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**VIRTUE: THE DOVE OF PEACE?
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INNER TRANSFORMATION**

A virtuous life is the fruit of a mind with a rich inner landscape. It can be overtly inferred by sincerity in speech, generosity of righteous deeds and is elegantly fulfilled by inner contentment. World peace entails that despite prevailing differences and disapprovals, global citizens find it proper to continue to work together towards meliorating the quality of life for one and all. This paper analyzed secondary data to unveil the instrumental role played by virtues in the conquest of peace. The findings deducted are indicative of the seminal importance of virtue inculcation as means to restore world peace.

KEY WORDS: Virtues, Peace, Values, Character Strengths, Positive Psychology, Spiritual Psychology, Human Values.

INTRODUCTION

1. PEACE

Peace is a concept that is denoted by the existence of conditions that are conducive for global citizens to resolve their incompatibilities in a manner that is harmonious and guarantees dignity. World peace entails that despite prevailing differences and disapprovals, global citizens find it proper to continue to work together towards meliorating the quality of life for one and all.

1.1 Classification of Peace

Bauer T. (2019), in his literary work entitled, “ Spirituality and Peace ”, highlights the intense interdependency between the two constructs. The broader the notion of peace, the deeper its association with spirituality, he purports.

1.1.1 Weak Peace

Weak peace is the first level of attainable peace (Bauer T. , 2019) characterized rather simply by the absence of conflict, war or any kind of violence. It is the all important state of non-maleficence, where no harm or its threat is being brought to any entity.

1.1.2 Strong Peace

Next in progression, is the level of strong peace (Bauer T. , 2019) which is a less simpler notion relative to weak peace. This level is characterized by not only the mere absence of contentious forces, albeit also the presence of positive and idealistic ones. It is the desirable state of beneficence, where good is being brought to entities.

1.1.3 Holistic Peace

Finally, at the apex, we find the notion of holistic peace (Bauer T. , 2019), a stage so unique, that it comes to be distinguished by a ‘ trans-rational’ desire to strive towards higher, nobler goals. It is the super state that encompasses the previous two states, in addition to the new found experience of bliss, unconditional love and a marked feeling of interconnectedness, all three vital for the establishment of enduring and universal peace and harmony.

The paper “Quadriya Sufis : Restoration of Peace in Kashmir Society ” (Damsaz and Andrabi, 2017), documents the efforts of the Quadriya Sufis in helping people in the deepening of their understanding of their relationship with God and in establishing the concept of humanism in the valley. The authors highlight the notions of cultivation of virtue and a style of life inspired by right conduct, as perceived by the Quadriya Sufis to be the highest attainable standards of true humanity.

Indeed, once there is harmony in the human, there would be harmony around the human (Dr. Goyal B. R., 1998). This is documented once again beautifully in the form of a hymn:

“Where there is righteousness in heart,
There is beauty in character.
Where there is beauty in character,
There is harmony in the home.
Where there is harmony in the home,
There is order in the nation.
Where there is order in the nation,
There is peace in the world.”

-A Hymn on Righteousness (Kalam APJ & Tiwari A,2005)

2. VIRTUE

Virtue, if explained lucidly, refers to moral excellence. It is the entity that fosters personal, inner greatness for the collective good of the humanity in its entirety. Being virtuous commands conformity to the highest prescribed standard of conduct. A virtuous life is distinguished by a righteous thoughts and an incorruptible committal to integrity and personal honor. Virtues seek to imbibe in us principles of a higher nature, and in the process bestow its practitioners with a special worth.

2.1 Classification of Virtues

All over the world, reputed doctrines on the subject have interesting accounts to offer on virtues.

The religion of Christianity gives a wholesome account of nine virtues or the fruits of the spirit:

“...Love, Joy, Peace,
Patience, Kindness, Goodness,
Faithfulness, Gentleness and
Self- control ...”

- Galatians (5:22-23) the Holy Bible

In Hinduism, the sacred text of Bhagavad Gita, documents Lord Krishna enlisting the virtues that are possessed by the wise. Some of the attributes of the illumined soul are considered to be:

“...Humility / Absence of Pride, Non pretentiousness
Nonviolence / Non-Injury, Forbearance, Forgiveness
Uprightness, Service to the Teacher,
Purity, Steadfastness and
Self-Control ...”

- (Chapter 13; Verses 8-12) the Bhagavat Geeta

In Islam, the sacred text of Quran instructs people to adopt a character that is morally upright. Being kind to people and giving charity to the poor and the helpless are some the most emphasized virtues to be cultivated.

Indeed, the pervading similitude that is to be found in all religions of the world is the extolling of the profound ideas of truth goodness and beauty (Venkataiah, 1998).

This paper shall now proceed towards understanding in depth, the nature of some select virtues and the potential they have in restoring peace and harmony in contemporary times.

2.2 Empathy, Compassion & Charity

Empathy comes to be defined as the combination of the potent acts of being aware of and sensitive to another's past or prevailing circumstances. It exemplifies the ability of accurately understanding another's thought process and affective state through vicarious experiencing. Inculcation of empathy requires the learning of the skill to move from our perception to the point of perception of others. This conscious shifting of the focus from the self to the existential circumstances of another is conducive to the establishment of peace, harmony and cordial relations.

