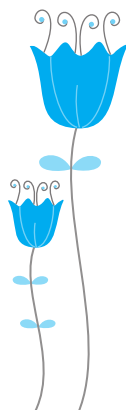
Finally, what it takes to be at peace is the art of building and sustaining healthy relationships. Relationships comprise the substance of life. They manifest the very logic of life: reciprocity. Unilateralism is the opposite of reciprocity. “Breathing, which sustains life, is an exercise in reciprocity: we take and we give out. When this is disrupted, death results. Reaffirming and validating reciprocity is a major strategy for peace. This needs to be done with greater urgency and focus than ever before as the spirit of ‘cut-throat’ competition spreads cynicism about the feasibility of reciprocity among children. It would be a great pity if, through education, we cripple the children’s capacity to relate justly and joyfully to others and to the world around them. Education should reinforce the culture of peace and not undermine its foundation. A peace-oriented teacher can improvise infinite ways for fostering in students the discipline of reciprocity. Given the current scenario, we need to develop the pedagogy of reciprocity.

oriented person can, on the other hand, see even trivial issues in a larger perspective, and reconcile seemingly conflicting interests. S/he will not mind limiting her individual interests, if need be, to promote larger good.

Choosing peace is about creative problem solving, carefully understanding the problem itself and its various dimensions, and adopting new ways of thinking, perceiving and handling situations. There is the usual tendency to want to get the problem out of the way. We do not often give enough time to explore the issues in-depth but seize the first possible solution. This implies rushing through and resorting to short cuts. Later on, we may find that the problem has still not been solved. It may further require analysing the pros and cons of the choices made, and visualising the consequences of one's decisions or actions. The process involves challenging old assumptions, mindsets and perceptions as well as the willingness to rethink our prior ideas, as Albert Einstein said, "no problem can be solved in the same consciousness that created it; we must learn to see the world anew." The creative solution of any issue or problem requires clarifying doubts, dialoguing, acknowledging and affirming others' perspectives, needs and problems, and then acting consistently in that direction. Continuous monitoring of one's own behaviour and the awareness of changes in our perceptions and ways of thinking helps us to respond to different issues, problems and conflicts, creatively.

Finally, choosing peace involves the question of life-style. At the individual level, it involves a shift from consumerism to simplicity, which is basic to peace. The secret of simplicity in life is a right sense of priorities. Life is more important than lifestyle. Who we are matters more than what we wear and what we eat. An expensive and wasteful lifestyle can gradually rob us of peace. Indulgent lifestyles inhibit our personal growth and sense of responsibility. Only those who maintain a disciplined lifestyle and grow professionally can inspire others. So, one of the most important aspects of peace orientation is that of being alert to one's life style and analysing whether it is conducive to peace or not.

Choosing peace involves being alert to the opportunities for promoting a culture of peace through the work that one does



daily. It involves being a peace advocate at the work place, as a whole. Peace advocacy is not just a matter of preaching peace but of maintaining peaceful and joyful relationships with all at the work place, practising a caring culture, and upholding values for peace; in short, living the peace advocacy.

SOME FACTS ABOUT PEACE

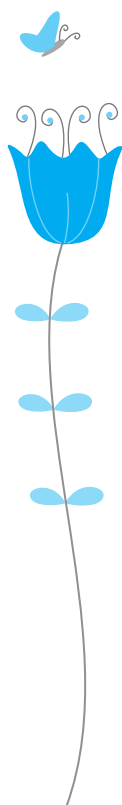
Peace is Basic to Work

We need to recognise that building peace is basic to work. No work is work unless it contributes to peace. It is an alarming sign of social ill health if work is made a medium for conflict, tension or unhappiness. Peace and work are inseparable. A barber cannot cut hair unless one sits still; a musician can't sing and a speaker can't speak if the audience is restive. Thus, peace is basic to the work we do as teachers.

Peace is Dynamic and Holistic

Peace results from consciousness when we are mindful of our actions and of their impact on ourselves and on others. All walks of life are affected by peace and vice-versa. In order to be peaceful, our own basic needs of various kinds have to be fulfilled. For example, it cannot be imagined without physical health and well being. It implies a positive attitude and desirable habits towards keeping oneself physically and mentally fit. Earlier, health used to mean the absence of disease but now it has taken on a more comprehensive meaning because the interrelationships between physical health and the other dimensions like mental, social and emotional well being are part of the true meaning of health, that is, holistic health.

Peace also depends on the external environment. Everyone at all times and in all places may not be able to maintain such a perfect state of peace within or outside. Yet, if we aspire to attain peace, we must voluntarily and continuously strive at the personal and social levels to maintain peace. We cannot claim to be peaceful within and with others all the time due to our needs, which are recurrent and changing. Our desires, needs and choices keep us wanting more and more, as some of these get fulfilled. Mindful awareness of what we really need and what can be dispensed with, is an essential pre-requisite



to the peace process. Hence, peace involves voluntary restraint of our desires, as well as, accommodation and acknowledgement of others' needs, views and aspirations. Peace is practising certain attitudes and values in life which provide restraint and inner strength, maintain healthy relationships with others. Practicing positivity and staying focused on developing one's own potential and contributing to the common good is a hallmark of peace.

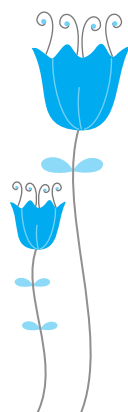
Peace is Context Specific

Concerns for peace vary with different contexts and situations. For people living in places like Iraq or Kashmir, peace is absence of war. For others, living in continuous fear of communal violence, peace is living in harmony or non-violence. For the people of Bundelkhand in India and of Somalia in Africa, it is getting food for survival. For still others, living with a scarcity of resources, peace is getting clean drinking water and electricity or getting employment or two square meals a day or not being exploited. For a teacher, concerns for peace are primarily related to managing over-crowded classrooms, maintaining discipline, finishing the syllabus in time, producing the best academic results, handling aggression, maintaining relationships with colleagues and fellow teachers and so on. It is indeed a challenge for teachers to build a healthy peaceful work culture, pre-empt conflicts and violence, and maintain harmony within and around. The following sections will open the doors to learn more about the nuances of peace building as basic to the work and profession of teachers. Only if they do so, will they fulfil the basic goal of education, that is, help our children build peace within themselves and with others around them.

The ideas provided here are representative rather than exhaustive. A teacher who is aware that promoting a culture of peace through education is basic to her profession will be alert to a whole range of opportunities - obvious and hidden - for addressing it in the curricular matrix. Only a peace-oriented teacher can innovate infinite ways for fostering peace-orientation in children.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF PEACE

Peace is like a seed. It sprouts, becomes a sapling, grows into a tree and spreads its branches all around, offering shelter and shade. Building

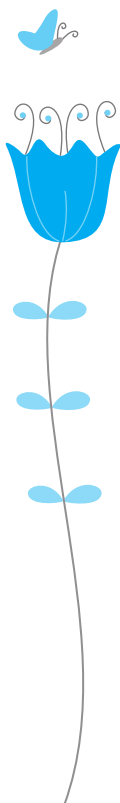


peace starts with the individual, moves on to the family and community, reorienting systems, structures and institutions, spreading throughout the land and, ultimately, embracing planet earth, as a whole.

Building peace is somewhat similar to building a house – brick by brick. The **individual** is the first building block of the mansion of peace. For an individual to be at peace, her survival needs – food, clothes and shelter – have to be met. The ‘basic’ needs of a human being include the need to grow and to develop. That is why education is recognised as a fundamental right worldwide. The education of all members of a society needs to be seen as a peace investment, provided it is education of the right kind. This is true also of the provisions to meet the individual’s need for security, dignity, identity and well-being. For a society to be at peace, its individual members need to be protected against violence, injustice, humiliation, oppression and discrimination. A human being is not merely a body but a holistic being. Her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs have to be satisfied to ensure harmonious development. Only a fully and holistically developed person can be a building block of peace.

The **family**, another building block plays a crucial role in the formation of an individual. A child nurtured in a conflict-ridden home is unlikely to be peace-oriented. Healthy relationships comprise the backbone of a stable and peaceful family. Such relationships stand on sound values and humane ideals. A child growing up in a home where violence is the preferred problem-solving strategy is unlikely to have faith in the way of peace or patience with strategies for conflict resolution. Home is the nursery for our humanity.

The **community** to which a person belongs to is the third block. It also plays an important role in the identity formation of an individual, and determines the level of security she enjoys. That being the case, it is easy to see that the relationship between an individual and her community is intimate. A besieged and insecure community could infect its members with a taste for, and faith in violence. Insecurity is an important factor in predisposing an individual towards violence. Corporate rights are included in our Constitution – minority rights being an example to minimise the insecurity of



communities and to promote a sense of belonging together. This is the investment that the nation makes to promote and stabilise peace. Individuals, on their part, have a duty to see through, and reject the attempts of self-seeking persons who infect their communities with a contrived insecurity in order to use the members of that community for vested interests. Individuals who acquiesce or collude with such people ruin peace, albeit unwittingly. Leaders of all communities are under obligation to the nation to restrain themselves accordingly.

Society is the fourth building block of peace. A society is an extended and variegated family. Diversities mark a society, as it consists of diverse individuals, families, interests and communities. This notwithstanding, every society has certain shared characteristics and ways that its members endorse, adopt and employ. That is why we talk of a violent society or a stable society or a consumerist society. A violent society may include several peace-loving individuals, but its over-all orientation is towards violence, which influences the collective decisions taken in it. There is a reciprocal relationship between an individual and the society in which she lives. Social mores are internalised during the process of growing up within a society, unaware. By and large, individuals are uncritical of the attitudes and social mores they imbibe in this fashion. To them, they seem 'natural.' We say, "A sound mind in a sound body." Equally, it is true to say, "a sound person in a sound society." The individuals, families, and communities that comprise a society have a duty to avoid the pursuits, advocacies, methods and goals that undermine peace. This is also a matter of 'inspired self-interest.' Only in a peaceful society can individuals, families and communities attain and enjoy security, belonging, development and fulfillment. The vested interests of no group should be allowed to disturb the harmony of a society.

The **country** is the largest building block of peace. The spotlight in this context falls squarely on politics and religion. Fostering the capacity to relate wholesomely is the essence of "Religion." The word 'religion' comes from a Latin word which means 'to relate.' In that sense, religion is a resource for peace. The disservice to peace that narrow religiosity does is to limit the loyalties and responsibilities of a person only to her religious community. This, in turn, promotes a negative, and at times hostile attitude to those outside of one's



community. “Politics” means literally “the art of living together in a city”. “Nation first” should be the slogan in politics. Communal politics, by which perverse religiosity is played is injurious to politics and religion alike. A country that allows itself to be overtaken by hate and negativity lets its energies be wasted. Peace is basic to progress and well-being. Nations at peace comprise the building blocks of global peace.

PEACE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

If there is light in the soul, there will be love in interpersonal relationships. If there is love in interpersonal relationships, there will be harmony at home. If there is harmony at home, there will be law and order in society. If there is law and order in society, there will be peace in the world.

—A Chinese Proverb

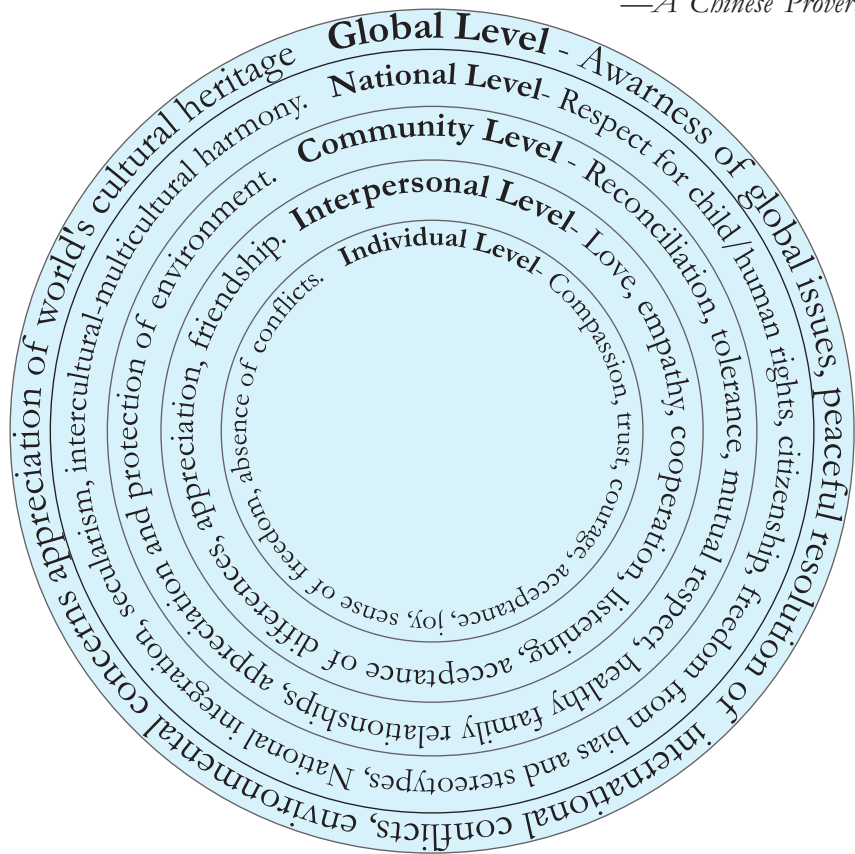
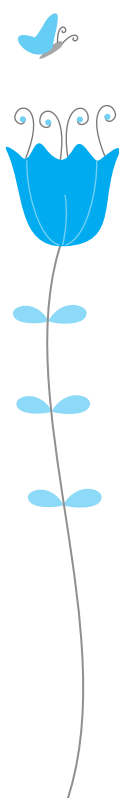


Fig.2 Levels of peace



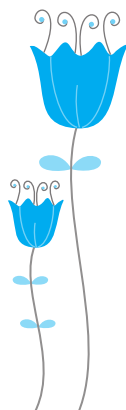
The harmony and love originate from one individual but it spreads out and influences interpersonal, community, national and even global level as has been elaborated in the above Chinese proverb.

Individual

A woman with all the curiosity and optimism in her heart to change the unjust world meets a sage and asks, "How can you be at peace when the world around you is full of hunger, poverty and injustice?" The sage smiles and responds, "If everything in the world were all right, no hunger, no poverty and no injustice, would you, my child, be at peace then?"

The scope of personal peace is vast. It encompasses the fulfillment of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of a person. The physical needs of a person wishing to live in peace are easy to list. These are the basic physical amenities without which a person cannot live with dignity; this includes physical safety or protection from physical violence. Absence of war, communal clashes, domestic violence and road accidents encompass the scope of physical safety. Apart from physical safety, fulfillment of material needs is also required such as food and clean drinking water for living, health care, shelter and clothing. To have these material instruments for living, one needs gainful employment, access to good education, vocational training and a viable health plan.

Though physiological needs like food, shelter and clothing are important for a person to live, and thus, an important component of fostering peace, human beings have other needs too, to feel at peace. These include good health, love, dignity, freedom from insecurities, feelings of joy, freedom to express oneself without fear and so on. Some of these needs have been recognised by the state and international community in the form of Fundamental Rights in India and Human Rights in the global community. When these wants and aspirations are not realised, people feel without peace. This lack of peace encourages violent behaviour such as irritation, frustration, anxiety, depression and anger, and may cause suicides, theft and even murder. All these reactions stem from isolation or alienation, or a lack of belonging. In order to remedy such a situation or avoid such violent reactions where one hurts oneself or another person, people need strong relationships with friends and family



who can support them. This support system is a source of emotional, psychological and societal anchoring for an individual and helps a person feel secure.

Interpersonal

Peace at the interpersonal level implies that there exists mutual love, trust and cooperation among members, which is based on respect and an acceptance of differences. The relationships are warm and friendly, and any difference of opinion is settled through dialogue.

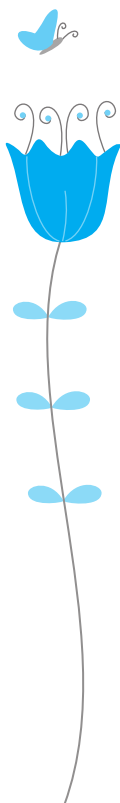
The process of initiating a discussion about a problem and listening patiently and carefully to one another to resolve a conflict is a key tool that needs to be learnt and promoted. In the technical language of peace building, such tools have been called dialogue and active listening.

The Battle for the Orange

There are two men who have one orange between them. Both of them want the orange for a particular purpose and start fighting with one another. They start calling each other names, blaming one another's upbringing, profession and social standing.

A wise old woman passes by. Noticing them fighting, she asks them to stop and tell her about the problem. The men tell her that both of them want the orange. She suggests a compromise. They refuse. The lady then asks them why they need the orange. The first man says he needs the orange to make juice out of its pulp. The second starts laughing and says, "why are we fighting because all I need is the peel to make a face mask for my wife?" They both shake hands and thank the lady for resolving the problem. The lady smiles and says, "But I did nothing except make you listen and talk to each other, my children."

This may look like a simplistic story but the same strategy could be applied when one thinks of inter-group conflicts. We refuse to listen to others whenever there is a conflict. In fact, we avoid all opportunities to talk. The lack of understanding, bias and empathy is what eventually makes us suspicious and fearful and pushes us to react negatively to people. A clash of aspirations and desires, and a threat perception is then born out of this sense of inclusion or exclusion, and can be best resolved through honest communication,



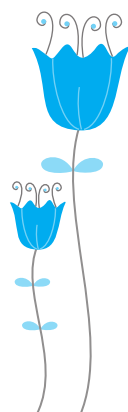
dialogue and active listening (*Both these concepts will be discussed in further detail in the up-coming chapters*). When one is interacting at an interpersonal level, one develops relationships which give us space to explore our limitations and foster better understanding, as we wish to maintain that relationship. The situation becomes more complex, however, when one enters a community or organisational space, as more factors and assumptions are added. We need to understand that processes of dialogues and mediations at the individual level differ from the social and group levels.

Community

A community is a group of individuals bound together due to some commonality – either by lineage, historicity, geography or intention. Peace at the community level refers to absence of not only violence and crime but also fair treatment of different groups by each other; healthy family relationships, and cleanliness and order in the neighbourhood. The interpersonal relationships within families, across families, in the neighbourhood and across different groups living together in interdependence are characterised by trust, warmth and caring for each other's needs and concerns.

Small communities such as a family or a large one such as a village, all have certain norms and rules that govern their interactions. These rules come with their set of power relations between the members of the community. The expansion or curbing of these powers often cause conflict within the community which may lead to violence.

All communities want to gain power to mobilise resources like land, water, electricity and infrastructure, and capture opportunities for advancement and success like education, training and jobs. The insecurity about resources is a major factor that predisposes people towards conflict and violence, which aims to wrestle out power to procure resources for its needs. However, needs may be real or perceived. In either case, whether the needs are legitimate or merely to gain power for pursuing vested interests, the conflict arising out of them have to be addressed. It is important for every individual to become aware of the broader picture underlying the conflict, the just needs and the vested interests of different groups. The choice to act with responsibility and to accommodate differences



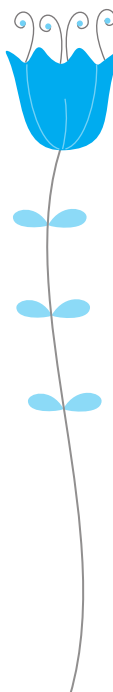
in favour of justice is necessary for building peace among communities. The relationships between families or communities should be based on compassion and reconciliation so that families, communities or individual leaders exercise power with responsibility and not under the influence of a bias or a prejudice due to language, region or caste.

Communication across different groups is possible through institutionalised channels created for the purpose. For instance, any conflict in the neighbourhood is brought to the notice of the welfare organisation and sorted out by it. Similarly, other such channels could be created, which facilitate dialogue. In the absence of communication, mistrust and insecurity breeds. Insecurity among communities is often exploited by individuals who talk tough and emerge as leaders by winning the faith of innocent people.

Communities are built on trust, acceptance and honest relationships where people don't abuse their powers and privileges. The language of peace has to go beyond the tolerance of diversity, to acceptance and co-existence. It is always good to be mindful of the power that you exercise over someone and that others exercise over you, as power can be abused, and quickly become dictatorial, and thus, violent. These power relations affect national politics where the power accumulated by certain groups leads to exploitation, inequality and injustice for others.



National



India is a land of diversity – from food to clothing, religion to language and regions and socio-economic distinctions, all have their distinct flavour. Sometimes these diversities live in harmony, and at other times, they react violently to each other. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution gives good indicators of the circumstances necessary for peace to prevail in the diverse society. We have been tracing the importance of some of these indicators from the individual to the community level. These are liberty or freedom, equality, justice and fraternity. We have addressed them by different names like physical safety, freedom of expression, right to gainful employment, and care and compassion. In this chapter, we will explore how these terms have an importance at a macro or national level.

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

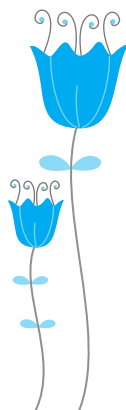
IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

Liberty or freedom has long been a main source of unrest in the world, right from the individual level to the community and national level. Just as members of a family react aggressively when their liberty is curbed, so do communities, when they feel that their freedom to express their distinct culture, socio-economic potential and promote the wellness of their community has been under threat. In a diverse country like India, the state is always walking the tight rope of giving every community the freedom to be, and at the same time, preserving the cultural “fabric” of the society. Liberty can be curbed by laws, by the action of one community towards a minority community, and by non-inclusion in decision making opportunities. India has seen many clashes taking place when people feel their liberty has been challenged. Thus, checks and balances for maintaining freedom with responsibility are a must for ensuring peace in such a diverse nation.

True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Justice is the pillar which ensures that the freedom of one does not become tyranny for another. As pointed out by the *NCF 2005 Position Paper on Education for Peace*, “In a society marked by multiple pockets of endemic injustice, the demands of justice must take



precedence over the claims of peace, paradoxically for the sake of peace.” Our active judiciary, constitutional checks and recourse to judiciary is just one side of the coin. Justice, to be truly meaningful, needs sharing of power, compassion towards the underprivileged and empathy towards the disadvantaged. Freedom from exploitation should become a central focus of citizenship education. Education of rights and duties becomes a must in school to ensure that students are equipped to fight for justice.

Equality is the third pillar of ensuring peace in society. Freedom and justice are only words and if equality is not assured, they fall short. Equality does not mean the same treatment to all but is deeper in its scope. It implies that we bring all our citizens on a level playing field, free them from aeons of exploitation, and ensure their mental, physical and spiritual development by providing opportunities to all irrespective of their birth, background and gender.

If we take our nation to be a reflection of the world that we live in, we will realise that we need to hold these three principles very close to our hearts. Understanding the importance of fraternity or solidarity and the knowledge that we all belong to one large community, a nation and the globe, we recognise our interdependence, and then, become empowered to help build a peaceful nation and a peaceful world.



Global



In the past 200 years alone, the world has seen two world wars. It is said that in the 20th century 180 million people have died because of international or civil war alone, 1.7 million children have died due to poverty in 2000, and 790 million people are undernourished. These statistics indicate the lack of peace in the world.

While the world is in turmoil, currently, there are also lots of movements for peace at the international level, and many international bodies, which are pressurising governments, states and civil societies to work towards building a peaceful world.

Look at the following list of Global Spending Priorities

- Pet food in Europe
- Cigarettes in Europe
- Basic Health and Nutrition

- Perfumes in Europe and US
- Women's reproductive health
- Military spending in the world
- Narcotics in the world
- Business entertainment in Japan
- Alcohol in Europe
- Ice cream in Europe
- Water and Sanitation for All
- Cosmetics in Europe
- Basic education

What do you think of the global spending pattern on these items? It would be difficult to believe that the top five items of spending were the military, narcotics, alcohol and cigarettes. (For the real rating, see below).

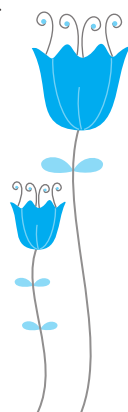
Real Story

- Military spending in the world (956 billion USD; US contribution, 466b)
- Narcotics in the world (400b)
- Alcohol in Europe (105b)
- Cigarettes in Europe (50b)
- Business Entertainment in Japan (35b)
- Pet food in Europe (17b)
- Basic Health and Nutrition (13b)
- Perfumes in Europe and US (12b)
- Women's reproductive health (12b)
- Ice cream in Europe (11b)
- Water and sanitation for all (9b)
- Cosmetics in Europe (8b)
- Basic Education (6b)

Source—<http://www.globalissues.org/praderelated/facts.asp>

What did the above exercise convey?

The way each individual or group chooses to spend money decides the health of the people living on the earth. The pattern of global expenditure is not quite right. Too much money is being spent on drugs and the military. What can we do to reset priorities? A feeling of helplessness may creep into some of us, knowing that



others hold a decisive role. But this awareness is empowering since each individual's decisions are important and that includes ours! Therefore, it is important that each one of us is aware of global issues like environment, poverty, war and destruction. Conflicts arise out of power over resources like oil, gas and other commodities. Above all, there must be appreciation and respect for all cultures and their heritage.

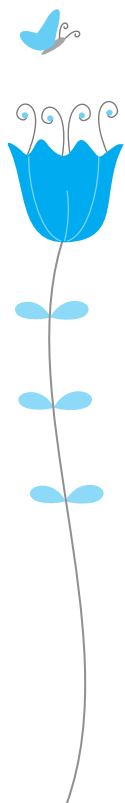
Reflection

Think of an event that disturbed your peace. Identify which spheres it belonged to.

Now reflect on an instance when you have influenced the peace of any of these spheres negatively or positively – personal, family, society, nation.



“Interdependence” is the logic of life. The same is also the logic of peace. Even as we see peace at different levels, in the interest of simplicity and clarity, we do not mean to compartmentalise it. Peace cannot survive or be confined to any one layer or level. All these building blocks of peace are interdependent. Every person is free and empowered maximally for peace at the individual level. Even as one moves from the individual to the family, to the community, to the society and to the national levels, the range of choice in respect of peace diminishes, as we move from the individual, through the intermediary levels, and finally to the national and global levels. That being the case, as teachers, we need to have a double-reference in promoting peace through education. While the immediate and primary focus is on orienting the individual student to peace, we also have to raise her level of awareness concerning the pros and cons for peace in the concentric and interdependent circles of peace. Education must involve a gradual enlargement of one's zone of awareness and responsibility; beginning with the self and extending to the country as a whole, and to the global village beyond. The emphasis must be on promoting a voluntary preference for the way of peace, rather than imposing a peace code on anyone. That is why Gandhiji said, “Be the change that you want to see in others.”



“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

Understanding this connection between the micro (the individual) and the macro (the globe), Gandhi ji shook the British Empire. He realised how an individual act of defiance was at the core of defying a structurally violent system, that is colonialism. We can see the power of ‘one’ coming together as the power of the collective which finally challenged a global structure of violence in the following acts promoted by Gandhi ji during his *Satyagrah* for Indian Independence:-

SALT SATYAGRAH: Salt, a small ingredient in cooking but used by all irrespective of caste, creed, religion or any other category which divides the human race became the symbol of rebellion by the masses of India and shook the British Empire. On 12th March, 1931 Gandhi ji undertook a 240 miles long march from Sabarmati to Dandi where he and his supporters made salt and defied the British Empire by breaking the law and refusing to pay the salt tax. Thus, an everyday act of cooking became an outcry for freedom by the masses of India. Jails were flooded by people breaking the salt tax law, and the British Empire had to listen.

KHADI AND CHARKHA: As thousands of Indians, under the guidance of Gandhi ji, spun the wheel at home and made their own cloth, little did the British Empire realise that the mills of Manchester were being brought to a halt. Whether it's the trickle down theory in economics or the bottom-up approach in development studies, all recognise this power that Gandhi ji so beautifully brought to the forefront. That is the power of one to become a collective, which can transform the world through its actions.



HARMONY WITH NATURE

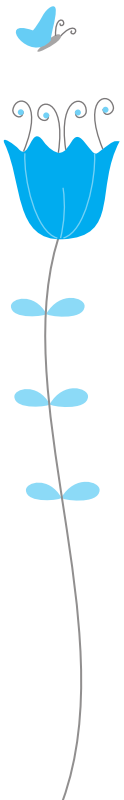
Taking care of ‘Nature’ is equally important. Human beings are dependant on nature for the fulfillment of their basic needs as well as for higher levels of solitude, peace and beauty. Rain, sunshine and the purity of the rivers, and a good harvest are necessary for sustenance. Vegetation, greenery, fresh air and clean water are also essential. Violation of natural laws and a lack of preservation of the environment are derogatory to the protection of human rights and friendly eco-balance. Generating a pro-environmental attitude

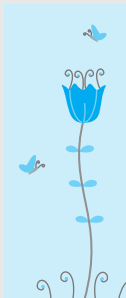


is necessary to guard against excessive misuse and destruction of the eco-balance.

An understanding of the values that support peace, therefore, requires attention. The concerns for the environment must be integrated into the practice of one's chosen lifestyle which contributes towards sustainable development. Sustainable human development means meeting our human needs today but not at the expense of natural resources on which future generations depend. It also means that people should have lifestyles that are characterised by the stewardship of resources, caring for the environment, the earth and the protection of natural resources. We must take from the environment only what we need.

The underlying principle is that no matter where we live, we are all linked together as parts of the same planet. These linkages are sometimes obvious and sometimes hidden. For example, environment pollution spreads without regard to national borders. A local conflict in an oil producing country can affect oil supplies around the world. Understanding the web of relationships in the system, appreciating the balance between the parts of the web and realising that changes in any part of the system will have effects on the whole is necessary. Peace is there only if understanding the interdependence of contributing factors and elements is there.





Understanding and Dealing with Conflicts

2

- **CONFLICT IS NATURAL AND INEVITABLE**
- **WHAT IS CONFLICT?**
 - Intrapersonal Conflicts
 - Interpersonal Conflicts
- **SOURCES OF CONFLICT**
 - Individual and Cultural Differences
 - Material Resources
 - Information or Knowledge
 - Relationships
 - Structures and Organisations
 - Needs and Values
- **VIOLENCE AS AN EXPRESSION OF CONFLICT**
 - Structural Violence
- **ANALYSING CONFLICTS**
- **DEALING WITH CONFLICTS CONSTRUCTIVELY**
 - Styles of Dealing with Conflicts
- **SOME SKILLS AND STRATEGIES**
 - Communication
 - Listening
 - Dialogue
 - Negotiation
 - Mediation
 - Facilitation

This section aims at clarifying that conflict is a part of life. It is important to understand that conflicts occur not only with others but they also exist within us. Conflicts arise due to differences among individuals, their backgrounds, abilities, needs, interest, gender, family, economic status and profession or culture, etc. We need to understand the way these sources lead to a series of small or big conflicts. How conflicts are overridden by violence, and the ways in which violence is expressed by individuals, groups and the very structure of society has to be understood. Working with conflicts and understanding the behaviours and attitudes of people engaged in the conflict, and the situational factors related to conflict have been discussed. The general approach towards handling these conflicts and the frequently prevalent styles have been presented. The various skills and strategies needed for dealing with conflicts have also been discussed.

A mind that is in conflict is a destructive mind, a wasteful mind, and those in conflict can never understand but conflict is not stilled by any sanctions, beliefs or disciplines because the conflict itself has to be understood.

—J. Krishnamurti



CONFLICT IS NATURAL AND INEVITABLE

Conflict is a natural part of living. We all experience conflict from time to time. Even if we were the only people living on the planet, we would still experience conflict because we not only have conflict with others but have conflict with ourselves, as well. Most people think of conflict as negative, and rarely associate it with positive words and images. Words like fight, dispute, controversy, strife, row, violence, fear and destruction come into mind but conflict *per se* is not negative or positive. Only the outcomes or consequences of conflict are good or bad. If we handle conflicts skillfully, we can produce far more positive results than if we do not know how to do so. Sometimes, ineffective ways of dealing with conflict do not help to achieve the desired outcomes but rather escalate tensions and losses. Many of us hear of incidents involving road rage, community fight, domestic violence, students' unrest, etc., which are the result of ineffective handling of conflicts. It has been rightly said that conflict need not be viewed as a 'conclusive' event but as an 'intermediary' event that can lead to positive results. Conflict is not a problem to be avoided but a process which leads to personal and social growth. A healthy outlook towards conflict is viewing it as an opportunity for growth and understanding. If handled intelligently, it allows for understanding each other's perspective and reflect on one's mistakes, thereby enhancing the ability to handle future conflicts in a better way.

The ability to deal with conflict is important for peace building in society and for oneself. Even more important than dealing with conflict is pre-empting it. Dealing with conflict without getting stressed requires us to understand its nature and develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills to deal with it.

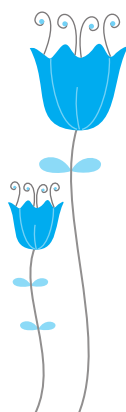
WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Having said that conflict is an unavoidable aspect of everyday life, we must understand what conflict really is. Conflicts simply denote incompatibility of needs, desires, goals, wants, temperaments, attitudes and values, which means that the two existing needs, goals or desires of individual or different groups could not be fulfilled simultaneously. Whenever our needs for money, power and resources clash with the needs of others, there is conflict. In other words, when the actions of one person block, prevent or interfere with another persons' ability or desire to accomplish goals, there is a conflict. Sometimes, people feel or think that they have incompatible goals. In reality, that might not be the case; it is, thus, only a perception. For instance:

“The Principal wanted to give Mr. Gupta the charge of holding examinations but he did not want to take it. They had a nasty brawl. Later, it was revealed that Mr. Gupta wanted to take leave for visiting his ailing parents but he thought this was the Principal's way of refusing leave, while the Principal thought that he would prove to be weak if he accepted Mr. Gupta's refusal. When the situation was cleared, both were comfortable with each other.”

Sometimes, it is only a perceived incompatibility of goals.

A conflict may be visible and expressed in actions or words (overt) or it may not be visible and expressed (latent). When a conflict is not expressed, it, in no way, means that it does not exist. Sometimes, it may dissipate on its own over a period of time but it may also intensify. Latent conflicts may occur frequently in formal and hierarchical relationships involving authority. This is akin to being the head of the family, institution or office when subordinates feel that most decisions are to be accepted. In this situation, unquestioned conflict may simmer for a long time. However, conflicts among individuals in informal relationships or at the same

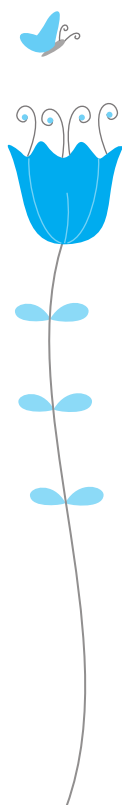


level of authority like among friends, siblings or colleagues may also lie hidden sometimes. Notions of conflict would thus vary with one's position, situation and context.

Intrapersonal Conflicts

Conflicts occur within an individual, too. The perplexing question “should I or should I not?” comes up many times on a daily basis when we are torn between two goals or situations. Conflicts get created sometimes when a choice must be made between two attractive goals or situations, and we cannot have both. For example, I want to accept a new job in the school which offers more freedom and monetary returns but I have to leave home before my child goes to school. I can either see off my child to school or accept the new job. This is an **approach-approach conflict**, where choosing one of the alternatives is least stressful! There is another conflict situation where a choice must be made between two unwanted alternatives. This is an **avoidance-avoidance conflict**, where a person has to choose from amongst two equally unpleasant situations, which is stressful. For example, your Principal wants you to be a part of the team organising examinations but you do not want to accept the responsibility. But if you refuse this duty, you would have to accompany students to a tour out of station. Yet another type of conflict situation is when a choice must be made between two alternatives, which have both attractive and una ttractive aspects. This is called an **approach-avoidance conflict** which also can be highly stressful. Conflict makes people go back and forth in taking decisions. The indecisiveness about making choices creates serious conflicts within. These dilemmas are part of the day-to-day life.

The internal conflicts, which are within the individual, generate considerable physical and psychological distress. We often battle with conflicting urges, desires and goals, which leave us restless and angry. The disturbance within and the preoccupation within our own minds about the choice we make and whether that is right or wrong, leaves us inattentive to the outside environment. As a result, we are less effective in handling our tasks and relationships. The stress due to continuing conflicts within makes us react aggressively to people and situations, which otherwise are not so offensive. Thus, the conflicts within have a bearing on our own psychological and physical



health, as well as on our work efficiency and relationships. They have to be understood properly and dealt with.

Interpersonal Conflicts

Other types of conflicts which are an inseparable aspect of human interaction are the interpersonal conflicts, which are important to be understood for peace building. Such conflicts also exist due to the incompatibility of goals, needs, values, beliefs and aspirations, etc.

Let us look at a conflict at work narrated by a teacher at one of the Training Courses on Peace Education:

“It happened in one of the schools. The incident involved a senior teacher and a new entrant. Sudha, the senior teacher, qualified and experienced, belonged to the upper class. She was arrogant, and thought herself to be perfect. The new entrant, Radha, was qualified but she lacked confidence. She was from a community, which did not have a high social status. She was upright but highly sensitive. During the first few interactions, the junior teacher got hurt by the senior teacher’s verbal and non-verbal communication. Gradually, mutual mistrust increased between them. Communication channels were almost closed, and each would pass very caustic and insulting remarks at the other. Both became stubborn. The authorities noticed all this but preferred to do nothing about it. Even students began to notice it. The intervention of the SC/ST Cell was solicited by one of the teachers and the news spread through the print media. It took a lot of effort on the part of all the concerned authorities and arbitrators to restore peace. But resentment, unfortunately, continued.”

In this case, the temperaments of the two teachers were incompatible. The incompatibility lay in their own attitudes, values and aspirations. The senior wanted to be respected for her higher economic status and seniority on the job while the junior felt insecure and sensitive about alienation, disrespect and humiliation. But could either of them satisfy their needs and aspirations through conflict? Was that the effective way of dealing with each other to satisfy their needs for respect and security, which are legitimate?

There are other interpersonal conflicts which involve injustice, insult or inequality to oneself or to other persons or groups, religion, language and caste. For example, some groups or communities feel, rightly or wrongly, that society, government or any other organisation did not do them justice. They engage in stirrings, causing road blocks in various places for hours together, which annoy others



who are inconvenienced. In all these expressions of conflict, the system is unchanged, and the incident will be repeated again, and there may not even be any protest then.

Conflicts like these are prevalent in all societies. These involve consequences which may have wide ranging implications and shall continue over time. These conflicts recur and have to be tackled again and again. In issues where one party feels wronged, it is important to address the problem seriously. Otherwise, simmering discontentment will lead to wide-scale disturbances. Since these recur, they not only put to test one's resources and self esteem, but may also erupt into serious, intense fights and widespread disturbances. Therefore, these conflicts need to be understood. These are indicators that all is not well, and that something needs to be changed. What are the causes of these conflicts? These causes have to be identified, explored and acknowledged to pre-empt any serious repercussion. Let us see why these conflicts arise.

