

City Montessori School and Human Rights Education

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The City Montessori School (CMS) started with only five students in 1959. Located in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh State in India, CMS also started a comprehensive and consistent program since its inception when the first five students wrote “Jai Jagat” (hail the world) on their slates.

Today on its 50th year of glorious existence, it continues to spread the light of education with the same undiminished fervor. While retaining the highest academic standard and pursuing excellence in all its forms, CMS has been constantly changing itself with respect to developments in the sphere of education. Since its inception, students from all over Lucknow and all over the world have come to CMS to seek challenges and prepare themselves in helping to make this world a much better place to live in.

Objectives and Elements of the CMS Program

CMS is educating students and parents of the world about the unique Article 51 of the Indian Constitution regarding international peace and security and preparing them to become law-abiding Total Quality Person (TQP) for tomorrow’s New World.

Article 51 of the Indian Constitution (Part IV - Directive Principles of State Policy) provides:

51. Promotion of international peace and security.-

The State shall endeavour to- (a) promote international peace and security; (b) maintain

just and honourable relations between nations; (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another; and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

This constitutional provision is based on the ancient Indian philosophy of Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam, which means that the entire world is but one family and the humankind its citizens. Each citizen of India, who owes allegiance to the Constitution, is individually (and with other citizens) duty-bound to make an earnest endeavor to promote the ideals of Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam.

The great proponent of non-violence and Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, said that “a day will come when the world will approach India in its quest for peace and India will become the light of the world.”¹ Article 51 and Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam embody this quest for peace in India, and have been proven as workable ideas during the international conferences held by the CMS in the past eight years.

The program of CMS considers the present situation of world’s 2.2 billion children who constitute the common denominator for all the nations of the world. For parents, their child is the most precious possession in the world. No parents can ever bear the thought of any harm

coming to their child. Yet, the United Nations data about the world's children show many staggering facts:

- (i) 29,000 children under the age of five die each day (twenty-one each minute) from malnutrition and preventable diseases.
- (ii) Each year, at least 250,000 young children lose their sight for lack of a small amount of vitamin A in their diet.
- (iii) In the past fifteen years, two million children died in war, about six million were handicapped, twelve million became homeless and one million lost their parents and were separated from them. Over 300,000 children have been exploited as soldiers, bearers and mineworkers. Twenty-five million children have lived in closed refugee camps, encircled by gun towers and barbed wire. The number of children killed or maimed by landmines every year stands between 8,000 and 10,000.
- (iv) Approximately 640 million children do not have adequate shelter. Of them, sixty million are homeless street children. The youngest street children are only five or six years old.
- (v) Nearly 100 million children of the primary school age are not taking part in any educational program.
- (vi) 500 million children have no access to sanitation, 400 million children do not have access to safe water, 300 million children lack access to information, 270 million children do not have access to health care services and 90 million children have no food to eat.
- (vii) 140 million children never even began school.
- (viii) The security of the world's two billion children and generations yet-to-be-born is threatened by ecological disaster, international terrorism and threat of a third world war with nuclear weapons. These are truly global threats and no one, in

any corner of the world, is safe or secure from these threats.

- (ix) The politicians of the world are busy with national politics and not with the needs and affairs of this age that are international by nature. Who will safeguard the future of the world's two billion children?

School is the Lighthouse of Society

CMS believes that the "school is a building with four walls with tomorrow inside" and the "destiny of a man[/woman] is shaped in the classroom." CMS, therefore, upholds that "a school must act as the Lighthouse of Society to provide a meaningful education, spiritual direction and leadership to students, parents and society" - and that a modern school must be concerned with the affairs of the age. Hence, its program is a CMS initiative on behalf of the world's children. CMS adheres to the following basic principles:

- a. Education - a Powerful Instrument of Social Transformation

CMS believes that at certain moments in history, education must also act as a powerful instrument of profound social transformation. Such a moment has now arrived. CMS believes that education is a continuous and creative process. Its aim is to develop the capacities latent in human nature and to coordinate their expression for the enrichment and progress of society by equipping children with spiritual, moral and material knowledge.

