

# Peace In Today's Era: Finding Peace In A Frantic World

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## INTRODUCTION

***“World peace must develop from inner peace. Peace is not just the absence of violence but manifestation of human compassion”***

***Dalai Lama***

The word peace conjures images of harmony and bliss in psychological, social and political sense. These images seem to conflict with the reality of chaotic and non-harmonious world. The field of peace is an attempt to reach towards a world which is peaceful or at least free of violence (Grewal, 2003). Peace and Harmony have been sought by humanity ever since the dawn of civilization. And yet the whole of human history, from the very earliest times, is replete with wars and violent conflicts from the tribal right up to the international level. All religions preach peace, but in fact religion has been one of the major sources of violent conflict down through the centuries, and remains so even today. Science was supposed to help establish peace, but it has created increasingly deadly weapons of mass destruction, so that a single nuclear warhead now packs explosive power equal to one thousand of the bombs that obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki half a century ago. Communism, socialism, capitalism, democracy, have all claimed the desire to establish peace, but inevitably have all waged war. These facts point to the disturbing conclusion that violence is perhaps built into the very texture of human consciousness. Despite the great peace-makers like Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Emperor Ashoka, and Mahatma Gandhi, there seems to be no appreciable decline in the human propensity towards violence. Indeed, twentieth century has surpassed all records of violence, killing and maiming more humane being than in the last ten centuries put together. Further Koestler suggests that as a result of an engineering defect in the human cortex, man is a creature programmed for self destruction (Singh, 1996).

From times immemorial, a variety of developments, upheavals and changes have been taking place on this planet of earth. Some of them have certainly brought glory to the mankind and helped in improving the quality of human existence. But there have been movements in the history of human civilization, when people have fought against one another, for the smallest of the things and for large empires. Most of such events are disgrace to the humanity. Unfortunately, such events have not ceased or decreased, instead now, when the

world is bestowed with all the modern sciences, technology, they are on the increase. However, there have been some golden eras in the history of human race, when comparatively people were happy, contented and there was some harmony and peace in the society, possibly, because there was less of jealousy, less of lust and greed for wealth and materialistic pleasures. This must have been possible because the people were not only trained and educated to be more humane but were also spiritually enlightened. The present day conflicts, turmoil, bloodshed and massacre in the name of caste, creed, religion or boundaries of nations are spreading all over the world and they speak volumes of typical human behavior destructive in nature. All this is taking place in spite of very high level of education, mind boggling scientific developments and economic boom, which was possibly never witnessed in any earlier era in the human history (**Vishwanat, 1996**).

Our aim is not to achieve a perfect world. What we do want is much more unity and peace throughout the world. It has been found that there is no happiness greater than peace and that peace links with the practice of love. Peace can take place within the individual. Some believe that this inner peace can be strengthened through our relationship with the Divine. Inner peace involves peace of mind and absence of fear. Outer peace is peace in society. Our impression is that in India there is, in general, a greater stress on inner peace than in the West, where there is more emphasis on outer peace. East and West must come together, as the world needs both. This is known as holistic inner-outer peace. It has both spiritual and material dimensions. The sacred texts of the world's great religions can help us better understand holistic inner-outer peace (**Salomon et al., 2002**)

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Christie (2012)** defined Peace Psychology as the study of mental processes and behavior that lead to violence, prevent violence, and facilitate nonviolence as well as promoting fairness, respect, and dignity for all, for the purpose of making violence a less likely occurrence and helping to heal its psychological effects.

According to **Christie et al. (2001)** Peace psychology seeks to develop theories and practices aimed at the prevention and mitigation of direct and structural violence. Framed positively, peace psychology promotes the nonviolent management of conflict and the pursuit of social justice, what we refer to as peacemaking and peace building, respectively.

## **HISTORICAL ROOTS OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY**

Long before there was a field known as peace psychology, psychologists were concerned about wars and how to prevent them. Perhaps the **first peace psychologist was William James (Deutsch, 1995)**, who, in a speech at Stanford University in 1906, coined the phrase “the moral equivalent of war” (**James, 1910/1995**). James argued that war provides human beings with opportunities to express their spiritual inclinations toward self-sacrifice and personal honor; consequently, to end war, societies must find alternative “moral equivalents”

for the expression of these profoundly important human values (**James, 1910/ 1995**). Though his proposal to create a young citizens service corps for building communities (rather than destroying them) garnered little attention at the time, James's phrasing about "the moral equivalent" entered the modern lexicon as an insight about the deeply rooted motivations behind war and provided a hint about what might need to be done to avoid armed conflict. By the close of World War II, 13 well-known American psychologists (including Gordon Allport, Edna Heidebreder, Ernest Hilgard, Otto Klineberg, Rensis Likert, and Edward Tolman) circulated a "Psychologists' Manifesto:

Human Nature and the Peace: A Statement by Psychologists" (**reprinted in Jacobs, 1989**), which was signed by almost 4,000 psychologists (**Smith, 1999**). The Manifesto argued that "war can be avoided: War is built, not born" and urged lawmakers to work toward peace with attention to "the root desires of the common people of all lands" (**Smith, 1999**). For several decades thereafter, social psychologists accrued insights about the situational mechanisms that produce conflict and contemplated how situations might be altered to create peace.