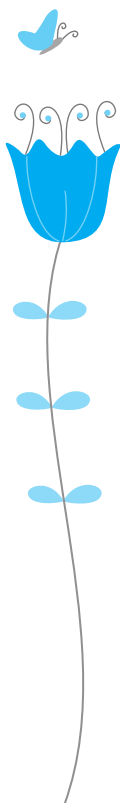
SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Understanding the source of conflict is a complex matter. A variety of perspectives could be used to explain the dynamics of conflict. The attribution bias, that is, the tendency to blame others, may be one of the perspectives in understanding conflict. Another view of conflict is from the perspective of equality and justice, that is, people become stressed, frustrated and angry when they perceive that they are not receiving a fair distribution of something that they need or value. Still another perspective is that conflict is a product of a context or a situation in which divergent needs evoke tensions. Another viewpoint is based on a perception, that is, people create the situations they perceive. Moreover, due to internal tensions also, pressures build up and create conflict. However, underlying these different perspectives, a few sources could be easily discerned, which give rise to conflicts.

Individual and Cultural Differences

Often, due to different backgrounds, our perceptions about conflict vary, and we fail to arrive at a common understanding. It is important to look into the causes and sources of conflicts.

Conflicts are inevitable as there are differences in the way we see things, hold opinions and understand our environment. Our attitudes

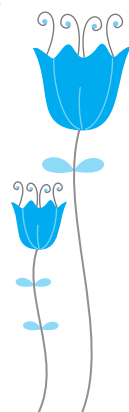


towards family, peers, neighbours, colleagues, society and the world around us are significantly different from each other. For instance, some of us are significantly affected by incidents of terrorism, environmental imbalances, social crimes, road rages, etc. to the extent that we take out processions, join protests or indulge in activism of other kinds. But there are others who may not do any of these activities but that does not mean that they do not think about these issues. Some of us may rededicate ourselves to the larger issues of constructing a better society through education; still others for introducing greater probity in public and social life or working to remove social ills.

Different individuals have different ways of seeing things and drawing meaning from these situations. Our perceptions are guided by our interactions with others in the family, peers, people in the neighbourhood and society. For instance, a person who grows up in a neighbourhood characterised by religious antagonism amongst different communities might harbour a certain kind of attitude or mindset.

Similarly, children living in families where domestic violence towards women is an accepted norm or children disciplined with corporal punishment are likely to grow into adults convinced about the instrumentality of violence and corporal punishment to discipline children.

On the other hand, individuals who have been exposed to familial or intercultural harmony and trust are likely to work their way through conflicts by initiating dialogue or discussion rather than by resorting to violence. However, each family is different and even within a family, members grow up differently. Some families themselves are constantly engaged in conflicts. These conflicts result from incompatibility of temperaments, needs, demands and available resources. The outcome of these conflicts is mostly tilted in favour of those having greater power, money and resources-political or social. Those who are powerless, feel insecure. Sometimes, due to insecurity, they form groups to feel secure, and seek emotional and social strength and support from each other. This is commonly observed both in the family as well as in politics. In the family, children often come together against empowered adults who indulge in violence. At political and social levels, weaker groups indulge in the formation of social-political pressure groups that leverage



benefits, which otherwise seem elusive, or force implementation of reforms and changes. Differences due to religion, caste, class and language often result in conflict.

Other sources of conflict lie in material resources, information or knowledge, relationships, social or organisational structures, need and values. Let us see how these conflicts are decided by these sources.

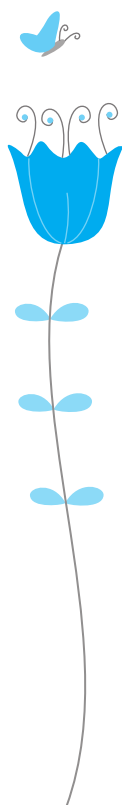
Material Resources

It is easy to understand how material resources cause conflicts, as these are identifiable and visible. Ownership of material resources like land, money, house, property or other materials give rise to serious conflicts among individuals or groups and even across different states. Distribution of property in families; resources like water and electricity in residential colonies and states and issues of water, oil and natural gas, and mining of precious metals also becomes a source of conflict among different countries.

Information or Knowledge

It may not be evident as to how information or knowledge becomes a source of conflict. Since information or knowledge and know how or the possession of facts gives an advantage in many situations, keeping these sources to oneself or within one's group produces hostile reactions among others. For example, a business man wants to purchase a piece of land as he is tipped by his friend that this land is available cheap but he does not share this information with a third friend, whom he sees as a competitor. This becomes a source of conflict between the friends. Often, information about a course of study, if not shared with others in families and society, becomes a source of conflict. Sharing information with some and keeping it from others, too, gives rise to individuals and groups warring with each other.

Having information or data, a set of facts or possession of some other technical or linguistic skill may help some people understand situations better and gain advantage. These people get in conflict with others who get disadvantaged due to a lack of information and a misinterpretation of facts and situations. These groups, instead of acknowledging their own inadequacy, look for reasons to blame others. Sometimes, court cases and serious conflicts get precipitated when facts are not available. Organisations try to be transparent in sharing information and data with their employees to avoid conflicts.



Relationships

It is even more difficult to imagine as to why conflicts occur in relationships, particularly, in close relationships, which are supposed to be means of emotional and social support. The various relationships in families, communities and professions develop on an understanding of common interest and needs, and an expression of mutual support. When these relationships are in the formative stage, no attention is normally paid to differences of opinion, as people focus and appreciate others for common needs and perceptions. However, as interactions get intimate, differences of opinion or interests surface. These differences in needs and interests accumulate over a period of time as people either do not or ineffectively handle these differences. Gradually, each act of the other may appear as a threat to our interests. These differences and disagreements are perceived as emotional rejections of each other, and attempts are made to convince or win the other over to our own view. This complicates relationships, as the very basis of relationships, i.e. the appreciation of their interests and needs, is questioned. In families too, the issues underlying conflict are crucial to relationships and emotional warmth. Rejection of the others' view point is perceived as a rejection of the person. The stronger the relationship, the greater are the efforts made to convince the other through arguments or evidence, which actually works in the opposite direction.

Structures and Organisations

Social or organisational structures have the cause of conflict inherent in them. These structures in social organisations and business organisations have clear cut authority structures, which bestow the decision making power on various issues concerning their members. In the family, the way money will be spent or the rights and responsibilities of each member and work assigned are largely decided by the head of the family – mostly men or parents. This arrangement has nowadays become a source of conflict, as youngsters have more information and knowledge. So, they have a conflict of interests with their elders. Similarly, in organisations too, particularly big ones, where people of different professions, region, class, caste and language work together, central decision making may cause conflict as the interests,

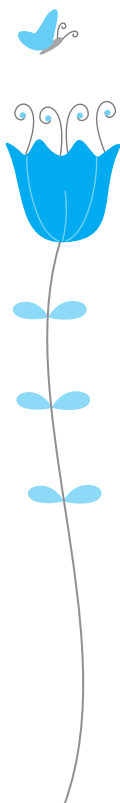


welfare and rights of one group are perceived to be in conflict with those of other groups. Thus, conflict becomes inevitable. However, these conflicts are resolved or managed by power sharing, information exchange, and participatory decision making.

Needs and Values

Needs of individuals are the most fundamental causes of conflict. In fact, underlying all the above causes, is the satisfaction of the perceived needs of the individual. These needs, as perceived by individuals or groups, are recurrent, intense and all encompassing. They take charge of the individual and direct all his behaviour towards the satisfaction and fulfillment of these needs. Needs are of different kinds. The most urgent basic needs are for sustaining life like food, water, hygienic-conditions, security and safety. The other category of needs is for identity, respect and inclusion. These are equally urgent, and sometimes more compelling than even basic needs. When the satisfaction of these needs is threatened, there is bound to be conflict. For example, there is often unrest over wages, bonus, curbing of benefits and rights over green areas or jungles. All these come in the way of need satisfaction. Social structures and organisations may sometimes deny individuals respect, support or exclusion, advertently or inadvertently. For example, in the family, grown up children may not be consulted over property disposal or purchase. There could be a lack of parity in the distribution of benefits or income. In social organisations or communities which are in a majority, rituals, symbols or other social needs of the minority may be overlooked. This threat to identity, and non-inclusion causes hurt and humiliation. The lack of acknowledgement and understanding of the identity of other groups leads to serious conflicts, even though these are not apparent.

Different personal values can also lead to conflicts. Values are beliefs people hold which help them evaluate the worth of various aspects and issues of life – religion, politics and other personal and social issues. Some values are more important than others. Value based conflicts are particularly problematic in relationships. If people can appreciate the source of conflict as value based, they can understand that a particular issue is important to one person and that s/he is not just being stubborn. This helps in continuing



relationships. But a lack of understanding can lead to distress in relationships and break-ups.

The most difficult conflicts to understand and manage are the ego based conflicts, where one or both parties view the outcome as a measure of self-worth, that is, how competitive one is, how much one knows, how much power one has and so on. In these ego based conflicts, winning becomes more important than finding a fair solution to the problem. Even minor disagreements can erupt into aggressive confrontations.

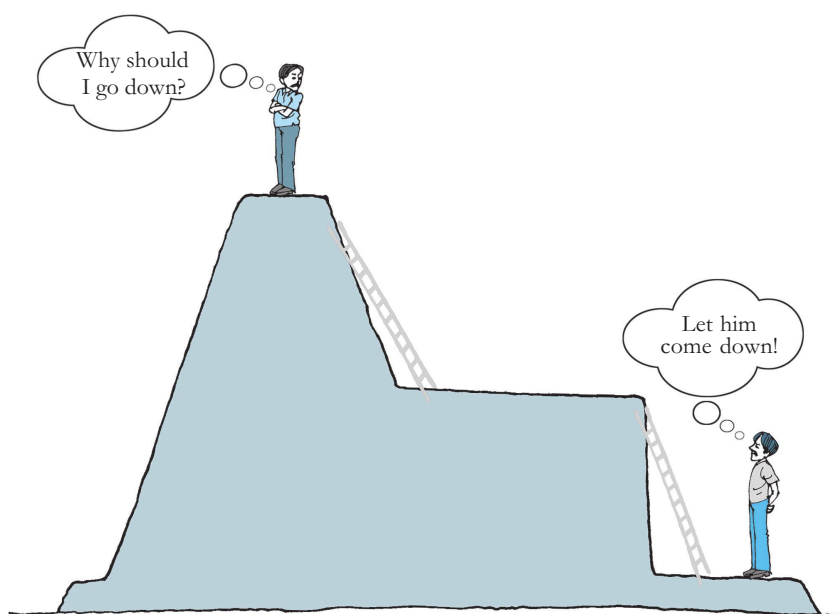
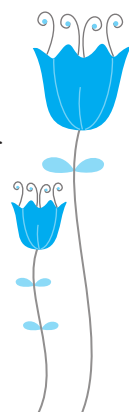


Fig.3 Ego blocks

Conflicts over attitude and values are also frequent in homes, organisations and society. The values of justice, secularism, citizenship, caring for others, and other personal values of cleanliness, punctuality, honesty, truth, etc. are sources of conflict at various levels. Whatever the source or cause of conflict, if it continues for long, it is unhealthy. Stress caused by conflict could erupt into violence.

VIOLENCE AS AN EXPRESSION OF CONFLICT

Conflicts are inevitable but violence is not. We sometimes resort to violence as a reaction to conflict. Conflict itself is not bad; it is violence that is problematic. When one mentions violence, it is an imagery of



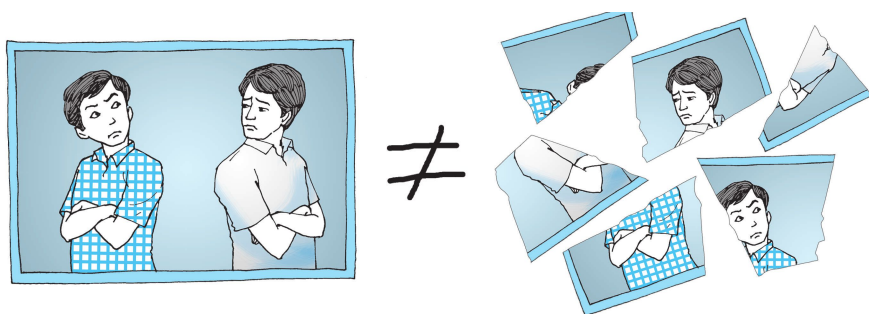
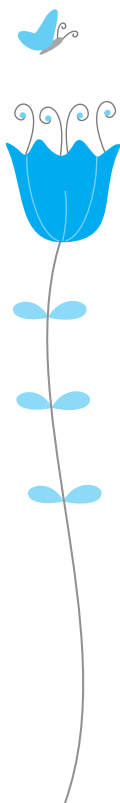


Fig. 4 Violence is but an expression of conflict; it is not the same as conflict

someone beating others or hitting and causing injury or killing. But violence is not simply physical. Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that harm or hurt the body, mind and spirit – physical, psychological or the environment.

Violent physical actions like beating, hitting, torturing or harming are the most feared kinds of violence, as the intention here is to cause physical harm to others. This is *overt or direct violence*, and it involves both verbal and non-verbal direct strikes against others. However, words could also cause hurt, pain and injury to the psyche, and even kill. Hurt and pain caused by abusive words of a spouse and humiliation by parents and teachers on failure has often led to suicides among students. Strong words are frequently used to put down others, particularly, those lower in authority or power such as useless, stupid, idiot or other abuses that reflect negatively upon the others' capability, gender, family, caste, religion, and nationality. In families, women and children are often subjected to violence where verbal abuse or the necessary needs for healthy living are withheld. One may not actually kill the other but a denial of needs or humiliating words could cause substantial psycho-physical damage or sickness which may lead to even loss of life. Is this not violence? We cannot avoid conflict but violence is definitely avoidable. But there is more to violence than just the direct kind.

Attitudes and structures, too, could be violent when these prompt behaviour or verbalisation that may appear innocuous to people themselves, as these could be reflections on the way of life of a certain community or person but these could be harmful or cause hurt to other communities or individuals. These may not appear to be violent as such but these form the basis of violence on a large scale, as hurt caused by these attitudes is often difficult to tolerate.



Hidden violence in society in the form of these attitudes is called structural violence.

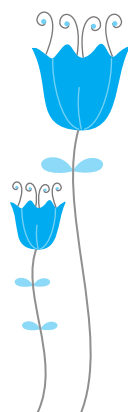
Structural Violence

Violence is not merely physical violence but the whole structure of the psyche is based on violence. This constant effort, this constant adjustment to a pattern, the constant pursuit of pleasure, and, therefore, the avoidance of anything which gives pain, discarding the capacity to look, to observe what is – all these are a part of violence. Aggression, competition, constant comparison between what is and what should be, limitation – all are surely forms of violence.

—J. Krishnamurti

Systems, practices and institutions, too, can be violent. Sometimes, structures are created that deprive people of their rights and the ability to satisfy their basic human needs. These structures discriminate between individuals, groups, communities and nations to the point of threatening lives and livelihood. For example, societal and organisational structures like family, bonded labour, dowry and self styled moral organisations become sources of violence. This kind of violence is known as *structural violence*. Additionally, overt violence frequently emerges as a response to structural violence. Structural violence can further be understood in terms of the vertical and the horizontal kind. When people are repressed politically, exploited economically and alienated culturally by structures, systems or institutions, it is vertical structural violence. The needs that are violated in this case are that of freedom, well-being and identity. On the other hand, horizontal structural violence denies the need for identity. Structures separate people who want to live together.

Being invisible, cultural violence is the most dangerous kind of violence, as it is inside all of us. It is inherent in our beliefs, language, customs and symbols; even dress and food could be violent as these become sources of discrimination, prejudice and bias. Deviation from these practices or beliefs leads to the alienation of individuals. Structures are external but cultures are internal; they make up our identity and nourish our hearts with religion, ideology, language, etc. Here, the intention is not to harm or kill but conflicts created



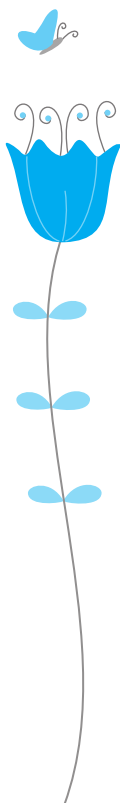
through words and images often indirectly cause violence. In fact, there are aspects of cultures that define violence or war as good, some types of killing as right, even sacred and beautiful; in other words, cultural violence is used to justify direct or structural violence. For example, boys and girls are raised differently in our culture – boys are given a lot of freedom while many restrictions are imposed on girls. Indeed, this is all done in the name of culture which is ingrained in our psyche.

For example, in families, women and girls are denied opportunities for growth and development, and any rebellion is put down with physical violence towards them. On the basis of caste and religion, people are denied the right to marry.

Let us look at a few examples of actions, words and attitudes that are violent.

Think about

- **Attitudes** that harm and/or hurt
 - Over-indulgence in eating. (Physical)
 - Lack of responsibility about work. (Psychological)
 - Disrespect for differences in caste or religion. (Social)
 - Disrespect and disobedience of norms regarding sound, littering or pollution, etc. (Environmental)
- **Words** that harm and/or hurt
 - Use of words like stupid for others. (Psychological)
 - Use of dirty or castiest words. (Social)
- **Actions** that harm and/or hurt
 - Pulling the ears of a child. (Physical)
 - Ridiculing him/her. (Psychological)
 - Commenting on the caste or profession of the family. (Social)
 - Wasting water or electricity or causing pollution. (Environmental)
- **Structures and Systems** that harm and/or hurt
 - Disciplinary practice like corporal punishment. (Physical)
 - Displaying names of failing children on bulletin boards, or insulting children in the assembly for indiscipline. (Psychological)
 - Discrimination among children on the basis of culture, caste, language or region. (Social)
 - Practices and sanctions for burning leaves in schools, disregard for standards of safety. (Environmental)



ANALYSING CONFLICTS

Coming back to conflict, once we know that there is an on-going conflict, what do we do about it? The initial step is to analyse the conflict, and then deal with it constructively.

Look at the following conflict.

A lady teacher, Ms. Aman Amber, started working in a school in January 2004. She really loved her job and especially loved teaching children. For the past 15 days, she had been missing from the school assembly. The Principal came to know about her late arrival to school on the 7th day. He initially ignored it and thought that it would not become a routine.

But this continued to happen. On the 10th day, the Principal decided to personally monitor the situation as he did not want this to become an infectious disease. He had to initiate some action. Other teachers had also started murmuring about her late arrival and about the Principal not taking any action in this regard.

The Principal's problem was aggravated by the fact that Ms. Amber's past records were really good and that she had always been loved by her students. The Principal also liked her a lot as she was dedicated to her profession and was a responsible person. This resulted in the other teachers being jealous of Ms. Amber. Moreover, some of the teachers felt that Ms. Amber had deliberately been given less work in comparison to them.

Taking advantage of the precarious situation that Ms. Amber was in, some teachers instigated her students. As a result, there was restlessness within her students, and they seemed to be drifting away from her.

On the 16th day, the Principal issued Ms. Amber a show-cause notice due to pressure from the Teachers' Association.

It is important to understand that conflicts change over time, passing through different stages of activity, intensity and tensions. It is helpful to recognise these stages.

In the above conflict situation, until Ms. Amber had come late to school, there were no particular issues with regard to her. There was no open conflict *per se* but obviously the majority of the teachers did not like her as she was a favourite with the Principal and the students. Moreover, she completed all the tasks given to her with responsibility. This is the **pre-conflict stage** wherein there is an incompatibility of goals between two groups (on the one hand are the majority of the teachers of the school and on the other, the



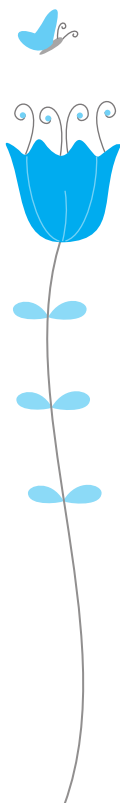
Principal and Ms. Amber – although these groups need not be a conscious formation – maybe, the opposing sides see each other as group) which could lead to open conflict. In this stage, there is potential for confrontation as there may be tension in relationships and/or a desire to avoid contact with each other.

When Ms. Amber starts coming late to school and does so for 15 days at a stretch, the conflict comes out in the open and becomes overt as the teachers have started murmuring and the Principal has noticed it. Relationships between the sides are becoming strained, leading to a polarisation (division/split). This is the **confrontation stage**. In this stage, supporters may engage in demonstrations or other confrontational behaviour like occasional fighting or low levels of violence. The opposing sides may also start gathering resources and finding allies with the expectation that the confrontation and violence will increase.

In the case of social, political and community-level conflicts, people become aware of the denial of their legitimate needs and rights and begin to assert themselves. The conflict, thus, comes to the surface and is no longer hidden. Here, people have a choice regarding how to express conflict and how to get their concerns addressed. Choices range between violent or non-violent mechanisms or a combination of both.

In the case of the present conflict, it reached its peak when the Principal issued a show-cause notice to Ms. Amber due to pressure from the Teachers' Association. This is the **stage of crisis** when the tension and violence are most intense. In the case of large-scale social and political conflicts, this is the period of war, when people from both sides are being hurt or killed. Normal communication between the sides ceases, and people indulge in accusations more than in saying things simply and plainly.

Now, there has to be an outcome to the crisis – Ms. Amber will give a reply to the show-cause; the school authorities may decide to take strict action against her or because of the changed circumstances, Ms. Amber may decide to leave the school or maybe, the matter is resolved amicably. So, in the **outcome stage**, one side may defeat the other or call a ceasefire (if it is a war), or one side may surrender or give in to the demands of the other side, or both sides may agree



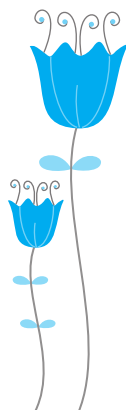
to negotiations (with or without a mediator), or an authority (in this case, the Principal) or a powerful third party may impose an end to the fighting. Whatever the outcome of this stage, the levels of tension, confrontation and violence certainly decrease here, with the possibility of a settlement.

The fifth and the last stage is that of **post-conflict**. In this stage, the situation is resolved in a way that leads to an ending of violent confrontation, decrease in tensions and the beginning of normal relationships between the parties. But if the issues and problems (in the above case that of Ms. Amber's coming late to school everyday) have not been adequately addressed, this could eventually lead to another pre-conflict stage or could be the beginning of a new cycle of conflict.

So, what we have just seen are the **five stages of conflict** – pre-conflict, confrontation, crisis, outcome and post-conflict. These stages generally occur in the linear order given above but there may be variations in some situations, as each conflict is unique and follows its own logic. Moreover, some conflicts might never reach the outcome stage, forget the post-conflict stage – such conflicts might, in fact, get caught in a cycle, and move back and forth between the confrontation and the outcome stage (where negotiations consistently break down and violence resumes). Obviously, the challenge for peace lovers and peace builders here is to prevent the negotiations from lapsing (going back) into open confrontation, and supporting the peace process in such a way that it reaches its logical conclusion, that of a peaceful stage.

Moving on, Ms. Amber's conflict situation has several issues that can be sorted into three categories: core problems, causes and effects. We will try to sort the three categories by using the picture of a tree (refer to figure 5). The roots of the tree symbolise the root-cause of the problem, the trunk of the tree represents the core problem and the branches stand for the effects. In some conflict situations, some issues might be seen as both causes and effects of the conflict. In such situations, the same issues could appear in both places.

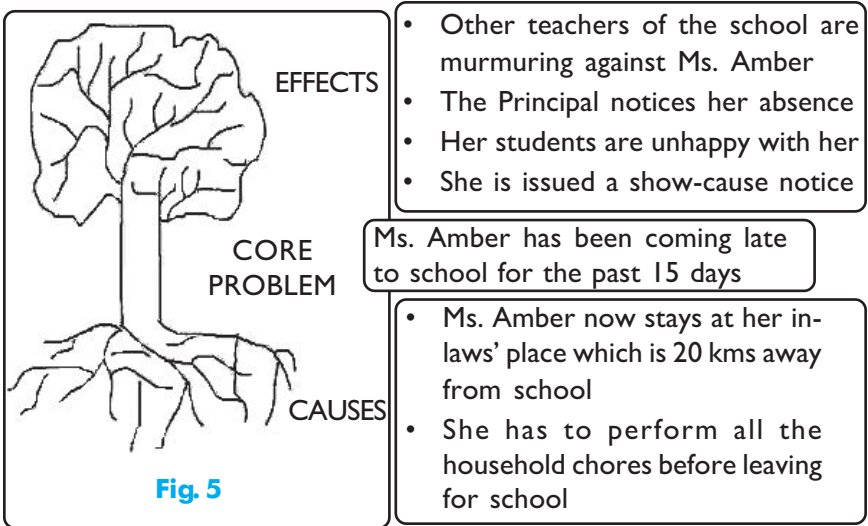
In Ms. Amber's case, the core problem is her coming late to school and doing so for the past 15 days. The effect of this is that the other teachers of the school are murmuring against her, the Principal notices her absence, her students are unhappy with her,



and finally she is issued a show-cause notice. Now, with regard to the root-causes of the problem, we need some more information. After all, why had Ms. Amber been coming late to school? For this, we will need to know Ms. Amber's side of the story:

I was married last month and thus, have now shifted to my in-laws' place, which is a good 20 kms from my place of work. Since I have to do household chores (my mother-in-law expects me to do them and there is no way we can afford to hire a maid), and then take a bus, which during rush hour traffic is packed and gets into jams all the time, I get late for school everyday. Pre-marriage, it was not an issue at all, as my house was a 5 minute walk from school. I do not want to leave this school and definitely not the job (my income is important to keep the house running). Moreover, I, too, hate coming late to school. Now, these teachers are spreading all kinds of rumours about me. As a result, I am tense all the time. In fact, two days ago, I scolded my students. I, who should have shown care and empathy, actually ended up yelling at them without any rhyme or reason.

We now know the root-cause or the reason for Ms. Amber coming late to school – she had shifted to her in-laws' place post-marriage, which was 20 kms away from the school—and her mother-in-law expected her to perform all the household chores before leaving for school.



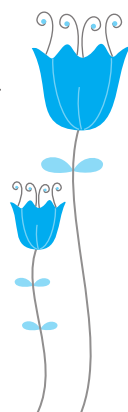
(Source Fig. 5: Simon Fisher et al, *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*, New York: Zed Books & Responding to Conflict, 2000; p. 29)

The figure that we see above is that of a conflict tree, which has three important parts – the causes (roots), the core problem (trunk) and the effects (branches). The conflict tree thus helps us to identify the three main issues in a conflict – causes, core problem and effects. Above all, this method helps us distinguish between the root causes and the core problems of a conflict. But why is it so important to know about the root causes of a conflict?

Mostly, what happens is that as conflicts progress, the root causes which gave rise to the conflict in the first place, get ignored and other issues gain prominence – problems that arise as a result of the root causes occupy the primary position. Additionally, uncovering and addressing root causes is essential if we want to achieve sustainable peace, for a conflict will keep raising its head again and again, maybe in the same old form or in a new form, if the root causes are not addressed. Prolonged violent social conflicts at their root are not fought over substantive issues, but rather can be traced to basic human needs or structural or systemic issues. Basic human needs emphasise on the existence of universal needs that must be satisfied if people are to resolve protracted social conflicts.

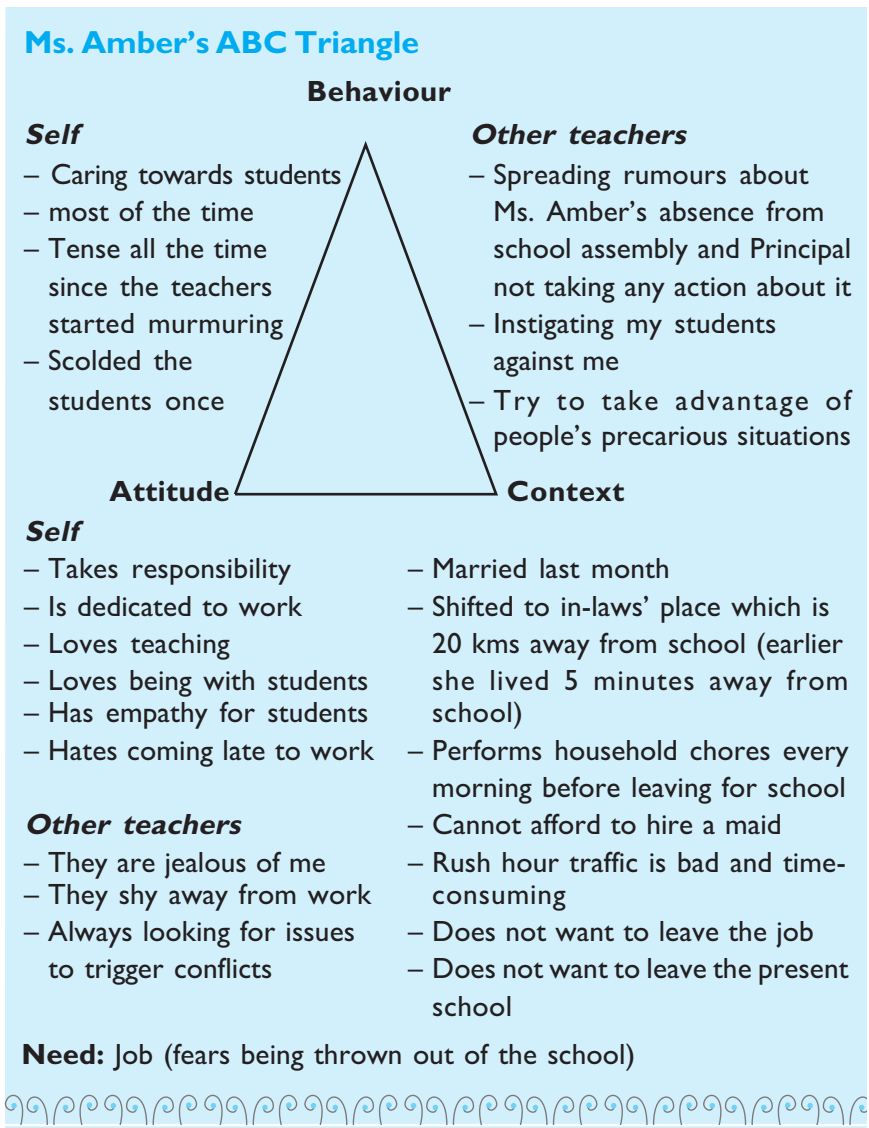
All human beings possess a set of non-negotiable, basic needs – material (food, shelter, health care, and employment – freedom from want), cultural (right to religion, language) and social needs (respect, dignity and freedom from fear). The need for life to be perceived as being predictable and safe is extremely important. If these needs are not met in socially accepted ways, individuals and communities resort to violence to have these needs met. Injustice, either in reality or the perception of it, thus, becomes the root cause of the conflict. The human needs for identity, recognition, security and personal development play a particularly important role in contemporary conflicts. In recent years, the human need for identity has come to be seen as the primary source of modern ethno-nationalist conflicts. Thus, if we want to work on the resolution of conflicts, then it is necessary to think in terms of its root causes.

Apart from root causes, the attitudes and behaviours of opposing groups and individuals play an important part in the

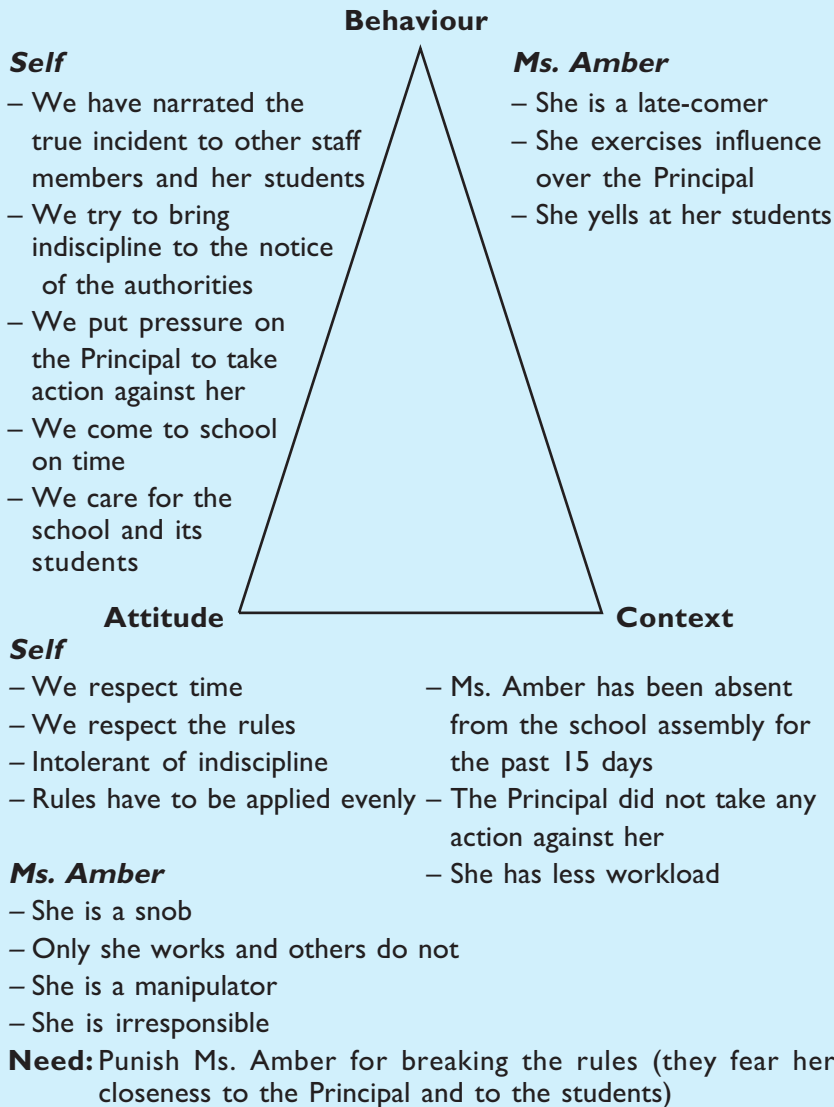


context of a conflict. All conflicts have these factors or components: the attitudes (A) of the conflicting groups or individuals, the behaviour (B) of those involved and the context (C) or situation of the conflict. Together, they form the ABC Triangle.

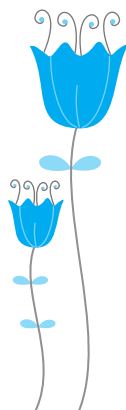
Let us now try to fill the ABC triangle from two perspectives – one from Ms. Amber’s and the other from the perspective of the rest of the teachers.



ABC Triangle for the Other Teachers of the School



Conflict will have to be analysed from a holistic and wider perspective if we want to reach the root cause of the problem. Without examining a patient and analysing his problems, it is difficult for a doctor to prescribe medicines – the same is the case here – until and unless conflicts are analysed from different points of view, we cannot think of strategies to resolve them.



Thus, conflict analysis is a practical process of examining and understanding reality from a variety of perspectives. This understanding forms the basis on which strategies can then be developed, and actions planned. Through conflict analysis, we are able to (i) understand the background and history of the situation, (ii) current events that precipitated the conflict, (iii) all the relevant groups and individuals involved, not just the main or obvious ones, (iv) understand the perspectives of all the groups and individuals and know more about how they relate to each other, (v) identify factors and trends that underpin conflicts, and (vi) learn from failures as well as successes

It is important to realise that conflict analysis is not a one-time exercise; it must be an on-going process as the situation develops, so that we can adapt our actions to changing factors, dynamics and circumstances while dealing with conflicts.

Given below is another conflict situation which will give you opportunity to analyse the situation in the light of what you have read.

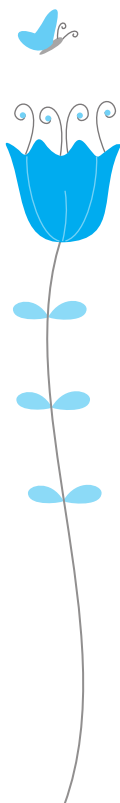
Think and Analyse

Shikha always topped the class. She excelled in not only studies but in sports and other extra-curricular activities, as well. The whole class admired her for her brilliance and wanted to be friends with her. She was the apple of her teachers' eyes, as well. It seemed like nobody could beat her. Slowly this success, admiration and attention got to her, and she became haughty, snooty and arrogant.

Everything was going on fine, until one day, a sweet girl by the name of Swati joined Shikha's class. Swati was an introvert but good at studies and excelled in dancing and singing. Due to her good nature and humble behaviour, the class started admiring her. Very soon, Swati became good friends with almost everybody. She was always willing to help her classmates, no matter what the situation.

Shikha, meanwhile, did not like this shift. She hated Swati and treated her as a rival. Besides, she now had tough competition from Swati, and it was only a matter of time before Swati, instead of Shikha, topped the class. Shikha was seething with anger and hatred but was unable to do anything. She decided to wait for an opportunity. But Swati had no issues with Shikha and wanted to be friends with her. In fact, she had no clue about Swati harbouring ill feelings for her.

One day, Swati was going towards the school canteen to grab a bite during the lunch break as she had forgotten her lunch at home. Lunch break was due to get over in 10 minutes and a mathematics test was



scheduled right after the break. Therefore, Swati was almost rushing. In the meantime, Shikha was going back to class after buying a glass of fresh juice from the canteen. Swati bumped into Shikha by mistake and the juice spilt all over Shikha's school dress. Shikha started yelling at Swati for spoiling her dress and spilling her juice. Swati apologised profusely for her fault but Shikha would just not listen.

Shikha left the scene screaming and went straight to her class teacher's room. There, she narrated the incident to the teacher with all the drama and theatrics involved in it. In fact, she sounded as if Swati had done the whole thing purposely. Shikha was very dear to the class teacher, and so, she immediately rushed towards the classroom.

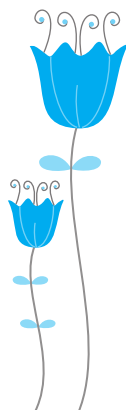
Swati was reflecting on what had just happened and feeling guilty about the whole thing. She had made up her mind to go and talk to Shikha once again and say sorry to her. Swati had a feeling that the initial outburst by Shikha would have subsided by then and that the two of them would be able to talk calmly about it.

Moments later, Swati was startled to see the class teacher standing right in front of her. The class teacher gave a *dressing down* to Swati in front of the whole class, without asking her or letting her say anything. Swati felt very humiliated and unjustified about the treatment meted out to her. She had never imagined that a private situation would become a public affair. One person, standing behind the teacher, was smiling – it was Shikha; she had avenged her defeat.



