

Educational, Social and Spiritual Endeavours towards a Culture of Peace in India and beyond

UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Democracy and Peace

WORLD PEACE CENTRE MAAER'S MIT, PUNE, INDIA

New developments, innovations and programmes

○ “Indian Academy of Human Rights, Democracy and Jurisprudence”: Dedicated to the promotion of education in human rights, democracy and peace, the World Peace Centre has recently established this Academy as a separate unit headed by Adv. Bhaskarrao E. Avhad. Its purpose is

- to prepare modified human rights education programmes;
- to offer certificate courses and post-graduate diploma courses in Human Rights and Democracy;
- to train post-graduate students, practising lawyers, advocates, NGOs and other social groups in this field.

○ Research Cell: Focused on the same concern, a Research Cell has been established headed by Prof. R.V. Pillai, former Secretary-General of the NHRC, and Dr. Chandrakant S. Pandav, Advisor, WHO, Geneva. As one of its first tasks, an innovative book is being authored by Adv. Bhaskarrao E. Avhad aimed at promoting the awareness and importance of human rights education.

○ Training Programme on Culture of Peace: Launched for a full academic year the programme provides a lecture series on Culture of Peace, Human Dynamics and Effective Communication. This programme has helped a large number of students, teachers, executives from corporate houses, private/public sectors and many other people in developing their communication skills, bringing in attitudinal change in their personality; promoting their character development and moulding their integrated and holistic personality as responsible citizens of the world.

Highlights of Activities in 1999/2000

◆ “Hiroshima-Nagasaki Day” held at WPC on 6 August, 1999. The commemoration of this day was organized and conducted by the school children. The deliberations brought home the horrifying effects of any accidental fall out of nuclear weapon and the holocaust that will be caused by an atomic war. At the end of the event school children sent an unanimous appeal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO, requesting them to take all necessary steps to ensure banning of all nuclear and chemical weapons. The message focused on the following challenges: „ALL THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS NEED TO BE DESTROYED. NO MORE WARS. ALL THE CONFLICTS AND ISSUES MUST BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY. PEACE MUST PREVAIL AT ALL COST, IF THE HUMANITY IS TO BE SAVED FROM ANNIHILATION.“

◆ Annual Endowment Lecture Series dedicated to Saint Shree Dnyanesh-wara & Saint Shree Tukaram, 24-30 Nov., 1999. This one-week programme, now an annual event, brings together people from diversified professions and different faiths and religions from various walks of life and helps to bind them together with love and affection and feeling of universal brotherhood.

◆ Workshop on „Challenges in the next Millennium”, 25-29 November 1999. The need for reorienting the higher education system to meet the challenges in the next Millennium attracted a large number of participants, who were impressed, inspired and motivated by the deep rooted science behind YOGA, Pranayam and Meditation techniques, which were actually and daily practised to control and establish a balance of mind and body. It also helped participants to understand the philosophy behind spirituality and science which are essential for human welfare.

◆ Multi-Media Coliseum established on the Banks of Indrayani River, Alandi, Jan. 2000. This huge Multi-Media Coliseum (screen size of 63' x 45'.) is to promote the concept of “Mass Education Class-Room”, accommodating thousands of people at a time. The wide screen with a high resolution projection system is assisting education and training of students, teachers, peasants, workers, social groups and other masses in various fields like science, spirituality, health care, hygiene, human rights etc. related to a culture of peace, through lectures, discourses and other cultural programmes by eminent scientists, philosophers, educationists, thinkers, spiritual leaders. The Multi-Media Coliseum has helped to a certain extent in transforming Pilgrim Centres of India to Divine Knowledge Pilgrim Centres, through the lectures, discourses and other cultural programmes organized through the multi-media projection system. It is a unique experiment being adopted for the first time in India to educate and train the masses.

- ♦ “Information and Communication Technologies in Indian Schools in the 21st Century”, two-days workshop at WPC, 21-22 January 2000. This workshop was intended to help teachers, officials and policy makers to evolve the guidelines in framing national policy on “Information Technology Education”. It was the first of its kind organized by the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO, the Ministry of HRD of the Government of India, under the auspices of the WPC. It helped evolve a document for policy planning of Information Technology Education in India.
- ♦ National Students Conference on “Culture of Peace”, 3-6 Febr. 2000. This Conference helped inculcate a sense of discipline, morality and character with an understanding of various themes of morality, ethics, science and spirituality. The participants pledged to act as messengers and promoters of peace. They also decided to play their role through the networking of the institutes as well as in co-operation with other like minded friends` ort he cause of healthy family system, brotherhood, love and compassion.
- ♦ Within this context, Programmes like daily “World Peace Prayer”, “Peace March”, “Human Rights Day” etc. should be also mentioned referred to in detail in the contribution made to the first issue of the Bulletin, autumn 1999. The same applies to Yoga Classes which are being conducted at the World Peace Centre and joined by more and more people from the neighbourhood.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Centre and its Chairs organize social welfare activities in and around the Maharashtra State. The Institution has two Medical Colleges viz. MIMER Medical College at Talegaon and MIMSR Medical College at Latur, Dist. Latur, with 700 bedded Rural Hospitals. Both are located in rural areas. Their concern is to cater to the health care needs of the poor, needy and under-privileged people at these 1000 places.

