

Education and world peace  
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EDUCATION AND THE  
SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFE  
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# **EDUCATION AND WORLD PEACE**

TO DISCOVER what part education can play in the present world crisis, we should understand how that crisis has come into being. It is obviously the result of wrong values in our relationship to people, to property and to ideas. If our relationship with others is based on self-aggrandizement, and our relationship to property is acquisitive, the structure of society is bound to be competitive and self-isolating. If in our relationship with ideas we justify one ideology in opposition to another, mutual distrust and ill-will are the inevitable results.

Another cause of the present chaos is dependence on authority, on leaders, whether in daily life, in the small school or in the university. Leaders and their authority are deteriorating factors in any culture. When we follow another there is no understanding, but only fear and conformity, eventually leading to the cruelty of the totalitarian State and the dogmatism of organized religion.

To rely on governments, to look to organizations and

authorities for that peace which must begin with the understanding of ourselves, is to create further and still greater conflict; and there can be no lasting happiness as long as we accept a social order in which there is endless strife and antagonism between man and man. If we want to change existing conditions, we must first transform ourselves, which means that we must become aware of our own actions, thoughts and feelings in everyday life.

But we do not really want peace, we do not want to put an end to exploitation. We will not allow our greed to be interfered with, or the foundations of our present social structure to be altered; we want things to continue as they are with only superficial modifications, and so the powerful, the cunning inevitably rule our lives.

Peace is not achieved through any ideology, it does not depend on legislation; it comes only when we as individuals begin to understand our own psychological process. If we avoid the responsibility of acting individually and wait for some new system to establish peace, we shall merely become the slaves of that system.

When governments, dictators, big business and the clerically powerful begin to see that this increasing antagonism between men only leads to indiscriminate destruction and is therefore no longer profitable, they may force us, through legislation and other means of compulsion, to suppress our personal cravings and ambitions and to co-operate for the well-being of mankind. Just as we are now educated and encouraged to be competitive and ruthless, so then we shall be compelled to

respect one another and to work for the world as a whole.

And even though we may all be well fed, clothed and sheltered, we shall not be free of our conflicts and antagonisms, which will merely have shifted to another plane, where they will be still more diabolical and devastating. The only moral or righteous action is voluntary, and understanding alone can bring peace and happiness to man.

Beliefs, ideologies and organized religions are setting against our neighbours; there is conflict, not only among different societies, but among groups within the same society. We must realize that as long as we identify ourselves with a country, as long as we cling to security, as long as we are conditioned by dogmas, there will be strife and misery both within ourselves and in the world.

Then there is the whole question of patriotism. When do we feel patriotic? It is obviously not an everyday emotion. But we are sedulously encouraged to be patriotic through school-books, through newspapers and other channels of propaganda, which stimulate racial egotism by praising national heroes and telling us that our own country and way of life are better than others. This patriotic spirit feeds our vanity from childhood to old age.

The constantly repeated assertion that we belong to a certain political or religious group, that we are of this nation or of that, flatters our little egos, puffs them out like sails, until we are ready to kill or be killed for our country, race or ideology. It is all so stupid and unnatural. Surely, human beings are more important than national and ideological boundaries.

The separative spirit of nationalism is spreading like fire all over the world. Patriotism is cultivated and cleverly exploited by those who are seeking further expansion, wider powers, greater enrichment; and each one of us takes part in this process, for we also desire these things. Conquering other lands and other people provides new markets for goods as well as for political and religious ideologies.

One must look at all these expressions of violence and antagonism with an unprejudiced mind, that is, with a mind that does not identify itself with any country, race or ideology, but tries to find out what is true. There is great joy in seeing a thing clearly without being influenced by the notions and instructions of others, whether they be the government, the specialists or the very learned. Once we really see that patriotism is a hindrance to human happiness, we do not have to struggle against this false emotion in ourselves, it has gone from us forever.