- b. Purpose of Today's Education - Redemption of Humankind from Its Godlessness

CMS believes that the main reason for the weakening of the social fabric and the spreading global unrest is the meaningless-

ness of education that has filled the mind of the human being with godlessness, ignorance, confusion and conflict. Therefore, CMS believes that the purpose of today's education should be the redemption of humankind from (i) its godlessness, (ii) its ignorance, (iii) its confusion, and (iv) its conflict. CMS also believes that human beings have three realities, namely, (i) material (ii) human and (iii) divine. Only a balanced development of all the three realities of life can make an individual a total quality person and a useful member of society.

c. Let Us Make Every Child Good and Smart

CMS believes that every child is potentially the light of the world but at the same time the cause of its darkness. Therefore, meaningful education must be of primary importance. CMS believes that now the time has arrived when it must try to make every child both good and smart, a gift of God to humankind, the pride of the human race, and the light of the world.

d. True Education Releases Capacities

CMS also upholds that true education releases capacities, develops analytical abilities, confidence in oneself, will-power and goal-setting competencies and instills the vision that enables one to become a self-motivated agent of social change, serving the best interests of the community.

e. Education - The Greatest Service to God

CMS believes that an attempt to educate children is the greatest service that can possibly be rendered by people to Almighty God, building their character, and inculcating the love of God in their tender hearts. CMS teaches its students - 'do not engross yourself only in your personal concerns, but let

your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of humankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of people.'

Building Blocks of CMS Lighthouse

The four building blocks of CMS Lighthouse are

- (i) Universal values - values like honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, kindness, compassion and other spiritual values that are common to all the religions.
- (ii) Global understanding - developing an international perspective and a global vision so that one becomes a globally aware citizen of the world.
- (iii) Service to the world – this implies not busying oneself in one's own concerns only. Instead, "Let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of humankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of people."
- (iv) Excellence in all things – this implies making the pursuit of quality and excellence a habit. It also implies that one must cultivate purity of heart, fine manners and humility.

CMS sees three realities of human beings - Material, Human and Divine – that can be expressed in educational terms as in the following:

- (i) Material Education - this is concerned with the development of the body and its sustenance, material comfort and ease. This is common to both human beings and animals.
- (ii) Human Education – this relates to civilization and progress (governance, charitable work, trade, arts and handicrafts, sciences and great inventions, etc.), which are essentially human activities as distinguished from animal activities.
- (iii) Divine Education – this is about achieving

divine perfection; for in this state, a person becomes the focus of Divine blessings. This is the goal of humanity.

Human rights education is an integral part of Human Education. This entails sensitizing students to the needs of ensuring basic human rights for everyone. CMS education is education for life as CMS believes that at a certain moment in human history, education must also act as a powerful instrument for profound social transformation. The purpose of today's education must be the redemption of humankind from Godlessness, Confusion and Conflict. Human rights education is not undertaken separately; in fact it is integrated in every CMS activity.

Implanting Ideas of Respect for Law and Peace

For over four decades now, CMS has been relentlessly working towards implanting ideas of respect for law, self-discipline and world peace in young impressionable minds. CMS is also working towards building bridges of unity and constructing barricades of peace in the minds of its students, their parents and the general public. The theme of "peace, communal harmony, tolerance towards all religions, world unity" pervades all aspects of school activities. CMS is probably the only school in the world to have a full-fledged World Unity and Peace Education Department (WUPED).

World Unity Education is concerned mainly with promoting the concepts of world unity and peace building. There is a special emphasis on the learning process at all levels. World Unity Education deals with "positive unity." The concept concerns itself with problems of environment, natural resources, universal human rights, economic deprivation and social justice that can best be tackled by a unified approach. World Unity Education basically means being

concerned about the affairs of the age.

WUPED is CMS's special department that imparts training in world unity and world peace to its students. Although WUPED is involved in virtually all CMS peace education events, the biggest event organized by WUPED is the International Conference of Chief Justices of the World on Article 51 of the Indian Constitution, which is held in December every year since 2001.