Free Diagnostic Camps

These Camps are regularly organized by the WPC at both Medical Colleges since 1997 for the rural people from the remote areas. The WPC’s point of departure in this regard is that, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every one has got the right to life, a life which is free from serious problems of health and hygiene, in clean surroundings. The rural poor are provided with free diagnostics, spectacles, crutches etc. including, if required, free hospitalization, treatment, medicines and nursing. Thousands of people in the rural areas have been benefited from these camps which have helped them to avail of the right to good health and to be able to create the awareness regarding human rights on various fronts.

Environmental Improvement and Pollution Control Project

WPC has taken up a massive programme in this field at Alandi and Dehu pilgrim centres on the banks of Indrayani River since 1986. This project, involving an expenditure of about 100 million, would help in providing thousands of pilgrims who visit these places daily and the local people with potable drinking water right on the river banks, clean water for bathing and healthy environment near by the temple and around the river banks. The students, with a sense of commitment to the social cause, have surveyed and carried out the project work under the guidance of the faculty members. This work is in progress.

The Environmental Improvement and Pollution Control Project, apart from providing clean drinking water and good amenities to the pilgrims and healthy surroundings, have been able to instil a sense of cleanliness among thousands of pilgrims who visit this place daily. The project, directly or indirectly, is able to educate and train the common masses about healthy environment, clean habits and their roles in this regard.

Formation of Vishwa Shanti Sangh – World Peace Union:

Vishwa Shanti Sangh – World Peace Union has been established on 3 February 2000 to propagate the philosophy of World Peace Centre and help in carrying out the various activities which will promote the Culture of Peace by creating a forum of individuals and a network of institutions/ organizations. As the task of establishing a Culture of Peace is quite enormous, a single organization like World Peace Centre by itself will not be able to carry out this task. Involvement of large number of individuals and organizations is essential for the success of the work ahead. These individuals or the organizations who believe in the mission of the World Peace Centre and who will become members/associates of the Vishwa Shanti Sangh, will participate and contribute their own share for promoting a Culture of Peace.

Vishwa Shanti Sangh as the organ of the World Peace Centre is keen on spreading the message of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace through formal and non-formal education for the students in particular and common masses in general. For this purpose it is interested in creating a mass movement by making its activities broad based and widespread. From this point of view, the Vishwa Shanti Sangh would like to involve NGOs and educational institutions not only from the various parts of the country, but also the entire world.

Proposed programmes / activities

In general: The World Peace Centre of MAEER's MIT, Pune, has planned further projects and activities in education, training, research, connected with a number of conferences, meetings etc. that will help in propagating the objectives of UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, apart from those of the WPC which are more or less identical, and include educational, science related, environmental and social issues. More and more events have now become annual ones taking place on certain fixed dates.

Furthermore, WPC intends to conduct a number of courses and training programmes devoted to attitudinal changes and mind control, which will help the participants to think positively and globally and act for the benefit of the mankind at large.

Networking: It is also proposed to develop networking of the institutes and organizations active Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, which will help in exchange of thoughts and faculty, optimal use of resources and better organization and promotion of various programmes. The formation of the "World Peace Union" (see above) is a step in that direction. Even the individuals who subscribe to the philosophy of World Peace Centre would also be able to come in the fold of this Union for spreading the message of peace, love, compassion, reverence for life, harmony and human rights, etc. Already some individuals and organizations have evinced keen interest in this regard.

Further, WPC would also work in close liaison with UNESCO; the National Human Rights Commission; the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO; the Ministry of HRD, Government of India; the Education Department of Maharashtra State; NGOs and other organizations, who are involved in this common cause.

With the formation of "Indian Academy of Human Rights, Democracy and Jurisprudence", it is also proposed to conduct education and training programmes and courses in these areas. Programmes will also be conducted for women and children, which will highlight the plight of the women and the children in the society, their abuse and exploitation and steps necessary to safeguard their rights. Some of the **activities already planned** are listed below. This list will be further supplemented and concretized in the near future.

Continuation of Saint Shree Dnyaneshwara and Saint Shree Tukaram Endowment Lecture Series: 24 – 30 November 2000.

Orientation Workshop for staff members: 25 – 29 November 2000.

Asia Pacific Regional Students Conference on "Culture of Peace": 3 - 5 February 2001.

Programmes for promoting Human Rights Education in the year 2000 at all levels.

Celebration of Human Rights Day: 10 December 2000.

Training and motivating the teaching faculties, business houses, corporates, police, defence forces etc. concerning Human Rights, Culture of Peace and Democratization.

Courses devoted to Yoga, Meditation and other similar activities which would help in mind control and behaviour.

Conducting programmes for women's and children's welfare including their rights, adoption of needy/orphan children by individuals / institutions.

Final remark

The Management of World Peace Centre of MAEER's MIT, Pune, India and the UNESCO Chairholder hope and feel confident that this Peace Centre will certainly be able to help promote the Culture of Peace through its value based Universal Education System and other programmes befitting the aims and objectives of the UNESCO Chair Programme. In fact, the aims of the WPC corresponding to provisions made and summarized by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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