Nationalism, the patriotic spirit, class and race consciousness, are all ways of the self, and therefore separative. After all, what is a nation but a group of individuals living together for economic and self-protective reasons? Out of fear and acquisitive self-defence arises the idea of "my country," with its boundaries and tariff walls, rendering brotherhood and the unity of man impossible.

The desire to gain and to hold, the longing to be identified with something greater than ourselves, creates the spirit of nationalism; and nationalism breeds war. In every country the government, encouraged by organized

religion, is upholding nationalism and the separative spirit. Nationalism is a disease, and it can never bring about world unity. We cannot attain health through disease, we must first free ourselves from the disease.

It is because we are nationalists, ready to defend our sovereign States, our beliefs and acquisitions, that we must be perpetually armed. Property and ideas have become more important to us than human life, so there is constant antagonism and violence between ourselves and others. By maintaining the sovereignty of our country, we are destroying our sons; by worshipping the State, which is but a projection of ourselves, we are sacrificing our children to our own gratification. Nationalism and sovereign governments are the causes and the instruments of war.

Our present social institutions cannot evolve into a world federation, for their very foundations are unsound. Parliaments and systems of education which uphold national sovereignty and emphasize the importance of the group will never bring war to an end. Every separate group of people, with its rulers and its ruled, is a source of war. As long as we do not fundamentally alter the present relationship between man and man, industry will inevitably lead to confusion and become an instrument of destruction and misery; as long as there is violence and tyranny, deceit and propaganda, the brotherhood of man cannot be realized.

Merely to educate people to be wonderful engineers, brilliant scientists, capable executives, able workmen, will

never bring the oppressors and the oppressed together; and we can see that our present system of education, which sustains the many causes that breed enmity and hatred between human beings, has not prevented mass murder in the name of one's country or in the name of God.

Organized religions, with their temporal and spiritual authority, are equally incapable of bringing peace to man, for they also are the outcome of our ignorance and fear, of our make-believe and egotism.

Craving security here or in the hereafter, we create institutions and ideologies which guarantee that security; but the more we struggle for security, the less we shall have it. The desire to be secure only fosters division and increases antagonism. If we deeply feel and understand the truth of this, not merely verbally or intellectually, but with our whole being, then we shall begin to alter fundamentally our relationship with our fellow-men in the immediate world about us; and only then is there a possibility of achieving unity and brotherhood.

Most of us are consumed by all sorts of fears, and are greatly concerned about our own security. We hope that, by some miracle, wars will come to an end, all the while accusing other national groups of being the instigators of war, as they in turn blame us for the disaster. Although war is so obviously detrimental to society, we prepare for war and develop in the young the military spirit.

But has military training any place in education? It all depends on what kind of human beings we want our

children to be. If we want them to be efficient killers, then military training is necessary. If we want to discipline them and regiment their minds, if our purpose is to make them nationalistic and therefore irresponsible to society as a whole, then military training is a good way to do it. If we like death and destruction, military training is obviously important. It is the function of generals to plan and carry on war, and if our intention is to have constant battle between ourselves and our neighbours, then by all means let us have more generals.

If we are living only to have endless strife within ourselves and with others, if our desire is to perpetuate bloodshed and misery, then there must be more soldiers, more politicians, more enmity—which is what is actually happening. Modern civilization is based on violence, and is therefore courting death. As long as we worship force, violence will be our way of life. But if we want peace, if we want right relationship among men, whether Christian or Hindu, Russian or American, if we want our children to be integrated human beings, then military training is an absolute hindrance, it is the wrong way to set about it.

One of the chief causes of hatred and strife is the belief that a particular class or race is superior to another. The child is neither class nor race conscious; it is the home or school environment, or both, which makes him feel separative. In himself he does not care whether his playmate is a Negro or a Jew, a Brahmin or a non-Brahmin; but the influence of the whole social structure is continually impinging on his mind, affecting and shaping it.