### **Cold War Peace Psychology**

The Cold War created widespread fear of nuclear annihilation, which supported further work in peace psychology. In 1961, a collection of articles on "Psychology and Policy in the Nuclear Age" was published in the *Journal of Social Issues* (**Russell, 1961**). The articles were written by well respected psychologists who advanced some of the most durable concepts in peace psychology. These Cold War publications contrasted sharply with earlier publications on war and peace in several ways.

- First, the level of analysis was shifted from an exclusive focus on the behavior of individuals to a more inclusive focus on the behavior of nations.
- Second, psychologists began to emphasize the prevention of war rather than preparations for war.
- And third, whereas previous research had attempted to document or generate public consensus with government policy, the new work was critical of U.S. foreign policies (**Morawski & Goldstein, 1985**).

### **Post-Cold War Peace Psychology**

The focal concerns of post-Cold War peace psychology have become more diverse, global, and shaped by local geohistorical contexts in part because security concerns are no longer organized around the U.S.–Soviet relationship. Today, several themes are emerging in post-Cold War peace psychology: (a) greater sensitivity to geohistorical context, (b) a more differentiated perspective on the meanings and types of violence and peace, and (c) a systems or multilevel view of the determinants of violence and peace (**Christie, 2006a, 2006b**).

### **KINDS OF PEACE ACTIVITIES**

**Galtung (1975)** differentiated between three kinds of peace activities—peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding—as differing and complementary dimensions of peace work.

- **Peacekeeping** is a response to an acute situation and typically involves the containment or de-escalation of violence and the enforced separation of would-be combatants.
- **Peacemaking** is focused on arriving at settlements or agreements within a conflict situation.
- **Peace building** is a more proactive attempt aimed at healing a post conflict society and reducing structural violence in an effort to prevent conflict and violence from erupting in the future.

Peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace building can be used ad seriatim to move a relationship from violence to nonviolence (peacekeeping), to conflict resolution (peacemaking), or to social equity or transformation (peace building), although these three dimensions of peace intervention are fluid and not mutually exclusive.

### **A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY**

In the conceptual model, the focus is not only on *negative peace*, which means not only efforts to reduce violent episodes, but also *positive peace* (Wagner, 1988), which refers to the promotion of social arrangements that reduce social, racial, gender, economic, and ecological injustices as barriers to peace. A comprehensive peace not only eliminates overt forms of violence (negative peace) but also creates a more equitable social order that meets the basic needs and rights of all people (positive peace).

Multilevel model combines reactive interventions (negative peace) with proactive interventions (positive peace) at the interpersonal, intergroup, and international units of analysis. Such an approach recognizes that violent episodes have structural and cultural roots. In domestic violence, for example, the proximal cause may be an interpersonal conflict that escalates to violence. At the structural level, domestic violence is rooted in power asymmetry and women's economic dependence on men worldwide. Similarly, organized forms of direct violence are often rooted in institutional structures, military-political-industrial complexes, the existence of which is justified with cultural narratives (e.g., just war theory) that specify conditions under which war is regarded as legitimate (Christie & Wessells, in press) peace psychology does tend to favor cooperative over competitive relations (Deutsch et al., 2006), and diplomacy over coercion (Wagner, 1988), peace psychologists hold a range of views about the effectiveness of force in the pursuit of national interests.

### **GOALS OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY**

The goals of peace psychology are to “increase and apply psychological knowledge in the pursuit of peace including both the absence of destructive conflict and the creation of positive social conditions which minimize destructiveness and promote human well-being” (Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence, 2006).

## **REASONS FOR DISRUPTION OF PEACE IN THE WORLD**

### **Political Unrest**

International political discomfort and divide has often found out its way in the numerous wars that mankind has witnessed. War is characterized by extreme violence, social disruption, and economic destruction. Some of the most devastating wars in the history have been: World Wars I (1914-1918), World War II (1939-1945), Armenian Genocide (1915-1918), Russian Revolution (1917), Indo-China War (1962-1967) etc.

### **Religion**

Religion is a big game changer, politically, socially and perhaps spiritually. There is a very thin line between religion and fanaticism which has been unfortunately been dilute by religious leaders leading to communal tensions and religious wars. Hindu-Sikh riots of 1984, Godhra riots of 2002 and the recent Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 are some examples to quote.

