

# Imparting Peace-Building Through Education

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**Abstract** – Peace education is needed particularly for today's youth. At places where militancy and other forms of violence are right at one's doorsteps, children and youth are more vulnerable to violence as they draw violence from real life too. In such instances, violence imbued from the media is practised in reality as well. Also, youth of today are tomorrow's leaders and hence there is a need to mould them in a pacifist mindset to have a peaceful future. Conflicts cause violence if not handled with care. The dynamics of conflicts have to be understood and peacemaking skills nurtured in the community as a whole. People resort to violence, or at times non-violence, while handling conflicts. Education should promote non-violent options of conflict resolution.

**Keywords** – Appreciative Inquiry, Culture of Violence, Higher Education, Non-violence, Peace-building.

## I. INTRODUCTION

I start this paper by presenting a news report. This is not about killings on a college campus in the U.S., but murder of a principal of one of the colleges in the Tamil Nadu province in south India where teachers are normally held in high esteem.

*Vengeful Students Murder Principal*  
(*The Hindu Newspaper*)

*TUTICORIN, October 11, 2013: In a ghastly incident on Thursday morning, the principal of a private engineering college in Tuticorin district in southern Tamil Nadu [in India] was murdered by three students on the campus, as an act of revenge against the suspension of one of them, police said.*

*L.R.D. Suresh, 45, principal of Infant Jesus College of Engineering, Keezha Vallanad in Tuticorin district, was attacked with long knives as soon as he got out of his car. The suspension of P. Pitchaikannan (21), a final year B.E. (Aeronautical Engineering) student, for his behaviour on and off the college campus, provoked him to murder the principal, police sources said.*

*While Pitchaikannan, the prime accused, stabbed the principal in his stomach, his roommates, G. Danish (21), final year B.Tech. (Information Technology) and M. Prabhakaran (21), third year B.E. (Civil Engineering), caused a grievous bleeding injury on his head, the police said. Besides arresting the trio, the police seized the weapons used in the killing.*

*Preliminary investigation revealed that Pitchaikannan was suspended for five days on Monday following an alleged attack on Athithan, a final year student, over occupying a seat in a bus on October 5. Athithan was attacked on the college premises and outside the campus recently. Pitchaikannan was also irregular in attending classes and laboratory work.*

Yes, it is alarming. It reflects the malady in the Tamil society known for its values and virtue. My feeling is that parents, fellow students and teachers could have played a

positive role in, first of all, maintaining discipline. This calls for a total culture of peace. On the contrary, if the stakeholders had promoted a culture of violence and hatred, a problem which is a molehill will look like huge mountain.

I remember simple instance of a peon in a University department who wants an inappropriate certification from the Head for applying for a permanent job. The Head was sympathetic but refused because it is unethical. The peon became furious and left the chamber of the Head. The fellow teachers who were not involved in the incident could have kept away or pacified him. But on the contrary, one teacher asked the peon in the presence of other teachers and students, a simple, calm question but which would definitely provoke, "Has the Head signed?" This is enough for the uneducated peon to go into another outburst in the presence of many. Is it not a fact that the teacher has played a negative role not befitting that of a teacher? Is it not a fact that the teacher sowed and nurtured the seeds of indiscipline and verbal violence? And this disharmony spread like a wild weed.

This small event took place when I headed an academic department specializing in "Communication". It is a case of effective communication misdirected. Adolf Hitler used to say, "By the skillful and sustained use of propaganda, one can make a people see even heaven as hell or an extremely wretched life as paradise." Yes, the Nazi propaganda cost six million innocent lives. Lessons should be learnt from history so that bad history does not repeat itself. Communication should be directed towards peace.

Peace education is needed particularly for today's youth. Youth are brought up in the world of violence – it is not just the Gulf wars glamorously telecast worldwide but also other programmes such as television news and serials which bank heavily on violence. So much that television programming washes away much of what is learnt in schools and colleges. At places where militancy and other forms of violence are right at one's doorsteps, children and youth are more vulnerable to violence as they draw violence from real life too. In such instances, violence imbued from the media is practised in reality as well. Also, youth of today are tomorrow's leaders and hence there is a need to mould them in a pacifist mindset to have a peaceful future.

Conflicts cause violence if not handled with care. The dynamics of conflicts have to be understood and peacemaking skills nurtured in the community as a whole. People resort to violence, or at times non-violence, while handling conflicts. Education should promote non-violent options of conflict resolution.

Violence is acts of aggression with the intention of causing pain or discomfort to others, either directly (from bullying and fighting to a disrespectful tone and name calling) or indirectly (as in theft or vandalism) [1]. Thus, ragging, eve-teasing and verbal abuse in colleges are

forms of violence. Such violence disrupts the learning environment and makes colleges unsafe places. In fact, those who are prone to violence in their student days are more likely to display violence later on in life. Those who undergo higher education would end up as leaders in several walks of life. When that is the case, students of higher education need to be specially trained in peaceful ways of conflict resolution. Of late, peace-building (or peace education) has emerged as a separate academic discipline.

In a conference on higher education, Timothy Light said: "When the consequences of a person's or a group's actions inadvertently harm someone else, there will be moral responsibility though the one causing the harm had no intention to cause so much harm and did not realize that he or she would cause harm. When the products of educational institutions act in ways that are truly beneficial to those over whom they have influence and authority, we can feel that teaching has borne good fruit. When they act out of ignorance and cause harm, we, their teachers, may indeed share in their ethical flaw [2]."