DEALING WITH CONFLICTS CONSTRUCTIVELY

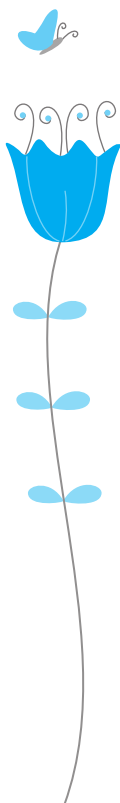
We have already discussed the different ways of reacting to conflict. Reactions of different individuals to conflict vary depending on the perception of their own needs and its intensity and the centrality of the conflict to their own self, the context and the authority or power wielded by the other party, as well as the temperament. For example, even a very timid person may react aggressively if someone attacks his very source of livelihood. Most people have a habitual way or personal style of dealing with conflicts. These styles are more or less consistent ways of approaching conflicts, although the context and the relevance may modify the way the individual approaches conflict. There are broadly five styles which have been identified in the literature. Basically, two dimensions underlie these styles: interests in satisfying one's own concerns and interests in satisfying others' concerns.



Styles of Dealing with Conflicts

Some people prefer to avoid conflict, which can, at times, lead to a self-perpetuating cycle, i.e. people think of conflict as bad, they get nervous about a conflict they are experiencing, they avoid the conflict for as long as possible, the conflict gets out of control, and they handle the confrontation badly. This negative experience sets the stage for avoiding conflict the next time which, in turn, further aggravates the conflict. This is the **avoidance style**, which is adopted by those who do not want to make efforts to deal with conflict. Either they fear that the consequences of conflict will be negative or that it will get intensified or they believe that ignoring the conflict will make it go away. For minor conflicts, this strategy may be a good one because there is no need to react to every little encounter. For bigger conflicts, withdrawing is not a good strategy, particularly, when the avoider has a greater power (parent, teacher, supervisor, etc.). This situation prevents the less powerful person from expressing his concern, which will bring frustration and resentment. In this style, there is low concern for the self as well as for others.

When instead of ignoring the conflict, the person brings the conflict to end, by giving in easily, then, it is the **accommodation style**. It indicates that the conflict is settled in favour of what others want from us. There is low concern for the self and high concern for others. It is considered to be an ineffective way of dealing with conflict, particularly, when it is habitual, as it does not generate a constructive way of resolving conflict. The **competing style** indicates high concern for the self and low concern for others. A competitor will do anything to emerge victorious by adopting aggressive ways, including verbal attacks and physical threats. This style is not desirable because it fails to generate fruitful solutions to problems, and is likely to escalate resentment and hostility. Yet another style is that of **compromising** with moderate concern for the self and for others. Compromisers are willing to negotiate. Both the parties give up something so that both can have partial satisfaction or gain. Compromising is a fairly constructive approach to conflict, especially when the issue is moderately important. In the **collaboration style**, conflict is viewed as a mutual problem, to be solved. There is high concern for the self as well as for others. It encourages openness and trust. The focus is on the idea rather than



the person. This is considered to be the most productive approach for dealing with conflict.

SOME SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

As you have seen, the most effective approach to conflict management is collaboration. There are a few principal assumptions about conflict, which facilitate the process of conflict resolution. (1) In a conflict situation, we must try to give others the benefit of doubt, i.e., try not to doubt the intention of those who disagree, and try to fully understand their frame of reference. (2) The status of the person should not come in the way. (3) Conflict should be considered as a mutual problem to be solved cooperatively rather than as a win lose proposition. (4) It is better to choose a mutually acceptable time to sit down and work on resolving the conflict and not to tackle the conflict as and when it arises, and finally, (5) It is better to communicate the flexibility and willingness to modify one's position while dealing with conflict. However, there are some specific skills and strategies which equip individuals to deal effectively with conflict.

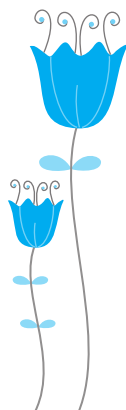
Communication

Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace

—Buddha

We have just said that communication, both verbal (through words) and non-verbal (through signs, symbols, body language or even by remaining silent), is important in dealing with a conflict. That is why we are talking about communication in a section on dealing with conflict. **Communication is a continuous, unending process of exchange about our stand on various issues whether we remain silent or speak.** Our silence on issues leaves scope for others to draw their own interpretations which could mean displeasure or acquiescence or lack of involvement. The following story will further clarify:

A science teacher of a school wanted to do a project with her students. The project related to finding out the health quotient of the residents living in the immediate surroundings of the school, and had certain social aspects; for health is also related to many social, economic and cultural denominators. The science teacher wanted the social science teacher to be part of the project. In the course of the project, the social science teacher differed with the science teacher on the issue of quantifying the

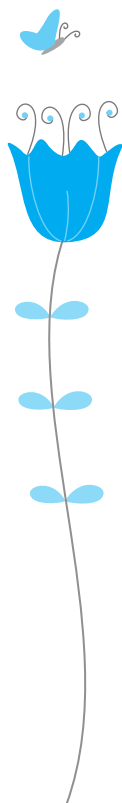


social denominators of the level of the education of residents. Both aired their views and the reasons for and against them. This resulted in a dispute. The two teachers had a previous history of a few grudges against each other over exchanging classes, which surfaced again. This turned the dispute into a conflict, and several factors complicated it further. Both of them vigorously started campaigning against each other in school to enlist the support of more and more teachers in favour of their perspective.

In the above case, both the conflicting individuals communicated initially with each other and came to know the different views. Both teachers narrated (that is communicated) the above episode to their colleagues in school in order to gain support for their points of view.

The two disputing individuals felt that they needed to sort out their differences as the project work had been stalled. The conflict seemed to have had an overpowering effect over them as it resulted in negative emotions and negative energy all round them, which in turn, was having an effect on all other work and relationships – professional as well as personal. Some of their colleagues gave them feelers that they needed to speak to each other directly instead of talking behind each other's back or against each other. Thus, one morning, the science teacher walked up to the social science teacher during the morning prayers and wished her. The latter responded with a smile. During the lunch break, the social science teacher came calling on the science teacher, ostensibly to share her lunch with her. Over lunch, the talk veered from one topic to the other and finally zeroed in on the project. They talked about the different possibilities of including the other's viewpoints into the project, and finally settled on allotting 10 points to education, which would be divided into two sub-sections of five each, one of which would be allotted to the level of formal education and the other to informal education. They decided to test the latter with the help of a specific questionnaire that would contain ten general questions related to health consciousness like common knowledge about the kinds of diseases, how they are caused, what body parts they affect and so on.

The above incident reveals that **communication skills are indispensable** – without communication taking place between the conflicting individuals or groups, there can be no solution. But one important aspect that must be kept in mind is the fact that while dealing with a conflict, **good communication alone does not**



necessarily lead to a solution. Underlying communication is the disposition (nature and temperament) of the conflicting individuals and groups – **without the right disposition or the willingness, no amount of communication is sufficient for the resolution of the conflict.** Those disposed to resolving a conflict or possessing the will to resolve a conflict, benefit more, and generate better communication. It all actually depends on what is communicated and how it is communicated.

Communication has to focus on common grounds, first, in the case of serious disputes where contact between two individuals or groups has broken down, like the teachers wished each other and talked about general things before zeroing-in on the conflict. The crucial issues where there is a difference of opinion should not be touched until a comfortable level of communication is restored between the two parties.

The very essence of dealing with conflicts by peaceful means is dialogue or communication of a message, in which, both sides talk positively and listen actively. If we learn how to communicate more effectively, the result will be a generation that is more receptive and sensitive to each other, and less violent. The most important skill in this regard is listening.

Listening

Listening is an important aspect of communication. It is also the primary means through which human beings communicate understanding. But listening is a tough activity; it requires attention and energy. We often think that we are listening but in fact, we hardly listen to each other. We are mostly waiting to speak or already formulating our reply. This shows that we are not open to others' view point. We are only interested in thrusting our own opinions. When conflicts escalate, and the intensity and emotional involvement of the conflicting groups and individuals increases, it leads to a decreased ability to listen and communicate. An average person remembers only about 25 per cent of what he or she hears because our mind either tends to wander or we do not pay attention. Did you know that most people speak about 125 words a minute but our brain processes information three times faster than that, so, we usually fill up by tuning out, daydreaming or rehearsing our response.

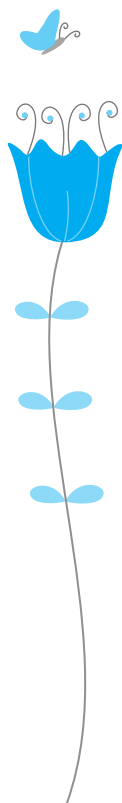


When we say ‘listening’, we are certainly not talking about hearing. Listening is much more than hearing the words of a speaker. It is actually about connecting to the deepest concerns and inherent fundamental worth of the other person. This connection must come from the heart.

It is only through listening that conflicting groups and individuals come to know about the deeper needs that motivate each one of them. These needs are often not obvious because the fight appears to be for material things but what is mostly at stake is the quest for self-development – empowerment and recognition by others. In the case of the conflict between the science and social science teacher, each was looking for recognition from the other over the hurt and humiliation caused in the past, and respect for one’s own view point. Allotment of a certain percentage to education in the health project was certainly not the real cause of the conflict, although it was an immediate or precipitating cause. Good listening thus offers recognition, and acknowledges and honours the uniqueness of another human being. It also empowers, for it invites and supports others to express themselves fully and deeply. It involves listening to both verbal as well as non-verbal content.

Verbal and Non-verbal Listening: Sometimes, when we are focused on the conversation, our eyes and ears pick up signals which give us the impression that something about the other person is not right – his/her posture, shifting of an arm or a leg, a quick downward glance, an unexpected tone of voice, an expression on the face, etc. Here, we may have been reading the body language. Non-verbal messages can be expressed through body posture and position, gestures, facial expressions, eyes, volume and tone of the voice and speech. Sometimes, our verbal message is quite contrary to our non-verbal message. In that situation, it is the non-verbal message which we rely on more than the verbal. We often hear arguments when people in conflict accuse each other of not being genuine. The non-verbal messages have a great role to play in communication and the creation of trust or mistrust. We inadvertently give expression to our internal doubts, hostility and prejudice.

Most people think that communication is primarily a verbal exercise but it is equally true that body language serves as an indicator of what individuals and groups are thinking and feeling. However,



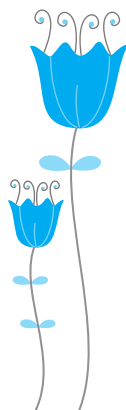
it is also true that in most cases conflicting individuals and groups are unaware of their own non-verbal communications. Researchers say that as much as 80 per cent of communication is body language.

While dealing with conflicts, it is essential to pay attention to not only the verbal but also the non-verbal behaviour of the conflicting individuals and groups, more so for third-party interveners, so that they can gather useful information about how the conflicting groups and individuals are responding. Moreover, by paying attention to their own body language, third-party interveners can better communicate respect to the speaker, reduce their chances of unintentionally insulting the speaker and give the message that 'I am listening to you.'

Good listening is also often referred to as "Active Listening". In active listening, the focus is not on the listener's view or opinion; it is rather on the content of the speaker's message – on the interest, feelings, perceptions and desires of the speaker. The listener reflects or plays back in his or her own words the essence of what the speaker has said. For example, "So you felt..... You are saying You believe"

Four core principles of active listening

1. **PHYSICAL ATTENTION:** Face the speaker and give him/her full attention while keeping an eye on the body language.
2. **PARAPHRASING:** Restate the basic ideas and facts of the speaker and check to make sure that your understanding, meaning and interpretation is accurate by saying:
"It sounds like what you mean is Is that so?"
You do not.....
"So what happened was Is that correct?"
3. **REFLECTING:** Show that you understand the speaker's feeling and reflect the same by saying:
"It sounds like you feel" (frustrated, angry, disappointed, annoyed, impatient etc.)
"I can see that you're feeling because"
4. **CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:** Use verbal encouragers like "uh huh", "yeah" and open-ended questions (what, when, where, how) to help clarify what the speaker said or to elicit more information from him/her by saying:
"Can you say more about that?" or "Tell me more."
"What happened? How did you feel about it?"



Two important forms of listening are paraphrasing and summarising, which are fundamental skills in dealing with conflicts, especially in mediating.

The box given above briefly touches on the art of paraphrasing. To extend it further, the focus in paraphrasing is on the speaker and not on the listener. For example, you can say, “You feel that”; “The way you see it is”; “If I understand you correctly, you are saying that” Do not say, “I know exactly how you feel. I’ve been in a similar situation.” or “You know my friend or so and so had something like that happened to her a couple of weeks ago.”

We must pay attention that paraphrasing fits naturally into the flow of conversation. It should not seem as if we are using any special skills. The speaker should only be aware of the fact that the person paraphrasing is a good listener and is trying hard to understand his/her perspective. Thus, each time we paraphrase, we should avoid using the same set of words or phrases.

Some paraphrasing tips

1. A paraphrase is shorter than the speaker’s own statement.
2. One should not merely repeat the speaker’s words but mirror the meaning of the speaker’s words.
3. A paraphrase does not contain any hint of evaluation or judgment but describes things thoughtfully and in a supportive way. For example: “So when he walked out of the meeting, you thought he was trying to manipulate you.” It would be a mistake however, to say, “That doesn’t sound like a very constructive attitude to me” or “It sounds like you had good reasons for doing what you did.”
4. We must pay attention to the impact that paraphrasing has on the speaker. Some people do not like to be paraphrased while, in some cultures, it is perceived as disrespectful. So the listener should observe the reaction of the speaker and adjust his/her use accordingly.

A summary is similar to a paraphrase however, a bit longer. It is used to summarise the content of a discussion as well as to highlight common concerns and common grounds between conflicting groups and individuals by the third party intervener.



Reflection

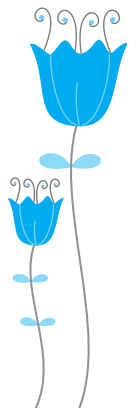
Now, can you think of a person who is a good listener? What qualities does that person have?

In conclusion, all communication comprises the verbal as well as the non-verbal aspects. Just as there can be no societal conflict without communication, there can be no societal solution of conflict without communication. Communication is the core element in all the following processes that attempt solution of conflict, such as dialogue, facilitation, negotiation and mediation.

Dialogue

If we choose to view living with differences as a way to build peace, the medium through which this can be done is that of *dialogue*. Simply speaking, dialogue means to sit and talk with each other especially with those with whom we have differences. Talking together can, however, involve debating, discussing with a view to convincing the other, arguing for our point of view, and examining the pros and cons. But these are the features of debate, while, in dialogue, the intention is *not to* advocate but to inquire; *not to* argue but to explore; *not to* convince but to discover.

The first and foremost important thing about a dialogue is the creation of a safe space – safe both psychologically as well as physically – only when people feel safe will they be able to express their opinions freely. Then, we must agree that the purpose of the whole exercise is to learn from each other, to discover each other. We also need to use appropriate communication skills in a dialogue, and that involves putting aside our own judgments, and listening carefully and respectfully to the experiences of others. Sometimes, in the course of the dialogue, hidden things surface such as conscious or unconscious beliefs, perceptions, assumptions and fears, etc., which may be rational or irrational. In such circumstances, we should be willing to be tolerant and not just laugh at them. Rather, we must help ourselves as well as others to bring these hidden aspects in front of everyone so that the level of understanding increases by way of conscious reflection. In a dialogue, there can be several ups and downs. It is important that we stay through the hard places, the



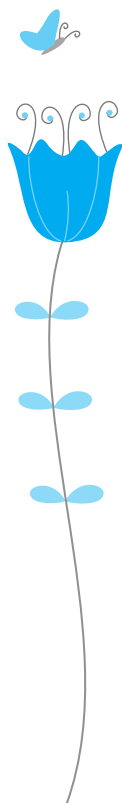
downs – anger, frustration, emotional outbursts – and use them as learning opportunities. And most of all, as teachers, we should be willing to be changed by the experience. If we approach dialogue as a way to change others (our students), we will be frustrated. We should, thus, approach dialogue as a way to learn and explore, and be open to the change that comes with the process.

Now, let us go back to the story of the science and social science teacher. The school principal had been noticing for a few days that normal conversation had become a thing of the past and that the teachers were divided – some in favour of the science teacher, some for the social science teacher, and yet others against both of them. This got her worried as some teachers were using this opportunity to get back at others, and conflicts from the past were now coming to the fore. She decided to use these events as an opportunity. The Principal called a meeting.

In the meeting, the Principal talked about general things concerning the school and other administrative matters. Later, she posed a question to the teachers – what does ‘relationship’ mean to you? She gave each teacher a chance to speak his or her mind. Nobody was allowed to speak out of turn. Some of the teachers chose not to speak. The Principal did not force anybody to speak. Some of the teachers emphasised the fact that relationships were the key to human existence and human bonding. Without relationships, human beings would lead a dull, monotonous and conflict-ridden life; it would be a free for all and all against all.

Once she had gone around the room, the Principal posed a second question – what sort of a relationship do you envisage in your organisation or place of work; in this case, the school? The teachers reflected on this issue, and while responding, most teachers stressed on the need to have good, cordial and cooperative relations in school at different levels: among the teachers; between the teachers and the non-teaching staff; between the teachers and the management; between the teachers and the Principal; and between the teachers and the students. The Principal, in her concluding remarks, highlighted on the imperative of valuing and respecting relationships at all levels – personal, organisational and communal. She also brought out the connection between being at peace with the self and with others, and having and maintaining good relationships. In the end, she thanked the teachers for taking time out and participating in the discussion and for expressing their opinions.

The process or the *end* that you have just witnessed is that of dialogue, and the *means* through which this process was conducted



by the Principal is known as facilitation. The school Principal, in the above case, was wearing two hats – one hat was that of the head of the institution and the other was that of a facilitator. As a facilitator, she was responsible for conducting the process (how things are done) smoothly but not responsible for the content or the final product. But as the head of the institution, she had an interest in the content of the dialogue, and also spoke her mind during the course of the discussion. In the above example, the aim of the Principal was to initiate a dialogue and make the teachers think of the kind of environment (relationships) they wanted for themselves and for their students and colleagues in the school.

Negotiation

In cases where individuals with shared and opposed interests work out a settlement in order to come to an agreement, the process of reaching an agreement is called negotiation. There are basically two kinds of choices available while negotiating – either go for a win-lose situation (adversarial or distributive approach) wherein one person will win while the other will lose – or go for mutual problem solving wherein both the individuals and groups will try to maximise a joint outcome. This is an integrative approach, which will result in a win-win situation (gains for both the disputing individuals and groups). The latter approach is preferable if the disputing individuals or groups have a stake in maintaining ongoing positive relationships

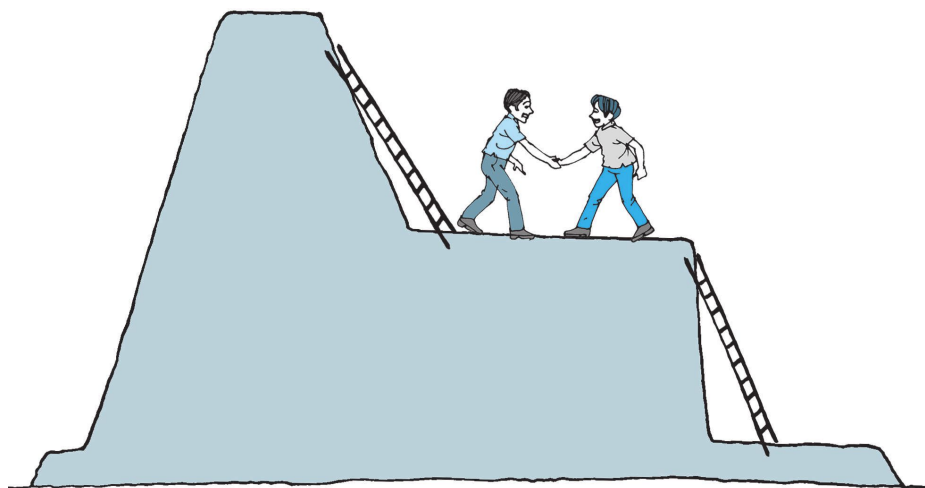
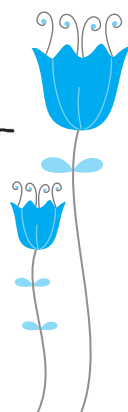


Fig. 6 Stepping towards negotiation



with each other. While negotiating, it is advisable that we are hard on the problem but soft on the people. This means that we should attack the problem at hand but treat the other side as human, having emotions, values and different perspectives. Remember, Gandhiji refused to see the British as evil; rather, he viewed their policies and agendas as such.

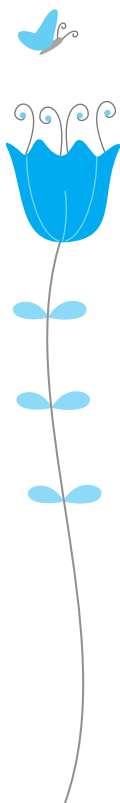
Let us look at a frequent occurrence in daily life, where we negotiate the price of vegetables, groceries and other items. Beginning with a lower quote for the price mentioned by the grocer, we get the price fixed to a reasonable one that is acceptable to both.

Well, do you identify with the scene described above? Does it sound like a familiar scene, one that you experience every now and then? Can you think of a name to describe the above process? What is it known as?

The process that you have just witnessed is known as “negotiation.” We negotiate almost everyday and on several different things: what clothes to wear, what food to eat or not to eat, where to go for recreation, how to reach a particular place, how to spend our money, how much to spend or not to spend at all etc. So, negotiation is something that we indulge in all the time. It is this simple, useful and widely prevalent skill of negotiation that is used as a strategy to deal with conflicts.

Certain principles to be followed in the process of negotiation are –

- **Separate the people from the problem.** Relationships often become entangled with the problems. One should pay attention to maintaining a long term positive relationship between the disputing individuals and groups, and try to affirm the same symbolically and otherwise.
- **Communicate effectively** during the course of negotiation. This is a must, and involves listening actively and respectfully and speaking for oneself and not about others.
- **Focus on interests; not on a position** as positions are more conflicted than interests.
- **Generate multiple options** for resolving a problem. While generating options, we should not judge them prematurely as to what will work and will not work, and look for ways of solving the problem that meets everyone’s interests, instead.



- **The final solution must be legitimate.** It must be based on an objective criteria or on principles.
- **Look for alternatives,** as well – What is the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement? (BATNA).
- **Commitments made during the process of negotiation should be realistic.**

Now, let us look at yet another process of resolving conflicts.

Mediation

There are situations where a dialogue between the conflicting parties cannot take place or suddenly breaks down as both parties feel insecure or hostile to each other. In such situations, an individual or a group, other than those involved in the conflict or affected by it, intervenes. This process is called mediation. Mediation is primarily required due to the mistrust of the two parties towards each others' intentions to resolve their conflict or an attitude of non-negotiation of their own stance or position, which results in complete silence, as well as physical and mental distancing of each party from other. The mediator has to be a person or a group acceptable to the conflicting parties. The need to have a mediator arises to reduce the distance, and to enable the parties focus on mutual gains rather than in taking positions. It involves those who have nothing to gain or lose from the conflict, who intervene to facilitate the meeting of the two. Conflicting individuals or groups have prejudices and pre-conceived notions about the outcome of the conflict, which prevent them from generating alternatives that could provide solutions leading to mutual gains, and avoiding losses.

Mediation enables people to talk about their own prejudices. What a mediator does is to provide a climate in which both parties can come together and open communication where mediators facilitate their negotiations. Mediators provide:

- a setting, away from the usual inhabitation of the conflicting mediators, individuals or groups.
- a safe place, where there is likelihood of each party experiencing security from harm whether physical or psychological.
- a change in issues to be focused upon rather than focusing on differences Individual groups consider common interests and issues.



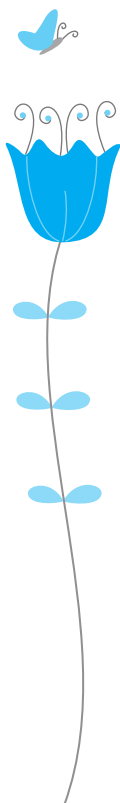
- an exploration of crucial issues that have a bearing on the point of disagreement between parties
- helps enable conflicting individuals or groups to assume responsibility to resolve the issues of conflict, and collaborate tentatively for common gains.

Facilitation

In most organisations, people get into conflicts with others not because of what decisions were taken but because of how decisions were made – who made the decision, by what method and by what level of majority. Thus, decision-making lies at the core of building peace in group, community or organisational settings. People who are a part of an organisation want to have a say in the way the organisation is run, and therefore, when they are not given a chance to participate in the process of decision-making, it gives rise to a lot of ill-will, rumour mongering and hard feelings, which ultimately get expressed in the form of conflicts. In order to settle disputes or simmering conflicts in a family, group or organisation, someone can take the lead to initiate a dialogue so that differences may be expressed, discussed and explored. Facilitators help diffuse tension by exploring discontentment or rumours, and clarifying issues. Thus, facilitation is a process of helping individuals and groups complete a task, solve a problem or come to an agreement to the mutual satisfaction of the people participating in the dialogue or discussion.

Let us look at the way the conflicting parties, the science teacher and the social science teacher, came to an agreement, facilitated by the Vice-Principal of the school, using the above principles of mediation and negotiation.

Proceeding further with our story, the Vice-Principal came to know about the conflict between the science teacher and the social science teacher, and decided to intervene. The Vice-Principal enjoyed a personal rapport with both the teachers. She called both to her chamber at the same time, without their knowing about it. She asked them about the problems that they were having with each other and about the issues that had cropped up in the project. Initially, the two teachers spoke directly to the Vice-Principal and not to each other and addressed peripheral issues rather than substantial ones. The Vice-Principal, then, had to coax them to talk to each other directly,



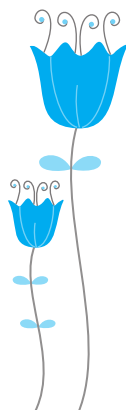
and more so, issue by issue. Each one poured her heart out and spoke of the hurt and humiliation caused in the process, and also spoke of what they needed from the other. The issues were laid out threadbare, and discussed and analysed comprehensively. The two came up with three different options for ending the problems. Each of the three options was taken up one by one, and their negatives and positives, discussed. Finally, the two settled on one option as it took care of their viewpoints. In all this, the Vice-Principal just kept going back and forth between the two, paraphrasing their story and their feelings and summarising the issues of contention and the common grounds of agreement. Thus, the issues related to the project were settled amicably to the mutual satisfaction of both the parties.

The important skill that a peace builder must possess is to communicate effectively. Good listening skills are a must for using strategies of mediation, negotiation and facilitation. It is said that mediators are only as effective as their listening skills. That is why good listening is at the top of the list of skills needed for mastery in learning mediation. Good listening helps in building rapport and trust between the mediators and the conflicting individuals and groups. A negotiator, too, needs to listen effectively, and check for meaning constantly. A facilitator can show respect and compassion only by being a good listener.

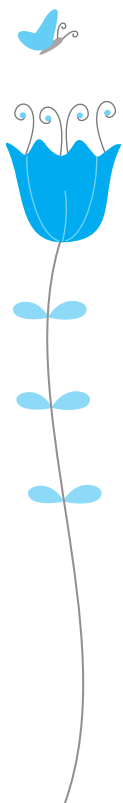
Having gone through the various skills and strategies of dealing with conflicts, we could use them in building a peace classroom.

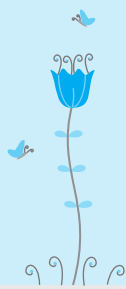
In nutshell, it can be said that many conflicts can be pre-empted. However, when conflict occurs, it is not to be avoided but to be acknowledged and dealt with, in a constructive manner. Constructive handling of conflict is likely to result in cooperation and collaboration with each other to maximise the gains and minimise the losses at both ends. Becoming aware of the conflict and a willingness to deal with it, is itself a positive step. The habit to look within and understand one's own prejudices, biases and fears about conflict will also sow the seeds of positive outcomes. Those who are able to listen to others and express themselves accurately are better able to deal with issues, effectively. Ethical decision-making and alternative ways of problem solving are fundamental to dealing with conflict.

The intention to understand, accept and accommodate the beliefs of others is equally important. The inner struggle to reach a decision



or resolve the issue continues. There may be a feeling of confusion or loss of control in the midst of problems. Tolerance and perseverance will help. The awareness of the process that we go through in dealing with conflict will enable us to learn new ways of resolving conflicts. The change process begins the moment we become aware of the conflict and continues until it is resolved. When the conflict arises, everything and everybody associated with it begins to change. The quality of inner change, produced by the conflict, is determined by the skill, with which the conflict is dealt with. The positive change process promotes significant personal and social growth as it enhances the ability to handle future conflicts constructively.





Towards Exploring and Enabling the Self

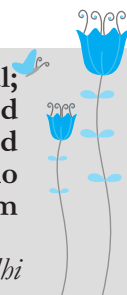
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- **THE SELF AND OTHERS**
 - Self Perception
 - The Self in Relation to Others
 - Perception about Others
- **BIASES, PREJUDICES, STEREOTYPES AND THEIR ORIGIN**
 - Dealing with Prejudices, Biases and Stereotypes
- **PRO-PEACE ATTITUDES AND VALUES**
 - Love and Compassion
 - Truth
 - Justice
 - Righteousness
 - Positive Outlook
 - Appreciation of Diversity
 - Focusing on the Positive in Others
- **SELF REFLECTION AND LISTENING TO THE INNER VOICE**

Exploring and enabling the self finds significant place here because the self is the locus of all thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and values, which form a particular personality make-up. Further, these determine how we respond to our own inner needs, and deal with our relationships outside. Awareness of oneself, and understanding one's own attitudes, biases, prejudices, strengths and weaknesses helps to overcome certain blocks to peace. Overcoming the negative is one aspect of enabling the self for peace. When we eliminate the negative, we see that the positive starts happening. Another aspect of enabling the self is to acquire positive attitudes and values which are important for living in harmony with oneself and with others. Both these aspects have been dealt with. The emphasis on improving communication skills and listening effectively continues as this helps in reducing biases and prejudices as well as developing positivity in relationships. Importance of continuous reflection and awareness of the self has been highlighted.

Everyone of us has good, inherent in the soul; it needs to be drawn out by the teachers, and only those teachers can perform this sacred function, whose own character is unsullied, who are always ready to learn and to grow from perfection to perfection.

—Mahatma Gandhi



The way we respond to the world and our relationships are deeply related to the understanding of who we are and what values we hold dear. Lack of understanding of our own beliefs, attitudes and values may result in behaviour which generates conflicts at intra-personal and inter-personal levels as was discussed in the section on conflict. But do we understand ourselves? Do we know who we are? Some of us will answer – ‘I am Raja’ or ‘I am a teacher’; others will say – “I am Indian”; still others may include more than one aspect. We may describe ourselves in terms of our family, community, state or national or religious affiliations. **Why do different people have different answers? Inherent in all these answers is ‘my identity’ which distinguishes me from others.** Our answers will reveal aspects of our **identity** important for us since we have so many different components of identity. For example, we could be a friend, a parent, a worker, a neighbour, a boss or a subordinate. But these roles or identities are contextual, and depending on who asks this question and where, our answers might be different.

This aspect of identity emerges from self in relation to others, those that are connected with him or her. Based on these relationships, we seek our identity and form images of ourselves at various positions and contexts. But every individual is much more than the sum of these limited identities. The right vision of who we really are requires deeper understanding of our ‘self’ – our unique

needs, aspirations, strengths, limitations, attitudes, beliefs, values, intention, motivation and so on. It is, therefore, important to discover one's true self.

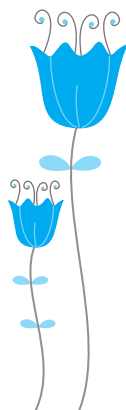
THE SELF AND OTHERS

Indian philosophers and thinkers have highlighted the importance of the self as the key to the transformation of the world. Delor's Commission Report (1996) on 'Learning the Treasure within' has rightly emphasised upon the importance of knowing oneself. It says, "Education must first help individuals discover who they are, only then they may genuinely understand others." Understanding others, in turn, also makes possible better understanding of oneself.

Self analysis or reflections are ways of understanding our own inner worlds better. It is about becoming clearer on our needs and how we can satisfy them without offending others. It is about recognising when and why we get angry, frustrated or anxious? It is about learning to listen to oneself as much as listening to others. It is about being aware of one's biases and prejudices towards others. It is about becoming aware when we are stuck in the old ways of looking at things, which are no more relevant. Bringing peace to oneself and others around is not just a matter of techniques and skills but requires a deeper understanding of oneself. The question is what is the self? What constitutes self understanding? Let us try to find out.

Self Perception

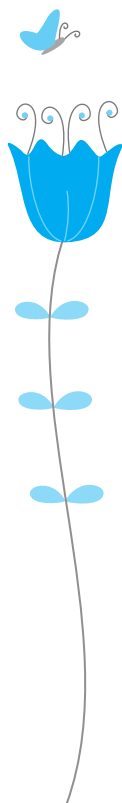
The self is considered to be the sum total of our perceptions and beliefs, that is, what we think about our abilities, physical features, values, goals, motivations, intentions, aspirations, relationships, etc. For instance, I am a girl, I am rich, I am tall, I am beautiful, I am intelligent, I am very popular, I get angry easily, etc. All these constitute conceptions of the self or many concepts that define the self, are also referred to as self-concept. We could also say that self-concept explains ourselves to us. These conceptions, based on many experiences and events in life, may vary from situation to situation and in different phases of life. Every one of us has both positive and negative self-conceptions. Each conception has a value attached to it which makes us feel good or bad. If we value our self, it bestows



high self-esteem but if we underrate ourselves, it may lead to poor self-esteem. Self-concept and self-esteem are often used interchangeably but there is a distinction. Self-concept is a belief about who we are. Self-esteem is an evaluation of who we are. If people evaluate themselves positively, they are likely to have high self-esteem or vice versa.

A variety of factors influence and shape the self. The self develops from past experiences; it determines current behaviour and future expectations. It evolves during infancy, when we begin to understand ourselves as distinguished from others, and proceeds through interactions with others, particularly close relationships. During childhood, feedback from parents, teachers and our own experiences exert a strong influence on our self. Even the casual comments of significant adults make us develop ideas about our abilities and potentials. Experiences of success and failure provide us knowledge of our self. For instance, a child who performs well in studies thinks of himself or herself as intelligent. Another one with unsuccessful experiences thinks of him/herself as unintelligent. When parents, teachers and friends appreciate and encourage, self-esteem is likely to be high. On the other hand, when they scold, reject or abuse, the self-esteem is low, irrespective of the inherent potential. In other words, the potential inherent in an individual unfolds and matures when she receives love, appreciation and encouragement. The inherent potential is likely to decay when she is not loved, or when she is discouraged and abused. The external environment, in the form of family members, parents, siblings and other members of the extended family, teachers, etc. is crucial for positive self-development.

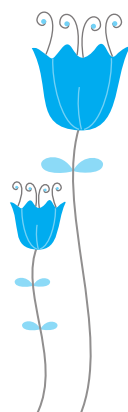
Other factors which shape the 'Self' are one's own observations and constant evaluations in different situations. Individuals observe their own behaviour and draw conclusions about themselves during daily life. Our own observations of our own behaviour are obviously major sources of information about what we like. We compare ourselves with others in order to assess our abilities and qualities. The observation and evaluation of one's own behaviour may not be entirely objective. People may evaluate themselves in more positive ways than they really merit, in some areas. At the same time,



they may view themselves more negatively than they are, in other areas. These errors of perception cause distortions in their self-concept.

Sometimes, people experience a gap between what they actually think about themselves and what they would like to be. This mismatch between self-perception and the ideal is termed “self-discrepancy.” Everyone experiences self-discrepancy. Yet, most people manage to feel reasonably good about themselves. How is this possible? An important factor is our awareness of the discrepancy and whether the discrepancy is actually important to us and to what extent we are ready to accept ourselves and are motivated to change and reduce the gap between the ‘actual and the ought self.’

When self-concept is established, the individual has a tendency to preserve and defend it. As we grow older, we are not open to new experiences due to our strong emotional attachments to earlier ideas of the self. Generally, people are strongly motivated to maintain a consistent view of the self across time and situations. This may cause conflicts within the individual as well as with others. The concepts about the self and related attitudes, which have relevance to the past, may cause conflict or may not serve the purpose. For example, you developed negative attitudes towards a certain community during interactions with others as a child. But now, since your childhood circumstances have changed, the community has become different, more educated and empowered, thus rendering old attitudes, flawed. These flaws in our attitudes must be identified and changed. But we do not question the relevance of our old attitudes and self-perceptions in spite of the fact that the circumstances and the environment have completely changed. The new experiences which are in conflict with our ‘self’ are either rejected or these are adjusted to the old frame of the self. For example, our ideas about our ability, our need for further study, hard work, etc. are dealt with in a certain manner, even if there is fresh evidence that we have the potential to excel. We brush it aside with embarrassment and rationalisation that it is too late. The task we handled was easy, we believe and say that it was a freak chance that we succeeded. We thus, lose the opportunity to grow. Similarly, our attitudes about many other aspects of our self are too rigid to change. If we are rigid about our ‘self’, we are not open to new



experiences and knowledge about people, problems and society, and we remain in conflict within and with others.

Thus, the lack of willingness to change one's view of oneself becomes a source of conflict as our attitudes, experiences and self are no more in line with the truth. For example, it is believed that men are superior to women. But there is a lady boss in the office. This contradiction of a man's "Self" being subordinate to a woman's causes conflict. Beliefs and attitudes do have inherent dynamic qualities to change with time and experiences, which facilitates adjustment to situations. However, resistance to acknowledge these experiences causes blocks in the way of attitude change. These blocks must be identified, and the self needs to be oriented to the present so that we are open to new experiences, people and situations.

When Yen Ho was about to take up his duties as tutor to the heir of Ling, the Duke of Wei. He went to Ch'u for advice. "I have to deal," he said, "with a man of a depraved and murderous disposition. How is one to deal with a man of this sort?"

"I am glad," said Ch'u Po Yu, "that you asked this question. The first thing you must do is not to improve him, but to improve yourself."

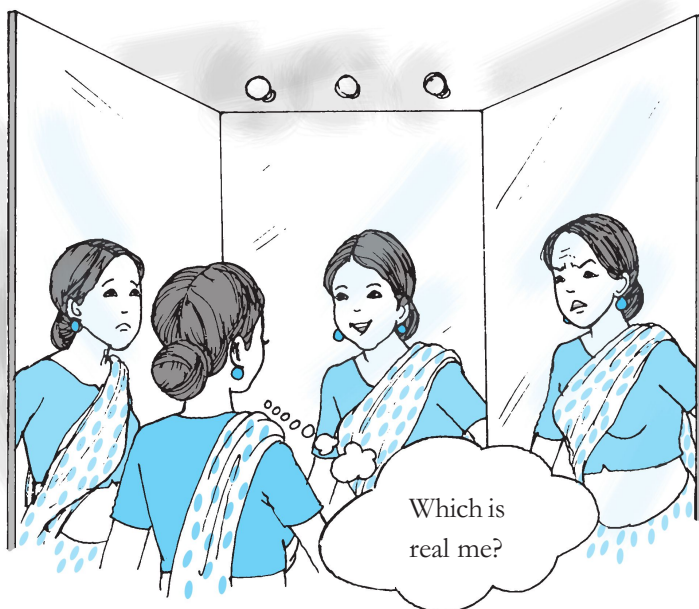


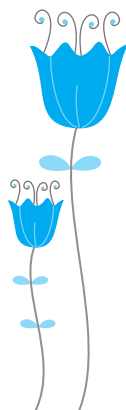
Fig. 7

The Self in Relation to Others

As discussed earlier, when our self-perception and outer reality are not in conformity with each other, our vision lacks clarity. This lack of clarity in our perception of our external environment – our friends, colleagues, neighbours, etc. causes discomfort and mistrust. Although we continue to behave as if everything is fine, our little conflicts pile up, and relationships sour. When it is a family member, our reactions are not so strong, depending on whether it is a senior or powerful member of the family. On the contrary, when the other party is weak or lower in authority, we often react wilfully. In such situations, the underlying attitude is that we need not be careful. However, when our own self-perceptions are placed in order by opening up to looking at our own distortions, we are able to perceive others too, in proper ways. We can see that the others are quite needed to make our world complete, whether it is a family member or people around us in school and in the neighbourhood. It is important to realise that if we want to be valued by those around us, which is crucial to our self-esteem, we will have to understand and value others, too. Valuing others enables us to deal effectively with them. But why do we not value or respect others? Why do we see them as full of flaws?