### **Advancement of Science**

A clear cut evidence of disruption of world peace as a result of excess development of technology is the attack on the **Twin Towers in USA on 11 September 2001**. All of the technology of that day - the airplanes that the hijackers used as flying bombs, the buildings they damaged and destroyed, and the heavy equipment used in the massive rescue and then clean-up effort. The most prominent technology on that day, of course, was the World Trade Center complex. After the attack, the WTC's Twin Towers came to symbolize not only the day itself, but also a collective emotion of people all over the world.

The **Chernobyl accident, 1986** was the result of a flawed reactor design that was operated with inadequately trained personnel. The resulting steam explosion and fires released at least 5% of the radioactive reactor core into the atmosphere. Two Chernobyl plant workers died on the night of the accident, and a further 28 people died within a few weeks as a result of acute radiation poisoning. UNSCEAR says that apart from increased thyroid cancers, "there is no evidence of a major public health impact attributable to radiation exposure 20 years after the accident."

The **Bhopal Gas Tragedy, 1984** was a catastrophe that had no parallel in the world's industrial history where Forty tons of toxic gas was accidentally released from Union Carbide's Bhopal plant, which leaked and spread throughout the city. The result was a nightmare that still has no end, residents awoke to clouds of suffocating gas and began running desperately through the dark streets, victims arrived at hospitals; breathless and blind. The lungs, brain, eyes, muscles as well as gastro-intestinal, neurological, reproductive and immune systems of those who survived were severely affected. Dead bodies of humans



and animals blocked the street, leaves turned black and a smell of burning chili peppers lingered in the air. An estimated 10,000 or more people died. About 500,000 more people suffered agonizing injuries with disastrous effects of the massive poisoning. None can say if future generations will not be affected.

### **Lack of Moral Values**

With modernization and industrialization man is believed to be on the path of growth and development. He has made life easier and more comfortable for him with the advent of science and technology. But the other side of the picture has a different angle to the story man is devoid of mental peace and contentment despite having the reins of modernization in his hands. Man shows a downfall in his morals and values owing to his undying lust to obtain and achieve. Impatience, anger, frustration, adultery, backstabbing, exploitation are on the rise in man. These attributes lead to social evils like cheating, Mental and physical harassment, murders, rapes to name a few.

### **ROLE OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY IN PROMOTING PEACE**

Persons who represent the liberal and conservative worldviews are "programmed" by genetics and other forces to be who they are. Trying to change them is not practical. Helping them understand themselves as political beings and channeling their energies in constructive, cooperative activities for the good of all concerned will be important to reduce wasteful in-fighting and conserve energy and resources for constructive use. One productive way to promote peace is to more consistently politically empower citizens of the liberal worldview. Persons of this worldview tend to trust and accept people different from themselves and want to cooperate with them (McConochie, 2010).

Psychological literature confirms that maltreatment ranging from childhood abuse and deprivation to rape, torture, war, and poverty inflicts deep and persistent psychological and mental health wounds that cause suffering throughout the lifespan and across generations, thereby detracting from peace within individuals, families, and societies. Psychological research further affirms the WHO inclusion of mental health as a crucial factor in overall health, defined as a "state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." Yet, in much of the world, mental health problems are stigmatized as signs of personal, familial and group weakness and thus are often inaccessible to efforts to prevent further social injury and deprivation. Peace Psychologists stress **that Psychosocial Wellbeing and Mental Health should be treated as Human Rights so as to endure peace within the individual and the society (Reyes et al., 2012).**

**Peace Psychologists encourage peaceful co existence between individuals of diverse backgrounds.** Various principles include understanding the ethos of conflict, collective memories, the nature of identity, and the “contact hypothesis” which maintains that hate dissipates when people come together to work on a common project or goal. Many programs and strategies have been developed to apply conflict resolution principles, with positive results in a number of contexts in replacing prejudice with tolerance and acceptance, and promoting mutual understanding and constructive cooperation. Conflict resolution program includes educational programs, dialogues, encounter models, compassionate listening, nonviolent communication, cooperative problem solving, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Psychological science shows that children exposed to violence, war, natural disasters and other traumas are at elevated risk for enduring social, educational, physical, and psychological impairments to their wellbeing and social and emotional development. **Peace Psychologist suggest that by inculcating resilience in these individuals can result in mitigating such outcomes (Reyes et al., 2012).**