For instance, when tsunami struck the Indian coasts on December 26, 2004, Indians came to know of the term 'tsunami' for the first time. But though a tsunami warning system was in place in the Indian Ocean, countries like India and Sri Lanka were kept in the dark about the impending tsunami. Hasan Suroor quotes *The Telegraph* to say that the U.S. military base in the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia was alerted by a tsunami warning centre on Hawaii in the Pacific but it was not passed on to other countries in the region. If this is true the question worth pondering is what use is the knowledge [of tsunami warning] if it cannot be used for the larger benefit of humanity [3]. This calls for a change in mindset for a culture of peace.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF PEACE

*Here are a Few Definitions by Exponents of Peace-Building:*

Peace-building is an organic system that requires relationships and coordination of multiple activities, multiple roles, at multiple levels. No one activity and no one level will be able to deliver and sustain peace on its own. - *John Paul Lederach*

Strategic peace-building is an inter-disciplinary, coordinated approach to building sustainable just peace – a peace with justice. – *Lisa Schirch*

Peace-building must be seen as a process, rather than a goal. Peace-building and conflict transformation are essentially about changing society and people's attitudes toward conflict. – *Anneke Galama and Paul van Tongeren*

The overall aim of peace-building is to transform conflict constructively and to create a sustainable peace environment. – *Luc Reyhler*

The original purpose of peace-building is consolidating whatever degree of peace have been achieved in the short term and, in the longer term, increasing the livelihood that future conflict can be managed without resort to violence. – *Elizbeth Cousens and Chetan Kumar*

## III. PROBLEMS ON CAMPUSES

In many academic institutions, teachers and students suffer from several problems: restless mind; stress and strife; strain in relationships; lack of study-life balance; indifference to the people around; and poor time management. All these problems result in disharmony devoid of peaceful co-existence. A smile is the beginning of peace, said Mother Teresa, a missionary and Nobel laureate who served the sick and needed primarily on the streets of Kolkata, India. Teachers and students should first learn to greet each other with a pleasant smile.

Some conflicts on the campuses spring from: study-related stress; lack of friends; insensitive teachers; non-understanding parents; dejection and depression; negative risk-taking (eg. alcoholism, drug addiction, love and sex); and not sure about getting a right job. The effects of stress on individual are: loss of productivity, enjoyment and intimacy; sleep disturbance; headache and migraines; fatigue (tiredness); lack of concentration; panic attacks; irregular periods for girls/women; thyroid disorder; and weight gain or loss.

Times have changed and this calls for a change in teacher-student relationship. Education has become learner-centric. Teacher has become more of a facilitator. Authoritarian control of teacher is decreasing. Teacher-student relationship has become friendly. Reprimanding no more works. With student feedback, teachers are at times at the mercy of students and some teachers unethically resort to populism particularly (1) giving attendance to students who otherwise lack attendance; and (2) awarding pass marks or higher marks to students who do not deserve those. Teachers should neither be authoritarian nor permissive. They should balance between these and mould the students.

Teachers need to gather and tell stories of positive images. We need to avoid dichotomizing and labelling students as good guys and bad, or intelligent and dull. When something goes wrong one should take the blame jointly instead of pointing fingers at others as responsible for the debacle.

Teacher-centric education has given way to learner-centric. Now we focus on outcome-based education. 'Outcome' is mostly defined in terms of market worthiness. No more a teacher can stop with his or her expectation, "I want my students to understand what is taught in the class". The teacher should facilitate students to go further to 'apply the knowledge', 'justify the results', 'analyze the data' or 'design a process'. Students ought to be engaged in activities such as discussion, group problem-solving and involved in higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The challenge is to impart practical skills in the process of uncovering and discovering the syllabus. The social norm of covering the syllabus is the thing of the past.

## IV. BEYOND EGO-SELF

The fulcrum of an academic discourse is that we agree to disagree but is this in practice in our academic

situations? Most academics take it personal when fellow academics have a differing opinion. They take it too personal and this spoils academic relationship as well. Such discord among teachers is transmitted among students too with magnified stress.

We need to have a chance to understand ourselves better – we need to answer the question ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What is my relationship with the world around?’ We need to have a chance to hear ourselves. Defensive ego or self-image should not spoil academic atmosphere. In an academic department, both the teachers and the students are put in a box and they need to have a harmonious relationship to maintain a good academic environment. Personal stubbornness and self-interest shall not stand in the way. When we ‘win’, we should not bask in the ego-self. Let me refer to the ancient analogy of a rice grain in a boiling pot of rice. Where from does the rice grain gain the energy? Is not the grain energized from the whole of the environment? Let us be free from ego so that positive forces of nature can act through us. If we are not open we are fixated. Let’s not be bogged down by our own ego-self.

Every student and teacher shall be confident of oneself and shall be able to appreciate the needs of the people around too. Each one should be able to answer the vital questions: (1) What is the purpose of life? (2) Why do you do what you do? (3) Do you find meaning in study/work? (4) What are the possibilities that you have not thought about? and (5) What is the change that you can make to have an impact?

In the mid 1990s, I had been doing my doctoral research on perceptions of the viewers on the University Grants Commission’s Countrywide Classroom whose Gyan Darshan channel is now hardly watched. I had been interviewing teachers and students. Even earlier, not many teachers were watching the programmes. However, I found a senior college teacher in a rural government college not far from Chennai city enthusiastically saying that he watched the programmes regularly. I was very happy. Then, I asked him in what ways he shared the knowledge gained or motivated his students to watch the TV programmes. But he said he did not talk non-subjects to his students though he made his son watch the programmes along with him. If only the teacher gave the same importance he accorded to his son to his students as well, it would have made a world of difference.