Perception about Others

Our perceptions of others are full of errors, which are quite oblivious to us. We tend to over-generalise qualities we see in others on the basis of superficial and incomplete information. What could perhaps be a chance or exceptional behaviour or even hearsay is extrapolated as legitimate and normal behaviour. Any other observation is then fitted into this extrapolated or assumed frame of reference. The lack of objectivity, due to occasional and limited interaction, leads to an unsystematic and erroneous understanding of the other, and produces biases and stereotypes about others – individuals as well as groups. We must be watchful of this tendency of jumping to conclusions about our judgements and evaluations of others. The biases, prejudices and stereotypes are born of this tendency in human beings to generalise on the basis of one single observation or gossip or hearsay or whatever limited negative information we have, particularly about those whom we do not like. We tend to be positive about people we like. In order to understand others, we must explore



our own biased attitudes. Why do we have a certain bias towards an individual or a group? Is it based on my own knowledge or I have picked it up from others?

BIASES, PREJUDICES, STEREOTYPES AND THEIR ORIGIN

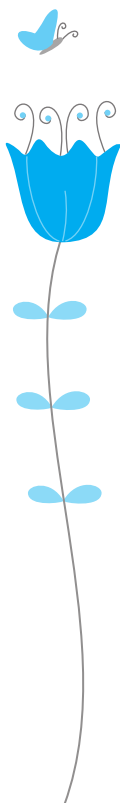
The biases or prejudices are normally assumptions we have about people without actual experiences. They are rather based on particular social, economic, regional or biological groups that they belong to. This, then leads to exclusion or inclusion of people, based on these perceptions. Generally, we are either vaguely or not at all aware of our biases. Awareness comes into focus when we face crisis. Reflect on the following situations to understand (a few dimensions of) your own bias:

- When were you acutely aware of being a woman or a man?
- What thoughts come to your mind when you are kept out of any group?
- When you are in a strange place, whom do you choose to talk to?

What would our answers be to these statements? To what extent would our own feelings be applicable to all other individuals belonging to that category or group? What would be the implications of applying them to all individuals belonging to that category or group?

When we behave according to such biased attitudes without reflecting, it may lead to alienation of others, and in some cases, violence as well. This will become clearer as we explore some of the statements below and see how our perceptions about others determine our behaviour towards them.

- “Boys are better at mathematics than girls.”
- “Old people are in the habit of nagging.”
- “Children who wear spectacles watch a lot of television.”
- “The police is very harsh and insensitive.”
- “Most stepmothers ill-treat their children.”
- “Hard physical work is not a woman’s cup of tea.”
- “All politicians are corrupt.”
- “Parents from the lower strata of society prefer to send their children to work rather than to study.”
- “Mothers-in-law usually trouble their daughters-in-law.”

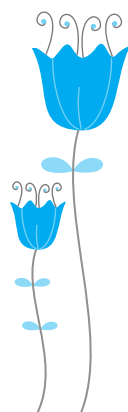


- “All people who can speak good English are well-educated.”
- “Most people working in government offices are inefficient.”
- “Most teachers in government schools are least interested in taking their classes.”
- “People doing manual labour are not intelligent.”
- “People in the village are simpletons.”

These statements are reflective of attempts at over-generalisation or categorisation of individuals. The danger that lies within this is the inability to recognise an individual's attributes as different from that of the group. The effect of these statements can sometimes become so overpowering that it prevents us from looking at the individual from an objective perspective. Albert Einstein was a victim of such thinking. He did not speak until age three. He was so quiet and defiant in school that his teachers suspected that he could be mentally retarded. In adult life, he wrote four papers, which revolutionised modern physics. While belief in some of these statements may not have very serious consequences, these beliefs do result in negative attitudes towards certain groups of people, thereby causing difficulties in interpersonal relations. Internalisation of these statements, right from childhood, without critical thinking, can have serious repercussions. But even before I, as a teacher, think about touching upon these issues with my students, I need to work with myself. So where do I begin?

The statements above reflect biases, prejudices or stereotypes. It is important to understand the meaning of these terms, which may help us explore our own biases, if any.

Bias is a preference that stops us from impartial judgment. As a teacher, I may have a bias towards a child who is a high achiever, who comes to school in a clean uniform everyday or to a child who belongs to a certain caste. This may be so because I accord a very high value to those things. For these preferences of mine, I may assign this child several duties within the class. But this may not necessarily be the best decision since it would inhibit other children from getting the opportunity to take up responsibilities. The teacher may not be perceived as fair. The environment that thus gets created within the classroom is not a very favourable one. Biases blind the ability to look at others' attributes or qualities.



Exercise

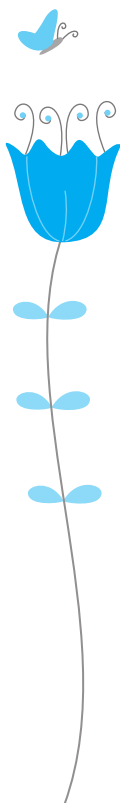
It would be a good exercise to make a list of the attributes and qualities that I expect from the children of my class, and reflect upon the extent to which the possession or non-possession of these qualities would influence my opinion about these children.



Now, let us look at another term – *Prejudice*. It means making a pre-judgment – that is, a judgement about someone or something based on traditions or other sources rather than one's own experiences. Prejudice is a rigid emotional attitude (favourable/unfavourable) towards others – a group or individual that predisposes us to think of them in negative terms, such as, “members of a particular community are very aggressive by nature because they consume a lot of meat.” This is a statement that shows prejudice. If we were to ask the person making this statement as to how many members of this community had he/she closely interacted with, the answer may possibly be none or a couple. Then, what is it that had made them form this attitude? A possible answer to this may be that we have heard this from those around us. The danger that lies in such prejudices is that if ever we were to encounter a member of that particular group or community, one would have pre-conceived notions of their behavioural attributes, and interact with them keeping these in mind. The possibility of an objective interaction thus gets minimised.

Prejudice has the potential to predetermine our understanding to the extent that we ‘misinterpret’ and ‘misread’ whatever they tell us or do, so that it fits into our prefixed image of them. In the worst case, we might not even be interested in interacting with ‘these groups or individuals’ at all because we think that we already know what we need to know about them.

Prejudice may be negative (hostile, unfriendly) or positive (favourable, friendly) but in either case, the categorical attitude towards a group is applied to all its members. By implication, an individual is judged not as an individual but as a member of a group. While prejudice, whether positive or negative, is unwarranted, it is the negative variety that deserves greater attention since it causes social friction.



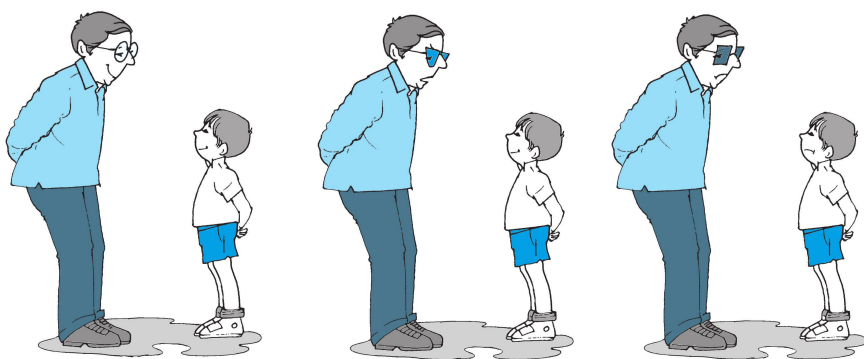


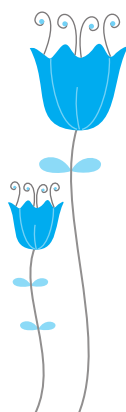
Fig. 8 Perceptual bias

Once during a session with teachers (Class VI to XII) on the issue of child rights, as part of their in-service training programme, one of the teachers raised his hand and said, ‘Madam, despite what you may say, I know that children from slums are not going to improve. There is no hope for them since they and their parents do not have the motivation to bring about any change in their children.’ This statement was startling for the huge implications it held for all the children that would come to the tutelage of this teacher.

The critical concern is that we become aware of our prejudices and make conscious attempts to individualise each child who comes to us, rather than putting all of them into the same box.

Now, let us look at the third term – *stereotype*. Stereotype is making an over-generalisation from experiences with one or a few members, to a whole group. Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes, particularly negative ones, often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution of groups or individuals. Television, movies or comics have a great role to play in sustaining stereotypes. A stereotypical preconception of a group member both stimulates and sustains prejudiced responses. The manner in which stereotypes impact the interaction among children gets aptly depicted in the following story:

Roopa was a late entry into the class. She was handicapped. The class teacher requested the other children of the class to help her cover the backlog. She did not speak much with other children. They thought of her as a poor student who needed academic help. After the class tests were held, much to the surprise of the other children, Roopa was among the toppers. She spent a lot of time alone. One day, they pushed her and she slipped, and was seriously injured. She had to be hospitalised. After that incident, others’ opinion changed about her and a few even befriended



her. In the next examination, she topped the class again. The other girl, who was the topper, found this very annoying. She would always make sarcastic remarks about her disability. Sometimes, she and other friends, who were also angry with her, would push her, too.

Roopa's story is a reflection of how a few experiences that children may have had with quiet children, made them believe that all quiet children were proud. Stereotypical characteristics do have a basis, and therefore, it must be acknowledged that while we may have come across these characteristics in a couple of children, we are quick to generalize them. This story could be used in class to generate a discussion on the following issues:

- What had made the classmates behave in a particular manner with Roopa?
- Do they come across other situations of this kind?
- If this was to happen to them, how would they feel?
- How could situations of this kind be avoided?

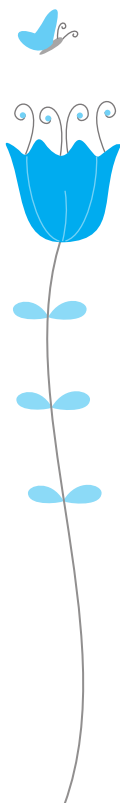
Just undertake another exercise. This could also be undertaken with the students.

Just close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Bring to your mind the difference in the skin colour of an Indian and a westerner.

You would probably describe Indian skin to be dark. But do all Indians have dark skin? It varies, and some of them may even have skin as fair as western people. A harmonious co-existence requires that we give everyone an independent chance for assessment. Let us now deal with a situation that children often encounter.

- 
- What does this picture depict?
 - If adults were to look at a child wearing this, what would they say to him/her?
 - What would the child feel at that point of time?

This was tried with some adults, and some of the instant responses that came in were, "He must be watching too much television," "She must be sitting too close to the television," "She would be lying down on the bed and reading." While these adult responses may be based upon a few real life experiences, the danger that lies with this generalisation is that it closes our eyes to the



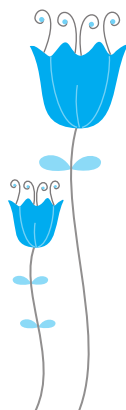
uniqueness of each individual. All of us like to be looked at as unique individuals with our specific qualities. In the above case, the child may actually be wearing spectacles because of some congenital problem. A boy in Class II started losing sight in one eye due to some congenital problem in the retina. The doctors were, in fact, of the view that his condition was irreversible, and that gradually, he would lose complete vision in one of his eyes. If such a child was to be confronted with remarks of the kind described above, it is bound to make him feel extremely hurt. It is quite likely that he may consider his teacher to be insensitive. Instead, understanding the child's unique situation makes the child feel secure and understood, and naturally, the consequences are going to be very positive.

We need to recognise that some of our beliefs are actually *biases, prejudices* and *stereotypes*. However, we treat them as facts, and consider our actions to be perfectly justified. Contrary to this, facts are knowledge or information, based on real occurrences, and can also be referred to as verifiable; for example, the number of children present in a class on a particular day. This could be verified by anyone and the answer would be the same.

Holding biases, prejudices and stereotypes against people also leads to selective memory of our subsequent experiences and distortions in our perceptions, which are conveniently fitted into existing stereotypes. It is important that our interactions are based on an open frame of mind and on a proper understanding of facts.

The important question that still remains unanswered in the above discussion is, "What is it that makes us biased, prejudiced or stereotypical?" While the complexity of human nature makes it practically impossible to offer a single explanation to the above unanswered question, let us summarise some of the explanations that have been proposed.

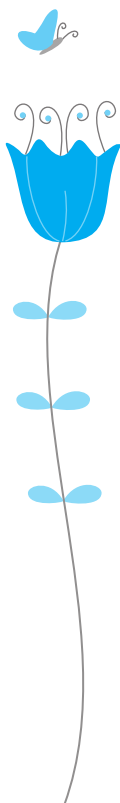
- Biased, prejudiced or stereotypical responses are learnt by observing our parents or other significant individuals in our immediate environment. To cite an example, if I were to constantly hear from my parents that old people are in the habit of nagging, there is a likelihood that I would grow up believing that statement to be true.



- The desire to conform to group norms also leads to such responses. Group acceptance can be such a significant need among some that we may be willing to go to any length to conform to what the group believes in. Having views different from others creates the fear of social exclusion, which we, as social beings, are not willing to accept. For example, a very common feeling among adolescents is that parents do not understand them. While this may be true in a few cases, generalising these statements to all parents may not be fair. Amongst younger children, biases frequently occur against those having an impairment or a disability or those from backward class or caste. They are very often seen as non-performers without even being given a chance to perform. We are all aware of the story of Helen Keller. She survived high fever as a baby and even though she was both hearing impaired and visually impaired, she became a writer and a lecturer.
- Limited interactions with the groups against whom these prejudices may be held is also a contributory factor. We all have our limitations in terms of close interactions that we can possibly have. Our understanding about other people or groups that do not come into our domain of interaction so frequently is based upon what we get to hear from others or even what the media projects, rather than on first-hand experience. This kind of information, particularly, that which is negative, makes it difficult to look at such individuals objectively.

Now let us explore some of the frequent stereotypes. We make generalised statements about individuals or groups. When we use a stereotype which says “girls are weak” or “this community is lazy” or “she is always dominating,” how can we think of all girls as weak or all members of a community as ‘lazy’, or any girl to be always dominating? We would realise the dangers of making oversimplified generalisations on many other issues as well. This would help us realise that rigid beliefs can be an obstacle to understanding people, and that they can also be a barrier to change, both on a personal and a social level.

We need to critically examine and reflect on the sources of our attitudes. Only then can we bring about attitude change in our self. It is important that we recognise that belief systems can change when confronted with new knowledge or personal experience. This understanding can be used to deal with prejudices, biases and stereotypes.



Dealing with Prejudices, Biases and Stereotypes

Convinced about the necessity to rely on facts may create turbulence or unrest in our minds, and in our zeal to do something about expressed biases or stereotypes, we may do something rash. How should we deal with these stereotypes and biases? Communication is a crucial factor in dealing with biases or prejudices. The following three communication styles are frequently used.

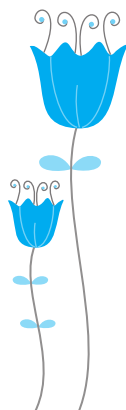
- **Avoidance** : Saying nothing or ignoring
- **Aggression**: Attacking back
- **Assertion**: Confronting in a clear and open way by:
 - Releasing the pain by expressing your feelings to a friend or ally (usually latter or somewhere else)
 - Using anger reducers (reverse counting, a few sips of water) so that you can think about the words you want to use (you would not be heard if you make the other person feel guilty or wrong)
 - Using strategies (active listening, clarifying questions, and I-messages) to keep the other person's defensiveness to a minimum.
 - Maintaining a positive tone.

Of the three styles of responding to a bias or prejudiced statement, assertion is, in all probability, the better response to end or change the prejudice you are experiencing.

It is important to realise that it is not easy to interrupt when such biased or prejudiced comments are being made. Most often, we tend to become defensive, which may, in fact, aggravate the situation. What is required is strong conviction and careful communication without hurting the feelings of the other person.

The communication skills of the teachers are crucial in dealing with biases, stereotypes and prejudices.

When a teacher finds it necessary to intervene in a situation involving a bias or a prejudice which evokes strong reactions, it is important to understand that we need to be careful about how we say things and what we say. We should enable those involved in the situation to express themselves. Our role must be to facilitate and bring out information, opinions, attitudes, experiences and feelings.



We don't want to make the situation worse by annoying or confusing the other person. In order to enable people to express, it is necessary that we listen to them without interruption. However, absurd the others' opinion may be, we should not be impatient or look down upon them. The attitude of respect and support is a must to encourage the other person to continue to talk about difficult situations which evoke strong feelings and to pay attention to others with a view to find a solution.

Some facilitative expressions and precautions have been outlined below:

For instance –

- **Talk about yourself and about what you feel,** need, want and think.

I have a problem,

I feel angry when others _____

I feel unwanted and lonely _____

I feel as though something is wrong with me when _____

- **Begin your sentences with “I” rather than with “you”.** For example:-

I feel hurt when you don't listen to the instructions I give for homework in the classroom', rather than," You never complete your work. You don't care about your studies."

- **Use neutral language and be as specific as possible.** For example, Using definitive language like – “I can never trust you”, can be annoying and vague. Instead, providing specific feedback on how the other person makes you angry can be more useful. For instance, saying, “I get upset when you do not pay attention or complete your work or do not come on time etc.,” is more helpful.

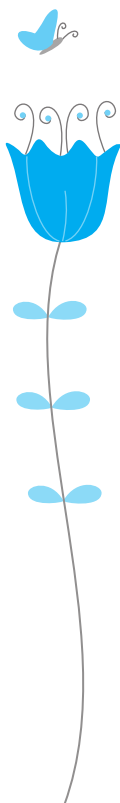
- **Not to call names, blame, characterise or judge.**

The moment we blame, criticise or judge others, they get angry, and close up to any meaningful further communication.

“You are so stupid; people like you never remember to complete their work. You'll never improve your work habits.” These statements will only anger students.

- **State your positive intentions** to resolve the conflict.

“This discomfort between us really concerns me. I think if we



sit down and talk, we can make things better. I'm willing to spend the time necessary to improve the situation. You can tell me what makes you angry with me or what I can do to help you."

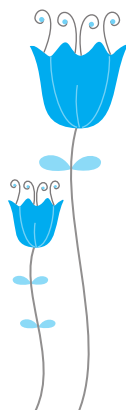
- **Tell the other person that you want to listen to his or her viewpoint.** "I understand that you may have your problems or differences. I would be glad to listen to you. Your point of view is important to me. I understand that you may have found this assignment uninteresting or difficult. You can tell me about the problem, which will help me improve further assignments."

S. No.	Talks that offend	Instead you can say
1.	You are stupid, you are a duffer	Which part of it you haven't understood?
2.	You are so negative	What is it that is bothering you?
3.	You are argumentative	What is it that you were discussing?
4.	You are aggressive	What happened? Why did you act this way?
5.	You performed poorly	You tried well. I am sure you can do better.
6.	Sit with an intelligent child. Then, you'll understand things in class	If you don't understand something, you can take the help of your classmates.

Let us reflect on some more situations:

We often have differences of opinion with others. Did you have such a problem with your school principal? We generally feel that some of the things that the principal expected from us were unjustified? What do we do in such situations? Do we ignore the situation? Or do we express our concerns in the form of verbal anger? What do you think we should have done in such situations to resolve the conflict?

- Do we talk to the principal about what we feel, need, want and think? Or, do we blame her for overburdening us?
- Do we talk about our feelings and issues or do we attack her by characterising and judging her behaviour?
- Do we give specific information about what made us feel so



angry or do we make vague statements such as, “you don’t care about the teachers at all?”

- Did we let the principal talk about her/his viewpoint or were we too busy expressing our own concerns? Let us think back, and try and remember if we did listen as much as we spoke?
- What about our body language? Do you think our non-verbal actions showed that we were there for a “dialogue” and that we were trying to resolve the conflict or did it show something else?
- After thinking back and reflecting upon our experiences with the school principal, do we think that we could have had the “dialogue” in a different manner? Would we have liked to have talked differently? Do we think that this could have led the conversation into a different direction?

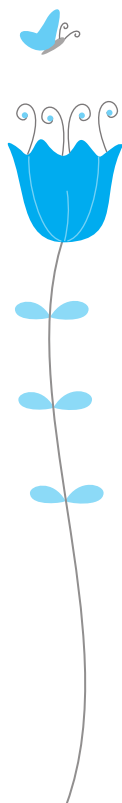
Think about it!! Our verbal and non-verbal behaviour with our colleagues, seniors, friends, family and children can make a whole lot of difference in resolving our everyday conflicts.

Thus, our interactions and relationships could become meaningful, and a source of pleasure if we are aware of our own self, attitudes and communication styles. In order to further consolidate our positive attitude, we may ponder over not only overcoming biases but acquiring pro-peace attitudes and values.

PRO-PEACE ATTITUDES AND VALUES

At the hub of learning, to know about oneself and others, is a set of values and attitudes which are the individuals’ blue print for the way they perceive the world. These values guide and regulate their actions and behaviour. Values and attitudes are learnt within the family, the neighbourhood, society and culture through the process of socialisation. Differences in socialisation patterns lead to the development of different beliefs, attitudes and values. However, there are certain fundamental values which are considered pro-peace and civilized by all human beings across the globe. These are essential for living in harmony with oneself and with others.

A peace educator is consistently engaged with clarifying values that establish his/her understanding of realities and actions in the world. The core values required for peace are love, compassion, justice, truth, righteousness, appreciating diversity, integrity, optimism, hope etc. Why should we foster these values in ourselves and in our students? Let us look at them briefly.



Love and Compassion

“We are shaped and fashioned by what we love.”

—Goethe

Where love reigns, peace prevails. Love is the source of worth. What we love, we value, protect and preserve. Love is also the energy for growth and development. Love enables us to express our best and to see the best in others, which is the secret of growth. Discrimination, discouragement, denial of opportunities to a person or group: all denote a failure of love. To love others is to do whatever one can do to facilitate their progress.

Compassion arises out of a deep inward sense of belonging and love for others. It arises out of our kinship as members of the human family. This enables us to transcend all barriers, labels and prejudices. We feel for those who suffer, even if they are strangers or at a distance from us. We feel their suffering as something that somehow happens to us also. This keen sense of universal kinship is a profound resource for peace and brotherhood. What propaganda, rumour-mongering and hate campaigns do is to suppress this sense of kinship and inhibit compassion. When compassion is suppressed, cruelty wakes up. Violence erupts.

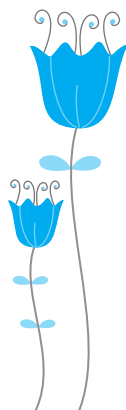
As teachers, we need to explore fully to nurture compassion in ourselves and in our students. Without this, we may fail to educate, whereas, we may succeed in preparing people for the job market.

When you recognise that all human beings are equal and like yourself in both their desire for happiness and their right to obtain it, you automatically feel empathy and closeness for them...True compassion is not just an emotional response but a firm commitment founded on reason.

—The Dalai Lama

Truth

Truth is to peace what falsehood is to violence. What is knowledge worth if it excludes passion for the truth? Being truthful is in accordance with the nature of human beings. Being truthful is natural, and lying is artificial. A truthful person is not merely one who speaks



the truth but who is truthful in her action as well. Knowing anything untruthful is no better than ignorance; it is violence. We feel hurt when falsehood is spread about us. An educated person must feel the same degree of indignation at falsehood being spread about another person or group or community. Teachers are in a vantage position to strengthen the foundation of truth among students. Our work as teachers cannot bypass the duty to nurture in students the art and science of seeking the truth. Fostering a firm commitment to truth through education is the best input that we can make into building a culture of peace. We must ensure that no one becomes a victim of falsehood either as a propagator or as a victim. It is not enough that we refrain from speaking or spreading falsehoods. We must own up to the truth that we know. If we keep quiet instead, someone will get victimised. Such silence is violence. The famous 'Triple Filter Test' in the box tells you more about truth.

A Triple Filter Test

Socrates may not have said this. Yet, it is a very good test.

The next time someone starts to spread some gossip, think of this:

In ancient Greece (469-399 BC), Socrates was widely lauded for his wisdom.

One day, the great philosopher came upon an acquaintance who ran up to him excitedly and said, "Socrates, do you know what I just heard about one of your students?"

"Wait a moment," Socrates replied. "Before you tell me, I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," Socrates continued. "Before you talk to me about my student, let's take a moment to filter what you're going to say. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now, let's try the second filter, the filter of Goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my student something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something

bad about him, even though you're not certain it's true?"

The man shrugged, a little embarrassed.

Socrates continued. "You may still pass the test though, because there is a third filter – the filter of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my student going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really..."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither True nor Good and not even Useful, why tell it to me at all?"

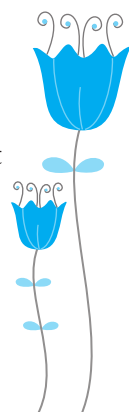
This is the reason Socrates was a great philosopher and held in such high esteem.

Justice

"Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognise the voice of their own conscience usually recognise also the voice of justice."

—*Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

Injustice undermines peace. When a society compromises its commitment to justice, it also undermines its own peace. Peace and justice are like the two sides of the same coin. Commitment to justice must be deemed the hallmark of an educated person. To be just to others is to treat them as we want to be treated by others. Justice arises out of a sense of human solidarity. Superficial differences apart, we all belong together. Therefore, what we do to others will happen to us, someday or the other. Everyone is special or none is. So, I really cannot expect to get the justice that my neighbour or my classmate is denied either by me or by others. So the best way – indeed the only way – to ensure that I, too, get justice is to give justice to others, and to be committed to justice for all. The school and the classroom need to be seen as gardens of justice. Are students developing "a concern for others?" or are they simply self-centred? Do they try to thrive at each other's expense? Do they have the courage for justice, even if it is likely to hurt their interests? As a rule, wherever justice is upheld, the cause of peace is safe. As teachers, we may not influence the attitudes of all but we can at least



shape the outlook of the young minds we nurture. The relationships we maintain with them, the subjects we teach and the vision with which we pursue our work are the means and the resources given to us to make a constructive input into justice and peace.

Righteousness

Another important value is doing one's duty and accepting responsibility for one's work and action. To accept responsibility for work requires sensitivity, initiative, willingness to work, commitment, involvement, determination, perseverance, courage and resourcefulness. Doing one's duty helps in achieving one's goals and providing a sense of satisfaction. Taking up responsibility for work and action is to do our duty. Quite often, people learn to become helpless due to an indifferent attitude; lack of willingness and resourcefulness; too much dependence on others and the lack of a flexible attitude. Making use of available resources in hopeless situations is important. One should also encourage righteousness – 'I do my duty as if everything depends on me.' This phrase reminds one to own responsibility rather than wait for others, and not give up easily while overcoming problems as this helps to overcome helplessness.

Positive Outlook

"Most important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."

—Dale Carnegie

Positivity is the seed of peace. Negativity wastes our energy, talents and opportunities. Those who are infected with negativity become incapable of happy interpersonal relationships. They shut the doors on their own growth and fulfillment. Failing to do justice to themselves, they see themselves as victims, and blame others for their failures and woes instead of the appreciation and gratitude for whatever they have.

Thinking positive is also important for enhancing self-esteem. People's positive and negative states of mind arise from their self-concept, the image they build about their own selves. If they think they are winners, that thought gives them courage to win. Thus,



success begets success, so does failure. When a person has positive attitudes, she sees the brighter side of things. A positive outlook brings about joy, creativity, and a sense of purpose. Learning ways of positive thinking, and creating a positive mindset is an important attitude for peace.

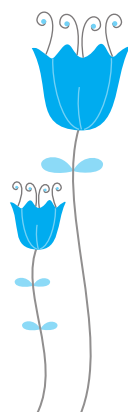
Appreciation of Diversity

The basic principle underlying love, compassion and justice is that all human beings are interconnected. Differences exist but they do not necessarily create divisions. Differences could be due to language, religion, ideologies, cultures etc. Efforts are needed to understand the diversity of the human race and to see what people have in common. Efforts are needed to foster love and respect and protection of cultural diversity, which requires appreciation rather than barely tolerance for existence. It requires sensitivity, open-mindedness, joy of working together, resisting conflicts and mutual understanding. It is a matter of individual responsibility to see whether we are responsible for creating differences or divisions which may result in hatred and violence or we are spreading love and affection.

Focusing on the Positive in Others

This is another important value for enhancing positive social interaction. Adopting a positive outlook towards each other, valuing others and gaining skills in expressing feelings of affection and appreciation help in being related to people. These lead to open communication and positive regard for others. It is generally said that people who find good things to say about others find others saying good things about them.

Apparently, with the rapidly changing world, the importance of these eternal values may seem to be waning but, in reality, people have begun to ask questions like – what is important to me and what do I really want in my life. Practicing peace requires clarification and re-evaluation of the values we hold dear because what it takes to be at peace is staying rooted in enduring values and practicing them in life. We can stay rooted only in that which endures. Being rooted in what is fleeting and unstable can breed only anxiety and restlessness. For example, sitting on the branch of a tree that we



think is going to snap off any moment is not a peaceful state. Values and principles are meant to sustain personal and collective life.

Nowadays, some of us often question whether values can be taught. We need not teach them but we need to be aware of these eternal values which are known to us. But we are not able to practice these in life, as we fail to see the connection between these values, health and happiness. Reflection on a continuous basis on our actions, intentions and motives and goals will reveal this connection. It is important to turn our attention inward and reflect in complete silence.

What we have learned so far may help us handle the world around us more than the world within. These attitudes and skills may be of little value when it comes to understanding our inner processes. To understand the intangible, we need self-understanding, self-trust and a willingness to listen to ourselves. We need to listen to ourselves to know where we are and where we should go next.

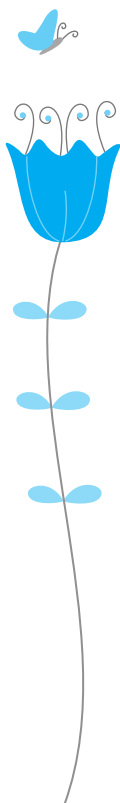
SELF REFLECTION AND LISTENING TO THE INNER VOICE

It is, therefore, important that we become aware of our 'self' and develop mindfulness about ourselves. The awareness of the self brings about transformations, and releases blocked energies. We need to constantly yet gently keep reflecting on our actions to understand and improve our self and the way we respond to situations in order to make ourselves more peaceful.

"We really do not learn anything from our experience. We only learn from reflecting on our experience."

—Robert Sinclair

Awareness of one's strengths and acceptance of limitations is important for understanding the self. Understanding one's strengths contributes to valuing the self, and self-confidence bestows the initiative to explore new aspects, which help in mobilising one's potential. This also changes the way we see others. It is important to develop an awareness of one's limitations. It is a step towards knowing and improving, and ultimately strengthening oneself. It is a natural human tendency to resist acceptance of one's weaknesses and limitations, failures and mistakes but it helps us to become who



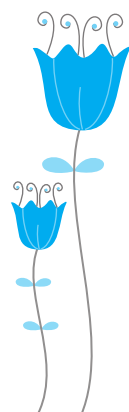
we are instead of directing effort to become who we are not. To know oneself, it is important to discover one's true being.

Self reflection includes thinking about –

1. Who am I? Where did I come from?
2. Why am I the way I am?
3. What am I doing?
4. What do I want to achieve in life?
5. Do I behave in a similar manner in all situations with everyone?
6. Why do I behave in a particular way?

In order to find answers to these questions, we need to direct attention inwards, in complete silence, wherein we can listen to our inner voice. We are mostly lost in noise created by the external environment which pulls us in different directions and plays upon our feelings. We need to listen and trust our inner voice. It does not imply that the inner voice is always right. It can be fallible. The value of learning to listen to this inner voice is to open ourselves, introspect and reflect. When we reflect, we often find deeper guidance which contains a wisdom that our conscious thinking was unable to reveal. Whenever there is time, try to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, settle down, close your eyes, and take a few minutes to relax. It is only when we give time to ourselves and away from the din of daily life that wisdom dawns. This inner wisdom speaks to us and tells us that something is not quite right. It will tell us when we push ourselves too hard or when we did not treat someone fairly or whether we should hold back for a while rather than rushing in. We must find opportunities to turn inwards and face ourselves.

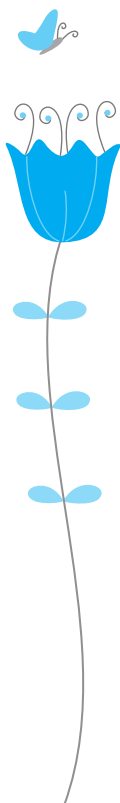
It is only through introspection that we can understand that inner nature is the controlling factor of outer action. Most of the time, we attribute causes to external factors and feel that people must change. The habit to look within and examine ourselves will bring in the sensitivity to discover that the change we wish to see in others can be brought about by first changing ourselves. The more we turn inwards to understand our own distortions of the outer reality, our strengths, and come to accept our weaknesses, the more tolerant and forgiving we become towards others. But it is not so simple to be forgiving and accepting when it comes to the deep and core

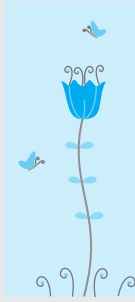


aspects of the self, which have very strong emotional ties attached. It is in these strong emotional aspects of the self, which are not open to question, that a lot of biases, stereotypes and prejudices towards other are located. Nevertheless—

*There is no need to run outside
For better seeing,
Nor to peer from a window. Rather abide
At the centre of your being;
For the more you leave it, the less you learn.
Search your heart and see
If he is wise who takes each turn:
The way to do is to be.*

Lao-Tze (Sixth Century BC)





Pedagogy for Peace

4

- **NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT**
- **BARRIERS TO PEACE**
- **ENVISIONING A PEACE CLASSROOM**
- **BECOMING A PEACE TEACHER**
 - Relationships
 - Modelling Behaviours
 - Listening and Communication Skills
 - Responding or Attending skills
 - Seeking Clarifications
- **IMPROVING CLASSROOM PRACTICES**
 - Psychologically Safe Environment
 - Constructive Feedback
 - Positive Reinforcement
 - Accepting Mistakes
 - Avoiding Impulsive Judgments and Evaluative Remarks
 - Respecting Ideas and Questions
 - Increasing Intrinsic Motivation
 - Using Humour

In this chapter, the focus shifts from our ownself to students, highlighting the need to bring about a paradigm shift in the pedagogy. The barriers to peace and the characteristics of classrooms that become spaces for nurturing peace have been identified. The kind of role a teacher must play, and the kind of relationships she must develop with children to nurture peace related attitudes, values and behaviour have also been emphasised. Teacher has to be conscious of her own behaviour and its impact on children. Her own attitudes and relationships determine the pedagogical practices. In this context, the importance of modelling peaceful behaviour and following certain classroom practices to create environment conducive for joyful and participatory learning have been described.

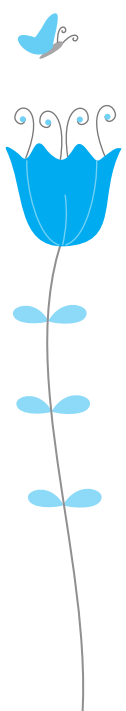


“The responsibility for building a peaceful and enlightened society rests with the educator.”

—J. Krishnamurti

As educators, how can we prepare our children and youth to meet the challenges that they face today and bring about a transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace? How can we teach them to live in harmony with the self, others and with nature? How can they be empowered to become responsible and committed agents of change for a better world? How can we help them with conscience, commitment and compassion? What type of education do we need to give to our students? What paradigm shifts do we need to bring in ourselves and in our policies, classrooms and school practices? The following parable describes the despair of a student.

Teacher, you gave me half a loaf



A teacher had a dream in which she saw one of her students fifty years from today. The student was angry and asked, “Why did I learn so much detail about the past and the administration of my country and so little about the world? He was angry because no one told him that as an adult he would be faced almost daily with problems of a global interdependent nature, be they problems of peace, security, quality of life, inflation, or scarcity of natural resources. “Why was I not warned? Why was I not better educated? Why did my teachers not tell me about these problems and help me understand that I was a member of an interdependent human race?”

With ever greater anger, the student shouted, ‘You helped me extend my hands with incredible machines, my eyes with telescopes and microscopes, my ears with telephones, radios and sonar, and my brain with computers, but you did not help me extend my heart, love and concern for the human family. Teacher, you gave me half a loaf.

Source : Extract from a parable

Jon Rye Kinghorn

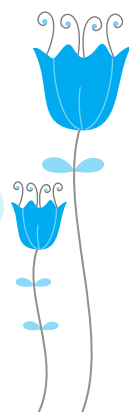
Merely preparing students to pass examinations and earn their livelihood is not sufficient. Education, which is knowledge driven, is not important alone. Of what use is it to be knowledgeable and competent if students are not able to commit themselves to a cause, if they are selfish and not willing to care and share with others or to respect and accept peace? Of what use is that knowledge if they cannot improve the quality of their life and that of others? Education is one of the instruments to empower children to live peacefully and also to build peace and unity in the world, to be citizens and leaders of tomorrow. We need to develop in them the sensitivity towards peace, the awareness that violence and retaliation are not the ways of resolving disagreements. We need to develop in them respectable attitudes to the rights of others, have special concern for the disadvantaged, to have tolerance of diversity, a commitment to values like truth, honesty, integrity, forgiveness, social justice and the like. Only this view of education involves the total development of the whole person, and not a finished product or outcome of a specific curricula for a given time or location.

A pertinent question that we, as educators and teachers, must ask ourselves is – Are we at present educating children to appreciate, practise and promote peace? If education seeks to promote peace, do we know what the pedagogical implications are to foster attitudes, values and skills for peace if we expect our students to be peace makers and peace builders? Do our schools and classrooms give space to peace in the school system and in the curriculum?

NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

First, let us try to understand what pedagogy is and the pedagogical dimensions that are conducive for peace. Pedagogy refers to the art and science of teaching; the way teachers accompany learners in the process of their growth and development. It is not just about teaching the subject content but the entire gamut of relationships, processes and strategies which are designed to enhance learning.