Here again the problem is not with the child but with the adults, who have created a senseless environment of separatism and false values.

What real basis is there for differentiating between human beings? Our bodies may be different in structure and colour, our faces may be dissimilar, but inside the skin we are very much alike: proud, ambitious, envious, violent, sexual, power-seeking and so on. Remove the label and we are very naked; but we do not want to face our nakedness, and so we insist on the label—which indicates how immature, how really infantile we are.

To enable the child to grow up free from prejudice, one has first to break down all prejudice within oneself, and then in one's environment—which means breaking down the structure of this thoughtless society which we have created. At home we may tell the child how absurd it is to be conscious of one's class or race, and he will probably agree with us; but when he goes to school and plays with other children, he becomes contaminated by the separative spirit. Or it may be the other way around: the home may be traditional, narrow, and the school's influence may be broader. In either case there is a constant battle between the home and the school environments, and the child is caught between the two.

To raise a child sanely, to help him to be perceptive so that he sees through these stupid prejudices, we have to be in close relationship with him. We have to talk things over and let him listen to intelligent conversation; we have to encourage the spirit of inquiry and discontent

which is already in him, thereby helping him to discover for himself what is true and what is false.

It is constant inquiry, true dissatisfaction, that brings creative intelligence; but to keep inquiry and discontent awake is extremely arduous, and most people do not want their children to have this kind of intelligence, for it is very uncomfortable to live with someone who is constantly questioning accepted values.

All of us are discontented when we are young, but unfortunately our discontent soon fades away, smothered by our imitative tendencies and our worship of authority. As we grow older, we begin to crystallize, to be satisfied and apprehensive. We become executives, priests, bank clerks, factory managers, technicians, and slow decay sets in. Because we desire to maintain our positions, we support the destructive society which has placed us there and given us some measure of security.

Government control of education is a calamity. There is no hope of peace and order in the world as long as education is the handmaid of the State or of organized religion. Yet more and more governments are taking charge of the children and their future; and if it is not the government, then it is the religious organizations which seek to control education.

This conditioning of the child's mind to fit a particular ideology, whether political or religious, breeds enmity between man and man. In a competitive society we cannot have brotherhood, and no reform, no dictatorship, no educational method can bring it about."

As long as you remain a New Zealander and I a Hindu, it is absurd to talk about the unity of man. How can we get together as human beings if you in your country, and I in mine, retain our respective religious prejudices and economic ways? How can there be brotherhood as long as patriotism is separating man from man, and millions are restricted by depressed economic conditions while others are well off? How can there be human unity when beliefs divide us, when there is domination of one group by another, when the rich are powerful and the poor are seeking that same power, when there is maldistribution of land, when some are well fed and multitudes are starving?

One of our difficulties is that we are not really in earnest about these matters, because we do not want to be greatly disturbed. We prefer to alter things only in a manner advantageous to ourselves, and so we are not deeply concerned about our own emptiness and cruelty.

Can we ever attain peace through violence? Is peace to be achieved gradually, through a slow process of time? Surely, love is not a matter of training or of time. The last two wars were fought for democracy, I believe; and now we are preparing for a still greater and more destructive war, and people are less free. But what would happen if we were to put aside such obvious hindrances to understanding as authority, belief, nationalism and the whole hierarchical spirit? We would be people without authority, human beings in direct relationship with one another—and then, perhaps, there would be love and compassion.

What is essential in education, as in every other field,

is to have people who are understanding and affectionate, whose hearts are not filled with empty phrases, with the things of the mind.

If life is meant to be lived happily, with thought, with care, with affection, then it is very important to understand ourselves; and if we wish to build a truly enlightened society, we must have educators who understand the ways of integration and who are therefore capable of imparting that understanding to the child.