I would like to cite another instance of insensitivity on the part of teachers. I happened to take part in a refresher course for university teachers conducted by an Academic Staff College of a reputed university. Most of the fellow teacher participants did not have knowledge of MS PowerPoint and even MS Word, and these MS Office software packages had to be taught as part of a Refresher course on Advanced Social Sciences. That means, a good portion of the training was on basic computer applications. I was surprised though most teachers were from non-metropolitan areas. Out of curiosity I checked with about a dozen of the teachers whether their sons and daughters knew the basics of computer applications. In every case, the answer was ‘yes’. Then I put a follow-up question,

“Whether computer applications is taught in schools and colleges?”, for which most teachers said that they send their sons and daughters to private computer centres for quality computer education. When this is the spirit of appreciating computer education, why is that the teachers do not make efforts to learn computer applications themselves? If we are not updating knowledge even at this basic level, will not our students regard us in poor esteem? Are we not giving a secondary treatment to our students compared to our children? Do we not think this disregard itself will be a source of conflict? We are in a digital era so much so that some teachers even use social media such as Facebook and Whatsapp to communicate with students.

The purpose of peace-building is to make the teaching-learning atmosphere interesting. Teachers should listen to the students. They should get to know the students’ emotional needs and cater to those as well. Teachers should be healers. They should equip students how to face life. We need to be confident but relaxed with our conscious awakened. Let us be critical and creative but with character. Teachers should not get into a complaining mode. If one is in a complaining mode, one loses vision and gets into victimhood. Even if we cannot raise to the level of self-actualisation [4], we should not lose self-esteem.

Abraham Maslow has developed the Hierarchy of Needs Model. Next to the “basic needs” come the “safety needs” and the “belongingness and love needs”. Only on the fulfilment of these three needs come the “esteem needs” which encompass “achievement, status, responsibility and reputation”. It is the duty of the educational institutions and the parents to see to it that the first three needs are fulfilled so that the student can achieve. Educational institutions should be all-encompassing so that the learning leads to the pinnacle of the hierarchy of needs – self-actualization.

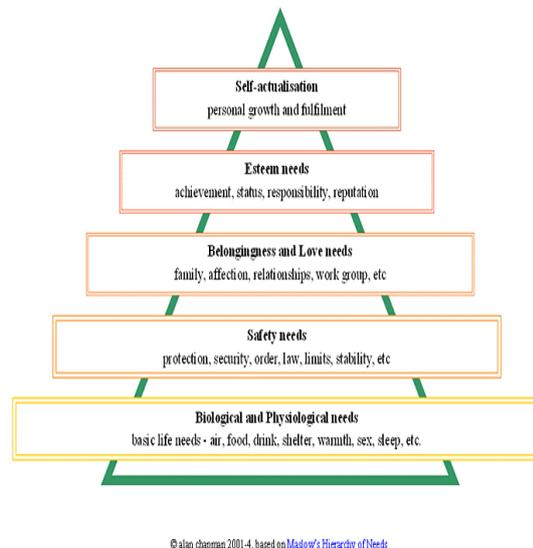


Fig. 1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

## V. CULTURE OF PEACE

A culture of peace is embedded in Indian culture. It is not only expounded in our philosophical stream of thought

but has been effectively put into practice as well. In particular, Mahatma Gandhi led the nation to Independence through a non-violent struggle. According to him, power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is thousand times more effective and permanent than one derived from fear of punishment.

This explains why the so-called liberators of Iraq or Afghanistan do not get wide acceptance among their people.

Strategic non-violent action – like what the father of the nation adopted for the Indian independence struggle – is an essential element of peace-building. Both violence and non-violence are strategies to balance power. Violence usually spirals into a cycle and creates new victims. But non-violent approaches to conflicts ripen the conditions for transforming relationships and structures while stopping the cycle of violence.

Many a times, even Mahatma Gandhi is no more projected as a role model in his own country. A generation a half century after independence, for whom the memory of Gandhi has receded, is misled by some leaders of society. The youth are made to believe that Gandhi's non-violent struggle is nonsense and he is the cause of many of the flaws in the country. Even some college teachers inject such venom among students. So much so that in the film 'Hey Ram' when Gandhi made unnatural summersaults after he was shot at, the youth audience in a posh cinema theatre near the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University gave a big applause. I was a sad witness to this. But Gandhi is revered round the globe for his humanness and non-violent means of conflict resolution. Let me ask a question: if we pull down Gandhi as a role model, who else we can have as a role model? We have strange political reasons to defame Gandhi after his assassination. Some reasons could be the people at the right end of the political spectrum find him not taking up the Hindu religious cause exclusively; those at the left end of the spectrum found him religious and not secular; some feel that he gave precedence to freedom struggle than social cause; and many feel that his concepts such as *swadeshi* (Indian-ness) and self-sufficient villages are irrelevant in this era of globalization and liberalization.

Absence of war is often mistaken as peace. In the post-Saddam Iraq and the post-Prabakaran Sri Lanka are examples of negative ('cold') peace contrasted with positive ('warm') peace. Peace (or positive peace) envisages human rights, economic well-being and ecological values. It paves the way for an interweaving of relationships between individuals, groups and institutions that value diversity and allow scope for developing human potential. The aim of peace-building is to transform conflict constructively to build sustainable just peace – a peace with justice.