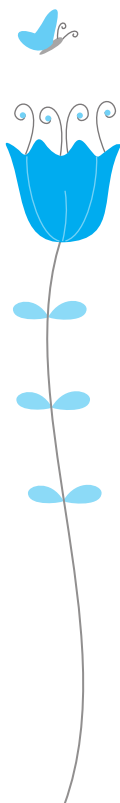
The pedagogy of peace has to be different from the conventional pedagogy based on the Banking Model of Education which places greater emphasis on contents instead of the learner. The banking model of education pilloried by Freire (1970) focuses on the teacher as the principle source of a student's knowledge. Students are empty



vessels into which knowledge must be poured. At the end of the year, an examination is set out to see how much of his/her knowledge the student has retained. This kind of model provides major attention to the teacher who stands at the front, and children are the audience, who sit in respect, full of silence, facing the teacher. Interaction between the teacher and the student is minimised. The pedagogy for peace, on the other hand, is grounded on the philosophy that children construct their own theories of how the world works, though their minds are less developed than those of educated adults.

The pedagogy requires a shift in approach, and the way teachers interact, relate and teach students in and out of classrooms because teaching for peace is not like teaching any other subject. It is about teaching the learner how to think about something, to reflect, critically evaluate, appreciate one's own values and those of others, develop better communication, better decision-making and non-violent conflict resolution skills, etc. so that these concepts ultimately find their ways into behaviours and actions. It is not confined to the cognitive level but also to the affective and behavioural levels. For example, understanding of any concept like cooperation is not enough. Ultimately, the task is to ensure that cooperation becomes one's internal disposition in the face of conflicts. The question then is how it is to be done? Peace related attitudes, values and skills cannot be developed by forcing students to memorise words, and also not by impositions. Experiences and opportunities must be given to internalise such attitudes and values, which can be sustained in the long run. The learner can only then take a conscious decision of practising peace values, attitudes and skills, consciously and responsibly. The pedagogical demand for such a kind of learning is to move away from the traditional banking model to an experiential or participatory model.

This model assumes that it is not what you teach but how you teach it that is important, and that is the essence of education for peace. In the absence of this, peace education could become just another duty, proclaimed to be done by schools, whereas it has to be the adoption of a whole new way of teaching-learning in schools, and of being with the students. Transcending the fragmentation of subjects and the strict regiment of 'covering the syllabus' is what makes 'Teaching for Peace.'

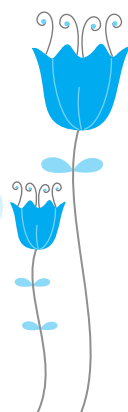


BARRIERS TO PEACE

Creating an environment where peace prevails and where teaching and learning is an experiential and joyous activity for all involved is perhaps one of the biggest challenges that one faces as a teacher. It is a challenge to build such a classroom where every child learns, and the teacher feels invigorated by the act, and not irritable and frustrated. Moreover, this would be an environment where children also want to learn rather than engage in fights and violence towards each other. The irritation of the teachers and the fights and disinterestedness of the students are possibly manifestations of unresolved conflicts and negative attitudes of both the teachers and the students. These conflicts and negative attitudes leave no room for respect for either teachers or students. When does a classroom convert itself into a space that becomes restrictive and boring, with no scope for deep understanding and reflection, which is essential for building attitudes and skills underlying peace? Look at one such classroom.

The teacher enters the class. The students are shouting at each other. Some are drinking water; others are giggling and chatting. There is a general sense of chaos. The teacher spends the first 10 minutes asking them to settle down and the next 30 making sure that some discipline is maintained so that learning can take place. After 40 minutes of patrolling, maintaining decorum, using gentle persuasion to blatant intimidation, the class is over, and she is exhausted. As the day progresses, her energy levels drop and she becomes irritable or apathetical. She is a teacher, and she wants to teach but shouldn't learners want to learn as well?

Our classrooms today, instead of being nurseries of peace, have become space for conflict. The wide variety of differences in the social, economic and cultural backgrounds of children, which are reflected in their attitudes towards discipline and achievement, exasperate the teachers, and leave them helpless. Even if some teachers feel like intervening and settling these conflicts created by class, caste or culture, there are additional issues coming from outside the classroom such as boy-girl relationships, parental neglect, drugs, violence, etc. which leave the teaching faculty thoroughly drained out. The scenario – fights, boredom, lack of attention and conflicts, so frequent in classrooms, continue in spite of the efforts that teachers make to eliminate such ugly scenes.

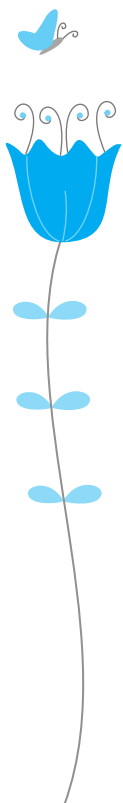


Then, there is always the race against time to discharge innumerable responsibilities. In this scenario, how can one find time to teach for peace? The burden of a *rigid and heavy curriculum* prevents children from learning creatively and at their own pace. Classrooms become boring and monotonous due to pressures on teachers to complete the syllabus or to teach even when they do not want to, due to other reasons.

Further, a structured timetable does not allow the teacher to experiment with different disciplines, organise field visits, or involve children in project work and so many other creative methods that enhance learning and harmony in the classroom. In spite of knowing and understanding the importance of dramatic play, interactive and fun learning, they continue to fall back upon the prescribed textbook and the “blank blackboard” for teaching.

Instead of a dialogue that should take place among students and teachers in our classrooms, all that remains is a monologue by teachers; one sided, examination-oriented and narrow in its scope. Generally, teachers tend to rely on coercive methods like punishment, verbal humiliation, labeling, alienation and asking students to leave the classroom. Sometimes, in desperation, they take recourse to making fun of their weaknesses or physical characteristics, and even targeting their parents, and, worse, resorting to physical violence.

Many of us as teachers do get aggressive in the face of the challenges that await us in the hostile classroom environment. In spite of our best efforts to maintain harmony, we do get violent, perhaps not physically but definitely via words, non-verbal expressions and our attitudes towards children; particularly those indulging in negative behaviour or those responsible for indiscipline, or poor achievers. When the need for appreciation and recognition are not satisfied through normal activities in schools and homes, children get restless and noisy. The aggressive, inattentive and disobedient ones are starved of the need for reassurance, positive feedback and appreciation. Not understanding this fact, teachers find these children to be the biggest challenge to peace in class. If positive ways do not yield satisfaction, negative methods are employed. Students unconsciously tend to engage in negative activities learnt at home or in school, and from classmates, that give



them the false feeling of recognition. They could also find refuge in bullying others. Having experienced violence at home in the form of wife beating or child beating or seeing others being beaten up, and further receiving corporal punishment in school, the energies of some of these youngsters find expression in that direction. The final outcome of these experiences surprises everyone at home and at school as evidenced in rising reports of violent acts by children.

The focus of parents' and teachers' demands and expectations from children is exclusively on excellence; only toppers are appreciated. It happens not only in academics but even in games. It deplores all hopes of their enjoying these activities, and renders them directionless about attitudes and skills, which underlie success and achievement. The fear of examination drives out the joy of leisure time, thereby, killing all creativity and rejuvenation of energies. Youngsters are happy learning to be competitive and giving full vent to their hostilities towards fellow students, expressed vicariously. Some of them want to be at the top, and pursue this goal so aggressively that they think of nothing but competition. They derive more pleasure out of cheating and beating others rather than enhancing the efforts directed at their own learning. In case they fail to achieve their targets, they may either direct aggression to themselves, to the extent of committing suicide or sometimes even becoming hostile to others. We fail to realize that children who are unable to get high marks, fail to receive appreciation, recognition and attention from teachers, which are important needs that the individual seeks to satisfy, to develop self-esteem and hone his/her talents, obvious or latent.

The accumulated emotional burden is not only within the students but also within the teachers. They develop poor self-esteem due to lack of appreciation of their efforts from school authorities, parents and community; pressures of time, teaching load and other additional responsibilities in schools. The sources of these burdens or stressors may lie in the pressures generated in the families where domestic violence towards women and children is not ruled out, work is not shared, communication is missing and love and cooperation not available. This may also be the case in schools which have inflexible time targets for syllabus besides the expectations of



parents, the principal and the management; lack of opportunities for relaxation, recreation and self expression, and a violation of the rights of teachers. As a result, sometimes, teachers may feel frustrated, and their behaviour becomes violent towards not only students but also towards fellow colleagues.

Let us consolidate the issues that affect children and come in the way of peace. Some of the issues were reported by teachers in training programmes on peace education.

- Bullying: Children, making fun of other children in the classroom because of their caste, status, parent's occupation, religion, personal appearance, disability, the stereotyping of boy and girl students in the classroom by each other, leading to situations such as refusing to sit and work in groups together.
- Ragging: Bullying of some children by their stronger counterparts.
- Prejudice, bias and abuse: Rejection/ hostility based on social/ group membership, grave physical injuries (e.g. Hostility towards children of other religious groups).
- Frequent illness which may even be due to psychological stress.
- Intra family conflict
- Young children experimenting with hazardous substances such as cigarettes and alcohol.
- Children damaging school property
- Poor attendance
- Irregularity in classwork
- Not doing homework regularly; cheating
- Low achievement
- Lack of hygiene
- Overcrowded classroom

These kind of problems prevail in classrooms. We attend to some of the most immediate problems and ignore others. Low achievement may prompt us to take notice but what about lack of hygiene, prejudices, biases, stereotyping, making fun of others, hostility towards other groups, etc. which have far reaching implications? It is important to deal with these issues which concern children's overall development.



What are the ways by which a classroom, instead of becoming restrictive and boring, with no scope for deep understanding and reflection, converts into a nursery of peace, where there is a budding of attitudes and skills conducive for peace? The pertinent question to ask oneself is – what is our attitude and approach towards problems which come in the way of peace? Should we be bothered about all these aspects, too, or do our duty of simply carrying on the burden of knowledge and information in our heads, and passing it on to students? It is easy for us as teachers to get caught up in the intensity and daily demands of the classroom. Sometimes, the greater purpose of our mission gets lost in the details. However, there are opportunities which are lying hidden in our day-to-day interactions. There could be positive ways of handling such problems that frequently occur in classrooms. There are alternative ways, which could transform classrooms into spaces nurturing peace. For that, it is important that we remind ourselves of the tremendous responsibility with which we are charged, and the powerful influence that we can have on the lives and futures of students.

Pedagogy for peace reminds us to question our convictions and habitual modes of teaching to look into what it means to teach, what and how we teach and what the carry over value of what we teach is. In order to get a sense of what peace pedagogy implies, let us try to envision a peace classroom.

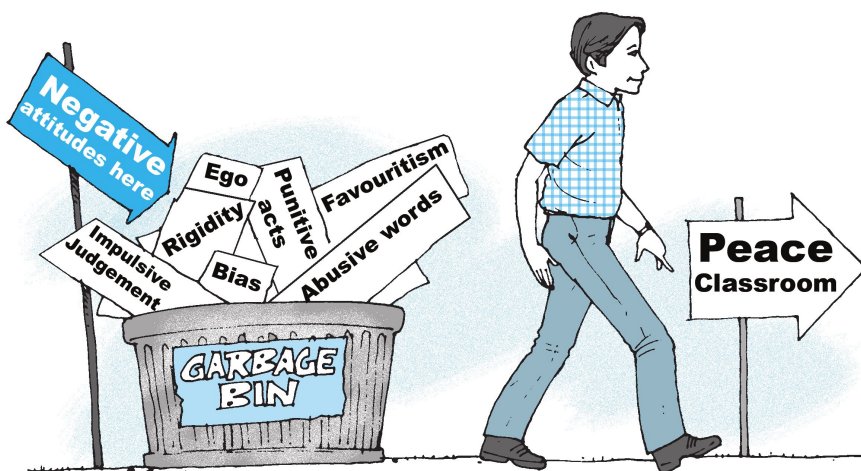
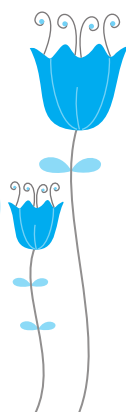


Fig. 9 Changing the mindset



ENVISIONING A PEACE CLASSROOM

Imagine

Close your eyes and concentrate on your breath. Now, with your eyes closed, imagine your students in the classroom. Think of each one as an exceptional person having something unique to offer. Now, think of their happy smiling faces, sparkling eyes and curious hearts. Imagine a classroom, which reflects this scenario.

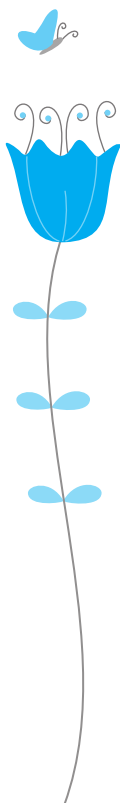
How do students in this space behave towards each other and the teacher?

What kind of attitudes do they display?

A peace classroom is not necessarily a nicely decorated, colourful room, full of well-dressed children who are quietly leaning into their books. Well! physical spaces are important but it is probably cleanliness, organisation of space and, above all, a space full of children, actively engaged with learning tasks. Such a classroom is imbued with activity, group work, happiness and order.

First and foremost, it is a non-violent classroom. As we discussed earlier, violence is not only physical; even attitudes and values could be violent. Therefore, this classroom is free from attitudes, values and behaviour that could set the stage for violence. Children refrain from using hurtful or abusive words for each other in spite of provocation. They would intervene in conflicts among their classmates; they will mediate and facilitate non-participants rather than incite or watch as spectators. Children would be prodded and persuaded by peers rather than willingly be left behind; aggressive children will be ignored and modified. There is a likelihood of different kinds of children mixing with each other rather than being excluded due to their ability, caste, disability etc. Children do not hurt, physically abuse, brutalise or discriminate each other for their gender, disability and religion.

The peace classroom is characterised by the **involvement and participation** of all. Children are willing to learn, not only those who are bright but even those who are alienated, quiet and shy. The isolated and marginalised children are the ones who are insecure and afraid, even though they may appear aggressive, sometimes. Sensitivity towards those who are marginalised makes them less



hostile, alienated and willing to join others. The essence of peace pedagogy is to involve all, particularly those who are insecure on account of their belonging to marginalised sections of society or poverty or difference in language or minority identity or disability.

Peace classrooms are spaces that provide opportunities to all for learning joyfully. An element of challenge is critical for the process of excitement and active engagement with tasks. However, the challenge should be within the reach of the child. What is challenging for one child becomes easy and uninteresting for the advance learner or another child in the same class and may even be remote and uninteresting to yet another one. When the concerns of all those fast, slow or average learners are addressed, they are encouraged and motivated to question, inquire, debate, reflect and arrive at concepts or create new ideas with support and encouragement from teachers, and learning becomes fun and least stressful. The fun and joy of learning for everyone is not because the teacher spends extra time, but because she is involving everyone, is innovative in seeking alternatives to deal with the class; the alternatives further allow the teacher time to stay unstressed and attend to students.

Let us look at yet another characteristic of a peace classroom; students assume responsibility for their actions. They do not develop the tendency to blame others; rather, they act on the behalf of and for others. There is an ambience in which it is emotionally safe to make mistakes. In such emotionally safe classrooms, students open up, think, discern and reflect. It lessens extrinsic control and nurtures students intrinsically. When students reflect and are not laughed at or humiliated for errors, they are motivated to learn and try again in the face of failure; their self-confidence increases to meet and overcome challenges. Each student thus, takes personal responsibility for his/her own progress. The sense of responsibility is an attitude that makes us feel like a cause that rather than a victim. This perception promotes action to avoid mistakes or problems. Self responsibility promotes initiative and active engagement involving enquiry, exploration, questioning, debates, application and reflection, leading to creation of ideas and positions, and alternatives for problems and conflicts.

In peace classrooms, the children are cooperative. They are aware of their goals and of the importance of cooperation as a healthy



strategy for achieving their goals; they can cooperate with each other to better themselves. They act more as a group rather than individuals competing with each other. This spirit of cooperation also springs from understanding and accepting their own self, their capabilities and shortcomings. Acceptance of the self comes easy as they are not subjected to rude comments or ridiculed or punished by teachers for who they are, in terms of caste, class and culture or for what they are able to achieve in a subject or in any other area. They are all able to do better as a team rather than as competitive individuals.

In peace classrooms, children are compassionate towards each other, and they share concerns with each other, help each other, and find solutions for their problems together. Alienation or discrimination in terms of ability, achievement, skills, caste, class or any other special quality is absent. Each one participates in the classroom processes – discussions, debates and activities. It is participation which is the focus, not success or effort. All of them, successful and unsuccessful, achievers and non-achievers are treated equally and no one's labeled a failure. Joy and fun replace competition and bitterness. Peace classrooms stress on attaining a level of efficiency rather than rank ordering the students. Therefore, all can look forward to and work to attain the target, since they are competing with themselves.

Peaceful classrooms have respect for cultural diversity. A peace classroom is a place where children learn how to appreciate and deal with differences rather than sweeping them under the carpet. In such classrooms, issues are debated and discussed, and information is shared about religious, regional, linguistic issues without anyone feeling rejected or alienated. There is an effort to create trust and acceptance towards all identities, and even if there is a religion or a culture represented in the class by just one child, s/he is made to participate in all group activities. Such classrooms will carry images, symbols, prayers of all denominations and will have diverse kinds of groups participating in prayers. Seeing their faith, culture and identity recognised and accepted, each one becomes a part of the group.

Creating such a classroom would not mean that the problems and challenges of a regular classroom have disappeared. However, it does mean that the teacher, having accepted the challenge, tries to



explore non-violent and positive ways of handling such issues. Due to a teachers' significant place, his/her attitudes and style of functioning in the classroom creates the ambience, which determines the classroom climate for peace.

BECOMING A PEACE TEACHER

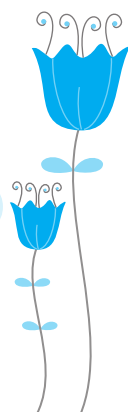
Peace classrooms are created by teachers who are sensitive and keen and who have strong convictions and become so by the virtue of their attitudes and skills, and the importance they place on relationships.

Relationships

Relationship is the inevitable result of human interaction. Relationship may be facilitating or blocking or both, in different contexts and at different times. The kind of relationships that teachers may have with students has potential implications for peace during teaching-learning. Researches indicate that knowing and learning are bound in relationships. Students conceive themselves and their learning in relationships, and the knowledge about the curriculum content is intimately bound with the relationships with teachers and peers in the classroom. Where teachers are not able to establish positive relationships with pupils, the growth in learning is blocked in themselves, as well as, in their students.

Ginnot (1972), in his classic book, 'Teacher and Child' described the power a teacher has: 'I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate; it's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated or a child humanised or de-humanised.' (pp.15-16)

Why do some children feel happy when they do not have to go to school? This is primarily attributed to their negative experiences in classrooms and schools; not that any teacher would deliberately mar the relationship with his or her pupils. It may often be due to the distress and the accountability pressure for student's attainment and results in examinations. These pressures thus narrow the



possibilities for teachers to develop the child in wholesome terms and change the basis of the teacher-pupil relationship. Peace pedagogy requires us to take a re-look at our relationships with our students. It is not that content is not important but the pedagogic requirement for peace must focus on 'relatedness' in the classroom because our school and classroom culture is not one that prioritises 'relationships'. The learners' perception about the subject is, on the other hand, sharply focused on a teacher's behaviour and relationship than on what they learn in that subject.

One looks back with appreciation upon brilliant teachers, but with gratitude for those who touched our feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary new material, but the warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for Carl Jung, the soul of the child.

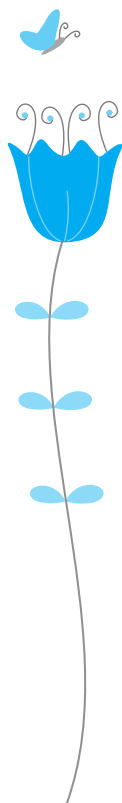
— Carl Jung

If we look back to our school days, we may remember some teachers who were kind and understanding. We may not probably remember much of what was taught. Here is what a school student has to say about a teacher from the memoirs of his school days.

"My Math's teacher soon gave up any attempt to teach Maths. I never passed a single test. The teacher somehow knew I could work for the school magazine. I had to explore a lot before I could write a particular story assigned to me. I was extremely shy, withdrawn and uneasy. Here, my teacher made me believe that I could learn. The teacher accepted my limits. I could begin to accept my limitations without shame. I started trusting my teacher. When I could not see a future for myself, my teacher told me that the future was mine."

The above narrative is about a teacher who knew mathematics very well. But as a teacher he was not confined to his job description but was asking who this child was and how his/her strength could be nurtured? The student was guided towards writing. Later, the student became an eminent creative writer.

This teacher, like most of us who teach, also had the pressure to conform to the expectations that came from his training and the policy governing schooling. How easy it could have been to have taught only maths and avoided spending extra time and energy on



Not bound by the subject matter and method, a peace teacher is the one who feels that his or her vocation is not to teach a particular subject but the child.

— *Anonymous*

the student. Truly, teaching a child requires courage to teach with a difference.

Teachers, however, differ in age, experience, social-cultural backgrounds, gender, marital status, subject specialisation, wisdom, temperament and self-conception. The schools they work in also differ and so do the groups of students they teach. Children also bring with them attitudes and value orientations from their families. All these differences may lead to different styles of relationships with students. Let us now go through teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students in the classroom.

Some teachers are very rigid and strict and even a little noise and disturbance is enough to set them in an aggressive mode. They may hit anyone around who seems to be involved in mischief, mostly without inquiry. There are still others who just want to be reassured of themselves; they keep questioning students about other teachers and compare themselves with them. They wish to know what they are doing and how they teach among other things.

Some teachers do not find themselves comfortable being close and personal to students. One such teacher says, "I would love to have a close interaction with students but I do not find it in me to do that. The moment children get personal, I avoid the situation. I become uncomfortable coping with it, although I know that it will be better for the students."

Some of the teachers' perceptions of their interactions with student in the classroom are depicted below:

- A teacher perceives her relationship to be more motherly than friendly. She says, "When I enter the class, I feel my students are like my children, and show them motherly affection. I do not know how far I am successful but I want them to behave properly and grasp everything."
- While another teacher says, "I do not want blind obedience. I can help them as a guide. I do not want students to be scared."



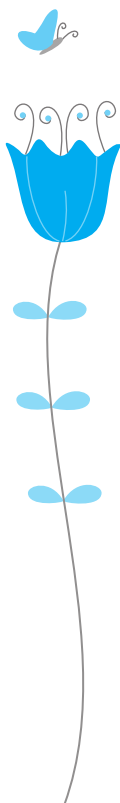
- Yet another teacher says, “I believe in authority with kindness. If a student says he was sick, I understand and allow him to complete the assignment the next day. But inside the class, students have to pay full attention. If I am strict with them, it is not done blindly but I convince them that it is good for them to be disciplined, and that they are not doing me a favour by being disciplined.”

The most important qualification of any teacher, therefore, is to be kind and loving. How a teacher can be loving and caring while teaching children is the subject matter of pedagogy for peace.

Modelling Behaviours

The teacher’s beliefs, temperament and approach determine the pedagogical strategies and culture prevailing in a classroom. As teachers, we convey attitudes and values whether we intend to or not. We communicate values by how we relate with one another, with students and others. We, as teachers, therefore, need to be aware of the effect of our own behaviour and attitude on students. If there is a mismatch between what we do and say, unconsciously, students would mirror what we do.

Students, whether they are rebellious or studious, well-behaved or not, unconsciously copy and get modelled after adults-parents, teachers and others, around them. Even if the home is not providing the right atmosphere, the teachers’ positive behaviour can make a lot of difference in pre-disposing children to peaceful ways. It may not be immediately visible but learning is inevitable. It is therefore, important that we are careful as to what kind of behaviour we portray, as it is likely to be emulated by students. For example, we find two students engaged in an abuse, fight or any other conflict. We slap each one to bring peace so that we can continue with our teaching. For instance, instead of saying – ‘respect others,’ it is important for teachers to model through their behaviour, in and out of the classroom, and help students construct their own understanding about respect. If she has self control and does not show anger but remains quiet and undisturbed under all circumstances, she is portraying and modelling the values of patience, tolerance, calmness and peace. If she is always keen to learn more and more and does not remain satisfied either with what she is or what she knows, she is encouraging her students



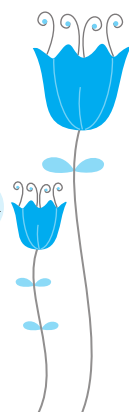
to progress. If she does not show any superiority over her students nor a preference or attachment whatsoever for one or another, she is demonstrating objectivity and equality. If the teacher does not have control over herself, how can she expect to control others? Treating children with blows and slaps indicates the use of aggression and violence in dealing with problems. This is especially true in our culture where all knowledge and wisdom is believed to be emanating from the teacher. The following poem brings home the message.

Children live what they learn

*If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves
and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place
in which to live.*

—Source <http://www.empowermentresources.com/info2/childrenlearn.html>

During routine teaching in the classroom, there is tremendous scope for portrayal of such behaviours, which nurture a harmonious and peaceful ambience. If a teacher says ‘thanks’ or ‘please’ or ‘I am glad’, student learns that such comments bring delight, while a rude silence conveys dislike. By portraying peaceful or aggressive,



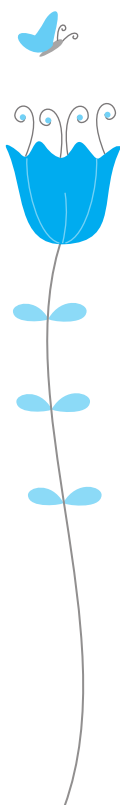
considerate or brute and flexible or rigid behaviour, indirectly, teachers model such behaviours for students as pointed out in the poem above.

Teachers' listening and communication skills are crucial for modelling such behaviours. These skills are described below.

Listening and Communication Skills

Communication skills are crucial for building a friendly climate and retaining the interest of learners. Communication is a two-way process which involves an exchange between the teachers and learners. The teaching-learning activity between the teacher and pupil or a parent and a child or anywhere else has to involve an exchange of ideas. During teaching-learning, teachers may think they have taught but until they seek feedback as to what the child has received, the process of teaching is incomplete. It is, in fact, a learning experience to seek students' feedback on what they have learnt. Often what the other has learnt depends on what s/he has heard. Listening skills are a very crucial aspect of communication. However, listening is only one aspect of communication. In schools, homes and many other places, we read a lot of messages, news items and instructions. It is commonplace to hear, "Oh! I thought it meant....." Interpreting messages holistically and responding to them meaningfully are important aspects of communication. Responding is a skill that teachers need to build to keep the communication on, and to develop trust to strengthen the relationship, without which, no serious teacher-learning can occur in classrooms.

Most of the time, as teachers and parents, we have to listen to students but we may not be actually hearing or receiving their spoken words. Although it is a commonplace activity, we hardly listen to each other. We have to distinguish between hearing and listening. Especially, as teachers, we hardly have time to spare, least of all, to listen to students. We pretend to hear them but active listening involves giving importance to the other and opening up to them. It is not because we do not want to but the stresses of daily life and our own personal agenda do not leave us free to listen to others and enjoy one to one communication. Rather, our misinterpretation of messages leaves a lot of scope for misunderstandings. As a result, students, our own children and friends, also gradually stop listening to us, and then, we take offence. Sometimes, even if we are paying

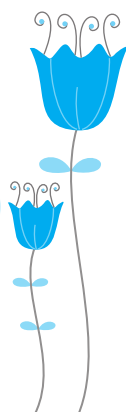


attention, we do not face them. As a result, receiving messages and their interpretation remains incomplete. Active listening is important for building healthy interpersonal relationships and necessary for effective teaching.

Another error that dampens our listening skills is **partial listening** as we listen to parts of messages, which could be of interest to us, as these are exciting or in our interest or are more clearly stated. Sometimes, some topics interest us and we listen to those parts alone and the rest of the message is not received. We develop our response on the basis of such incomplete messages, and later on, the incomplete receiving of messages may create misunderstandings.

In this context, one of the very important aspects of listening is **silence**. Silence on the part of the teacher during speech calls for intervals where she is free to listen to her students without passing judgments. Pre-conceived ideas and notions about the child create barriers to listening and attending. In order to understand, the teacher, as listener, has to ask relevant clarifying questions and provide space for comprehension rather than to try to confirm his/her prejudices or biases. We generally do not listen to others' perspectives. Rather, we try to confirm our own opinions. When our listening lacks understanding, it hurts others. It is necessary for teachers to understand how verbal messages threaten, humiliate, label and hurt children, and block their capacity to listen any further.

Yet another aspect that contributes to the error of interpretation is listening not only to their verbal speech but also to the **non-verbal messages** without prejudice and bias. Listening to the non-verbal messages means the physical posture and body language. Verbal messages are often in contradiction to the non-verbal messages. For example, when you hear a child say, "I did not prepare for the test today," what impression do you gather about him/her? Now, combine the non-verbal expression of the child while saying these words. The child is almost in tears with down-caste eyes. Is the meaning of those words the same? A teacher who does not have tolerance and respect for the students' opinion is not likely to listen completely. Verbal messages are frequently heard and interpreted by listeners as supporting their own thoughts and beliefs rather than the reality.



Responding or Attending Skills

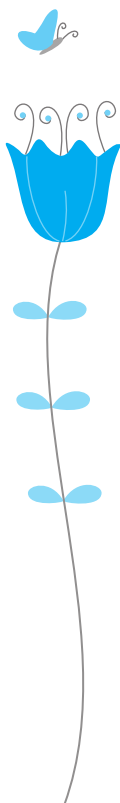
In order to develop our skills of listening effectively, we have to focus on how we attend and respond to others while we listen. Responding or attending skills include non-interrupting while listening to what appears to be vague or confused messages, responding in a non-judgemental manner and asking exploratory, open-ended, empathetic and genuine questions.

Seeking Clarifications

This is very important, as often, we as grown ups take our own comprehension to be perfect, although listening always leaves scope for omissions. However, while seeking clarifications, questions must be framed in such a way that these are open-ended. For example, instead of saying, “Do you think you should try to work hard?” you may say, “What do you think you need to do to get good marks?” The latter statement makes the child think of what s/he needs to do and what s/he can do; whereas the first statement is suggestive and not contemplative for the child. Similarly, instead of making judgemental, preaching, challenging and other non-helping statements as tabulated below, it is better to make empathetic responses, which involve reflecting responses, which help the child think consciously

Active Listening Steps that are Helpful

- Put yourself in the other person’s place to understand what he or she is saying and how he or she feels.
- Show understanding and acceptance by non-verbal behaviours:
 - Tone of voice
 - Facial expressions
 - Gestures
 - Eye contact
 - Posture
- Restate the person’s most important thoughts and feelings.
- Do not interrupt or offer advice or give suggestions or bring up similar feelings and problems from your own experience.
- Remain neutral without taking sides.
- Ask open questions to better understand the other person’s issues and concerns.



about what s/he is saying, as most of the time children are not clear about issues, and their responses are not made after conscious deliberation. Reflection or empathetic communication involves repeating the gist of the expressional communication as accurately as possible. For example, the child was angrily speaking to the teacher, “You have not said anything to the other child. You scold me all the time.” Instead of an angry response, the reflective teacher says, “What you are saying is – ‘I favour the other child and am set against you.’ Why do you think I would do that?”

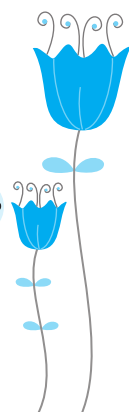
The usage of words and phrases that judge a person negatively, preach, challenge or evaluate makes a person defensive and blocks the process of listening. Along with communication, there are other skills and strategies, too, that help build a peaceful classroom. Let us see what these are.

IMPROVING CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Directing the student’s behaviour and acts in the classroom is a challenge for teachers. They have the choice over how they respond to a student’s behaviour. There are multiple ways of handling student’s behaviour, which would vary with the nature and intensity of the behaviour in question. Some general principles, strategies and skills, however, for handling disrupting behaviour, as well as, promoting desirable behaviour conducive for peace, are discussed here.

Much of the student’s behaviour in the classroom is perceived as undesirable – it disturbs discipline, order and peace. Some of these behaviours may be natural and age-typical, and will change as students become more mature. For example, students in the early grades are impulsive and motor-oriented and teachers understand that this type of activity needs to be properly recognised and channelised. However, teachers find it difficult to deal with common behaviours like shouting, name calling, pushing, complaining, making fun of others, fighting, disregarding rules and loud talking which come in the way of maintaining peace and discipline in class.

Corporal punishment has been in practice in schools for a long time. However, the kind of severity and excessiveness at present is unprecedented. Developmental psychologists have shown that children living with physical abuse and corporal punishment develop negative or hostile attitudes towards adults and other abnormalities, too.



The physical violence experienced by a child or an adolescent causes severe harm to his/her psyche. It humiliates and produces strong feelings of self pity and shame. The mental block resulting from punishment becomes a heavy burden, which is not easy to remove. Physical harm is visible but the harm done to the child's personality cannot even be reversed. The child will either become withdrawn or turn his aggression to others. Aggressive children are more noticeable due to their potential to cause nuisance but those who withdraw could be worse off. They may either develop total inferiority, be driven to insecurity and have inadequate selves, thereby negating their potential. However, substantial physical harm at the hands of a teacher like loss of an eye, hearing capacity or bleeding from the nose, getting a broken arm etc. are not unheard of these days.

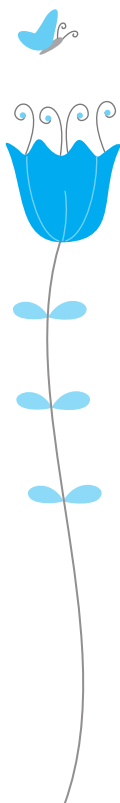
The Committee on the Rights of the child, the monitoring body for the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), has twice recommended to India (in 2000 and 2004) prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings. The Committee highlights that rejecting violent and humiliating punishment does not mean rejecting discipline which is about leading children to good behaviour.

12 per cent of UN member states – 23 countries have prohibited all corporal punishment in all settings, including the home. Eliminating corporal punishment requires both explicit law reform and sustained public parent education. Fulfilling children's human rights requires that assaults on them be criminal offences under the law just as assaults on adults are, whether or not the assault is disguised as discipline.

Source - NCPCR Newsletter, 2009

The NCPCR was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, an Act of Parliament (December 2005). Its Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The commission has launched a National Level Advocacy Campaign against corporal punishment. It has also issued guidelines for schools to create awareness among teachers, parents and the staff to sensitise them to child rights on education, health, care,



Look at the case of 14-year-old Tina, (name changed) a student of a private school, reported in the newsletter of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). She said that 'razor sharp tongues of teachers' affected her to such an extent that she even considered committing suicide. When a teacher berated a student by saying that a child was 'good for nothing' or that he or she should be sent to a 'special school' or that 'teachers were allergic to a child's face', it haunted her for a long time. Another such case is that of Raj (name changed), 14, a class VII student in an MCD school who also shared some of the common forms of corporal punishment experienced by government school children. Teachers made girls do housework under the pretext of tuitions and some teachers allowed students to pass their examinations only after sexually exploiting them.

(NCPCR Newsletter, 2009)



love and respect, and freedom from fear of learning. The website of NCPCR (ncpcr.gov.in.com) provides information regarding legal actions for inflicting corporal punishment. All over the world, there is consensus that corporal punishment is harmful for children.

Controlling students by yelling, slapping and hitting is really not the way to bring about discipline. It may not be possible to ignore indiscipline in classrooms. But exercising restraint and withholding the usual response could put them in control. What does a teacher do? Maintaining classroom discipline is not a bag of tricks or gimmicks. It is, in fact, a thoughtful and purposeful way of interacting with students. It is a style and a philosophy of relating with students, and modelling the values and the behaviour that a teacher would want them to learn. It flourishes in an atmosphere where a teacher responds to students with dignity and the skill to set realistic expectations of student's behaviour. Maintaining discipline also involves a multitude of skills to facilitate students to become responsible and self directed.

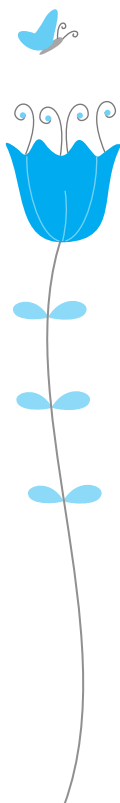
One of the important ways of maintaining discipline is to **provide clarity about rules and expectations** so that students become conscious about following the rules. Indirect reminders for adhering to the rules can also be put up on the board or by way of



posters like “we shall listen to one another, we shall seek permission before speaking, we shall let others learn,” etc. Students can themselves be involved in framing the rules. This will enable them to take the responsibility of observing the rules. Overall, it is best to state the expectations and rules positively. **Using non-verbal ways or signals** is another gentle way of redirecting behaviour. Body movements, sounds and gestures like rising from a seat and emphatically clearing one’s throat are helpful in gaining the attention of the class. Walking towards a student and removing the object which creates distraction can also be used to avoid nagging or constantly naming students. A teacher can also reduce classroom distraction by **restructuring and modifying the situation**, a change of seats, grouping of students and modifying assignments etc. **Warning** can also be used but not too frequently as it will lose its value.

Overall, it is important to use flexibility to know the differences in the learners indulging in undesirable behaviour. This means that not all students should receive identical treatment but that students must understand that their negative behaviour can cause unwanted consequences. Some alternatives available to the teacher are use of soft reprimands, i.e. sending to the corner of the room, taking away privileges, taking away points or recording a poor score on behaviour and habits or giving extra learning work. It is important to recognise that their use should be carefully reviewed in the light of the students’ progress. The teacher should keep in mind the strengths of the student and look for opportunities to praise desirable behaviour. A peace teacher should not be vindictive or punitive but must be consistent, calm and firm.

If some of these strategies to handle disrupting behaviour do not work, it is important to look for and find the cause. Children in schools are only a part of the whole and carry with them a wealth of culture, language, habits and attitudes. It is, therefore, essential that teachers know their students. Let them talk about themselves and their feelings. Learning more about students and their lives and letting them know that the teacher is keen to know them, itself is an act of compassion. It may be remembered that the purpose in using these methods is not to control the students’ undesirable behaviour but to help them behave in more acceptable manners. Here are some general principles for encouraging desirable attitudes and behaviour.



Psychologically Safe Environment

One of the basic principles of teaching for peace is creating a classroom environment, free from excessive competition, threat, ridicule, etc. It is neither an environment dominated by an authoritarian teacher nor it is a wholly permissive environment, without any structure. It aims at creating an emotional climate for students to experience a sense or feeling of personal worth, trust, dignity and self-confidence, leading to self-discipline.

Yet another practice that helps change children is freedom of expression. It involves allowing children to ask questions that help them relate to what they are learning in school and reconcile that to things happening outside; the trick lies in children answering in their own words, and from their own experiences, rather than simply memorising and getting answers right in just one way. All these are small but important steps in helping children develop their understanding of the world they are in and examining their own prejudices and biases. Quite often, children have an idea arising from their everyday experiences with parents and friends or because of their exposure to the media, but they are not quite ready to express it in ways that a teacher might appreciate.