Here are some of the initiatives of WUPED:

- Gandhi Bridge of Understanding
- Sadbhavana Club
- Gemini Projects
- Olympic Truce
- Vote World Government
- People to People International Program
- Peace Circles
- International Day of Reflection on Rwanda
- Aao Dosti Karein (Come, let's be friends)
- International Days
- Clean Gomti campaign
- Anti-Cracker Campaign
- Sunday Seminars
- Provisional World Parliament
- Environmental Education
- Experiential Learning
- Cross-Cultural Understanding
- Publications

The concept of a global family and the universal brotherhood of humankind are celebrated in all CMS events, which are organized with the sole aim of helping children in developing an international outlook and global perspective in keeping with the educational philosophy of CMS. The yearly conferences of the chief justices of the world emphasize the idea that our society must be founded on principles of equality of law and justice for all. These con-

ferences inspire children to be self-disciplined and law abiding as per Article 51 of the Indian Constitution.

The 'Aao Dosti Karein' is an India-Pakistan Friendship Initiative that started in 1999 during the most unfortunate Kargil war with armies locked in conflict on both sides at the India-Pakistan border. It was in this climate of extreme hostility to each other that CMS came out like a beacon light standing for peaceful negotiations between the two countries. Besides the ever-growing Indo-Pak Children's Penfriends Club, a large number of Pakistani delegations have since visited CMS many times and some of our children have gone to visit schools and attend sports events in Pakistan despite the hostile climate coupled with the enormous difficulties in getting visas.

The international exchange experiences lead to awareness and understanding of cultural, racial and religious differences, conflict resolution and teamwork. The international exchange programs started in 1972 when the first CMS students went to Holland in an international exchange program.

Another unique peace education exercise of CMS comprises of simulated Children's World Parliament sessions on Article 51 of the Indian Constitution wherein students play-act as leaders of various countries of the world. They group together to form a World Government and discuss issues threatening the very survival of life on our planet.

The Children's World Parliament provides a context to amplify the voice of students, develop their ability to make democratic decisions and generate unique solutions that will affect their future. The Children's World Parliament is the first parliament of this type in the world that proposes a central philosophy of conflict resolution and focused, creative, integrated thinking methods.

The simulated Children's World Parliament sessions in CMS leads to the realization that global problems like an increase of nuclear

stockpile, worldwide increase in terrorist activities, increasing danger of the breakdown of social, economic and political order and the like cannot be tackled solely by one country or, even a group of like-minded countries. This brings to light the need for resurrecting global jurisprudence and constituting an "Enforceable International Law" binding on all countries of the world. The need to foster respect for international law already exists in Article 51 (c) of the Indian Constitution and CMS is its strong advocate.

The CMS initiative of organizing the International Conference of Chief Justices of the World is one of the keys to creating a just and peaceful world order for today's generation and future generations. CMS propagates the importance of the acceptance of the principles of international law, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and a safe and sustainable future for all.

Mobilizing World Judiciary and International Public Opinion

CMS undertakes a number of steps, along with its students, in mobilizing international public opinion toward a world of peace and justice. The steps naturally developed after CMS took the first step of appealing to the United Nations to establish a 'New World Order' with enforceable international laws.

The First Step - Writing to the United Nations

In a letter dated 1 September 1999, CMS wrote a letter addressed to the then secretary-general of United Nations (Kofi Annan) regarding the idea of forming a World Government to safeguard the future of the world's children. CMS students collected nearly 100,000 such letters with signatures that were sent to the United Nations office in New York. CMS also

called for the strengthening of the United Nations System.

Then Secretary-General Kofi Annan responded on 11 October 1999 and said that the United Nations could do nothing on its own. Its strength was the strength of the member-states. He also exhorted the CMS students to ensure that all leaders of the world attended the Millennium Summit scheduled for the year 2000 in New York. He also said in the letter: "It is up to you to make sure that they come here firmly resolved to take decisions which can lead to a better life for all of us, and for our children."