Education for peace implied an active concept of peace. It is not simply the absence of war and violence. It is a concept founded on a sense of justice. Peace means recognition of plurality and strengthening of democratic institutions. In many instances, disruption of peace is because of the failure to recognize diversity. So education

should have a culture of peace at the core of the educational process. Affirmative action providing reservation for backward castes in educational institutions in India has contributed much to diversity and culture of peace. Even globalization is capable of promoting uniformity by countering the wealth of cultural diversity – which again can spur conflicts. The proliferation of posh private educational institutions will pose a threat to the lofty principles of affirmative action and diversity in a country like India.

The complex tasks of peace-building require both men and women to use their resources and roles to foster peace. We need to go in for the philosophy of non-violence and the strategy and methods of non-violent action, civilian-based defence and civilian peacekeeping. Students should learn to create non-violent power, identify tactics and develop plans for non-violent campaigns. Role-plays could challenge students to respond to violent situations. A simple situation may be how you will react if a pedestrian spits on a crowded pavement and dirties your shirt 'inadvertently'. Negotiation should form the basic building block of all conflict resolution activities. Students need to experience negotiation through case studies, observations of informal negotiations in their own lives, and simulations in the classroom.

## VI. EDUCATION FOR PEACE

Education policies have to contribute to the development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals and among ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups. It should promote knowledge, values, attitudes and skills conducive to respect for human rights and to build a culture of peace. The education process needs to be closely linked to real-life situations and it should put into practice tolerance and solidarity, respect for human rights, democracy and peace.

Towards this end, the 44<sup>th</sup> session of the International Conference on Education adopted the Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy [5]. The salient features of the framework are:

- Education must develop the ability of non-violent conflict resolution. It should also promote the development of inner peace in the minds of students so that they can establish more firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring.
- Education should help remove hatred towards those regarded as "the other". Textbooks should be revised to remove negative stereotypes and distorted view of "the other". [Even a common nursery rhyme such as "Chubby cheeks, dimple chin, rosy lips, . . . very fair, eyes are blue, lovely too, teacher's pet, is that you?" denigrates some section of people who are not fair in complexion.]
- Education should closely cooperate, in particular, with the family, the media, including traditional channels of communication, and NGOs. Students should be trained to analyze the media critically and profit from

a selective choice of programmes. The media should be urged to promote a culture of peace.

UNESCO considers peace as the corollary of respect for those human values, attitudes and behaviour that gave life to the principles of cooperation, non-violence, respect for human rights and cultural diversity. Education should cover human rights, democracy, international understanding, tolerance, non-violence, multi-culturalism, and all other values conveyed through the curriculum. Education should be regarded as a social phenomenon communicating such values as equality, harmony and solidarity [6].

Violence in educational institutions such as strike, ragging, eve-teasing, and even sickle / gun wielding may be attributed to suppression of conflicts. At times, teachers refuse to take note of or address the problems of students. Why is it that more Arts and Science colleges go on strike or have meagre attendance? Is it because of lack of infrastructure? Do the proliferating engineering colleges have good infrastructure? Not, exactly. According to psychologist Narayana Rao, "the disruption of orderly student life on college / university campuses in India is not a result of the irresponsibility of students. It is a symptom of a deep-rooted maladjustment, which is enhanced by feelings of personal insecurity, inadequate facilities for study and recreation, growing uncertainty about the future, and lack of an optimum level of personal efficiency" [7]. Yes, unemployment and underemployment looming large are the main reasons for the malady. Then why is that Arts and Science colleges, particularly in the government sector, are not redesigning their programmes to orient themselves to the job market? Why is there resistance from existing teachers to take to new programmes such as Marine Sciences (from those in Biology), Business Finance (from those in Economics), Electronics (from those in Physics) and the like? Why do teachers want to stick to traditional disciplines and not go in for applied, job-oriented subjects with a minimal retraining? Why do the same teachers who profess great value for their traditional disciplines of Arts and Sciences do not suggest their children to take to studies in the same disciplines? Is it not a fact Arts and Basic Sciences are sulking so much so that the inherent charm of those subjects is not revealed. Do you not think that conflict is inbuilt in the system of *not* making our academic programmes utilitarian oriented? Do you not agree that the commercialization of education which leaves behind many talented children from poor families will add to the conflict? Are these not the reasons why cities with high educational level also have high crime rate with the active involvement of the educated youth? Is it not a fact that academically qualified youth fail to get even teaching positions in colleges with enough salary?

## VII. WHAT IS 'CONFLICT'?

What is the difference between 'conflict' and 'violence'? *Conflict* is a relationship between two or more parties (individual or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals. Conflicts often lead to an

improved situation for most or all of those involved. People working for community development and human rights will often find themselves working not to resolve a conflict, but to intensify it and make it more visible, to the point where the issue is more widely recognized and effective action begins to be taken. On the other hand, *violence* consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and/or prevent people from reaching their full human potential.

When do we say a conflict is needed for promoting necessary social change? *Intensifying conflict* means making a hidden conflict more visible and open for moving towards non-violent ends. This is like clearing pus out of a pestering wound before closing it. On the other hand, *escalating conflict* refers to a situation in which levels of tension and violence are on the rise.

