



Promoting a Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience

Dear sweet children,

As we go on the spiritual path, the United Nations has many lessons to teach us on the way through the many international days, years or decades it has dedicated to specific themes and issues of human concern. They have been instituted to raise global awareness and accelerate action for a better, just and fair world that works for all, and not a privileged few. They should be like a compass to guide our minds, hearts and souls to follow resolutely and fearlessly. Rest assured that Amma is walking side by side with you as you tread your unique path of spirituality by having values as your guideposts.

These are occasions to educate the public on critical challenges we are facing worldwide and to mobilize political will and resources to address these global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity. The existence of some international days predates the establishment of the United Nations (in October 1945), but the Organization has embraced them as a powerful advocacy tool even today into the 21st century. The United Nations also observes anniversaries of key events in its history and bring humankind together for a common purpose. A good example is the International Day of Human Rights, which takes place on 10 December each year. This Day is observed all around the world with initiatives ranging from military and police officers swapping guns for running shoes in South Sudan, to a student competition in Russia, or a exhibit in Brazil. All in all, a multitude of individuals from all walks of life get involved, in a way or another, in the celebration of this special day and carry its message throughout the year.

Other most popular days, include International Women's Day (8 March), World Water Day (22 March) and the International Day of Peace (21 September).

You may also be interested to know that 21 March is the date of five different international days - Day of eliminating Racial Discrimination, Nowruz (Spring) Day, World Autism Day,

Day of Forests, World Down Syndrome Day. Interestingly, June is the month with the most international days.

Working towards a common vision is thus true spirituality. It is an inseparable togetherness.

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted on 10 December 1948 in Paris, states that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of humankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people." Moreover, article 1 of the Declaration states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The ideals of the SMVA Trust converge with these very values of the UN, too.

The task of the United Nations "to save future generations from the scourge of war" requires transformation towards a culture of peace. This in short, consists of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, tolerance and solidarity, promotion of all the 30 articles of the UDHR. It is also our deliberate conscious rejection of all forms of violence and instead supporting all endeavours to prevent conflicts. We need to tackle their root causes by solving problems through dialogue and negotiation. We also need to provide guarantees to others for the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development processes of their society, so that every personality can blossom to the fullest.

Conscious of the need for the creation of conditions of stability and well-being and peaceful and friendly relations based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, the General Assembly in the month of April annually observes the **International Day of Conscience (5th), and also the Day of Sport for Development and Peace (6th)**.

The General Assembly invites all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and individuals, such as from the SMVA Trust to build the Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience. This is meant to be in accordance with the culture and other appropriate circumstances or customs of their local, national and regional communities, including through quality education and public awareness-raising activities, thereby fostering the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Origins of a Culture of Peace

The concept of a culture of peace emerged from the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Côte d'Ivoire in July 1989. Since then, the promotion of a culture of peace has increasingly been seen as a worthwhile objective of the international community. The evolving concept has inspired activities at so many levels and in many regions with the full participation of civil society and grassroots organizations that the culture of peace is gradually taking on the characteristics of a global movement.

Within the United Nations system, the concept dates back to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), adopted more than 50 years ago, which states that " peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind".

What is Peace?

As Amma has always said, and I underscore again, peace is both an innate state of being and a dynamic, transformative, and evolutionary process. This is the SMVA Trust understanding of peace. Peace begins within us, and as others discover inner peace learning from us, then they will radiate peace and engage in a peaceful way of life. Through our projects we see this happening around our world, as seen in the spread of the International Day of Peace (21 September each year), and the other International Days, and the numerous Culture of Peace Initiatives all of you, my sweet children, are developing in your own local communities. In our SMVA cities across the US, India and in other countries, we are moving beyond separation, divisions and dichotomies and recognizing our common humanity. We are acting to end violence and to embody the peace our humanity cries out for and demands. We are envisioning and creating a world at peace. Hold this in your meditations and quiet contemplative moments, dear children.

Also remember that when we act in collaboration with others, we do make a difference in the quality of our own lives, our institutions, communities and our planetary future. It is an investment in our own selves. Through co-operation, we manifest the essential divinity and spirit that unite us amidst our diverse ways. And our ways then begin to influence all areas of human existence such as: Governance; Law and Security; Education and Media, Health and Relationships; Science and Technology; Religion and Spiritual Teachings, Environment and Habitat; and Culture.

Building a Culture of Peace

Amma is asking all Her sweet children to consider building such a collective consciousness. The task of constructing a culture of peace requires comprehensive educational, cultural, social and civic action, in which each person has much to learn and much to give and share. This culture addresses all ages and all groups; it is an open-minded global strategy with a specific purpose, namely, to make a culture of peace inseparable from culture per se, and to take root in our individual hearts and minds. Peace is not only the absence of differences and conflicts. **It is a positive, dynamic, participatory process linked intrinsically to democracy, justice and development for all by which differences are respected, dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are constantly transformed by non-violent means into new avenues of cooperation.**

Amma would like to remind everyone that a culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and customs, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reflect and are directed towards respect for life, for human beings and their rights. Peace means the rejection of violence in all its forms. It is the recognition of the equal rights of men and women, and the rights of everyone to freedom of expression, opinion and information, and attachment to the principles of democracy, freedom, justice, and development for all. It also stands for tolerance, solidarity, pluralism and acceptance of differences and understanding between nations, and between ethnic, religious, cultural and other groups and between individuals. We pay attention especially to the rights of all - urban and rural populations, migrants, refugees, indigenous persons, the elderly, persons with disabilities, prisoners, the sick, the hungry, and all categories of vulnerable groups. We must have the courage to stand up for their rights. Never forget what Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate once said, "Silence only tortures the tormented". Be fearless. Amma is protecting and supporting you!

So, as you all meditate, please focus on peace. This awareness should go beyond meditation and permeate your very state of being - as you walk, work or go about your daily existence – as you love and laugh. Amma wants you to become celestial beings of peace on this earth. Amma has high expectations of you and will support you in this noble effort. You all are seeking the highest spiritual attainment. Then this is the way. It is only as you intermingle with the world, and share the tears and joys of others, that you will yourself elevate yourself to God-realization.