The Second Step - Writing to the Heads of States/Governments

Disappointed by the United Nations Secretary General's response, the school reached out to the Millennium Summit of world leaders. On 10 November 1999, CMS wrote to all heads of states/governments requesting them to participate in the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit in New York. Among the agenda for the Summit was a call for the 'Promotion of Development and Peace and Establishment of a New International Political and Economic World Order.' In reply to the letters written to all the one hundred eighty-eight Heads of States and Heads of Governments - on behalf of the world's children - requesting them to support the call for a 'New International Economic and Political Order' at the Summit, CMS received only a few acknowledgement letters and three letters of support and encouragement.

The Third Step - Reading the Children's Peace Appeal

On 5 May 2000, CMS wrote a letter to then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan requesting him to read out the Children's Peace Appeal at the Millennium Summit to

be held on 6 September 2000. Mr. Gillian Martin Sorensen, Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations replied to this letter on behalf of Secretary-General Kofi Annan that he would be unable to do so. He added that "statements at the Millennium Summit will be limited to United Nations member-states with very few exceptions approved by the General Assembly itself."

Absolutely convinced that the world's children could not be assured of a future of peace and justice under the current structures of global governance, especially with the arbitration power weakened by the power of the veto in the United Nations' Security Council, the CMS appeal was unique in this regard. The CMS appeal called for a democratically elected and legally constituted World Parliament. This world body should have representatives from all countries and should enact international laws that are equally enforceable in all countries of the world. Under the guidance of the CMS founders, the CMS students were the first to make such an appeal with 100,000 signatures to the United Nations Secretary General.

The students appealed to the United Nations to discuss the establishment of a new political, economic and social order of the world, so that a more powerful governance structure can be formed such as a world government with some aspects of national sovereignties vested in it, so that generations of children may live without fears of nuclear threats, impending wars, ecological destruction and international terrorism. The CMS students identified these international issues as problems that could not be solved by national governments alone. Led by this author, the children promoted the idea that there should be one "Enforceable International Law" that must be binding on all countries, and one World Parliament.

The Fourth Step - Reaching Out to the World Judiciary

Disappointed by the United Nations and the world's political leadership, this author (founder-manager of CMS) saw a ray of hope in the world judiciary when he became aware of the historic 1993 decision by the Supreme Court of Philippines, in the Oposa versus Factoran case,² wherein the then Chief Justice Hilario J. Davide, Jr. upheld the right of minors and also those yet unborn to inherit a balanced and healthy ecology. The judgment also held that it is the inter-generational responsibility of every generation to pass on a safe and healthy ecology to succeeding generations.

This author then decided to organize a roundtable conference on Article 51 of the Indian Constitution in Lucknow on 14 January 2001. This conference was inaugurated by Justice Syed Saghir Ahmed, a former judge of the Supreme Court of India and was attended by several members of the judiciary in India.

Also heartened by the encouraging response from Justice R.S. Pathak, a former Chief Justice of India, and member of the International Court of Justice, a national seminar on Article 51 of the Indian Constitution was held on 25 February 2001 in Lucknow. This seminar was inaugurated by Justice Pathak and presided over by Justice Rangnath Misra, a former Chief Justice of India and a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague).

The success of this national seminar culminated in CMS hosting the International Conference on Article 51 of the Indian Constitution. The first conference was held in 2001 and continued annually for the next eight years.

These conferences were attended by delegates of several countries including Heads of Judiciary, former Chief justices, Deputy Chief Justices, Judges representing judicial heads, Members of Permanent Court of Arbitration, Attorneys General, Ministers, Members of Parliament, and eminent representatives of

non-governmental organizations from around the world.

Every year, nearly eight thousand students actively participate in the International Conference of Chief Justices of the World. They listen to the legal luminaries of the world for three days. For the 9th international conference in 2008, the Chief Justice of Malta, Honorable Mr. Justice Vincent A. De Gaetano arrived early in the city of Lucknow before the conference actually began on 12 December 2008 and interacted with nearly eight thousand students from Classes IX to XII at World Unity Convention Centre auditorium at CMS Kanpur Road Campus.