A sensitive and informed teacher is aware that these experiences accumulated in school, at home or in the community, underlie biases and prejudices of various kinds. Broadening the range of such experiences to include exposure to a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual environment reduces the scope for the formation of prejudices. However, just the presence of a multi-cultural student population does not mean that it is a multi-cultural environment. Only when there are interactions and exchanges, and the involvement of each and everyone that a multi-cultural environment is created, and is able to engage children through well-chosen tasks and questions, so that they are able to express their doubts, share views and question the assumptions underlying various beliefs, practices, rituals and social structures.

Constructive Feedback

Providing feedback is a necessary part of teaching. Students may lose confidence in teachers who accept everything and do not encourage them to improve. Many a time, criticism implies that the person is not



worthy. A gentle way of criticism is when a student is told that the idea is not worthy of the person's potential or ability. Constructive and meaningful feedback is important. Negative comments need to be avoided. Instead of saying, "You cannot do anything right," "You never use your head," we might say, "Can you think of another way of doing this?" Or "Let me show you another way."

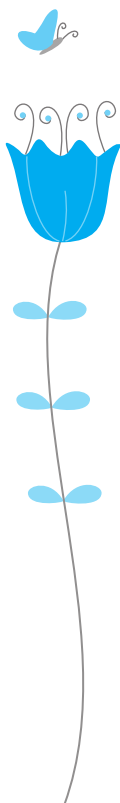
Positive Reinforcement

No strategy is considered more effective than positive reinforcement for desirable behaviour. Positive reinforcement where accomplishments (behavioural as well as academic) are appropriately recognised and self-esteem is strengthened are valuable. Whenever feasible, the teacher should try to find out ways to provide positive reinforcers. It could be recognition, leadership and a prestigious role, a word of appreciation, verbal approval, non-verbal approval or even awards. It is better if the reinforcement is descriptive and more focused on work rather than the personality. Descriptive praise is the skill of describing a student's motivation and accomplishment and not his/her personality.

A practice that some teachers adopt is to appreciate them for some quality of theirs, not necessarily in academics. Each child has one quality or the other, and we have to discover it. We need to recognise that all our students are smart but in different ways, and accordingly, we need to discover and help our students discover where their passions and intelligence lie. Academic achievement is not the only marker for intelligence, and as teachers we need to be mindful of it and encourage various other skills that our students possess. It is not easy, but perseverance and constant mindfulness about such children will yield ways.

Accepting Mistakes

Students must be made to understand that mistakes are a part of the work and that they are instructive. Only then will they understand the value of mistakes, and will not try to hide mistakes or feel embarrassed about them. The teacher who focuses on creating an atmosphere in which it is safe to make mistakes is teaching the value of learning to make a choice, whether good or bad, and then, experiencing the consequences. By providing an emotionally safe



terrain, teachers hold students accountable for their actions. It then helps in fostering responsibility for their actions rather than hiding the mistakes and putting up defenses to protect one's image. How a teacher becomes the symbol of deep respect for the student is narrated in the following paragraph:

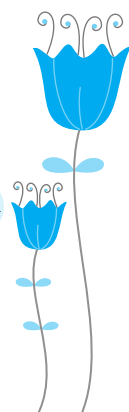
Sunny was not feeling very bright. He had awoken late, forgotten to bring his math homework, and rushed to school. Ms. Khushi walked in. "Good Morning everyone!" "Have you all done your homework?" "All those who have, please put your hands up." Sunny ducked under the desk to avoid her probing eyes. He suddenly looked up to see Ms. Khushi standing near his desk. "Sunny, is there something you would like to tell me?" she said. "Now I have had it", Sunny thought. "Ms. K.k.k.usbi,"..... his stammer always became more pronounced when he was nervous, "I have f....f....f.... forgotten to br...r....r....ing my book," he said. As usual, the whole class burst out laughing and waited with baited breath for the punishment that Ms. Khushi would give..... "Sunny, did you do your homework?" she asked. "I have ma'am, but forgot to bring it," he replied. There was complete silence in the class and the whisper of "liar and liar" could be heard from the children. Suddenly, Ms. Khushi broke the silence. "I believe you, Sunny. Please see that you bring your book tomorrow," she concluded.

Avoiding Impulsive Judgements and Evaluative Remarks

As teachers, we are often in the habit of passing quick judgements. Instead of giving one's own judgement, we can ask, "Do you like what you have done? What would you like to change to improve upon it?" Even in a situation where they have made a mistake, depending on the gravity of the situation, it may help to forgive. Against the usual perception that forgiveness leads to more carelessness, if a teacher helps build reflection by appropriate questioning about the student's behaviour and forgives, it is much more helpful than punishment.

Respecting Ideas and Questions

Criticism and making fun of children's remarks can hinder them from expressing themselves. It is important that students express themselves because we cannot know what they are thinking and feeling



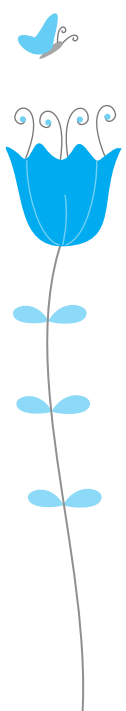
unless we let them express themselves freely. However, after they have expressed, even if there is an error, it should not be immediately corrected. Rather, use of expressions like, “Is there a better answer?” or “Does someone think differently?” Why? is more useful.

Increasing Intrinsic Motivation

Excessive competition is detrimental to peace. Inherent in competition is a set of values wherein success depends upon beating and defeating others. What is valued is triumph over others and being Number One. Competition teaches that self worth depends on victories; winning is the goal, and not learning or practice, or development. Trying to beat people is extrinsic motivation. It is important to develop intrinsic motivation, that is, motivation to do something for its own sake, to learn to enjoy, to meet the challenge rather than to win a prize and defeat someone else. What is important is to reach one’s own standards for success. Intrinsic motivation flourishes when teachers provide encouragement, and appreciation for the efforts put in by the child and help him/her be successful.

Using Humour

Everyone knows how a light hearted comment helps clear the tension and makes one feel at ease and comfortable. Sarcastic humour is a way of humiliating others, in which one person has pleasure while the other feels pain. Therapeutic humour is a two way experience where both parties enjoy the situation. Teachers can use humour to their advantage. The following example illustrates the point.



A teacher, on entering the classroom, found several pictures on the board, with “the teacher” written under each. We can imagine the vulnerability of some teachers and their reactions to such drawings on the board. She, however, went to the blackboard and picked up a piece of chalk. She first looked at the pictures, and then, at the class. Then, she walked over towards the pictures and said, “This one looks like me but needs some more hair.” In the next picture, she herself added glasses, and still in the next, she suggested to add a big nose and a long neck, and so on. The class started smiling and then laughed. Finally, she announced that it was time to study. Her approach in dealing with the situation was such that it did not make the students feel embarrassed. On the other hand, it may even have provoked some to reflect on their actions.

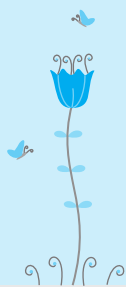
—Source *Conflicts in Classroom*, pg. 390 by Long, N.J. et al. (2009)

This teacher turned a challenging moment into a therapeutic event and demonstrated to her students, a peaceful way of reacting to such situations.

A paradigm shift in pedagogy enables teachers to relate to their students in pleasant and meaningful ways. The shift transforms the ambience in the classroom, overcoming the daily hassles and challenges posed by the ever-fluctuating demands on both students and teachers. This is not for sacrificing any serious goals of education; rather, it fulfils the holistic goals of education. Relationships strengthened by the teachers' own skills and strategies of communication and listening, as empathetic and genuine mentors, and classroom practices that are caring, pave the way for real "teaching-learning." Students can then learn and develop, not as information banks but as informed human beings. Even teaching subjects and all other activities is to be viewed from this perspective, as discussed in the next chapter.

So far, this chapter has highlighted the need for adjusting our classroom strategies to fulfil the goals of the holistic development of students as sensitive, caring and responsible individuals. Peace pedagogy also implies sound participatory teaching strategies. In the next part, we will examine ways of addressing these concerns.





Peace Perspectives in Teaching-learning

5

- **HOLISTIC APPROACH**
- **STAGE-SPECIFIC CONCERNS**
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHING PEACE**
- **TEACHING PEACE THROUGH SUBJECTS**
- **PEACE CONTEXTS IN TEXTBOOKS**
- **SOME TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR PEACE**
 - Silent Sitting
 - Drama and Role Play
 - Storytelling
 - Discussion
 - Small Group Learning
 - Maintaining a Diary
- **SOME EXEMPLAR IDEAS**
- **EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT ISSUES**

This chapter is an extension of the previous one 'Pedagogy for Peace'. The previous section dealt with how teacher's behaviour, attitudes, interactional styles and relationships with students determine the culture of pedagogy for peace. Following the holistic approach, the peace perspectives must also be infused in the teaching of subject matter. Such an approach ensures that the objectives of subject-teaching are not confined to the cognitive domain and that they rather find a way into the behavioural repertoire of students. This section focuses on utilising classroom and teaching situations to create peace perspectives. It seeks to identify peace contexts implicit in the textual materials and provides exemplar ideas to transact the subject matter in such ways that besides content knowledge students are oriented to peace values, attitudes and concerns. The use of various teaching strategies in subject areas have also been outlined, to stimulate teachers to design their own strategies in their own contexts.



**Any genuine teaching will result, if successful,
in someone's knowing how to bring about a
better condition of things than existed earlier.**

—*John Dewey*

The teaching-learning process is full of opportunities, where peace-related attitudes could be communicated, whether it is teaching any particular subject or dealing with the concerns of the students. Life outside and learning are highly interconnected. When a teacher is attentive to the concerns and anxieties of student and encourages them to express and clarify these, students are likely to be more open and visualise clearly the real purpose behind the study of subjects and of schooling. They are prompted to think about others and well-being of society. This is the peace perspective which has to be focused in “teaching-learning.”

HOLISTIC APPROACH

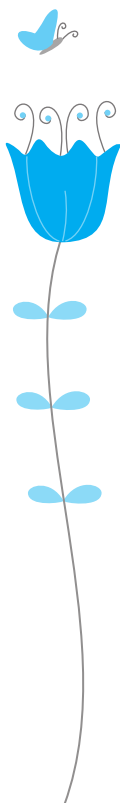
Education for peace requires a holistic and integrated approach. Since peace education is not separate from education, an especially designed course or a specified time is not required; it has to permeate the entire school environment. This approach proposes that all teaching-learning, all activities and interactions, whether in the class or outside, must be inspired by the comprehensive aims of education, which are inclusive of peace education. In this context, any one or two teachers are not to be entrusted with the task of promoting peace; every teacher is a peace teacher. The nodal point, where integration could take place, is the school curriculum, which inspires the entire gamut of experiences occurring in school. Sometimes, the curriculum is assumed to be only the syllabus and that too, gets confined to the textbooks; but this is a highly narrow and limiting meaning of the term.

The curriculum is actually the spirit behind all the activities, and the entire organisation and policies of the school, beginning from classroom transactions to textbooks, the school organisation, and

its relationship with the local community, and all the interactions within the school, whether in the classroom or on the playground, or casual interactions with teachers in school corridors, or during other activities like art, craft, drama, the morning assembly, socially useful productive work or community social service, examinations or picnic. All these activities and the way they are implemented flows from the policy and approach embedded in the curriculum. At the classroom level, peace dimensions are already woven into the contents of the lessons, which are means of helping students imbibe peace values. The textbooks, too, have to be looked at from the point of view of enhancing the peace perspective, which is already inherent in the subject content, and even in the stated objectives of teaching

The holistic and integrated approach has an edge over the “separate subject approach” from a number of viewpoints—psychological, motivational and pedagogical. From the cognitive and developmental point of view, constructivist psychology has established that children construct knowledge holistically. In the integrated approach, lessons and topics become the vehicles to convey peace messages in meaningful contexts. This approach makes the subject matter wholesome and situated in real life, which motivates students to learn and relate what they learn to their own settings. It aims at enabling students to explore and make connections between subjects and real life contexts, and while doing so, think, reflect and internalize positive ways of using that subject knowledge. However, a frequently expressed pedagogical goal of teachers is the compulsion to finish the syllabus properly. The default goal of teaching becomes syllabus-oriented so that all students are well-prepared for examinations and also so that they can obtain a high percentage of marks.

The real objective of teaching different subjects, to enable students to interact with the larger world meaningfully, understand life better and relate with it effectively gets lost. These pragmatic rather than superficial objectives have to be focused upon, rather than giving priority to the rote memorisation of subject content, and leaving it to children to understand its connection with life. A famous educationist, Dewey wrote, “*The child is the starting point, the centre and the end. His development, his growth is the ideal to which all studies*



are subservient. They are instruments as they serve the needs of growth. Personality/ character is more than the subject matter. It is he/ she and not the subject matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning.”

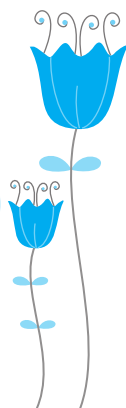
It is also important to remember that children’s capabilities at different stages of development differ. Accordingly, the attitudes, values and skills to be focused upon and the teaching strategies would be different according to their age.

STAGE-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

The primary stage of education is the ideal time for laying the foundation of a peace-oriented personality. These years comprise the formative period in the lives of students. At this stage, students are comparatively less burdened. The number of students who can be exposed to education for peace is at the maximum during this phase. Thereafter, students begin to drop out. Therefore, this is the stage at which focused attention should be paid to laying the foundation for a culture of peace through education. The saying goes, **“It is easier to build a child than it is to repair an adult.”**

The values that make up a peace-oriented personality include hygiene, both of the self and of the surroundings, respect for others and for elders, recognition of the dignity of labour, honesty, love, sharing and cooperation, tolerance, regularity, punctuality and responsibility, etc. All children are naturally loving and kind, but they are also imbued with the potential to be otherwise. Hence, the need to affirm and fortify what is constructive, and to forestall violent tendencies. They must be encouraged to develop the skills it takes to be at home with others (especially the art of listening) and with nature (aesthetic sensitivity) and a sense of responsibility.

As children grow older and reach the middle school stage, they begin to grasp abstract thoughts. In a limited way, they develop the capacity to think rationally and relationally about the various happenings in their surroundings. A crucial issue for children at this stage is that of relating to other children and their status in peer groups. Since the school brings together children from multiple religious, cultural and regional backgrounds, students need to be equipped with cognitive competence to understand the values underlying democracy, equality, justice, dignity and human rights.



This is the appropriate stage for developing the skills for handling information, in a way that will enable them to participate in groups and relate to others responsibly, negotiate conflicts and develop an informed aversion to various forms of violence. Besides, they need to develop discernment, to respond with maturity to corruption, misleading advertisements, and whatever is violent and unhealthy in the media. Above all, they need to be educated in the basics of becoming responsible citizens of a socialist, secular democracy.

In the secondary and senior secondary stage, students gradually become aware of their identity. They are on the threshold of becoming independent individuals, although still lacking in maturity. The resulting confusion leads to conflict with peers, parents and teachers. During this phase, their skills for rational thinking, communication and self-discipline are tested. They need training to resolve, through dialogue and negotiation, the conflicts they are sure to encounter in day-to-day interactions. They also need to develop awareness about inter-relationships and inter-dependence in the global and ecological contexts, so that they can form a wider perspective on justice, peace and non-violence. It is important to enable them to be not only be the recipients of peace but the active makers of peace, who can think for others and help them. They need to be at peace with themselves as evolved human beings who are peaceful and non-violent not because they are weak, but because of their commitment to peace, based on a larger awareness and rational thinking.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHING PEACE

A frequently observed pedagogical goal of teachers remains the compulsion to finish the syllabus and prepare students for examinations. The real objective of teaching subjects is relegated to the background. The teacher and the subject content dominate. The child, for whom all educational experiences are planned, remains out of focus. There are umpteen possibilities in classrooms, before and during teaching lessons, where peace perspectives can be interwoven. Much depends on teachers' perceptions of their tasks, roles and responsibility. The following anecdote reveals such a possibility—

It's 9 o'clock in the morning. After the assembly, Mrs. Lata went to the staffroom to collect her attendance register. As she was moving towards the classroom, she thought to herself that the chapter on the Constitution of India



must be completed today as it had stretched for too long. She also felt happy thinking that probably children would enjoy the lesson plan that she had worked out for them. As she moved closer to the classroom, she expected the children to be seated on the chairs. After the greetings and the attendance, she thought she would begin the chapter.

She heard children screaming and shouting in the class. As she stood at the doorstep, she saw two boys physically hitting each other, while the rest of the children surrounded them and cheered. Nobody noticed her enter the class, as the children were too engrossed in the drama that was unfolding in front of their eyes.

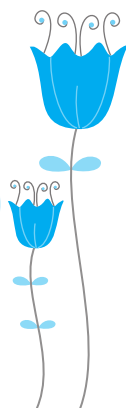
She was shocked at the situation. But she was unable to decide what to do.

One of the girls from the class noticed her and hurriedly asked her friends to get back to their seats. In a couple of minutes, all the children were back, including the ones who were fighting. She looked at the children and noticed that one of the students had his clothes torn and look visibly embarrassed. She looked at the other child, who had blood rushing through his face, and who was still very angry. A girl got up from her seat and said, "Ma'am, Rahul tore Maninder's clothes because Maninder ate Rahul's packed lunch." Suddenly, the other students joined in, supporting one or the other, and suggesting that Maninder did not eat the lunch or that Rahul did not tear his clothes.

Mrs. Lata silenced the class and began teaching the chapter that needed to be completed.



Fig. 10 Opportunity here for peaceful resolution.



There could have been alternative ways of handling such a situation. In such a situation, one can

- Ask them to stop fighting and go back to their seats or take them to the principal or penalise them in some other way.
- Ask the children why they were fighting.
- Ask the class why they merely watched this violence in the class without making any effort to stop it.
- Ignore for sometime and later take up the issue at an opportune time.
- Try to capitalise on the opportunity and devote time to handling the issue and postpone her compulsion to teach the lesson for a while.

We teach children chapters on democracy and justice from textbooks but when we face a real-life situation where these concepts can very well be integrated for their clear understanding, we shy away from engaging with them. Children will be able to learn about these values only by experiencing them in their lives. They will also learn that these concepts are not distant but that they are very close to their own realities. It gives an opportunity to a teacher to reflect that if situations like these arise in class, it is equally important to address them. Children must also learn how conflicts can be resolved peacefully.

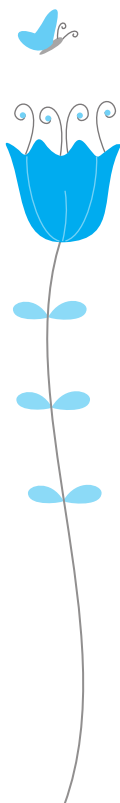
It is an opportunity for a teacher to sensitise students about the importance of communal harmony and respecting others and for developing skills to handle such situations, so that when children witness violence, they are able to do something about it. This is indeed a great task if a teacher were able to empower the forty odd children in her classroom to understand and learn to resolve their conflicts amicably.

This is an excerpt of a conversation between two young teachers in a staffroom, based on a real-life experience, as an example.

Ms. Geetha: Hey Sharada, how was your day? I am so tired today. I have been teaching non-stop since morning.

Ms. Sharada: So, were you able to finish the chapter on Diwali?

Ms. Geetha: Yes, and that has given me some satisfaction. At least the chapter is over.



Ms. Sharada: That's nice. Well, I wasn't able to complete my lesson plan on Diwali, today!

Ms. Geetha: Why? What did you do?

Ms. Sharada: I wanted to share this experience I had today in the class with you.

Ms. Geetha: What is it? Tell me.

Ms. Sharada: For the chapter on Diwali, I had decided to do a sharing of how children celebrated Diwali and Eid. During the discussion, a child from my class said that the blasts that had happened a day before Diwali were because terrorists wanted to kill people of a particular community. I asked the child how he knew that all people belonging to that particular community were terrorists. The child started laughing and the other children joined him. He then said that he just knew it. Later, he added that he also saw it on television.

Ms. Geetha: Oh my god! Did the child actually say that?

Ms. Sharada: Yes, he did. I was amazed at how an 8-yr-old child knew about the bomb blasts.

Ms. Geetha: Children these days have so much exposure to television. Parents should not have let the child watch all of this on television.

Ms. Sharada: But the fact is that children have exposure to such incidents. It opened my eyes to see that even an 8-yr-old is affected by conflicts that happen in the outside world.

Ms. Geetha: But children must be protected from all this. We must not talk about these things with them.

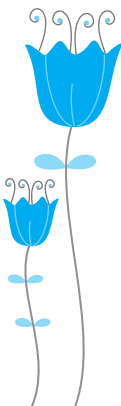
Ms. Sharada: But what do you do when a child comes up with such biases? Should we not discuss these things with them?

Ms. Geetha: No! We must not. We must protect children from such things. After all, childhood needs to be protected.

Ms. Sharada: But if we do not talk to them freely, then, other sources such as the media could make these biases even more stronger in children's minds.

Ms. Geetha: I agree with that. But I am not so sure about what we should do. Anyway, what did you do when the child said this?

Ms. Sharada: I had a discussion with the students on why they felt like that. There are a number of children in my class belonging to that community. So, I asked that child whether so and so belonging to that community was a terrorist. The child said no and the other children also said no. I told them that I didn't know who was responsible for the blasts but we should not form opinions just on the basis of hearsay.



Ms. Geetha: So, how are you going to find out who was responsible for the blasts? Are you from the CBI? (Laughs)

Ms. Sharada: What I have thought is that we could perhaps discuss clippings from the newspaper on this case with the children and discuss it further.

Ms. Geetha: That's a very good idea. You must go ahead with it. If I find some articles on the case, I will certainly get them for you.

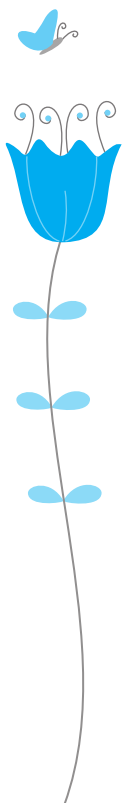
Ms. Sharada: Thanks Geetha. That's very nice of you.

The classroom, thus, is a very dynamic place where a teacher faces many kinds of unforeseen circumstances which require sensitive handling. It may be about dealing with children who bully each other, or children who come from disturbed homes, or handling gender stereotyping. A teacher who is able to handle these issues sensitively and amicably indeed 'builds peace.'

TEACHING PEACE THROUGH SUBJECTS

Teaching must encourage students to build their knowledge by connecting and consolidating their experiences in real life and the outer world, and enabling them to respond to the challenges appropriately and effectively. The task of teaching for peace is challenging and interesting and it requires willingness, commitment and ingenuity on our part as teachers. The responses of the learners to their world and its realities are enhanced in their effectiveness by study of subject contents included in Languages, Science, Mathematics and Social Science. However, in our enthusiasm to teach students, we sometimes go overboard and merely teach subjects rather than improving learning through them, as well.

We must understand and make explicit the goals of teaching a subject. For instance, one of the objectives of teaching and learning of **Language** is to improve competence of communication through the oral and written expression in that language, to understand the inherent culture and aesthetics and to attain proficiency to convey various thoughts and feelings in an articulate and aesthetic way. If this does not happen, the goals of language learning are not served. If these goals of education are served, language could actually promote peaceful disposition by proper and appropriate expression of love, respect and empathy and avoid miscommunication,

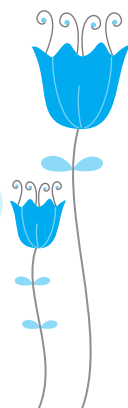


prejudice or bias, which need to be learnt by students. The barriers to communication, which are created by words, language and the inadequate expression of emotions, have to be understood in a language class. The teaching of '*Desdemona*' by Shakespeare, for instance, serves this end, to understand how prejudices and biases keep growing if these are not expressed and clarified. Critical reflection on these goals of language learning would make it easy to see the connection between learning of these subjects and the goals of education for peace.

Similarly, let us look at the goals of teaching Social Science. The content of **Social Sciences** is aimed at familiarising students with their environment, socio-political, economical and geographical, as well as, the interactions and relationships among individuals, institutions and organisations. The objective is to help them develop a broad perspective on societal development, and bring about comprehension of the individual and social problems inherent in the structure and processes of society.

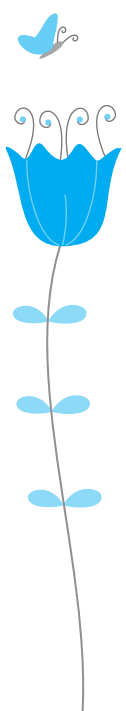
Since the Social Science content deals with relationships, it should enable students to perceive the way these relationships are structured, political, cultural, economic and social transactions, migrations, border issues and gender, race and caste issues, and to critically examine if these relationships are inspired by justice, democracy and equality. It will teach them how these social injustices lead to environmental imbalances; personal problems that have a relevance to the development of the human values of freedom, trust, respect for human dignity and cultural diversity. Social Science should familiarise students with the vocabulary to consolidate their own experiences in society with regard to these institutions and organisations and produce an insight and a vision to understand real social situations.

The ultimate objective of teaching Social Science is to think critically, to understand the social reality and the various identities existing together, and arrive at suggestions for facilitating desirable changes for welfare, peace and prosperity. However, the way these subjects are dealt with sometimes leaves a lot of scope for attaining these objectives. We concentrate on rote memory of the concepts rather than its more interesting connection with life outside. If at all



students and teachers discuss issues, it is criticism with a pessimistic eye rather than focus on the positive and constructive aspects. Thinking about how to enhance positive attitudes or taking constructive action is off the mark. It is this role of teaching Social Science which needs to be the focus from the peace perspective to maintain the true spirit of teaching the subject.

The content of Social Science at elementary stage aims at creating an interest in the area and thinking about the broader themes underlying the study of societies rather than remembering details of the existing knowledge. Looking at the developmental level of children at this stage, they do not have the requisite cognitive frameworks to consolidate such detailed knowledge. Any enthusiastic efforts to stuff too much information would backfire, adding to the curriculum load and posing problems of comprehension and disinterest in the subject. At the stage of secondary education, the content gets diversified, and here, subject knowledge becomes more thematically classified into separate areas like History, Geography, Political Science and Economics. Let us see how these subjects at various stages could be taught with an emphasis on peace-related concerns without digressing from subject-related objectives and rather, facilitating interest, retention and in-depth processing of subject matter. One lesson idea is described below:

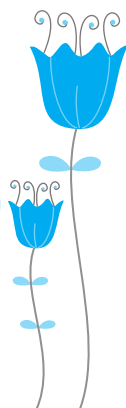


In the History Textbook of NCERT for Class VIII, *Our Past-III*, the lesson 'From Trade to Territory: the Company Establishes Power', there is content which describes the monopoly of trade by the East India Company by procuring sole rights of trade, elimination of rival companies to boost trade, pushing up prices to earn higher profits and causing hurdles in the way of rival companies to prevent them from trading. In this lesson, the teacher can help students connect these ideas to their own contexts, ask them questions, about whether they have had an experience of this kind. Teachers may use their experience to highlight peace concerns relating to inter-group conflicts, a lack of concern for the local community and its welfare and the use of force to monopolize trade and put down rivals.

For example, in the NCERT's Geography Textbook for Class X, there is a lesson on forest and wildlife resources, this chapter will have content on flora and fauna in India, vanishing forests, conservation of

forests and colonial policies. All these topics are prescribed from the perspective of forest preservation, environmental concerns, prevention of cruelty to animals and its effect on the environment, which are all indicators of inter-dependence among human beings, as well as, nature. However, these concerns would be understood only when opportunities are created to discuss the tribal populations which are dependent on forests for their survival, while government rules declare these areas as protected. These instances of conflict and issues of justice and inequality will be understood by students in a much broader perspective, and will affect their emotional and behavioural responses. Similarly, in NCERT's History Textbook for Class VII, *Our Pasts-II*, the lesson on 'Tracing Changes Through a Thousand Years', there is ample scope for connecting the subject matter to real life, and constructing a perspective on peace in students' minds. The content, which discusses the concept of religions, while teaching the sequence of events in history when people travelled to India and found opportunities for trade and sometimes established themselves as rulers whether British or Mughals or others, provides scope for discussing how these people also brought with them new technologies, and contributed to the composite culture of India. For instance, Sher Shah Suri planted trees and built roads, which facilitated trade and transport even now. There are many other such instances.

Science subjects provide ample scope for infusing and highlighting peace values and concerns. The attitudes, values and skills of precision, flexibility, objectivity, accurate observation, cross checking or verifying and critical thinking are to be nurtured through science. Besides, scientific knowledge has a bearing on health and hygiene, nutrition, cleanliness; the attitudes which are crucial to quality of life, individual happiness and social relationships. A number of environment related concerns, as well as multicultural myths and facts, too, could be placed in proper perspective through the teaching of Science. The content in Biology, related to understanding origin, and the spread of diseases provides opportunities to understand our responsibility, and develop a caring attitude towards others. Teachers may seize this latent potential of the subject to drive home the concerns of peace, and clarify how our actions affect others and vice-versa. There is interdependence among people in many ways that may not be clearly visible to us.

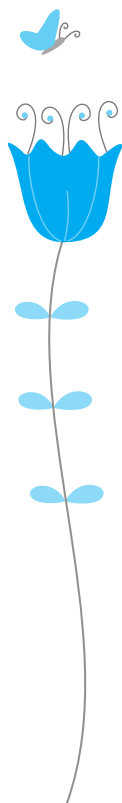


Similarly, the content of Chemistry also has chapters on reactivity of different metals, reagents, catalysts, etc. These also are latent or hidden opportunities to not only make lessons interesting and humorous but also illustrate how our behaviour, too, is like a catalyst or a reactive metal or like noble metals that are not reactive. We catalyse fights or we act like mediators to bring about peace. Similarly, Physics also helps us see how the balance of forces in our life has to be reviewed to understand why we stick to our point of view and do not open up to others. Our cultural, familial and neighbourhood, and even school related ties are like forces that make us prejudiced. All these and many more hidden and explicit opportunities could be visible to a teacher imbued with peace perspective in education.

The NCERT Science text book for Class X has a chapter on 'Life Processes', which has dealt with nutrition in plants and animals as well as in human beings. This content can be linked to children's experiences with dental caries, blood pressure, haemoglobin and kidney problems, etc., in their families. The content can also make them understand as to how we are interdependent on nature, as plants capture light energy and transform it into fuel for us. Discussions on these topics will enable them to learn the subject matter better and also make them think critically and become aware about their own health.

Similarly, the chapter on coal and petroleum formation will become more interesting and will be retained better if linked with the societal issues of rising costs of traveling and air pollution, as well as, depleting earth resources; especially eliciting students' views and experiences so that their actual response to such critical issues turns more reflective.

However, at times, due to teaching the subject content in a routine way, and teachers' own preoccupations, these opportunities, inherent in the subject, may remain hidden. Therefore, it is important that textual material in books may be presented with such a perspective that the attitudes and values of peace, implicit in the subject matter, become explicit, and teachers capitalise on them while teaching. Not only must the content, in which peace values are explicit or implicit or hidden but also the negative or anti-peace instances must be discussed to undermine their impact. Even differences of opinion

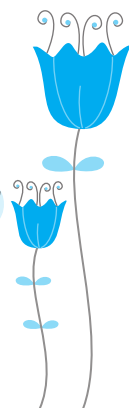


with regard to issues should be expressed so that these are discussed threadbare and reflected upon from the perspective of peace. Textbooks may also provide guidelines and clues to teachers to focus the discussion on these themes.

PEACE CONTEXTS IN TEXTBOOKS

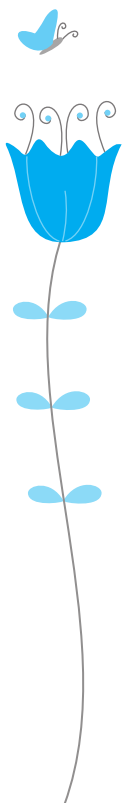
The content of the textbooks assumes a lot of importance for the communication of values and to highlight concerns related to peace, especially in view of the realisation that the content is never value free, as against the commonly held assumption. In fact, textbooks convey values depending on the content sampled out. However, it is the implicit agenda of the textbooks, which has a greater driving force. This potential of the textbook has been both overlooked and exploited by the educational system for various purposes. The potential is inherent in the sampled content of the textbook and its presentation and also in the questions, illustrations, figures and pictures and even the organisation. The attitudes and values underlying subject content, which have a bearing on peace concerns, have to be identified, and consciously interwoven and highlighted in textbooks of different subject areas. All subjects have the potential for conveying the attitudes and values relevant for peace, although some subjects are more amenable to highlight and emphasise peace values like social sciences and languages.

It is important to identify the themes and lessons where the peace context already exists so that while teaching the lessons, teachers could emphasise these concerns which are integral to the subjects. Young minds could be influenced to a far greater extent by consciously planning the subject matter of the textbooks and by the presentation of the content, highlighting peace related values and promoting awareness of human and democratic rights of the disadvantaged and other marginalised populations. For example, the lesson on the Indian Constitution in the Political Science book has to discuss the values of equality, justice, rights and duties, harmony, secularism and national integration, which are also the concerns of peace. Besides potentially peace laden themes and lessons, there are portions which at times inadvertently present violent attitudes and contexts; these contexts also need to be



understood by teachers so that during transactions they are able to develop alternative perspectives which generate an awareness regarding the futility of violence. For example, while presenting prejudice or religious intolerance in History books, sometimes, content may incite passion and anger. The teacher has to handle the situation carefully and explain that prejudice means judging others and that we should not judge others and rather, view others from the perspective of peace and humanity. The importance of teachers' awareness lies in enabling students to think and reflect on both the pro-peace and the anti-peace contexts, and thereby making appropriate choices. The strategy will not only create a change in thinking at the cognitive level but will also induce changes in the emotional and behavioural realms.

As pointed out earlier, at different developmental stages, the peace-related knowledge, attitudes and values, which ought to be nurtured among children, vary. At the primary stage, the concerns relating to peace have to do with developing awareness and positive attitudes towards self, others, work, leisure, discipline, courtesy, emotional and social caring, compassion, respect for diversity, competencies related to the self, others and the environment. The components of peace, relating to health for all, aesthetic sensitivity, values of caring, compassion and collective living and following the ideals of secularism and democracy have been incorporated in contemporary textbooks. For instance, environmental study textbooks at the primary level include titles like environmental studies, art of healthy and productive living. Language textbooks focus on communication skills but other concerns like joy and inner harmony, removal of gender bias, and respect for manual labour, physical, mental and emotional development and well-being, appreciation of cultural heritage, etc. are some more foci that have been implicitly or explicitly woven into the content of elementary textbooks. These themes continue in the upper primary stage. The secondary stage textbooks have also to be critically viewed by teachers with respect to the content and the questions and the pictures included in them, to assess how they address the values underlying peace, viz. personal development, development of social skills and national and cultural identity. In order to make full use of all



opportunities in a conscious manner to convey positive attitudes and values which would enable a student to develop positivity within herself, and develop responsibility and respect for the rights of the self and for others, too, the textbook content material has to be judiciously reflected and discussed, giving opportunities for expression of all kinds of divergent opinions. Textbooks need to include content, which enables young children to develop vocabulary, knowledge, concepts, attitudes and values characterising happy, courteous, aesthetically sensitive and socially aware human beings.

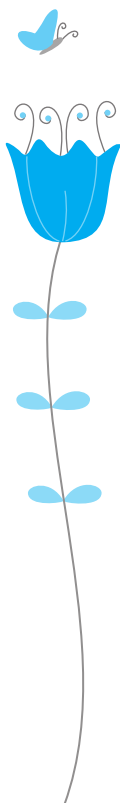
For example, languages textbook content should have instances which model and enable the development of communication skills needed for living with cultural diversity, conveying respect and empathy, helping others and effective self expression in general and particularly for dealing with conflicts. For instance, the Class IV Environmental Studies Textbook, *Looking Around* by NCERT has a chapter 'A Day with Nandu'. This chapter has content that encourages children to reflect on living together, and on cooperation, which can be further elaborated by teachers. Yet another chapter in the same book has discussed the respect for nature, plants and animals, and the role of people in protecting them. Similarly, the Class IV Hindi textbook *Rimjhim* by NCERT has a chapter *Kirmich Ki Gaird*. This chapter implicitly conveys the process of conflict resolution by focusing on a common goal. The children fight to own a ball but they end the fight and decide to play with it. Such examples could be used by teachers to encourage children to reflect on many other conflicts occurring frequently in class. In the Class VIII History textbook, *Our Past-III* a lesson, 'From Trade to Territory' highlights the territorial designs of the East India Company and corruption among its officials. However, it also highlights that not all were like that, and explains that the most common human desire which inspired them to come to India was to trade and earn more, and return to Britain to lead a comfortable life. However, a few corrupt officials and their ambitions to power, changed the direction of history. This places, in proper perspective, the role of the East India Company, and attitudes toward the British. Thus, textbooks could effectively draw attention towards values of inter-culture harmony, conflict resolution and cooperation, which promote peace.



SOME TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR PEACE

It has been emphasised that classrooms need to encourage critical reflection on subject knowledge, and understand how these experiences could be beneficial for themselves and for others to make life more peaceful. This is possible only if teaching-learning could provide freedom and the time and space to students for learning at a pace convenient and comfortable to them. It will also enable all learners to express their opinions and aid comprehension of subject matter. It will ensure their greater involvement in the teaching-learning process and simultaneously take pressure off the teachers' shoulders. However, this does not mean no responsibility; it rather means a different kind of responsibility. This is a supportive role, which is encouraging rather than teaching in an authoritarian manner without regard to students' abilities, interests and learning styles. How is this possible without stressing our already overloaded teachers? Instead of attending to pedagogical goals of finishing the syllabus alone, they may become more creative by using different strategies and methods of teaching so that learning is facilitated without them being overburdened.

Students have differential inclinations to use various sensory and motor capabilities for learning. The education system and teaching are generally suited to those who use the verbal mode. It is important to pay attention to the different styles of learning and preferences of learners for other modes such as visual and physical, which are useful in learning through charts, paintings and drawing or playing music. All aspects of learners – physical, affective and aesthetic, and their social capabilities must be activated through teaching. Only then students are likely to develop holistically, experiencing in reality the meaning of values and skills. For instance, to rote memorise democracy or justice is not the same as actually participating in a play and experiencing injustice, or making a democratic set-up work for them. However, play experiences have also to be discussed while teaching the text. It is through participation in such activities that lasting experiences are acquired which leave an indelible mark on the student's memory. These strategies could be different for learners of different age groups. A few specific strategies for teachers to use are discussed here.