People engage in conflict when their needs are not met or when their aspirations are not consistent with those of others. Mahatma Gandhi differentiates between 'need' and 'want'. According to him, 'need' is what a least person in a society can afford, and by this logic anybody else in the society who enjoys much better facilities than him or her goes in for 'want'. 'Want' may be difficult to enlist. They are innumerable, human desires. Want springs out of "greed", leading to inequality and poverty of the "other". 'Need' is something very positive. Gandhi uses 'need' mainly to refer to the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education. All should have, and all can pursue these. People undergoing subjugation often do not realize that they have the right to get their need fulfilled and stand up in pride. For instance, activists working with Dalits try to bring the latent caste conflicts to open so that the underprivileged people are empowered and they are able to lead a life of dignity. Conflicts exist in all relationships, groups, culture and every level of social structure. Injustice is at the base of most conflicts. Conflicts arise from imbalances in relations such as unequal social status, unequal wealth or access to resources, unequal power, or unacknowledged and unforgotten past injustice. These cause discrimination, unemployment, poverty and crime. If conflicts are sought to be resolved solely for the sake of peace and at the expense of justice, it can erupt into violence. Conflicts can be transformed into constructive outcomes when people are empowered.

In Bihar, Bhumihars (landowning caste) are in a state of perpetual conflict with Dalits (landless caste). The problem is centred on sharing of basic land resources. How long should Bhumihars be killing Dalits and ultra left outfits be killing Bhumihars? At times, Dalits are killed just because they refuse to go for work in Bhumihars' fields as a consequence of previous ill-treatment. So there is a need to understand the root causes of the problem. Questions that would help are: (i) What problems they face? (poverty) (ii) What conditions cause these problems? (low profit from agriculture) and (iii) What causes these conditions? (do not own land; caste oppression; lack of education). The resolution of the conflict should not be confined to cessation from fighting using the law and

order machinery. If conflicts are controlled by force it will lead to a culture of violence. We need a culture of peace that would offer sustainable peace. Root causes of the problems should be addressed. The possible solution should take into account sharing of land resources. . . or, initiating some development and educational schemes. The reconciliation will lead to Bhumihars treating Dalits with human dignity. This will happen only if ignorance is erased, awareness is created as to the nature of unequal relationships, and the question of equality is addressed from the view of those experiencing oppression. Wrongs committed should be acknowledged in an effort to make things right. Conflict transformation will shift from a mutually destructive to mutually beneficial relationship.

Agriculture is no longer economically viable taking into account its income generating capacity as an occupation. Such a scenario, at times, leads to starvation deaths or suicides. It is a sad tale that farmers die of starvation due to lack of purchasing power when there is food surplus and food grains rot or are eaten by rodents in the storehouses of the Food Corporation of India. It is not enough to increase grain production but there is a need to increase the farmers' income from crop production. One aspect of doing that is through education. Unless Indian farmers take to skill-based jobs – be it in agriculture or elsewhere – their condition will not improve.

Dalit women are considered as the “the other” of “the other” in the Indian social system. Another instance to prove this is the parading of Dalit women naked, often done even in the peripheral areas of the Indian capital of New Delhi. Such crime is perpetuated by upper or intermediary caste people when a boy or a girl from their community falls in love with a person of the Dalit community. It is a relative woman of the Dalit family who is given this cruel punishment. When such instances come to light, the media cover them but in a sensational or matter of fact way, rather than elaborating on the process. Such humiliations of lower caste women do happen around the capital city of New Delhi itself. If that is the case, what about the plight of the downtrodden people elsewhere in the country? The separation of an inter-caste marriage of couple Ilavarasan-Divya and subsequent death [suicide or killing] of Ilavarasan in Tamil Nadu in 2013 is because of a similar mindset. Given this context, educational institutions have a major role to promote gender sensitivity and communal harmony.

The politics of religion-based communalism of the last three decades is a tactic to change the focus from real issues to peripheral ones. The demolition of five-century-old Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 and communal violence against Muslims in Gujarat supported by the state government itself in 2002 are unwarranted. As part of communal hype, the symbol of Lord Ram with his wife Sita peacefully ruling from his *darbar* (throne) has transformed into a symbol of a warrior with a bow and arrow drawn out to vanquish “the other”. Ironically, hatred and killings are eulogized as a pathway to set right the perceived historical wrong. The change in the representation of the religious motif of Lord Ram had spurred a culture of violence. This is a striking example of

how a symbol of peace can be distorted to become a symbol of violence.

### VIII. THEORIES OF PEACE AND CONFLICT

Given below are some of the theories of peace and conflict, as summed up by Fishers and others [8]. Theories give you an understanding of how others work on a similar conflict. You should decide which of these or any others agree with your approach to peace-building.

Community Relations Theory assumes that the conflict is caused by ongoing polarization, mistrust and hostility between different groups within a community. The goals of work are:

- to improve communication and understanding between conflicting groups
- to promote greater tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the community.

Principled Negotiation Theory assumes that conflict is caused by incompatible positions and a ‘zero-sum’ view of conflict being adopted by the conflicting parties. The goals of work are:

- to assist conflicting parties to separate personalities from problems and issues to be able to negotiate on the basis of their interests rather than fixed positions
- to facilitate agreements that offer mutual gain for both/all parties.

Human Needs Theory assumes that the deep-rooted conflict is caused by unmet or frustrated basic human needs – physical, psychological and social. Security, identity, recognition, participation and autonomy are often cited. The goals of work are:

- to assist conflicting parties to identify and share their unmet needs, and generate options for meeting those needs
- for the parties to reach agreements that meet the basic human needs of all the sides.

Identity Theory assumes that conflict is caused by feelings of threatened identity, often rooted in unresolved past loss and suffering. The goals of work are:

- through facilitated workshops and dialogue, for conflicting parties to identify threats and fears they each feel and to build empathy and reconciliation between themselves
- to reach agreements jointly that recognize the core identity needs of all parties.