### **PEACE PSYCHOLOGY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

**Vinayak and Sharma (2016)** opined that peace building will require increasing rather than decreasing tension, redressing poverty and the large scale project of building culture of peace. Direct violence usually stems from structural violence because structured inequalities are predisposing conditions for outbreaks of violent episodes. Peace psychology should be based on both activism and analysis. Proactive approaches aim at the pursuit of social justice, the mitigation of oppressive and exploitative structures that can be predisposing conditions for episodes of direct violence. Proactive approaches treat peace and social justice as indivisible, and take a long view of peace, committing resources to social changes that embrace the principles of equity and inclusion. Peace psychology has much to learn from liberatory pedagogies, the central purpose of which is the empowerment of individuals and communities to challenge and change the world rather than adapt to unjust situations. Transforming peace education to address social justice presents challenges. Peace psychologists can provide important leadership, analysis, activism, and support for the crucial task of building sustainable peace. Analyzing the causes of violence, rebuilding war-torn communities, lobbying for social justice and arms control, teaching and practicing nonviolent conflict resolution, sensitizing ourselves to our own ethnocentrism, consulting with peacekeeping operations, ensuring gender parity, addressing ethnic identities and hostilities, empowering alternative voices, and building environmental security are just a few of the myriad ways peace psychologists can contribute to building a peaceful world (**Ashmore, Jussim & Wilder, 2001**).

### **IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY**

The nine principles consistent with peace psychology that aspires to build cultures of peace by preventing and mitigating both direct and structural violence are:

- I. Biological determinism can promote violence and social injustices
- II. Reducing the wealth gap to promote human well-being
- III. To prevented violence by supporting conflict management and constructive uses of conflict
- IV. Delegitimizing the use of violence at all levels of society to reduce episodes of violence
- V. Use of nonviolent action as a powerful means for promoting social justice
- VI. Step up the level of communication in the face of enimity
- VII. Peace psychology will be well-suited for social transformation
- VIII. Promoting equality between men and women is good for everyone
- IX. Prevention is desirable over intervention

In place of direct violence, the principles encourage a preventive approach that sharply distinguishes conflict from violence, links dialogue with the former, and delegitimizes the latter. Peace psychologists have treated structural violence as a problem in and of itself because structural violence also kills people, albeit slowly, by depriving them of basic need satisfaction. To mitigate violence, peace psychologists need to advance the principles that would place liberation psychology at the center of peace psychology, thereby empowering people to use nonviolent action in pursuit of equality within and between societies. Framed positively, from a psychological perspective, cultures of peace would promote indigenous and universal cultural narratives that support both an ethic of nonviolence and socially just ends, where ends refer to the equitable, inclusive, and sustainable satisfaction of human needs (Anderson & Christie, 2001).

### **MESSAGE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

However, if we really want the next millennium to be happier, more peaceful and more harmonious for humankind we will have to make the effort to make it so. We need to approach the next millennium more holistically, with more openness and farsightedness. If we are going to make the right kind of efforts to make the future of the world better, his holiness Dalai Lama believes the following matters are of great importance.

1. While engaging in material progress and taking care of physical wellbeing we need to **pay equal attention to developing peace of mind and thus taking care of the internal aspect of our being.**
2. Along with education, which generally deals only with academic accomplishments, we need to **develop more altruism and a sense of caring and responsibility for others.** This can be done without necessarily involving religion. One could therefore call this 'secular ethics', as it in fact consists of basic human qualities such as kindness, compassion, sincerity and honesty.
3. This past century in some ways has been a century of war and bloodshed. It has seen a year by year increase in defense spending by most countries in the world. If we are to change this trend we must seriously **consider the concept of non-violence, which is a physical expression of compassion.** In



order to make non-violence a reality we must first work on internal disarmament and then proceed to work on external disarmament.

4. We need to **address the issue of the gap between the rich and the poor**, both globally and nationally. This inequality, with some sections of the human community having abundance and others on the same planet going hungry or even dying of starvation, is not only morally wrong, but practically also a source of problems. Equally important is the issue of **freedom**. As long as there is no freedom in many parts of the world there can be no real peace and in a sense no real freedom for the rest of the world.
5. For the sake of our future generations, we need to **take care of our earth and of our environment**. Environmental damage is often gradual and not easily apparent and by the time we become aware of it, it is generally too late.
6. Lastly, one of the greatest challenges today is the **population explosion**. Unless we are able to tackle this issue effectively we will be confronted with the problem of the natural resources being inadequate for all the human beings on this earth (**Lama, 2000**).

## Conclusion

The scope of the threats to human security at the dawn of the 21st century is daunting. Terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, nuclear proliferation, failed states, ideological struggles, growing scarcities of natural resources, disparities in wealth and health, globalizing trends, violations of human rights, and the continued use of force to advance state interests are all complex problems with psychological dimensions. During the past 20 years, peace psychology has emerged as a specialty in psychology with its own knowledge base, perspectives, concepts, and methodologies. Peace psychologists are now well positioned to further develop theory that will enable us to more deeply understand the major threats to human security and to engage in practices that promote human well-being and survival. We hope that this introduction to peace psychology issues a warm invitation to psychologists who wish to join a thriving research and practitioner community dedicated to the promotion of peace with social justice in the 21st century (**Tint, 2007**).

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