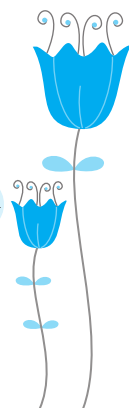
During the primary stage, children learn best if all their senses are involved in the process of learning. They are still in the process of exploring their physical and verbal capacities while their cognitive development is taking place very fast. They are developing motor skills and the use of language for communication in various contexts; and vocabulary for formal occasions and for understanding subject matter to be learnt in school at the middle and secondary stages. They are also in the process of developing their personality. The process of acquisition would be much faster if they are able to put into practice the attitude and behaviours being learnt. Opportunities could be created through the use of learning in small groups through dramas, story telling and experiential activities like visits.

During the middle and secondary stages most learners have already mastered motor skills, and the language necessary for learning in school. Their personality is, by now, socialised in accordance with the school ethos. The attitudes, values and behaviours which are not in accordance with peaceful behaviour are often kept hidden, as by now, learner knows that these are not socially desirable. However, the attitudes learnt at home or in school linger on, unnoticed.

Experiential learning facilitates expression and reflection, and orientation of attitudes and behaviour towards peace. It consists of the use of strategies which not only guide the formation of the right attitudes but helps process the subject matter thoroughly and works best in involving students who are not quite verbally-oriented.

Silent Sitting

There are times in the classroom when the teacher is exasperated with the students as they are hardly in a mood to listen to or study. This strategy can be used to recharge and to bring the restlessness under control while embarking on serious work in the classroom, or when students are tired, or to deliberate upon tricky issues. This can be used with all age groups. Students have to be gently persuaded to close their eyes and sit still just for a few minutes. The teacher must also join the group in this exercise. The experience could be shared and discussed with students as to what did they experience during the sitting and what kind of a feeling came thereafter. The teacher will be able to see that students become less restless afterwards. Some experiments have shown that sitting silently and

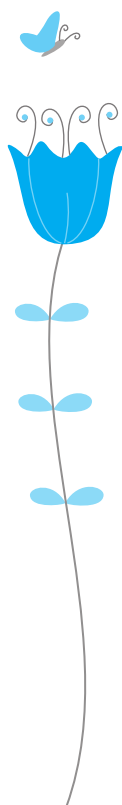


being with yourself helps in improving self-confidence and the ability to get along with others. It reduces negative emotions, and helps to experience peace. It, therefore, serves as a warm up exercise at the beginning of lessons.

Drama and Role Play

Another strategy, drama, may be already well-known to you. Drama and role play are different. Both could be used with young children, as well as, with adolescents but the issues and problems which can be tackled through these are different and so will be the goals of using them. Drama is more suitable where the context is written and well-planned in detail and known to some children or adolescents. But it has to be presented through dramatisation to others to imbibe the lessons or information contained therein or for better retention of the content or for prompting reflection. For example, one can use drama for History lessons or language learning or to drive home social issues. A play on Munshi Premchand's stories, e.g. *Bade Bhai Sabab* or *Bishops' Candlesticks* or any other such story or chapter could be dramatised to highlight the details of the situations, ethos and values. Any suitable chapter could be chosen by children to prepare a drama. But learning is best in the classroom, when it is done not for the sake of competition in school or for a prize but simply played by the class for the value that will come out of the experience, in retrospect.

Role play is more suitable for enabling self-expression, developing feelings of empathy or dealing with conflicts. Role play is more suitable for emotionally charged situations in the classroom, in school, in the family or in society where players take up roles of people that they have seen in conflict or of those who are involved in issues related to discipline and non-obedience, for example, adolescents in conflict with their parents and teachers or any other person. Role play is done wherein different individuals assume different roles after being briefed by the teachers about the situations. They act out the role as they feel, according to the brief of the character. After role play, the experiences are discussed as to what the students felt about their role and character. This is a very powerful medium. It should not be used in a casual manner by either teachers or students. The limitations and frustrations of the characters played



are experienced by the players. Emotional outbursts and serious emotional learning occurs in these role plays. So, the teacher should paraphrase the feelings without judgement; provide support; and respectfully acknowledge all feelings of anger, frustration or bitterness.

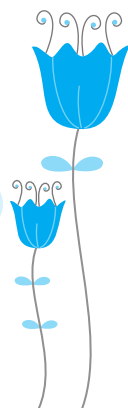
Storytelling

In recent years, we have learned that the mind has a preference for stories. It is useful with primary school children, who are fascinated by movement and facial expressions; it enables them to project their own opinions safely into the characters of the story. When a text is discussed this way, accompanied by experiential behaviour, it is better retained and continuous reflection on it is inevitable. Discussion at the end of the session, could be used to stimulate students' creativity, express deep-seated feelings of fear, frustration and anxiety or bias, which get reflected in their projections of such feelings on to the characters of the story. They could be asked questions at the end of the story to express their feelings, attitudes and values. For example, after narrating a story about stealing, one could ask as to what punishment ought to be given to the thief or how a character who is abusive should be dealt with. Posing such questions may elicit all their fears, biases and prejudices, which could then be used to structure experiences that create an emotionally secure, tolerant and bias-free attitude and behaviour.

They can even be asked to tell their own stories, sometimes, even using textual material to arouse their interest and involvement in the class to help develop vocabulary and retention from ideas and lessons. However, it is important that these sessions are not critical and that their opinions are not judged by teachers. It is expression and enactment all the way, only punctuated by reflection.

Discussion

As a strategy, discussion is useful when a teacher is presenting a topic where different points of views are to be critically examined and elaborated. Often in Economics, History, Political Science and other subjects, students are presented with theories, incidents and data which have to be discussed, and critical views have to be presented from different perspectives. For example, say, we are discussing the arrival of foreigners in India and their impact on



Indian economy and trade. Here, divergent views, some of them highly polarised, offer opportunities for learning peace-related attitudes. Some students could view these immigrant as adding to the local culture and diversity, technological advancement and giving a boost to trade and globalisation. Some others view them as threats to the local culture. Yet others may point out that India had not just one but many cultures and states, and the argument is taken further. Respect for the cultural diversity, interdependence and strength of different cultures could be acknowledged through the contribution of different students. Use of discussion in a full class, however, may not enable everyone to participate. Those who are shy or not prepared on the topic also need to be motivated. Motivating the students does not require extra efforts, rather, it only means not criticising them or pointing to their errors. It helps to acknowledge that they participated and contributed. The error could be noted by referring the matter to the whole group or by restating facts. The quiet ones could be involved by small group discussions as discussed next.

Small Group Learning

The teacher may like to group students in small groups, which get organised on a random basis. These groups are entrusted with the responsibility of reading and discussing the subject matter or text. The teacher's role is that of support, overseeing or coordinating. This technique could be used with middle and secondary students more than primary students although group settings could be used for all stages. Small groups facilitate expression for even those who do not participate in big classrooms. This strategy could be used to teach tough topics in maths, languages and science, etc. so that for the difficulties of all students, there are group members to help and provide emotional support to each other. A healthy competition is set up among groups to help each member do well, although personal-social issues crop up in these groups, but then, these situations also enable learning the values of caring, forgiving and restraint. Apart from the involvement of students and facilitating learning, this technique frees the teacher from thinking and planning ahead. Students learn to cooperate and work as a group. They learn to mediate and dialogue with each other to provide emotional support.

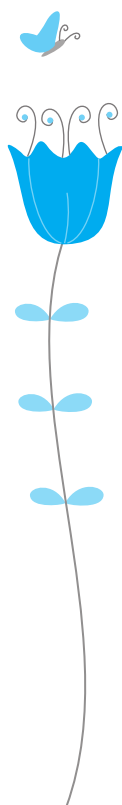


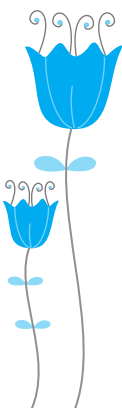


Fig. 11 Joy of learning in small groups.

Maintaining a Diary

Children could be encouraged to maintain a daily diary to record events that appear significant to them right from classes when they are ready to write down their thoughts. This helps as a strategy to remember their daily chores, become regular and punctual with tasks-homework and study. It also facilitates review and reflection on new knowledge and experiences. It acts as a monitoring device for the impulsive and undesirable behaviour that they engage in, during the day. By recording behaviour on a daily basis, they become aware and understand the reality behind their attitudes and behaviour. This awareness of positive and negative behaviours stimulates change for the better. Although younger children are not very articulate about their thoughts or feelings, they, too, may be asked to make drawings about their impressions of the day. This will help them reflect on the day's activity without actually verbalising it but it will plant a very useful habit in them.

There are many other strategies which could be used for different groups depending on the resources available, for example, collage making to understand political science, economics or history-related lessons. Students may collect material and prepare collages on chosen topics. Community social work or visiting nearby homes



of the elderly, interacting with children's homes or the rural and village community may help them understand issues of justice, equality and freedom. Picnics and visits to parks and to places connected with peace, equality, harmony and freedom inspire students to reflect on the meaning of these in an experiential manner.

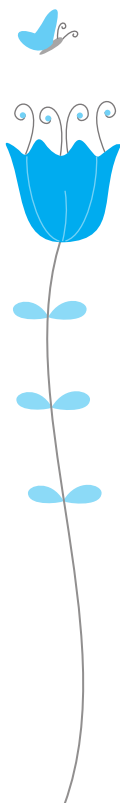
SOME EXEMPLAR IDEAS

At the primary stage, a child's self is expanding. It evolves as perceptions about her own capacities and family characteristics are added. Children must be encouraged to share these with others without anyone casting a negative reflection. For instance, at the primary stage, in EVS classes, they may be encouraged to speak about what languages and dialects are spoken at home, what kind of foods are eaten, about cultural festivals and rituals, and traditional dresses that are worn. Such an exchange will help them know their own and each other's cultures better and remove the element of bias. The activities which facilitate sharing, without judgement or evaluation, help them to accept themselves, remove the stress of being evaluated, and develop respect for who they are, and also respect the differences among them. This will minimise prejudice and promote inner peace, as well as, intercultural harmony.

Similarly, group activities and sharing of resources while carrying out small projects, and craft and art work in groups predisposes them to cooperation and collaboration.

At the secondary stage, language-related activities may include writing about topics such as 'Misunderstanding between friends and mediation by a third person who is a common friend.' This would help children develop a positive vocabulary, needed for mediation and compromise, besides learning about forgiveness and helping others, and also develop an insight into misunderstandings caused by meaningless and unwarranted situations and comments. Children could also be asked to frame a letter to the editor on, 'the callous attitudes of the public towards the environment' or about 'Issues of social justice, discrimination and citizenship in the community.'

Social Science teachers could pose questions like, "What would a peaceful world look like?", "Why is peace elusive in the world today?", "What kind of changes would you like to make?" and help

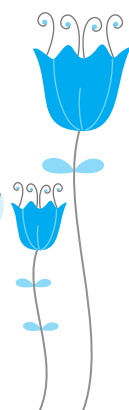


children explore answers based on their understanding of Geography, History and Political Science. These questions are likely to bring out attitudes and values that are both anti-peace and pro-peace. The attitudes and values that are anti-peace also must be discussed to bring into focus their fallacy, as the teacher who confronted childrens' attitudes about terrorists in the classroom and clarified the discrepancy in their thoughts and conclusions. Another such activity for senior students could be to identify problems in the community that require creative problem solving, and suggest solutions to some problems.

For example, describe any conflict at the state level or a conflict experienced by any community, and suggest how it could be tackled. The attitudes, values and behaviour that could make democracy successful or the benefits and shortcomings of democracy in India could be enumerated by children. This would lead to logical and creative thinking using subject matter studied in textbooks without feeling the strain of reproducing the right answer, as well as, learning to apply subject knowledge in real life problem solving.

Science by nature is an activity-oriented subject, and offers scope for indepth processing of content to develop appropriate attitudes, values and habits from the primary stage, exposing children to such activities that foster in them, attitudes and skill of observation, precision, measurement and critical thinking. Activities that prevent them from drawing premature conclusions or overgeneralisation on many environmental and social issues that underlie prejudices, biases and social injustices of various kinds. Learning about health and well-being by life style management should be linked with the study of tissues and other systems of the human body in Biology, for instance, linking of foods with diseases like blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

Teaching subjects, thus, offers innumerable opportunities of stressing upon peace perspectives without compromising the learning of the subject content. It rather deepens the understanding and processing of content. Infusing the peace perspective in teaching, and using appropriate strategies enable teachers to make the subject matter more interesting, and help permeate it not only into the cognitive frame of children but also into their affective and behavioural repertoire.

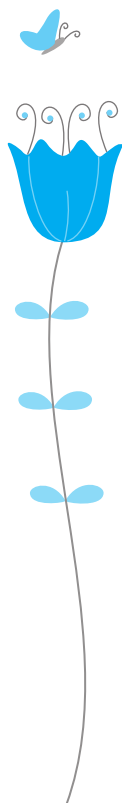


EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT ISSUES

As teachers, we know that assessment and evaluation are essential components of the educational process. An objective and credible system of assessment provides feedback to the learners as well as to the teachers on the progress attained by students vis-a-vis the methods of teaching-learning adopted by them. In the absence of an authentic system of assessment, the formative, as well as summative objectives of teaching-learning remain incomplete.

The current system of examination, instead of being a mechanism of feedback to students and teachers, has turned out to be a rat race for students to outdo each other. This focus of the examination tilts the classroom climate and the school ethos towards vicious competitiveness, to the exclusion of all other goals of education. Instead of a real quest for learning, fear of examination, malpractices, stresses and frustrations result from this competitiveness. The fierce competition and stigma imposed on students who fail keeps them in despair, and drives a few to suicide. Learning, which is meant to be a joyful experience, turns into something oppressive. We know that some, who are not able to manage top positions, are stressed enough to commit suicides just as others who do not make it to the pass category. These may be extreme reactions but even the general student population is none too happy with the system of evaluation. However, assessment cannot be wished away in spite of the fact that it generates tremendous anxiety and tension among students, and kills the joy of learning. It is necessary that a paradigm shift takes place not only in the teaching-learning process but also in the system of evaluation. It needs to be radically reorganised and made pro-peace and student friendly. But what can we do as teachers, here and now, without waiting for systemic reforms?

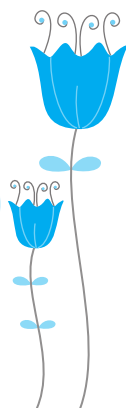
As teachers, our role is crucial. In fact, it is we who could insulate or pre-dispose students from self-condemnation in the event of not attaining the desired position on the basis of such a mechanical way of evaluation which does not record progress; rather, penalises for lack of comprehension, and labels students as pass or fail. This labeling not only further discourages them and affects their capability and motivation to learn but also diverts their attention to other



ways of getting recognition from their peers, which is crucial for their positive self-image. In the absence of such recognition, the low achievers often take to truancy, bullying and other negative behaviours. What can we do?

First, we need to understand the purpose of evaluation, which is to record the progress of the students, focusing on what they have learned, rather than what they have not learned. The recording of progress is to enable them to turn their attention to other areas that are tough for them. But assessment in schools is taken as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. We need to understand that the test or examination marks by themselves do not communicate much. The students hardly learn about their strengths or areas of improvement. There is a tendency to focus on areas where the student lacks rather than on his or her strengths. It is a common fear among teachers, as well as parents that the celebration of progress will make students complacent or arrogant. On the contrary, appreciation of any quality will lead to improvement in all the other areas, as well. Therefore, it is important to appreciate them for whatever progress they have been able to make. It is only appreciation in the right manner that will motivate and encourage students to perform well. Some of us are really concerned about our students and their performance, and to help them, we give our suggestions, and exhort them to do well but our focus is too much on their failures rather than their strengths. We use threat and scare rather than convey our belief in their abilities and their potential to perform better.

Research shows that teachers' and parents' expectations about students affect their actual performance level. Therefore, we must genuinely believe in the potential abilities of our students. In this context, the other concern relates to the differential abilities of students, which needs to be recognised. All students need not excel in all subjects. We focus too much on failures rather than appreciating students for their successes or giving them credit for passing or doing well in most subjects. Besides, opportunities must be provided for receiving recognition and appreciation not only in academics but also in other areas like sports, dramatics, etc., so that all students get opportunities for success and appreciation. Ensuring some amount of success for all students is necessary for motivating them to continue

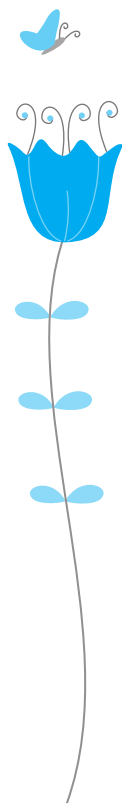


to strive for success, just in case their potential has not been realised due to extraneous factors like home, peers, language, etc.

The assessment of the performance of a human being is quiet complex as performance is dynamic and not constant. It is important to understand the reasons for students' failures as individuals' moods, needs and aspirations exert their influence on performance. Context and background is also important. Researches have indicated that an impoverished environment can drastically reduce a student's performance. This is true of students from under-privileged sections of society. There is a need to take care in using the same criteria of assessment as the one that is used for students from the privileged sections. Comparison may be made with respect to his/her own performance over a period of time and not with others' performance. Concerns of equality and justice are negated if students from radically different backgrounds are subjected to harsh reactions and comparisons.

Evaluation from a pro-peace perspective suggests providing constructive feedback, and encouraging students to know and understand their mistakes, which will be helpful in determining remedial action. If only marks are communicated, students would hardly learn about where they lack or where they need to make improvements. The way in which results are announced and communicated to students also needs careful attention, particularly in the case of low achievers. It is important to understand that students are emotionally involved in receiving marks or scores. They must be emotionally or mentally prepared to cope with the associated emotional reactions and be given time for expression of feeling and expectations, and reason out their own perception of the cause of failure or of low achievement.

Yet another issue central to assessment is that of the categorisation of students on the basis of knowledge or rather, rote memory-based tests, which put at an advantage those who process information at only the surface level without delving deeper into their behavioural and critical implications. It is also important to assess not simply the rote learning of the subject content but the ulterior objectives of its implication for real life. For example, the understanding of concepts such as democracy, social justice or

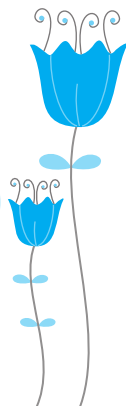


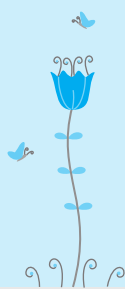
national integrity should be accompanied by appreciation of the attitudes and ethos underlying these social concepts and their incorporation in one's behaviour. Hence, the assessment of the students should include their attitudes and predisposition towards the attitudes and values of democracy and social justice, along with the knowledge and comprehension of these concepts. Such a perspective on assessment would require teachers' deeper and continuous involvement in assessment rather than terminally organised paper pencil tests.

In fact, this should be kept in mind right from primary classes, where more than academic outcomes, attitudinal aspects are important, not only from the peace perspective but for the holistic development of pupils. The holistic development in terms of personal characteristics of attitudes and values of health and hygiene, regularity, punctuality, cooperation, team-work, positive outlook, etc. also contribute to success in academic aspects. Therefore, as peace teachers, we have a responsibility to nurture these qualities among students right from the beginning, and with time these qualities get strengthened and facilitate academic success as well.

Some reforms in the examination system and evaluation procedure are in the offing. But we need not wait for these to happen. But our approach to evaluation and examination must begin with small attempts like avoiding too much emphasis on competition, allowing students to learn at their own pace without the threat of evaluation; recognising their strengths; providing success experience to build confidence; not labeling students and providing remedial attention to enhance learning and not only to secure marks.

In this chapter, we reflected on the need for a shift in pedagogical practices which could overcome barriers and hurdles to peace posed by the factors inherent in the classrooms and also those coming from local settings. The kind of knowledge, attitudes and skills teachers must possess and the practices they may use to influence the school environment for peace are addressed in the next chapter.





Taking Peace Education Forward

6

- **THE SCHOOL SETTING**
- **POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS**
 - School Ethos, Policies and Practices
 - School Activities and Projects
 - Involving Children in Peace Building
- **HOME-SCHOOL INTERFACE**
 - The Importance of Home and Family as a Resource
- **INVOLVING COMMUNITY**
- **THE MEDIA**
 - Messages are Constructed
 - Embedded Values and View Points
 - Profit and Power Motive
- **ASSESSING THE PEACE PROCESS**

The focus of this chapter is extending beyond ourselves to serve as a change agent and to spread the nectar of peace around, particularly in a school setting. Reaching out to significant others in the schools and the community is important as peace making is a shared responsibility. We have already learnt that peace in the society can be maintained fully if steps are taken at all levels, individual, national and global. However, the individual's initiative is crucial because society is what the individuals are. In the previous section, the focus had shifted from personal transformation towards empowerment of students towards the peace process as well as peace perspectives in teaching-learning. In this chapter we will look at the entire school plant and our role as reflective thinkers and mediators.



**“A candle loses none of its light by lighting
another candle.”**

—*Thomas Jefferson*

As sensitive and optimistic teachers, we cannot be just consumers of peace but have to be makers of peace as well to proactively intervene in the crisis and conflict situations around us. Maintaining peace is not only a personal responsibility but also a social responsibility. Just as we enjoy certain privileges, it is our responsibility to contribute to maintain those privileges. Similarly, if we enjoy peace with ourselves, it is our personal and social responsibility to build peace around. For teachers, it also becomes a social responsibility, as educating students in peace is intrinsic to our role as teachers and educators. Doubts, however, may still rage in our minds. We may ask – “what can I establish alone as a teacher in the school?” There are so many other teachers whose behaviour also matters for building peace. Besides, there is the Principal, staff members and even parents who play a crucial role in determining children’s attitudes and values. Over and above everything, there is the management, peer groups, the family, the community and other powerful influences like the media. Circumstances beyond our control may frequently cause feelings of hopelessness. However, enabled teachers with their heightened sensitivities and enhanced capabilities can influence change that may not seem possible right now. We have a choice to carry on with helplessness and anguish about our situations or to go ahead and at least try with optimism and confidence.

THE SCHOOL SETTING

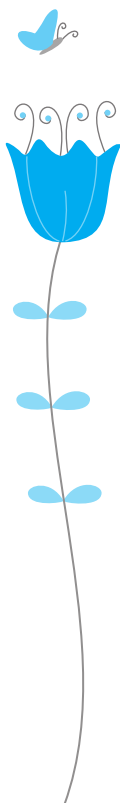
Our role as peace teachers is to understand the social climate prevailing in schools and to mediate as agents of change. We could facilitate the development of healthy attitudes and relationships at all levels among students, teachers, parents, and even staff members and officials, wherever possible. However, we are not to operate

from a higher pedestal, as experts but as members of the school. Moreover, we should not be afraid that we will be burdened with this responsibility all the time and that we will not have time or energy to do our own work. We must recognise the fact that our attitude and behaviour is likely to start a chain reaction and bring in positive results.

For all this, we should not expect a sudden transformation but place emphasis on small changes, look for creative alternatives, and count our blessings or strengths. Small changes do not stay small but gradually snowball into a movement, with courage and commitment. There is magic in the confidence generated by compassion, and a creative attitude towards difficulties, which can even limit the other negative influences. Attitudinal change in the self and others is the first challenge.

We discussed in the section on identity that our attitudes towards ourself, and prejudices and biases make us judgemental. These judgemental attitudes come in the way of our healthy relationships. Most conflicts and stresses in our relationships in school, with students, colleagues, staff and all others are born due to our judgemental attitudes towards them. The ways of dealing with these attitudes lie in adopting a non-judgemental positive outlook and communication skills of active listening and developing empathy, which was discussed in *Section-III* on exploring the self and dealing with prejudices. A non-judgemental attitude towards all relationships must be adopted and modelled by peace teachers. Becoming non-judgemental involves becoming descriptive rather than evaluative, and flexible and empathising with others. Empathy generates mutual understanding and improves relationships. As enlightened teachers, we could play an active role not only in improving our own relationships but also influence others by expressing positive attitudes, values, and behaviour.

For example, when a Principal shows anger to a teacher for coming late, instead of replying with anger or frustration, and accusing the Principal, of being biased, a peaceful teacher would empathise with him/her saying, “I can see I have caused inconvenience to you by coming late but the situation was beyond my control. I assure you that I will be careful in future. Moreover, I will make sure



that I will complete my work and you will find that my students do not lose anything.” There is, of course, a choice of giving vent to one’s ego, anger and frustration or expressing empathy. Chances are that the Principal and the teacher, both part less angry and less hurt. This teacher has demonstrated a positive and constructive way of dealing with a situation. This itself will set the stage for others to follow, thereby making efforts towards peace making.

Positive relationships need to be established with all. Sometimes, forgiving others and putting up with their weakness works wonders, just as we expect others to put up with ours. Often in the staffroom, PTA meetings or in many other situations, we tend to accumulate negative ideas and energy when we try to prove or justify our stand. Instead of complaining, criticizing the Principal or other colleagues or lamenting one’s own troubles, a peace teacher restrains her/himself and looks for proper resolution of conflicts by inviting others’ opinions. This teaches reacting in an unusual innovative manner. She reflects on the anger and asks, “What can be done that is not harmful/annoying to me and the other?” Once we give ourselves time to think, we will be surprised by our own creative ways, which remain hidden due to impulsive and habitual ways of reacting to certain situations. If conflicts cannot be resolved, s/he looks for peaceful negotiations and dialogues. If it is not possible to resolve one’s own problems, one can always seek the help of others but this is possible only if there are positive relationships with others. A peace teacher must understand that our inner peace and well-being depends on the relationships we generate. We need others, just as they need us. The happier the people around us, the better it is for our health. Is it then not important that we contribute to others’ health and happiness?

The attitudes we hold are crucial for our behaviour. Our attitudes do not change easily. When someone challenges our attitudes and makes it a point to prove that our attitudes are wrong, it makes us defensive. We defend our stand as our attitudes are emotionally loaded with our personal and cultural identity. However, if someone gives information and leaves it there for us to reflect upon, rather than trying to win a point, we are more likely to drop our biases and prejudices.



POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS

School has an extremely significant role to play in nurturing attitudes and values that promote peaceful orientation. It is a place which should be a 'Nursery for Peace', representing a culture marked by enthusiasm, commitment and willingness to work rather than an ambience producing fear, conflicts and violence.

School Ethos, Policies and Practices

Look at the schools' vision and policies. Are there any? If yes, do these reflect the motto of peace? How far are these fair to the teachers and students? Even if there is no enunciated vision or policy of the school, it exists and is embedded in the organisation of the school. The daily routines, the work allocation and discipline related practices reflect policies. Even the physical structure and facilities available in the school premises reflect the school policy. The various symbols, figures and murals displayed in the school environment also emerge from the vision of the school. The festivals, important days, holidays and the priorities placed on various activities, all emerge from the philosophy. If the explicit or implicit philosophy of the school is in line with peace, the school culture is more likely to be pre-disposed towards peace.

When the ideals and the philosophy stated by the school remain elusive to those for whom it is meant, these remain ineffectual. Therefore, it is important not only to have ideals and futuristic vision but it is equally important to make them explicit. These need to be interpreted and communicated to the staff and students. The vision and policies are sometimes directed towards peace but are not visible in action. For instance, look at the motto-“Justice prevails.” A school with this philosophy may or may not deal with its students and teachers with justice. This example shows that the vision is not reflected in the school practices. Is the vision statement-“We believe in Excellence” understood in the proper perspective? Excellence in what and for whom? Is it academic achievement only or personality and ethical development as well? Does the school celebrate the talents of a few or are the possibilities of receiving rewards available to many? Similarly, even if the mission of the school is holistic development of its students, priority is given to hundred per cent



results. These vision statements must be interpreted and they should not be contradictory.

A huge source of conflict in schools is use of corporal punishment. Discipline is very important. All of us have to be clear that discipline is maintained for the smooth running of the school, and the welfare of the children. If the school discipline itself unleashes stress and conflict among children, school teachers, the staff and the principal, it is not right; something needs to change! In the name of discipline, if children are humiliated and physically beaten, the trauma will continue into adulthood. Are we preparing a society which believes in violence, physical and brute force? We discussed earlier that violence is not only physical but that even verbal and structural violence, expressed in gender, caste and regional discrimination should be addressed. A peace teacher may make subtle efforts to remove these attitudes. These efforts may begin in the classroom by asking appropriate questions for reflection, and initiating discussions, etc. Later these efforts could be extended for other classes also through lectures, awareness raising through morning assemblies and bulletin boards. The discussion on school policies, which have inherent violence, may also be discussed. The school context and culture must be examined, and the awareness of all the teachers, staff and students should be raised about such issues.

As teachers, we are both victims and perpetrators of such structural violence. The expectations of the management about completing the syllabus, punctuality and workload and the attitudes of the staff, bother many of us and we would appreciate flexibility and equal treatment. But while interacting with students, we enforce rules that are as unpalatable as the ones enforced on us, and we rationalise our behaviour using force and different kinds of punishment to maintain discipline. It is important to analyse that just as resentment and anger builds in us through harsh rules, similarly, students also get stressed and frustrated. We have to create awareness about how violence dehumanises a child, and realise that the effects of such a punishment are not in line with the goals of education. Awareness can be created by involving other teachers in discussion; about “how to implement healthy discipline.” The fellow teachers’ attitudes towards corporal punishment can be changed by

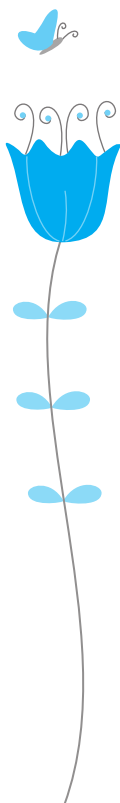


encouraging students to share their trauma and anguish about it. Even teachers can be encouraged to think of their childhood when they received punishment. We could begin with our students and share our strategies of healthy discipline. If we choose the ways of violence for maintaining discipline and do not stand up and vote against the suppression of others, we can expect the same. The rules for maintaining discipline have to be accepted by those for whom they are meant. Therefore, while framing rules, the participation of those for whom they are meant must be assured.

Science teachers in a school used to sit in the science laboratory during their free time. The Principal decided that they would have to sit in the staffroom instead. This led to conflict. When the Principal confronted them, they enquired if any science teachers were involved in the committee which framed rules. The matter was discussed, and it was revealed that a lot of expensive laboratory equipment needed to be overseen by a science teacher. The Principal had to accept the argument and take back his rule.

The above incident shows that it pays to involve the concerned people in the framing of rules and norms. Just as rules framed by a small committee cause annoyance and alienates other teachers, similarly, rules evolved by teachers could appear oppressive to students. Any rule or disciplinary practice which continuously causes trouble needs to be examined and discussed by all those concerned, although not necessarily changed.

Whatever the school environment or cultural ethos, it must be imbued with the values of caring and mutual respect, which is central to any effort towards peace education. Schools must move beyond the brick and mortar entities. There is no place for peace education in schools that have an environment where there is no clear vision or expectation, poor communication, teacher apathy and low productivity, complaints, complacency and little evidence of respect and trust. Researches and commonsense tell us that if peace education is to flourish in a school, these negative factors cannot exist. It is important to remind oneself that the peace values must permeate the daily life of the school and its culture through its celebrations, curricular and co-curricular programmes, classroom climate and procedures, opportunities and expectations, etc. These should also be connected with every activity and project existing in the school. As a peace teacher,



one should raise questions such as— Is there anything in the school environment that detracts from the values and tenets of peace education? Should policies and procedures be re-examined in the light of goals and expectations of peace education, etc.?

As a peace teacher, a simple but profound intervention could begin with a conversation, discussion or debate, not only among teachers in the staffroom but students, parents and management, also. As teachers, at times, we feel that we are victims of injustice. Decisions are made with the Head or the Principal and we are left out to implement them. The management of the school has no respect for teachers and salaries are either not paid or partially paid. Work load is distributed unfairly. Parents feel that the teachers are responsible for everything about their children. There are no facilities in the school, and yet, teachers are expected to be role models for students. We are required to fulfil parents' expectations of holistic development of their children, achieve good results, share administrative work related to teaching and also share other duties thrust upon us from time to time, and deal with all sorts of practical problems or crises. We, too, feel overwhelmed by the circumstances and stresses. These frustrations



Fig. 12 My role – spectator or mediator?

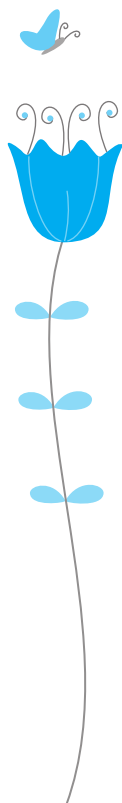


and stresses should find an outlet. Discussions and debates help us to express our points of view and listen to others. Trying to win a debate is not needed at all. Just participation in such conversations sets off a process of reflection and change, and is likely to reveal alternatives to deal with our situations creatively. This reflection on our practical difficulties and our intra-personal issues, and their consequences is crucial to bringing about changes in our attitudes and behaviour. Only when we are able to deal with our issues do we feel confident to intervene in the school's activities.

School Activities and Projects

We need not initiate huge projects or seek funds for making a difference in school life. Giving a pro-peace perspective to the usual activities organised in schools itself could trigger the change process. Doing activities in a routine manner does not give us so much mileage. For example, morning assemblies are held in a mechanical manner; these could be planned around the themes of peace and harmony including citizenship, a sense of responsibility, prejudice, conflict resolution, issues underlying justice and the values of democracy, environment, etc. using episodes, news clippings and stories followed by opportunities for discussion, reflection and clarification in the concerned classes. Students could be motivated to include peace issues in debates, seminars, dance, drama and other exhibitions and displays, and compose poems, and songs, etc. Important days like Republic Day, Independence Day, festivals and days observed internationally such as Human Rights Day, Children's Day, UN Day, Day for the Disabled, Girl Child Day, Environment Day, etc. are celebrated in schools. Why these festivals are celebrated, and the inherent peace messages, must be brought out and highlighted.

The celebration of these days does not mean that we should spend time just celebrating. How these will convey messages for peace making needs to be understood by students. Events, projects and activities could be geared towards promoting attitudes of respect and responsibility towards women, environment, the disadvantaged, the disabled, the needy and the poor. In order to develop sensitivity towards others, children could be encouraged to visit homes of senior citizens and disadvantaged groups, and to promote tolerance,



understanding and interest in the welfare of others. Solidarity camps bringing together children of different cultural groups and sports activities that promote the spirit of team work, cooperation and sportsmanship could be organised. We could create a corner where a dialogue could begin among students and teachers. However, precautions should be taken against these activities becoming a cause of conflict among students or colleagues. There are always possibilities of mischief. These need to be handled with flexibility, and any attempt at insulting or teasing one another should be dealt with firmly. Facilitating exchanges among students from various backgrounds and streams would help them overcome prejudices and barriers of region, caste and class, etc.

The way a peace teacher could extend his/her influence is by changing the perspectives of students, teachers and other personnel by disseminating knowledge about peace-related issues. There can even be a special input into the already existing activities mentioned below.

Many schools are able to bring out a small newsletter, which is circulated among students and parents. Film shows are also organised occasionally. These activities already have implications for peace-related attitudes. The messages generated through these activities have to be consolidated; and the implications discussed and highlighted by the teacher. Efforts could be directed towards bringing a newsletter from the peace perspective which includes articles on: cultural issues, conflicts and their resolution related skills, positive attitudes, communication skills, prejudice, anecdotes related to bullying, corporal punishment and its effect, child rights and human rights, environmental issues, gender role conflicts, and many such issues. Such efforts are likely to enhance the students' reflection about such issues.

The library may be organised to carry a section on peace education related books and material. This section may be displayed and highlighted for all students and could contain material related to various aspects of peace, which has a bearing on subject content also. For instance, for the students of Classes XI and XII Science, material on acid rain, green house effect, ozone layer, melting of glaciers, etc. would enable them to understand the link between life and the environment. Similarly, an understanding of the history of



conflicts among different nations and its linkages may be suggested for history students of Classes XI and XII. For younger students, storybooks, life-histories and anecdotes on the lives of great visionaries of peace may be suggested. Discussion on these readings may be organised while teaching related content in all the subject areas of Languages, Political Science, Geography, etc.

Involving Children in Peace Building



Fig. 13 Peace through peer groups

Using peer-to-peer communication is one way of really extending ourselves to a large number of students by developing our own group of like-minded students and teachers. These peer students or teachers are our communication channels for collecting information about conflicts or any other anti-peace elements. The strategy involves encouraging students to serve as volunteers for peace making, and preparing them to be part of a larger chain of change agents, who will facilitate percolation of the efforts made by the peace teacher. The teacher may choose certain students who have a peaceful bent of mind and awareness of the issues underlying peace. Students can be given training in communication and mediation skills, and an overarching understanding of peace issues like inner-peace, inter-dependence, cultural diversity, human rights, relationships, and respect

for all forms of life including nature. A group of such students, who have been trained in mediation and conflict resolution, may intervene in conflicts and help change negative attitudes among students. The students should be thoroughly prepared for their role of conflict mediation and negotiation. They should also be forewarned about not exceeding their role as peer mediators. These students should work in tandem with the peace teachers so that they are properly guided for making a difference in the ethos prevailing in their school.

HOME-SCHOOL INTERFACE

Out of various influences that affect the individual, the home and the family are very powerful. Parents' involvement is desirable in all educational endeavours at home and at school. Both the home and the school are essential for initiating and sustaining desirable changes. However, parents' role gets undermined due to the pressures of the present day fast paced life. There is often complaint of lesser cooperation and involvement from and by parents as well as from teachers. It is true that parents and family must complement the efforts made by the school.

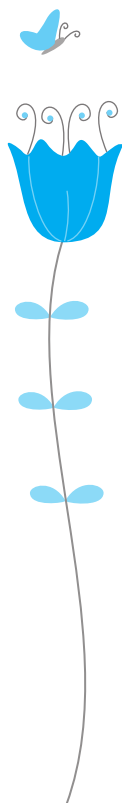
The first step in the process is to bring parents to school, which is difficult. Those who do come to school rarely feel good; either teachers or they have complaints. A peace teacher's role lies in encouraging teachers to reflect on why parents do not turn up whenever there is a parent-teacher meeting or when the class teacher wants to consult them. The communication skills of engaging parents, giving suggestions rather than only criticising and complaining about their wards every time they meet, sharing with them the efforts teachers are making towards various complaints of parents and conveying their expectations from them are crucial to healthy relationships between parents and teachers. An important skill in dealing with aggressive parents who want to transfer all the problems of children to teachers is to give them a patient hearing and questioning them about how they can contribute to their child's development.

The family through its nature, interaction styles and affiliations makes a difference to health, self-concept, identity, attitudes and beliefs and prejudices, which, in turn, could make an individual peace-oriented



or aggressive and violent. The sense of security, warmth, love and care available to a child in the family is likely to build pro-peace attitudes and values, while aggression, hostility or neglect may lead to violent ways of being. Career-obsessed parents create an ambience at home where the only thing of consequence is academic achievement. Those who cannot make the grade that appeases the parents' expectations are made to feel worthless. In the same family, different siblings experience a climate that is a world apart due to their success or failure in fulfilling parental dreams about their career and achievements. A child who fails faces hostility, rejection and scorn compared to his/her sibling who makes the grade.