Such educators would be a danger to the present structure of society. But we do not really want to build an enlightened society; and any teacher who, perceiving the full implications of peace, began to point out the true significance of nationalism and the stupidity of war, would soon lose his position. Knowing this, most teachers compromise, and thereby help to maintain the present system of exploitation and violence.

Surely, to discover truth, there must be freedom from strife, both within ourselves and with our neighbours. When we are not in conflict within ourselves, we are not in conflict outwardly. It is the inward strife which, projected outwardly, becomes the world conflict.

War is the spectacular and bloody projection of our everyday living. We precipitate war out of our daily lives; and without a transformation in ourselves, there are bound to be national and racial antagonisms, the childish quarrelling over ideologies, the multiplication of soldiers, the saluting of flags, and all the many brutalities that go to create organized murder.

Education throughout the world has failed, it has produced mounting destruction and misery. Governments are training the young to be the efficient soldiers and technicians they need; regimentation and prejudice are being cultivated and enforced. Taking these facts into consideration, we have to inquire into the meaning of existence and the significance and purpose of our lives. We have to discover the beneficent ways of creating a new environment; for environment can make the child a brute, an unfeeling specialist, or help him to become a sensitive, intelligent human being. We have to create a world government which is radically different, which is not based on nationalism, on ideologies, on force.

All this implies the understanding of our responsibility to one another in relationship; but to understand our responsibility, there must be love in our hearts, not mere learning or knowledge. The greater our love, the deeper will be its influence on society. But we are all brains and no heart; we cultivate the intellect and despise humility. If we really loved our children, we would want to save and protect them, we would not let them be sacrificed in wars.

I think we really want arms; we like the show of military power, the uniforms, the rituals, the drums, the noise, the violence. Our everyday life is a reflection in miniature of this same brutal superficiality, and we are destroying one another through envy and thoughtlessness.

We want to be rich; and the richer we get, the more ruthless we become, even though we may contribute large sums to charity and education. Having robbed the victim,

we return to him a little of the spoils, and this we call philanthropy. I do not think we realize what catastrophes we are preparing. Most of us live each day as rapidly and thoughtlessly as possible, and leave to the governments, to the cunning politicians, the direction of our lives.

All sovereign governments must prepare for war, and one's own government is no exception. To make its citizens efficient for war, to prepare them to perform their duties effectively, the government must obviously control and dominate them. They must be educated to act as machines, to be ruthlessly efficient. If the purpose and end of life is to destroy or be destroyed, then education *must* encourage ruthlessness; and I am not at all sure that that is not what we inwardly desire, for ruthlessness goes with the worship of success.

The sovereign State does not want its citizens to be free, to think for themselves, and it controls them through propaganda, through distorted historical interpretations and so on. That is why education is becoming more and more a means of teaching *what* to think and not *how* to think. If we were to think independently of the prevailing political system, we would be dangerous; free institutions might turn out pacifists or people who think contrary to the existing regime.

Right education is obviously a danger to sovereign governments—and so it is prevented by crude or subtle means. Education and food in the hands of the few have become the means of controlling man; and governments, whether of the left or of the right, are unconcerned as

Another and still greater disaster is approaching dangerously close, and most of us are doing nothing whatever about it. We go on day after day exactly as before; we do not want to strip away all our false values and begin anew. We want to do patchwork reform, which only leads to problems of still further reform. But the building is crumbling, the walls are giving way, and fire is destroying it. We must leave the building and start on new ground, with different foundations, different values.

We cannot discard technical knowledge, but we can become inwardly aware of our ugliness, of our ruthlessness, of our deceptions and dishonesty, our utter lack of love. Only by intelligently freeing ourselves from the spirit of nationalism, from envy and the thirst for power, can a new social order be established.

Peace is not to be achieved by patchwork reform, nor by a mere rearrangement of old ideas and superstitions. There can be peace only when we understand what lies beyond the superficial, and thereby stop this wave of destruction which has been unleashed by our own aggressiveness and fears; and only then will there be hope for our children and salvation for the world.