Intercultural Miscommunication Theory assumes that conflict is caused by incompatibilities between different cultural communication styles. The goals of work are:

- to increase the conflicting parties' knowledge of each other's culture
- to weaken negative stereotypes they have of each other
- ultimately, to enhance effective intercultural communication.

Conflict Transformation Theory assumes that conflict is caused by real problems of inequality and injustice expressed by competing social, cultural and economic frameworks. The goals of work are:

- to change structures and frameworks that cause inequality and injustice, including economic redistribution
- to improve long-term relationships and attitudes among the conflicting parties
- to develop processes and systems that promote empowerment, justice, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and recognition.

### IX. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

Peace-building is a dynamic, interdisciplinary and multicultural field. Scholars including John Paul Lederach, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire and Johan Galtung have contributed to it. Building on principles and practices that have evolved over time, and responding to different historical circumstances, peace-building aims to cultivate the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to achieve and sustain a global culture of peace.

Understanding and transforming violence is central. The following United Nations diagram [9] shows how *knowledge* and *attitude* influence each other and they, in turn, influence *skills*. Peace-building aims to develop skills, attitudes and knowledge by promoting an environment of tolerance, care and respect.

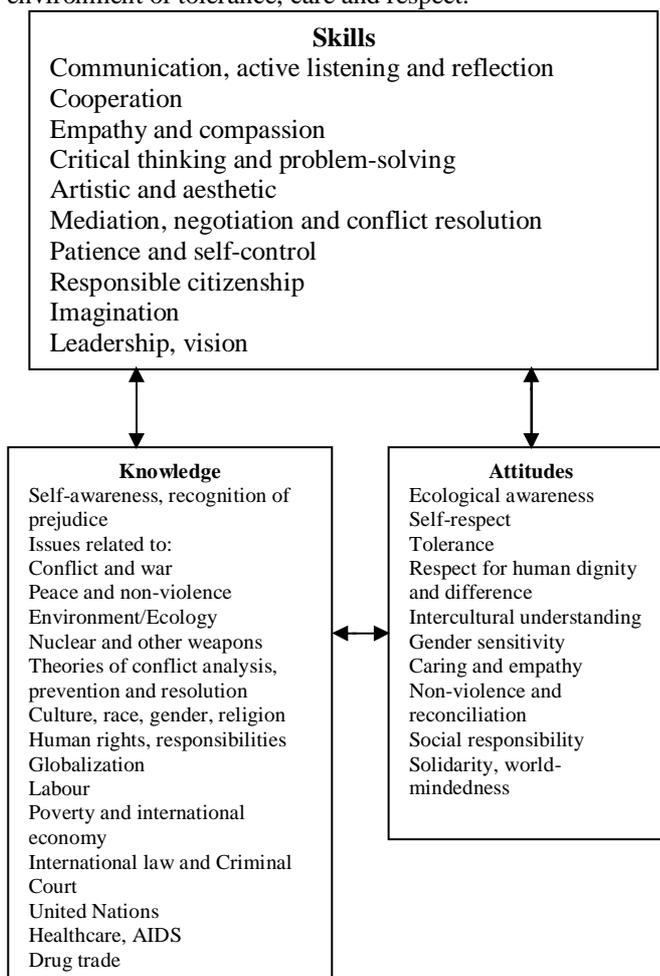


Fig. 2. Transforming violence

### X. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Let me tell about the ancient Chinese approach to positive change. Wu-wei (literally meaning "non-action") is one of the basic concepts in Daoism (Taoism). To Daoist (Taoist) Wu-wei means, letting things take their natural course and doing nothing that interferes with that natural course. Wu-wei is like water, with its yielding nature. Water is formless and so, moves effortlessly around obstacles to its destination. Water is soft and yet is able to carve through stone. Water is patient and takes its time, so when it does carve through stone, the marks it leaves are smooth and natural. Thus change can be powerful though peaceful.

To use an imagery of a muddy road on a rainy day, a person wishing to travel the road would pick their way through the driest patches and avoid the deep puddles. Focussing on the positive aspects of a situation can be the way forward when tackling conflict. This is what 'appreciate inquiry' is all about. It is based on the belief that our positive images of the future lead our positive actions. 'Appreciative' means the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (vitality) to living systems. 'Inquiry' means to ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

A basic principle of appreciative inquiry is to include all voices. We need to respect, honour and care for all dimensions of the physical world. To give a simple instance, a person believes that he or she is righteous, but if that same person dumps the garbage on the road, knowingly or unknowingly he is violating the human rights of others. Thus self-righteousness is not always righteousness.

Appreciative inquiry locates the energy of the positive core and develops creative right brain activities (through skits, songs, and poems) to demonstrate the values, qualities and themes they heard during the interviews. Some such things had been tried out in tsunami rehabilitation in Tamil Nadu in 2005, particularly engaging children in drawing. Appreciative inquiry contributes to dignity, respect and love for themselves, their families, their neighbours and their global community.

