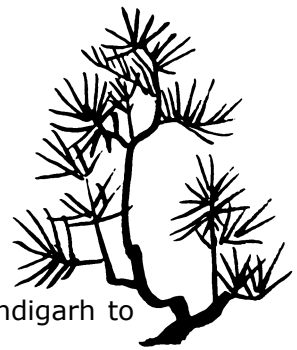


Teaching War or Teaching Peace: Some reflections after Hiroshima Day (2002)

Karen Haydock
haydock@gmail.com



It was sometime after the Kargil War. We had organised some events in Chandigarh to commemorate Hiroshima Day.

Chetan Premani, a scientist from a local research institute, presented a graphic slide show explaining how nuclear bombs were used and what happens when one is dropped. How the US politicians decided to drop the bombs on cities full of civilians instead of on a military target. How they insisted the bombs must be used even though the Japanese were about to surrender. How the scientists calculated the distance above ground at which the bomb should explode so as to kill the maximum number of people. How the americans playfully nicknamed the bombs. How the priest blessed the bombs to absolve the bombers and to "deliver them from the terrible destructive force that they were about to unleash upon these innocent people."And how, when the bombs were dropped, people instantly vaporised, leaving only their shadows on stone.

I showed some pictures and read out some testimonies of nuclear war survivors. How women ran down the streets - crying out for their mothers - crying out for water - with their skin hanging off of their limbs. How people held their open mouths up trying in vain to quench their tremendous thirst with the black rain that was falling, making indelible black marks as it fell.

A group of theatre activists led by Harleen Kohli helped organise a street play, to show what happens in a nuclear war, and to protest that it should never happen again.

Before the street play, we went to the local boys' convent school - the "best" boys' school in the city - to conduct a workshop session. I read out the story of Sadako (as written by Eleanor Coerr) to a group of about 30 boys from Classes VI, VII and VIII.



Sadako is a healthy, happy girl who had been two years old at the time the nuclear bomb was dropped some distance from her home. It seemed she had escaped harm at the time of the bombing. But then when she is 11 years old, preparing to run relay races with her friends, her health begins to fail. She finds out that she has leukaemia - the sickness caused by the atom bomb 9 years before. She has to stay in the hospital. She hears the story of the crane who is supposed to live for a thousand years, and how if a sick person folds a thousand paper cranes the gods will make the person well again. Sadako begins to fold a thousand cranes.

But, despite all her good luck omens, Sadako dies before she can finish folding a thousand cranes...

This is a true story, and Sadako is now memorialised by her statue in Hiroshima Peace Park, which is inscribed with the lines:

This is our cry,
this is our prayer:
Peace in the world.

After I finished reading the story, we all learned how to fold paper cranes.

Then we had a discussion. I asked the children why we read the story and why we folded the cranes.

They said that we have to remember what happened, and we have to know how bad atom bombs are, so that we can have world peace. The discussion went on for quite a while along similar lines, and I was feeling quite satisfied that I had contributed my own small part to world peace.

Now it was time for the boys to go back to their classes. However, I suddenly thought of one more question to ask them.

I asked them, "So, what do you think - should India should drop an Atom Bomb on Pakistan?"