As teachers, we have to be aware of the ways by which parents and other adults in the family and the neighbourhood encourage and perpetuate violence. Violent behaviour modelled by the family and school could be both verbal or non-verbal. Verbal violence could be in the form of using harsh abusive words and criticising rather than appreciating, withholding praise, and being impolite. Non-verbal violence is an attitude of neglect, alienation and beating, hurting or harming the other person physically. It may not be actually physical violence. But lack of appreciation and warmth, and comparison with others is also violence for the emotional and social well-being of the child. It alienates the child and denies her/him social security that s/he deserves in the family. We discussed in the section on violence about how direct and structural violence, inherent in the family atmosphere and relationships, causes aggression and temperamental problems. In the family, violence is often expressed as indifference and hostility towards women and children. Although we may not directly influence the family of our wards, the understanding of our own family environment and the awareness of its impact on us, and the understanding of the behaviour of school children as a by-product of their family environment will facilitate the development of teacher-child relationships. Consciousness about the impact of the family is necessary to be able to identify with the needs of the children for interventions, and areas of enrichment. For instance, a teacher often knows that children are experiencing stress of high expectations or career-related anxiety of parents. Some parents even deny the usual play item or light entertainment, or even extra reading to children.



On the other hand, there are families which give no importance to study or health of their children due to pressures of making a livelihood. Sometimes, parents are very aggressive and they dominate and even use corporal punishment or ridicule children. Such aberrations have to be identified and dealt with. In such cases, organising awareness programmes for parents is the least a peace teacher can do.

A peace teacher can take responsibility for dealing with parents of not only his own class but also try and intervene or mediate wherever there is need. The parent-teacher meetings, already going on in school or especially organised for students of one's own class, may be occasions where issues of injustice or violation of rights of children, may be discussed. It may involve developing awareness about the school policies like reward and punishment, which places some at an advantage or is unjust to others; it may also mean preventing severe violence or corporal punishment or any other practices, which make children feel discriminated.

Besides violence, there are issues of discipline, domestic violence, boy-girl relationships, watching TV, pocket money, junk food and drug abuse among others which create problems for both parents and teachers. These could be better handled when there is communication between parents and teachers, and both are trying to solve the problems rather than engage in fixing responsibility on each other. A peace teacher through her calm and composed manner, displaying patience to listen, creatively solving problem by reflecting on problems can do wonders rather than hastily trying to give suggestions or avoid issues and send parents away.

The following are some ideas on **family communication styles** which we may find useful for sharing with parents to enable them to create a peaceful ambience at home.

The understanding of family communication styles will help us understand healthy family communication, the behaviour of family members, and ways of improving the family climate through effective communication. The fast pace of life has reduced interactions and communication between family members. We can share these ideas with parents and encourage them to reflect on the kind of family climate they have. When less time is spent at home, the time available to the members for each other is less. Multi-tasking reduces the



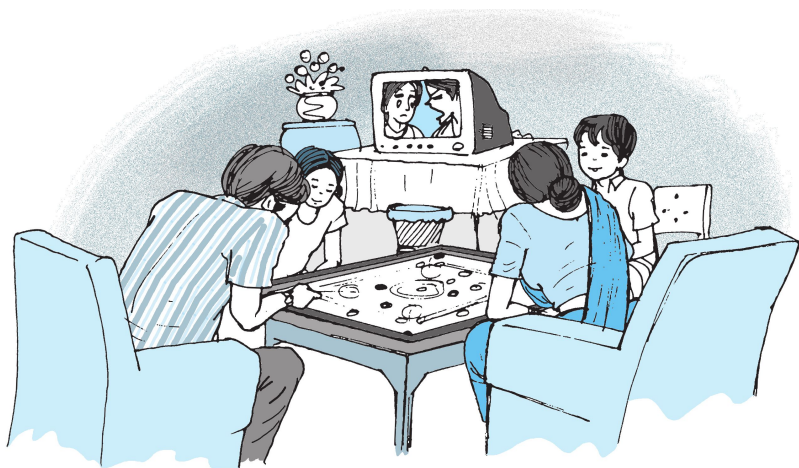


Fig. 14 Watching T.V. not at the cost of family interaction

efficiency of communication. For example, a mother is cooking and talking to the child, or a parent is busy with office work and answering children's questions. In such situations, the importance of skills and styles of communication is even more pronounced. In order to ensure an effective family climate, which fosters a sense of security, warmth and healthy personal orientation, it is important that parents understand and improve their communication skills. The achievements in academic, career and personal relationships are influenced to a great extent by the family climate experienced by the child. People communicate feelings through the verbal mode as well as through non-verbal modes such as gestures, body language and tone of voice. The verbal messages are either supported or belied by the non-verbal messages. The tone of voice gives away the feelings of anger, hurt, happiness, frustration, fatigue or an energetic state of mind of the speaker. For instance, a parent may actually not be listening to her child but may assert that she is paying attention. Similarly, non-verbal expressions communicate a lot about the level of interest, energy or boredom, etc. During communication, generally, people pay attention to verbal messages only, while a large proportion of communication is non-verbal.

The barriers to communication in the family are an authoritarian and aggressive style of speaking. The communications need to be direct and focused, referring to the situation here and now, rather than about the past. We have to help parents understand that they

should not refer to the past when a child is talking about himself/herself, for example, “We never used to watch T.V. as children or we did not do such a thing.” Parents should desist from comparing children to themselves or drawing parallels between siblings or anyone else. The discussion may be directly about the child/boy/girl with whom the dialogue is going on; and the same rules apply to communication between spouses. The use of anger, harsh words or confrontation should be avoided. Instead of continuing an argument in anger, it is better to agree to postpone the process of communication to another occasion. During communication, it helps to listen more than to talk. This, however, requires a lot of patience. Seeking clarification and acknowledging what you have heard is important. Making time and structuring communication patterns in the family is a very healthy practice. For instance, while retiring to bed, family members may spend time with each other or spend time at dinner, or when parents are relaxed and free to attend to these matters. Some keys to effective parent-child communication are:

- Communicating frequently and using every opportunity to make meaningful conversation. For example, if a child says, “I do not feel like doing my homework,” parents usually get angry. Instead, they should ask “What is it that you feel like doing? Why don’t you want to do your homework?”, and listen carefully to their answers. They must identify the concerns of children and help them overcome them with love and warmth.
- Sharing thoughts and feelings in a clear and direct manner. For instance, if they see that the child is not serious about his studies, they could say, “I am worried about your studies,” and wait for his response. It is important to resolve problems as soon as they occur or at the earliest opportunity.
- Resolving problems that arise between spouses, parents and children, and among siblings through direct communication nips conflicts just as they arise. Patience and choice of time when all are relaxed is also crucial.
- Direct and clear communication is always better than sarcastic, alluding or indirect accusation. This type of conversation, indirectly hinting at others’ mistakes and withdrawal from communication, does not allow others to respond, and breeds



contempt for each other, and the opportunities to resolve problems are lost. One should never close communication.

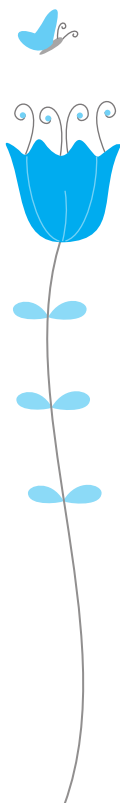
Listening is a very crucial aspect of communication. Parents must cultivate skills of listening attentively to not only verbal communication but also to feelings expressed through words, gestures, tone and tenor of voice. Communication is 80 per cent non-verbal and gestural. Understanding gestures and body language accurately is an important skill. Listening attentively includes observation, seeking clarifications with an intention to understand and know, rather than selective listening to prove our own assumptions and judgments. Most of the time people either selectively listen or do not listen at all. Even when people listen, they are mostly looking for words and arguments which confirm their own opinions. This tendency leads to a failure of communication. The other person opts out of the dialogue due to frustration at not being given a fair hearing.

Children usually are not very articulate and jumping to conclusions with them is usually disastrous, as they lack perspective. We should keep in mind the age and maturity level of children, and their lack of vocabulary to express themselves accurately. We need to put questions to them to clarify their meaning while listening to them.

Positivity and optimism are key words which should guide all effective communication. Marital and family discords reveal that unhappy family situations arise due to critical, mistrusting and contemptuous attitudes rather than any other real problems. Couples should keep communication channels open. They should compliment and encourage each other.

The Importance of Home and Family as a Resource

This is usually lost due to the lack of involvement of parents. There are several reasons for parent's apathy which can be corrected by us. We must see parents as allies and not as people whom we can blame. Lack of education, time, sensitivity, etc. among parents must not make us helpless. We can educate them about parenting and family life with the help of an aware and sensitive parent community. As peace teachers, we can organise parent days, family days or special lectures by child psychology experts, poster-exhibitions, interactive sessions for parents, parent-child interactive sessions, etc. Using



parents as resources for nurturing appropriate attitudes, values and behaviour among students is likely to impact in a positive manner. The task can begin by parents' involvement in the peace process, by self-questioning, for example, "How can I involve parents in nurturing values of peace in their wards?" "How effective is my communication with parents?" "Have I talked to the parents of my students about my ideas of promoting pro-peace attitudes and values?" and "How can I do a better job involving and supporting parents' efforts to nurture peace orientation in students?"

INVOLVING COMMUNITY

We, as peace teachers, must understand that often the achievement of our goals could be best facilitated through collaboration of the stakeholders. The local community of parents is an interest group which could be mobilised for various welfare programmes in school. We could make efforts to identify the resources available around us in the form of various specialised professionals like doctors, psychologists, engineers, etc. who could be invited to speak to parents, children and teachers on issues relating to health, communication, relationship-building, parenting and career-orientation. Even for procuring facilities on the school campus, some agencies are available. For example, there are Parent-Teacher Associations, which may help organise programmes of different kinds for schools. All we need to know is how to procure the addresses of such institutions. These are mostly a phone call away. But we have to begin a search by talking to our colleagues about what we want, and where such help is available. Peace teachers must initiate and stimulate thinking, seeking information and involving others, colleagues, parents, teachers, professionals and even the alumni of the school. An inter-face between these groups and the school will take care of what looks like an insurmountable task to us alone. Becoming information savvy is a desirable quality for peace teachers.

THE MEDIA

The media includes print, audio and visual sources which provide us information. Generally, we think of the media as synonymous with newspapers and news-channels. But these make up only a part of

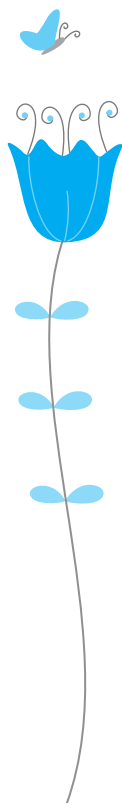


what the word “media” refers to. Media also includes advertisements, T.V. serials, films, books, talk shows, etc. The media has become an intrinsic and inseparable aspect of our lifestyles. Its pervasive presence, influence and outreach is not limited by roadblocks of under-development. It is often said that rural children in India have more ready access to television rather than to safe drinking water.

The media is one of the powerful influences on individuals, in the present times, particularly on growing children and the youth. We are exposed to one or the other kind of media which conveys information through various sources; it particularly catches our attention when we are not even in a critical thinking mode, for instance, listening to the radio when we travel in a car or while watching a movie, where suggestions or ideas about food, clothes, language, attitudes are portrayed. These images, symbols, stories and the messages embedded therein unconsciously impact our thinking, values, meanings, active vocabulary, dressing sense, eating habits, etc. This impact or change is so subtle and gradual that we are not even aware of it until we reflect on it seriously. For example, the slang that people use keeps on changing from time to time. Earlier, people used to greet each other by bowing down their head and saying ‘*Namaste*’, which has now been replaced by the more contemporary ‘Hi/Hello’. Although it is true that teenagers and young adults are strongly influenced by the media, as this is the age when identity formation is taking place, even older people are not immune to it. Gradually, we all follow the trends set in by the media. In order to understand why it happens, we need to look at the dynamics of the media.

Messages are Constructed

Multiple attitudes and thoughts presented in the media are interpreted differently by people, and their considered opinions vary widely from each other. However, the incidental exposure and influence of the presenter passing on information, his age, character, knowledge and style, etc. unconsciously make children and even adults prone to adopt the style, attitudes and values being projected, along with the information. There are other factors which alter the acceptance of the messages thrown up by the media, but this adoption is not done consciously. Its effect depends on the following factors:



- When the person conveying the information appears attractive or has a likeness to the viewers' region, religion, language, etc., his credibility appears to be much more.
- Our identity and view of life. The information that is in line with our thinking and view-point is readily accepted by us whereas the rest of the information is critically processed before we assimilate it. The information overload leads children to unconsciously accept whatever is projected without critical evaluation or processing it, as we do not get the opportunity to judiciously evaluate the information and make a balanced judgement.

Embedded Values and View Points

All media works are based on some individual's or group's conception. There are so many different forms of media, and each one has a different ownership. Each represents someone's viewpoint, and students' limited exposure to that viewpoint brings about an attitudinal bias. Therefore, it must be explored as to how the media presents limited viewpoints, which are based on the owner's discretion.

For instance, consider the following:

- There are so many newspapers, in many different languages; each has a different writing style and a characteristic bent towards a certain ideology, opinion and allegiance to languages, beliefs, systems, etc.
- Television and news channels, too, have selective areas. Some just report crimes, others focus on urban areas, still others on lifestyles of celebrities. But these do not provide a balanced and real picture of our culture or India. When it comes to food and clothing, the focus is on fashion and extravaganza. Real Indian culture, the food preferences, clothes and other details of the country may not be covered. This leads to incomplete knowledge and an unbalanced picture of our culture.
- The different media sources are primarily targeted at some special groups, viz. adults, urban, rural, etc. Even within the newspapers of the same language, there are differences in comprehensibility. Actually these media sources are consciously planned to attract



and influence a particular group. Accordingly, the issues and information of interest to the target group is sampled out for presentation in such media.

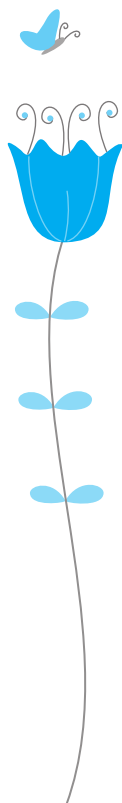
The original purpose of media was to make available a wide variety of information of the surroundings and make people active partners in working towards welfare and prosperity. But now, due to a budding of myriad forms of media, there is excessive competition, in which, the noble purpose and aim of the media has got lost. Quantity has resulted in lowering quality standards.

Profit and Power Motive

The media, is motivated to increase its viewers and listeners to enhance its profits. Therefore, the usage of words, images, opinions and ideas which would attract numbers are projected, irrespective of value content, standards of language or cultural ethics, etc.

As one of the key tools for understanding power relationships in the knowledge society, the influence of modern day media must not be undermined. As peace teachers, we need to understand how it affects our professional and personal lives, and moulds students' attitudes and beliefs towards everything, particularly in view of the fact that even in rural areas where there is lack of basic amenities, the media availability and exposure to all kinds of news, music and variety programmes, etc. is not affected. There is enough exposure to violent and aggressive attitudes and hatred towards certain groups, perhaps inadvertently. We ourselves must realise that based on the information in the media, the attitude of children is moulded. The way the media affects our relationships and day-to-day behaviour can be gauged from the way our clothes, language, and time for family interactions have been influenced by it. Becoming alert ourselves, and influencing students to be cautious is an important aspect of viewing media positively.

The media could become a double-edged sword in the hands of "aware" teachers, if they can help students discuss, clarify and make conscious efforts to watch programmes that help them. The discussion has to focus on what the benefits of watching programme are, which programmes can cause harm, and so on. The students' consciousness and understanding about the after effects of a programme will help them develop discerning attitudes. Parents,



teachers and other elders in the family have also to be educated as to how they themselves model faulty viewing of television and other media like magazines or radio programmes. Peace teachers can initiate discussions on such issues in the assembly, staffroom, PTA meetings, etc. to educate parents about the role that the media is playing in orienting our youngsters towards violence and spreading cynicism about our traditional values. It romanticises violence, aggression and anti-social approaches to solving problems.

Another concern about the media that teachers may bring to the notice of students is the prejudices and myths of various kinds, intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated by the media using subject content and its possible linkages to the information presented. Teachers can teach students how to hold and analyse information given by newspapers, TV, radio or any other form of media so that we can avoid perpetuation of mis-information, prejudices and violence. This will also help students develop critical thinking skills to comprehend and remember the subject better. Teachers may encourage students to ask questions. “Why is this message being sent?”, “What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from the message or being passed on through a programme or show or an article?” Such questions could be posed to students with regard to various kinds of messages in the media such as reports, pictures, stories, snaps, news items, etc. They may explore in small groups as to how their thoughts, ideas, views and life styles, time spent on family, study, friendships, etc. are shaped by the media. The teacher may help them discover the hidden characteristic of the media. In this context a few critical issues relevant to a subject area such as Politics, History, Science could be taken up during teaching to evaluate and discuss the credibility of the media. Thus, teaching becomes interesting, related to life events, and an awareness about the media is also generated.

As teachers, we have to point out these facts about the media to students and enable them to think critically and discuss the benefits and effects thereof. We have to help them discover influences on their own thinking taking care not to thrust our own opinions. Becoming aware of the influence will enable them to not only become wiser in critically evaluating the information and messages being received from various media sources but also resist the negative



impact of media in their lives. This is a continuing process of realisation through discussion and dialogue as to how credible different media sources could be.

As a teacher, we should not shy away, rather create opportunities to discuss certain news items or a radio or T.V. programme or a film as and when the opportunity arises, encourage students to articulate their views on the topic, discuss and critically examine, and empower them to limit the negative impact of the media on their thoughts and behaviour.

A peace teacher takes peace education forward by influencing and transforming the thinking of those around him not by preaching but by his/her own behaviour, attitudes and skills of engaging them in seeking information and giving an alternative perspective to existing attitudes, activities and practices. S/he poses questions wherever possible without arguing about what is right or wrong but by bringing reflection in other possible ways that are less violent and stressful, and thereby encouraging more optimistic solutions to existing problems. S/he models a moderate, positive and hopeful disposition to problems without any imposition on how to resolve them, requesting the collaboration of all those concerned. S/he is always taking a step forward towards peace in all his/her activities and relationships. It is just by being caring and having a cooperative and responsible style and disposition that a peace teacher can bring about change. These may be small drops but they do not stay small and gradually grow bigger and bigger with time and patience.



ASSESSING THE PEACE PROCESS

“The Unexamined life is not worth living.”

—Socrates

Evaluation and assessment are an integral part of any deliberately planned initiative of the efforts put in which reveal the effectiveness of the process as well as of the outcomes. But the plans must be implemented at the first instance. Evaluation is intrinsic to the process of implementation. It will contribute to self-appraisal, self-reflection and self-education. It will help us know what works, what should be changed and about what more needs to be done. The goals of peace education programmes seem to be very clear in terms of inner peace,

lesser conflicts and better relationships based on equality, justice, inter-dependence and positive attitudes towards differences of class, caste, gender and environment but the assessment of peace education initiatives is not direct and simple. The concept of peace itself is so vast that the outcomes appear elusive. Due to this, the evaluation of the peace process is complex. For instance, how do we assess inner peace or positive attitudes? These are not static qualities; there is continuous change taking place in them. The assessment of the change process is, therefore, not easy. This part focuses on finding out or tracking successes and failures. What works and what does not and why?

Peace building is a collaborative effort involving a change of attitudes at many levels. It is a continuous process, and we cannot say that peace has reached its final stage, and that no more efforts are needed. Therefore, as peace teachers, we must seek some feedback periodically about whether our efforts are bringing forth substantive change. It will help us stay focused, and we will be encouraged to know as to which one of our efforts are useful and yielding results and where we need to improve.

There is another reason for the complexity of the assessment of the peace process.

Even if we are able to assess the conceptual understanding of justice, equality, diversity, freedom, prejudice, and conflict resolution related knowledge, its percolation into the experiential and behavioural domains may or may not occur. Someone who understands democracy, human rights, social, emotional or gender justice related issues may not behave in accordance. Additionally, the people to be assessed are not at the same level of peacefulness. Where do we target our assessment? Peace is a process of moving towards gaining knowledge and skills of maintaining inner peace, resolving conflicts and acquiring positive attitudes and displaying peaceful behaviour. How do we assess the impact of our individual efforts? These are some of the challenges for the assessment of the outcomes and progress of the peace process.

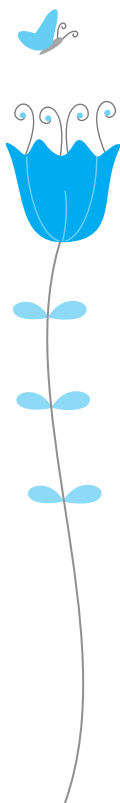
First, we need to specify what we expect and what we are evaluating? We are evaluating positive attitudinal and behavioural changes that might occur in ourselves, our students and teachers



and others, and the way these are changing our relationships at home, school and elsewhere to bring about peace. It is the change in attitude and behaviour that signifies the success of the initiatives for peace building. The change may take place at different levels, e.g. with students, teachers, the staff and the principal as well. The changes that are occurring in attitudes may not become visible but in order to assess them, we need to identify the realms and indicators of changes or gains. For instance, change may occur in the following areas—health and hygiene, physical environment, level of responsibilities, at work or in incidences of conflict, reduction in violence, improvement in pedagogical practices, awareness about the environment, etc. The indicators of change accordingly are related to these areas. For example—Are students more conscious of their health and the environment?, Are they eating junk food or do they eat healthy? To assess consciousness about the environment, there will be different indicators.

The importance of being watchful at every step and reflecting throughout the process has been amply discussed. Evaluation at every stage is imperative especially in the context of education for peace because this perspective of peace and education suggests that action without reflection is a reaction, and thus, not a mindful response to the world. Now, let us focus on what we are trying to change. The first level of change that we are targeting can be considered in terms of (a) changes in the physical environment of the school, (b) an individual transformation or change in one's own ways, styles and approaches, and (c) relationships among people.

The peace process is reflected in the physical environment as well. The physical environment is easier to observe. The individuals in school develop a sense of responsibility towards their immediate environment, resources and actions. This first gets reflected in their immediate environment and there is less chaotic garbage. Students care and do not litter papers; and other left-over eatables are thrown in the dustbin. Resources like water and electricity are preserved. Students can be seen switching off electricity on their exit from the classroom or do not leave taps overflowing. They not only do it themselves but politely remind others of using resources with restraint. They do not pluck flowers or break plants or other property in school. They act in a responsible manner towards the school.



There is less noise in the corridors. They do not deface walls. They are engaged in their work, and they realise their responsibility and duty. The classrooms are cleaner. We can see that appropriate use of existing resources is visible, and that there is enhanced knowledge about peace.

A key indicator of individual transformation is becoming less reactive to outward tensions and stresses, and becoming more reflective. Whatever changes are taking place in the individuals' attitudes such as decreased reactivity and more reflection or positive action towards stresses, these are not immediately visible. Before visible changes occur, changes at the attitudinal level are occurring. It is crucial to document these changes so that we are aware of the success of our efforts, and the pace of these changes. It is a slow process. The direction of attitudinal change is important as even a small change snowballs into a big one with the passage of time. Attitudinal changes are not even conscious. Exposure to relevant information and experiences about peace subtly brings about changes in thinking, which in due course of time transform behaviour. For example, when we learn and deeply reflect about social justice issues, we are likely to become more conscious towards issues of justice in our relationships and experiences with others. However, these are complex issues.

Indicators of changes in attitudes and values, and inner harmony and peaceful behaviour could be best assessed by self-reflection and self reports. Both these tools reveal the subtle and minute changes taking place in the individual, and also facilitate the change process. Self reports or expressions of the individual, about themes and issues having a bearing on peace and harmony reveal the changes that have taken place, and the area which needs to be further worked upon. Self reports could be elicited on a regular basis when we have implemented peace intervention, in general, or for a specific purpose. For example, we may target conflict resolution skills or communication skills, and record our experiences. Self-reflection is a process of recording changes taking place on a daily basis. The tool which is used frequently is a 'Reflective Journal'.

The **Reflective Journal** is a technique of reflection on the events of the day. Reflection enables analysis and interpretation of the happenings and events of the day in one's own context. The experiences, not in line



with our usual ways of thinking and behaving, encourage us to rethink and analyse such experiences in different ways and thereby widening our awareness. Those experiences which are in line with our thinking validate and strengthen our convictions. The process of reflection guides our thinking, and is likely to bring about change in our attitudes and behaviour in future. For example, having lost temper in a conflict situation, we take stock of our thoughts about the situation and feel that loosing temper was perhaps not a good response as it did not help in any way. It then may lead us to think of alternative ways of responding to such situations and make us cautious in our future dealings with others. Recording experiences this way also enables us to make reflection a habit and encourages the use of new vocabulary to explain various phenomena.

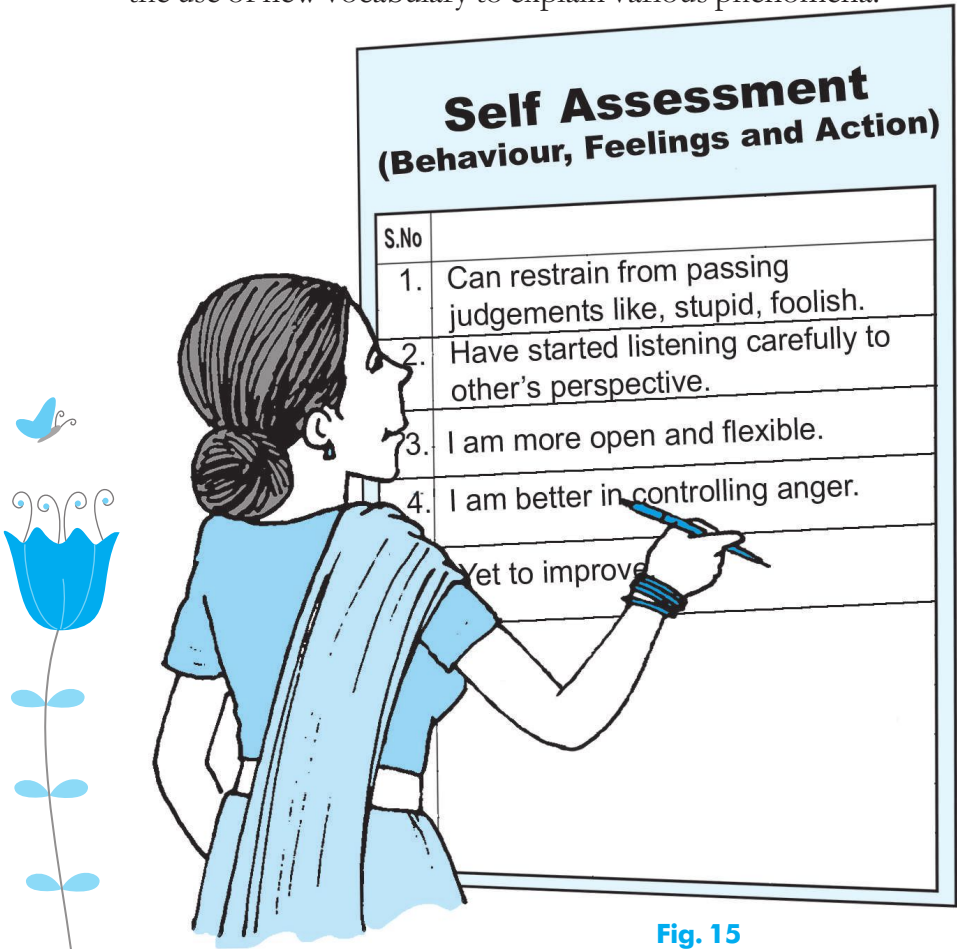


Fig. 15

It involves using a diary or notebook to record the events of the day which reveal the way the persons' experiences are shaping him/her. We may record how experiences or engaging with particular activities are changing our thoughts. An entry in the Reflective Journal by a teacher during a training course on peace education for teachers illustrates the point.

A teacher wrote:

"Changing the self seemed very difficult earlier but I could reduce anger. I am not absolutely peaceful but there is a difference. Peace is not something to think about but feel about. As a teacher, I have learnt to talk without fear but I have to create a similar atmosphere in my class as well where children can talk without fear."

Another way is to use an elaborate and comprehensive checklist or questionnaire containing behavioural indicators of peaceful attitudes, values and skills which serve as tools for assessing our progress towards peaceful orientation. These check-lists could be used for developing awareness and checking our progress towards peaceful behaviour. The following are a few examples of the kind of items which could be included in the check-list or questionnaire—

Has there been evolution of my mindset?

Has there been change in my propensity towards violence?

Have I become more sensitive to others?

Have I become more kind and protective of the environment?

Has the urge to mediate and resolve conflict become stronger?

The success of our efforts could partly be gauged through daily encounters with students, teachers, parents and the other staff in school. The way these relationships are moulded indicates the success of our peace education venture. But sensitivity is needed for an assessment of change in relationships. As novices, we may think that all conflicts would disappear and that there will be calm. In fact, the success of peace efforts means that there will be more dialogues taking place all around. There will be greater interaction. Serious differences of opinion will be expressed and dealt with rather than swept underneath. Among



students, these changes in the classroom can be seen as a reduction in physical violence, intervention and involvement of fellow students in preventing violence, reduced reactivity and greater tolerance of provocative statements. Greater sharing among students is indicated by the knowledge they have about each other. Compassion, cooperation, reduced biases and prejudices could be assessed in terms of sorting out of these conflicts by students on their own or by help from teachers, and students advocacy for their fellows.

Depending upon our effort to extend beyond, we can observe positive outcomes at different levels. At teachers' level, improved relationships could be seen in terms of greater tolerance and cooperation in sharing work, dealing with conflicts, less aggressive talk and more empathetic communication. There would be greater dialogue and frequent communication, and overall happiness rather than distress. There would be willingness to share work, cooperation rather than criticism, and reaching out willingly, overlooking and forgiving rather than blaming, sharing rather than helplessness. The teachers could be seen intervening and helping each other and settling most issues at their own level or offering suggestions constructively and looking into the benefits and welfare of the school.

At the principal's level, there is greater accessibility and availability to listen to the problems of students, teachers and staff. The students could be seen meeting the principal, and the teachers feel free to meet and talk to him or her. Meetings are more productive and pleasant. The focus and content of dialogues is on finding and offering solutions together. Relationships among members of the staff are more pleasant and respectful, irrespective of caste, class or region. An improvement in the relationships between parents and teachers is visible by way of the increased attendance of parents at the parent-teacher meetings and by the frequent visits of parents to the school. The influence of parents' visits further affect students' involvement with their studies; there is improved behaviour at home and an enhanced sense of responsibility. All these changes in relationships could



be assessed through self reports, diary entries and check-lists etc. filled up by the students.

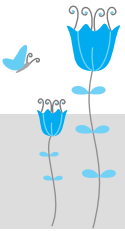
The most important visible impact of peace education programmes over a period could be the reduction in the actual incidences of physical violence among students and all other groups of employees. The incidences of hitting each other, use of abusive words and more importantly, retaliation to such verbal abuse decrease gradually. The peace teacher must continually keep track and identify where it has reduced more and where these could not be contained.

Along with evidence of the actual frequency of conflicts, self reports of teachers and students, which indicate awareness regarding their own indulgence in conflict, and efforts to take action are also very important in this context. Reflective journal is a means of recording evidence of conflicts which have been avoided or dealt with successfully.

All these changes in the school ethos, processes and environment need to be compiled, documented and shared with students, fellow colleagues and parents. The check-lists could be used periodically or left with students as a measure of self-assessment and feedback. The formative improvement of peace education programmes could also be based on this feedback.

To sum-up, the task of taking peace education forward involves a continuous process of self-reflection, self-assessment, self-improvement and adding new catalysts to expedite and improve this process by way of reading more about what we have read; discussing it with colleagues and trying it out. While being and becoming a peace teacher, we model attitudes and behaviours for others which bring change. Our deliberate efforts will further enhance this process. The assessment of the process provides us with tools to measure change as well as to steer the efforts in the right direction.





Epilogue

Education for peace has the potential to set in motion the process of growth and change—the change of mindsets that is likely to result in positive attitudes and improved practices, approaches and skills, for living in harmony with oneself and with others. This may seem like an exaggeration but having organised peace education programmes for teachers, we have seen it happen. We have observed bored and apathetic teacher trainees getting re-energised by learning about peace education and by exploring fresh perspectives. We have seen trainees recognising their strengths and bringing hope, positivity and enthusiasm in dealing with their problems. The perception of change, though, varies from individual to individual. For some, change is a threat to security, safety and stability. For others, it is an exciting process of renewal and regeneration. Learning about peace education provides exciting possibilities to generate positive energy, attitudes and skills to effect change in our own selves as well as in our students.

While we recognise that education alone cannot address the more fundamental and social problems of poverty, justice, violence, cultural diversity and identity which challenge peace education, but it can definitely play a role in the advancement of our understanding of ourselves, of others and of the world, which, in turn, plays an important part in dealing with the larger personal-social problems coming in the way of peace. Education can certainly improve our attitudes and values. Our understanding of education, however, needs to be broadened. Only then, can we embark on a journey of continually becoming better by re-evaluating and re-assessing the self. This also entails understanding that the issues of peace education are the same as that of education itself, and both aim at nurturing in our students the attitudes, values and qualities needed for living peacefully.

It is true that each individual must take responsibility for bringing peace in one's consciousness. Without this inner peace in the self, the possibility of peace in families, the society and in the world gets diminished. Society is what its individuals are. While each one of us may not be in a position to change or move the entire system we have the power to make choices – the choice to reject violence consciously in our own spheres of influence, resolving conflicts creatively and respecting all forms of life. It includes the fortitude to 'recognise, renounce, resist and remove' whatever undermines peace for all. Fiddling with laws and rules, indulging in self-centred, limitless greed, apathy towards others, particularly the deprived; and an egoistic life style are not compatible with the culture of peace.

We must remember that the commitment to peace needs to be active rather than passive so that we are indeed working for peace and not only lamenting and cherishing peace for ourselves. Even if we aspire to have inner peace, it has to be explored through not only personal but inter-personal levels too, through our work. We are not islands. The inner and the personal overlap with the social and the structural. The social action for peace draws deeply from inner peace and vice-versa. Inner peace is the kernel of collective peace. It is in the presence of turbulence that the capacity for peace is tested. Peace must be attained in the world of relationships and realities.

We have to be mindful of our own attitudes and practices, reflecting on the way we relate with others. Forthright acknowledgement and affirmation of injustices to others and a willingness to dialogue and negotiation are the keys to transforming conflict-ridden relationships. Conflicts dissipate energy. From dialogue and respect can come a process of reconciliation and healing of bitterness and distrust. The goals of educating for peace are fulfilled if we are able to open our minds and hearts to appreciate diversity, base our perceptions on empirical evidence, and free ourselves from prejudices and dogmatic beliefs. The peace approach to education will work if we are consciously propagating values like, equality of worth and dignity of all human beings, and minimise disparities of caste, creed, gender, etc. at all levels.

Teachers conduct the symphony of education. More than any other factor, education for peace depends on the teacher's sense of



responsibility and the kind of person s/he is, her vision, awareness, motivation, values and skills. Teachers are parents and members of the community as well. In all these capacities, they can sow the seeds of peace among students. Our students need to be empowered to choose the ways to peace. The empowerment comes from participation and inclusion; inclusion of all children, especially those differently abled or with disabilities, disadvantaged, marginalised, migrants, refugees, etc. We have to consciously model the right kind of behaviour, attitudes and values. Our younger generation will hopefully join the journey towards peace and will learn to become responsible and caring citizens. As James Baldwin had said, “Children are not good at listening to their elders but they never fail to imitate them.”

This handbook provides umpteen opportunities to reflect on our underlying beliefs and values, and the priorities that we choose and act upon, both with or without having mindful peace perspectives in school and in the classroom context. Our journey has just begun. It is a journey of self-discovery involving deep reflection which will help us challenge our assumptions and rethink the purpose of education and our role as catalysts. It would foster in us the ability to see congruence or incongruence of our attitudes and values with our behavioural practices.

As peace is a complex, multi-dimensional concept, the contents are not prescriptive. Rather, these are to be viewed as generalised guidelines. They must be adapted to your own situations and problems. These suggestive ways are meant to trigger reflection on local context specific factors that challenge your professional competence, and to create a movement beyond these limiting circumstances. Therefore, the implementation of suggestions must be preceded and followed by self-reflection rather than by hasty rejection if it does not fit into one's conceptualisation of solutions. Many a time, strategies offered may not work out as described or outcomes are contrary to expectations. We suggest limited and gradual trials of skills and strategies, as these may work differently if tried out without proper insight and understanding. Lack of success repeatedly with some strategies indicates the need to look back, reflect and review our own ways of approaching the situations. Resilience is crucial for bouncing back. It also helps to develop

perseverance and confidence to critically assess the situation and to move forward even in the face of adversity. The way towards peace is not just a narrow, straight road; it has many diversions. We need the will and the courage to remain committed to the path of education for peace. Our attempts may seem small and insignificant but perhaps the famous missionary, Mother Teresa (1975) had put it best when she said, “We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.”

ONE DAY AT A TIME

*Whatever the goal we are pursuing,
No matter how rugged the climb,
We're certain to get there by trying our best,
and taking one day at a time,
Forever is hard to imagine
The future is hard to imagine
But every new dawn
Brings a wonderful chance
To do what we can an that day.*



Notes

Beyond the Text

Here are some activities and suggestions for further learning and deeper reflection.

- Generating questions on peace and peace education through sharing perceptions.
- Initiating discussion on philosophical insights on peace, particularly views of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, J. Krishnamurthy, etc.
- Visiting websites on peace education initiatives at the national and international levels.
- Reading the Position Paper on Education for Peace.
- Visiting a few institutions, schools and places of significance for peace.
- Learning more about the reflective journal.
- Activities of self-reflection and analysis towards self-understanding.
- Using role-plays, dramatisation and listening skills.
- Trying out silent sitting, *yogasanas* and meditation.
- Collection and sharing of anecdotes, analysis of media, home and school situations on prejudices and biases.
- Demonstrations on cooperative vs. competitive ways of functioning, inter-dependence.
- Identifying situations from your own life where any constructive and destructive conflict, was helpful to get justice and peace in society.
- Analysing conflict situations to identify alternate ways of dealing with such situation in future.
- Designing talks or programmes by the participants for parents of their school on PTA day.
- Watching films, portraying peace perspectives.
- Thinking about the culture of your school, holding discussions, analysing factors in the school, which detract from peace.
- Developing a list of the qualities of a peace-making teacher.
- Analysis of portions of textbooks related to one's own subject area to identify hidden pro-violence or pro-peace messages.
- Planning a lesson while infusing peace components in teaching a subject.
- Profiling your school for peace making.
- Analysing news items and media reports to understand the role of media in creating or destroying peace perspectives.



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एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

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