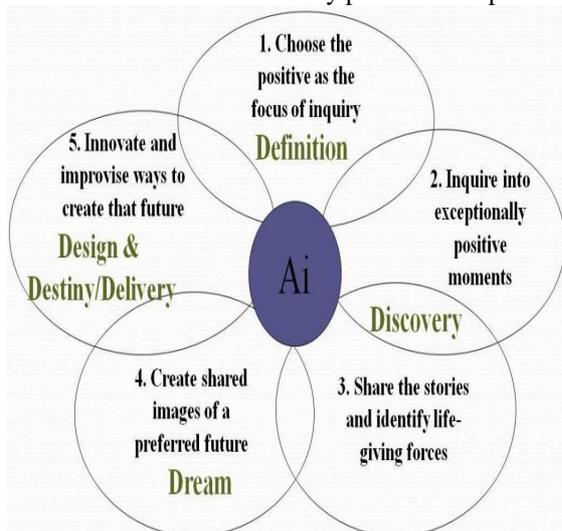
Appreciative inquiry is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. Appreciative inquiry involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the "unconditional positive question" often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. The arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism and spiralling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream and design.

Appreciative inquiry seeks to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul – and visions of valued and possible futures. Taking all of these together as a gestalt, it deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this “positive change core” – and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized [11].

Appreciative inquiry is grounded in a worldview that asserts that we use language and knowledge to create the world we know and understand it. For centuries, we used proof methods of pure science as though they apply to human behaviour. We see what we believe. It is the power of language and the relational use of it that creates the world. What works at one place may not work at another. Appreciative inquiry sees societies as “mysteries to be embraced” rather than having problems to be fixed.

Appreciative inquiry uses the change process that we call the 5-D Cycle [12]:

- Define the area of inquiry and learning,
- Discover what gives life to an organization, i.e. locates what is happening when the organization is at its best
- Dream about what might be – what the world is calling the organization to be
- Design ways to create the ideal as articulated by the whole organization
- Deliver through ongoing and iterative processes. The ‘Delivery’ is not some static plan for a solution, but rather a dynamic process of continuous change that is also referred to as the Destiny phase of this process.



\* Bernard J Mohr & Jane Magruder Watkins,  
The Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry;  
A Roadmap for Creating Positive Futures, p. 5

Fig. 3. Roadmap to positive futures

Had appreciative inquiry used extensively in dealing with the problems of tsunami disaster, the rehabilitation process would have been much more effective. First, fisher folk were not involved in the decision to prevent them for a considerable period from taking back to the sea; and this impoverished them. Second, the boat-centric rehabilitation left out many other aspects of coastal economy including the independent economic existence of fisher women who even owned nets and rented them out to fisher folk. Third, fisher folk kept out of sea a few months after tsunami were not involved in construction of boats or houses meant to be doled out to them. Four, when men who lost their wives married women half their age, widows were not allowed to marry though they too have valid reasons to marry. And the post-tsunami issues go on. In a nutshell, the way the post-tsunami rehabilitation has been approached has resulted in dependency syndrome among fisher folk – a group which used to be fiercely independent has been made to depend on doles from non-government organizations. Ethnocentricity (of non-coastal people) and vested interests (of NGOs and government) have jointly directed the tsunami rehabilitation process.

Appreciative inquiry uses participatory action research to harness the strengths of the community. It is an approach to improve social practice by changing it and learning from the consequences of change. Just like we try to avoid watery patches on a bad pathway on a rain day, strengths of the community forms the focus of appreciative inquiry. This does not mean social contradictions which contribute to an unfair society are ignored. Peace-building approach to human rights thus allows us to go into the root cause of the conflict and helps move towards a non-violent resolution and reconciliation.

## XI. MENTAL STAMINA

Are our students equipped with skills to face the stresses of modern life? Teachers have to recognize the needs of the students which include emotional needs. The youth of today lack mental stamina. This may be because of multiple reasons. Overarching aspirations and dreams are a direct reflection of the materialistic world view. TV or mobile phone, mobile gaming or Facebook or Whatsapp are used as instruments to get rid of boredom and gain some sensation. Socializing in the real sense has come down; playing games in the evening with neighbourhood children has become the thing of the past. Added with this is the single child norm prevalent in many urban families which results in pampered and spoiled children.

Students are today are extra sensitive. When I took over as the Head of an academic department in Anna University, my predecessor advised me to be soft with the students as he said that students of today do not have the mental stamina to withstand reprimand even for a right cause. Probably at the back of his mind was the issue of increasing suicide rates among students. Education is liberation from ignorance. And the word ‘guru’ in the Indian tradition in Sanskrit means ‘dispeller of darkness’. The ‘guru’ has given way to the ‘pundit’ (learned scholar). There is also a trend among the present-day University

teachers to equip themselves for promotions but not take due care to impart knowledge and skills to students – least said about pastoral care. We need to go back to the paradigm of ‘guru’ where the teacher is the light himself or herself and facilitates the dispelling of darkness. Students should be allowed to pursue interests that allow them to discover their full creative potentiality. They may receive and reflect the light of knowledge in the way they wish. Students of today are over-stressed and even the slightest provocation – be it for right or wrong – may shake the mental stability of the student.

Education is supposed to shape men and women of character. But then, education of today is more market driven and it can offer livelihood and not necessarily character. Education teaches us to be manipulative and clever rather than being upright and duty conscious. The rat race, instead of leading to the path of enlightenment, leads many students to the path of depression. However, only a meagre percentage of depressed students consult a psychiatrist. Even the faculty members and family members should notice the signs of depression among students and provide them with enough support.