Moreover, nearly one thousand students actively participated in the Peace March on 13 and 14 December 2008 that was led by the Honorable Chief Justices of different countries. The special attraction of the conference was the Children's World Parliament of about two hundred students discussing global issues and children's appeal to the world judiciary on behalf of the world's children for safeguarding their rights and specially their 'Right to a Safe Future.' About one hundred forty junior and senior students from CMS presented an appeal to the chief justices on 13, 14 and 15 December 2008. The CMS students thus get a chance to actively express their thoughts at a very young age before the Honorable Chief Justices of the World that, besides making them bold and confident in their lives, also develops a global mindset.

The conferences elicited appreciation from the participants. They expressed admiration for the efforts of the students of CMS on taking steps on global issues.

Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, Justice Hilario G Davide, Jr. said:

I am awed and humbled at such a bold concern and vision shared principally by mere school-children. I was contemplating with tears on the

plight of the world when I got hold of a CMS Prospectus. I looked at the cover where a child held aloft the world in his small hands. I then realized that the future is painted not only in the murky shadows of despair and dejection, but also in the bold and solid strokes of hope and optimism. My eyes focused on the words ‘One day I will change the world’ and ‘Every child is potentially the light of the world’. Hope surged in my heart. It is for this reason and for the sake of my grandchildren that I understand the concern of the children of CMS.

Madam Justice Graciela Dixon, Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama and President of International Association of Women Judges and Patron of the International Conference of Chief Justices of the World have also praised the CMS initiative. Commenting on the appeal presented at the International Conference of Chief Justices of the World by CMS students on behalf of the world’s children to safeguard their future, she said:

I asked myself – how could judges affect things? How could these children believe that simple human beings... who only have a simple responsibility... could have an impact? I was not the only one to have such doubts. But despite our doubts, we were there (at the conference). And we exchanged ideas, and it was said that we could change the realities.

Some reflections on the activities

CMS education is a comprehensive program on child development that makes the child not only a ‘consumer of peace’ but also a ‘maker of peace’, a leader, not just a follower. It is based on the belief that education for peace seeks to nurture ethical development, with values, attitudes and skills required for living in harmony within oneself and with others including nature. It embodies the joy of living and encompasses respect for human rights, justice,

tolerance, cooperation, social responsibility, respect for cultural diversities, in addition to a firm commitment to democracy and resolving conflicts non-violently. Hence the need for the development of a personality with inner resources of love, hope and courage. This is what CMS considers meaningful human rights education.

The students of CMS learn about human rights through various activities. The annual International Conference of Chief Justices on Article 51 provides one important venue for learning and practicing human rights.

The CMS organized the International Conference of Chief Justices of the World at Lucknow for the last eight years to create awareness of the provisions of Article 51 of the Indian Constitution all over the world, and thus generate immense global public opinion in favor of a new World Order. The recognition of the value of this effort is seen in the overwhelming support for the conference expressed through the speeches and messages that Heads of Governments, Heads of States, Chief Justices and Judges of the Supreme and High Courts of many countries of the world, governors, ministers, attorneys-general, members of parliament and state legislative assemblies, senior lawyers of the Supreme Court and law ministers given during the conference or sent to the CMS.

CMS continues in its task of promoting peace and human rights in the world.

Endnotes

¹ “Talk with Egyptian Delegates,” 4 April 1947, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, page 98, and in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (e-book) volume 94, (Berlin: GandhiServe Foundation), pages 231-232. Text available at www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/cwmg.html

² Juan Antonio, Anna Rosario and Jose Alfonso, all surnamed Oposa, minors, and represented by their parents ANTONIO And RIZALINA OPOSA, et alia, Petitioners versus The Honorable Fulgencio S. Factoran, Jr., in his capacity as the Secretary of the

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and The Honorable Eriberto U. Rosario, Presiding Judge of the RTC, Makati, Branch 66, Respondents. GR No. 101083, July 30, 1993, available in *Supreme*

Court Reports Annotated, Volume 224 (Manila: Rex Bookstore). The full text of this court decision is also available in http://www.lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1993/jul1993/gr_101083_1993.html