Jain (2018), in her paper entitled, “Spiritual Values in Jainism: An Eco-Ethical Practice Enhancing Sustainable Development”, appreciates the style of life offered by the religion of Jainism, towards fostering a society that is peaceful and egalitarian. This she explains in the context of Jainism's unique code of ethical and scientific virtues (non-violence, equanimity, empathy, compassion and charity) that have relevance in the realms of both, individual and universal responsibility. Through her paper, the author highlights the priceless teachings that Jainism has to offer to the world in the form of an enduring legacy of moral excellence, the sincere pursuit of which shall inevitably lead to the attainment of sustainable development, peace and universal harmony.

The virtue of compassion comes to be defined as empathy infused consciousness of another's tribulations, energized by the urge to carry out corresponding actions to help alleviate it. Compassion serves to function as a form of deep communication between individuals, communities and nations that reinstates faith in the eloquence of the shared

human experience. Compassionate deeds often have at their origins a benevolent motive to genuinely relieve others of suffering.

Demircy and Eksi (2018), in their research paper entitled, “Keep Calm and Be Happy: A Mixed Method Study from Character Strengths to Well-being” investigated the characteristics and sources of a happy and peaceful existence. The quantitative findings yielded a positive correlation between the constructs of peace and happiness with constructs of tolerance, spirituality and helpfulness amongst others. The qualitative findings of the research, interpreted peace to be perceived as more permanent, significant and superiorly prioritized relative to happiness. The results of the research also cited personal virtues, social virtues, optimism and spirituality among others as the primary constituents of the sources of happiness and peace.

The virtue of charity in practice is defined as the volitional providence of tangible and intangible help to others in need. Acts of compassion may emanate from the desire of deriving pleasure from a perceived enhancement in one’s social status, a sense of agency or simply an altruistic spirit (Harbaugh T.; 2007). Whatever may be the motivation, inculcating the virtue of charity is a profitable endeavor as it leads to elevated levels of happiness for the giver (Women Give Study, 2017).

2.3 PATIENCE

The virtue of patience is defined as the propensity to endure adverse circumstances, often requiring the observance of tolerance and exercise of perseverance in the face of unpleasant stimuli. Once imbibed, patience grants its native the blessed gift of emotional independence and influences an individual’s ‘response ability ‘for the better. As opposed to popular notions, patience does not signify a passivity of attitude, however quite on the contrary, exemplifies an active endeavor to resist the experience of unpleasant negative affect.

Godawa (2018) through his article entitled, “Spiritual Depth and Dynamic of Patience according to Christian teaching and experience” extols the virtue of patience as a prime determinant in the development of a peaceful and a joyous attitude, in the context of the extraordinariness of Jesus Christ’s personal life. He describes patience as an individual’s voluntary acceptance of difficulties as a consequence of his/her rooted commitment to goodness and further states that patience can be inculcated through deep, transformational inner experiences of the mind.

The virtue of patience appeals to its practitioner to disengage, alter perceptions and then reengage constructively, rather than giving in to impulsivity. Inculcation of patience thus, serves to function as nobler alternative to aggression, thereby being instrumental in the attainment of peace.

2.4 FORGIVENESS

“The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is an attribute of the strong”, identified the father of the Indian Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The virtue of forgiveness is defined as an intentional process of overcoming negative emotions harbored for another, often in the context of interpersonal transgressions. Choosing the path of forgiveness opens to us

the gateway to move away from the feelings of resentment and anger, to the realm of understanding and peace.

Stephen D. Edwards (2018), in his paper entitled, “ A Wisdom Way of Being to Transform the Heart of Humanity ” documents the results of a study (Edwards, 2014), wherein the participants, who underwent a workshop on the positive emotional theme of peace, described experiences of love, forgiveness, oneness with the inner world and the nature, calmness and transcendence among others.

The practice of forgiveness has been proven to improve physiological functioning, cognitive functioning and reduced instances of chronic health condition (Luskin. F.; 2002). By empowering its practitioner to release emotions that do more harm than good, forgiveness is a potent force whose appropriate harnessing, transports individuals and communities to a sanctuary of peace.

2.5 TOLERANCE

The virtue of tolerance is perhaps the most essential to ensure circumstances that are conducive for peace to prevail. The practice of tolerance allows people from diverse walks of life to exchange freely, opinions and ideas that may be incompatible, in a dignified environment.

Levels of tolerance towards homosexuality and racial minorities has indeed witnessed an increment (Janmaat & Keating ,2017). Young people are markedly more accepting of these groups than young people belonging to previous generations were. The trends observed are broadly supportive of the optimistic perspectives.

Thus, by encouraging the observance of agreeableness towards disapproved ideas and opinions, the virtue of tolerance comes to establish and consequently sustain cultural, communal, political and civic order and harmonious coexistence between diverse social groups.

Theoretical Model:

The Virtuous Pathway to Peace & Happiness

CONCLUSION

A virtuous life is the fruit of a mind with a rich inner landscape. It can be overtly inferred by sincerity in speech, generosity of righteous deeds and is elegantly fulfilled by inner contentment. It is style of life that is refined, creative and exemplifies a rooted committal to eternal virtues in an ephemeral world. These eternal virtues come to be comprehended by humanity as qualities of patience, forgiveness, empathy, compassion and charity, among others. As substantiated above, investment in the development, inculcation and propagation of these shall guarantee the human kind a future more prosperous as it is peaceful and more harmonious as it is progressive. May peace be upon you.

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