I would like to cite a case of an undergraduate student who got ‘B’ and ‘C’ grades in two subjects and went in for revaluation and the grades did not change. So he again went in for a ‘challenge’ paying Rs. 3,000 for each paper. For ‘challenge’, the course teachers concerned have to certify after going through the answer-sheets that he deserves higher grades. Although the course teachers were convinced he deserves ‘S’ as he has got all the answers right, the ‘challenge’ did not alter the grades. Even while challenging some teachers told in confidence that the ‘challenge’ is eyewash and normally the examiners who do this work do not alter the grades already given. On getting the final results, the student was doubly upset: he has not got the grades he deserved, and he had wasted his parents’ money in the vain effort to get his grievance redressed. First of all, the ethical question I wish to pose is that why is there a need for revaluation if the teachers value properly in the first instance. Then, are we taking ‘revaluation’ and ‘challenge’ seriously and doing justice to the aggrieved candidates? Or if we have done a good job in reviewing the first valuation, do we have a counselling mechanism to put the aggrieved student back on track. The student is upset and it affects his further studies. He keeps repeating like a worn-out gramophone record, “The system is not just to me and what is the use studying hard”. He does not know that in many colleges the system is so unjust that even if the teachers are convinced that the grading is wrong, the teachers are not permitted by the college managements to certify for a ‘challenge’ itself. He does not have the mental maturity to understand that worrying about the past is not going to help his future. ‘Worrying’ does no good to anyone and it makes one’s thoughts hazy. The worry affects the present studies too and the hurt thus gets magnified and affect the future too. Even if there is no hanky-panky in the valuation process, the student should be made to understand the process so that his or her peace is not disturbed.

Counselling is needed at the right time. Art of listening is important. The awakened person can be of great help when suffering people seek counsel. The suffering mind seeks solace, some balm for the wounds inflicted on the consciousness. But words and deeds of solace provide only a temporary relief, and suffering born out of deep-rooted delusions of the ego-self will recur. The awakened counsellor will attempt to point to this reality, whenever possible. Of course, this may not always be possible, and when ‘ignorance is bliss’, it may be ‘foolish to be wise’ [10].

Teachers as *gurus* should be role models holding up the light to dispel darkness. You as teachers should be with peace with yourselves; only then you can spread the message of peace. If you hug your neighbour’s infant child without caring for it the child cries though you pretend to care for it. The same is the case with your students. They get depressed if you do not really care for them. They have an intuitiveness to understand whether or not we really care for them. Your pretense of caring for students will not succeed. You should really like your students and do your best for them. Treat them like your own children. Be open to criticism. Be a reflective teacher to learn from your mistakes. Be innovative and creative. An educational institution is a microcosm of what society is. Accept the differences among students in terms of religion, caste, gender, economy, culture, region, intelligence, and the like. Strive for the empowerment and happiness of all.

## XII. CONCLUSION

All faiths have upheld peace in different names – be it peace, *shanti*, *amaithi*, *salaam* or *shalom*. As the Hindu mantra goes:

*Asato maa sad-gamaya |*  
*Tamaso maa jyotir-gamaya |*  
*Mrtyor-maa amrtam gamaya |*  
*Om shaantih shaantih shaantih ||*

Meaning:

Lead us from unreality to the reality,  
Lead us from the darkness to the light,  
Lead us from death to immortality.  
Om! peace, peace, peace.

In 2011, my former peace-building classmate Leymah Gbowee in Eastern Mennonite University in the U.S. got a Nobel Prize for Peace along with two other women. She is from Liberia, a country in the African continent. She was once a child soldier. But for her education amid challenging situations she would not have emerged as an eminent peace-builder. She led women’s peace movement from a faith perspective. Christian and Muslim women exhibited their power under her leadership to bring peace. She initiated a sex strike. Women refused to have sex with their husbands until the violence stopped.

Imparting peace-building through education will help:

- Carve out a hidden potential in a student
- Deal with stress and strife
- Develop team spirit

- Allow freedom and creativity to deliver better
- Excel in personal and professional life
- Build capacity to enhance human resource
- Nurture critical thinking
- Care for welfare of others.

Conflict is a normal part of everyday life and it is part of living. You should be able to deal with conflict, to allow and manage disagreement and dissent among people. Assert your opinion while being respectful. Listen with care and attentiveness. Conflict need not cross the line to violence.

Peace-building gives scope for the student to examine personal and communal assumptions about conflicts as well as personal and communal patterns of responding to conflicts. The student will also increase his/her capability to: a) *describe* situations of conflicts using non-judgmental language; b) *analytically* explain situations of conflicts using the tools of analysis we will cover in the course; and c) provide some *prescription*, in the form of specific suggestions about what should be done or should have been done in situations of conflicts.

Already professional ethics and value education have been introduced at the undergraduate level in several institutions. Many teachers even infuse peace-building into traditional subjects such as literature, history and the social sciences, whereas such subjects are relegated in the present era. Peace-building as a separate course will be more focused on real-life situations. No more, peace education is confined to anti-nuclear education that emerged out of atomic bomb attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945. Peace-building gives ample opportunities to discuss and examine current events – be it killings of Muslims in Gujarat, or Iraq wars and their aftermath, or rehabilitation of tsunami-waves hit people, or the 2012 gang rape in New Delhi passenger bus.

If only the values of peace were indoctrinated at the student stage itself, we would not be facing much of the conflicts that we face today. The study of peace-building helps not only to be at peace with the society but also to be at peace with ourselves. Peace-building not only teaches students what to think but also to think critically. It strives for a better future for humanity. So it is time to build peace through education.

If there is a conflict on the campus or home, intervention should be done at the right time.



Fig. 4. Crossing the line of violence

Intervention is needed before anger hardens into bitterness, revenge and retaliation. To be effective it must address the physical, the political and the psychological needs of people trapped in violence; all are important. People involved in situations must be supported in the development of their own resources for transformation [13]. Even a few caring people can make a difference towards a better world.

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