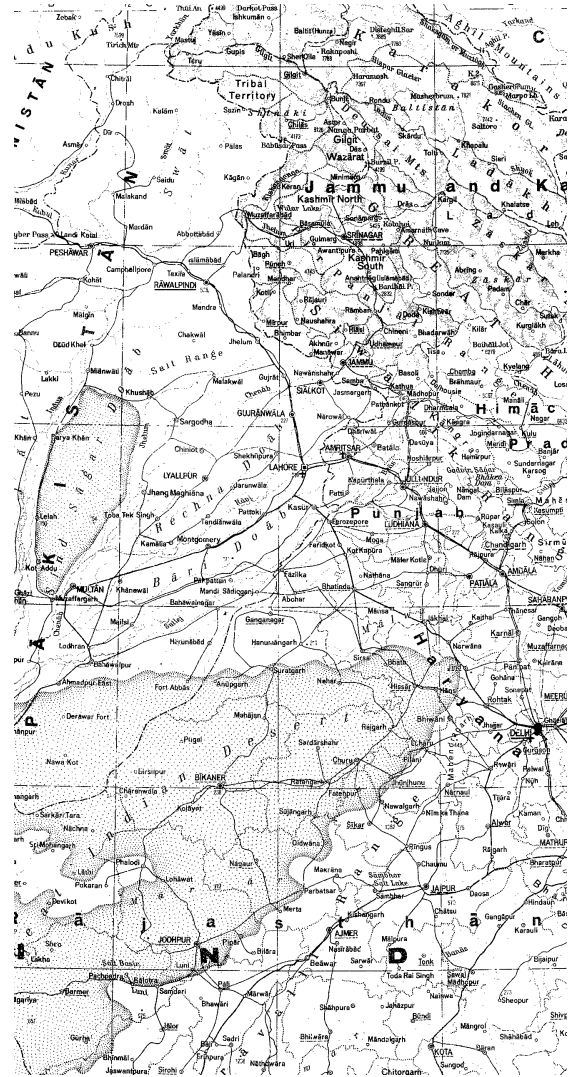
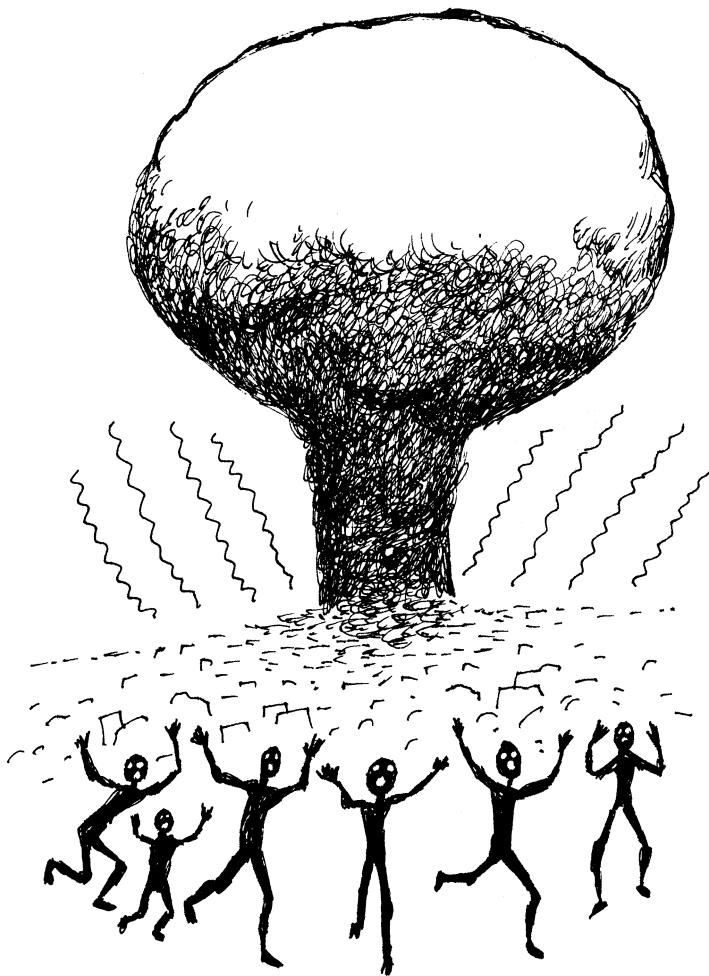
Immediately, more than half of the boys jumped up, raising their hands, waving proudly, and shouting out, "Yes! Yes! Bomb them!"

So I asked, "Don't any of you have any cousins there?...Don't you think there are also children in Pakistan who are just like you?.....Don't you think there might be any Sadako's in Pakistan?"

But even then, the boys answered, "But if Pakistan had done something bad, then it would be alright to kill their Sadako's."

One boy was laughing with a real mean glint in his eyes, saying gleefully, "Smash them!" Should we be thankful that at least this child is honest in communicating his feelings? Educated adult scientists in the USA may think similarly about 'the enemies', but may instead phrase their response in terms like, "the unfortunate collateral damage ... a fight for peace ... a war on terrorism ... the peacekeeping force ... nuclear deterrence...." – spoken while stuffing their pockets with the profits of the arms business.

Another boy said, with (false) authority, "It is not true that if we attack Pakistan with a nuclear bomb, we will also feel the affects in India." Are his parents the ones who have misguided him? Or his teachers?



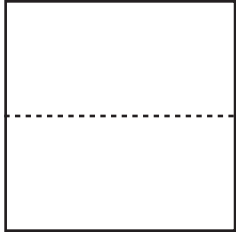
So I got to thinking about how children can learn to be so hateful and mean. And can we teach peace?

I wonder if 'uneducated' children would respond in the same way. What about children in schools that are not so elite?

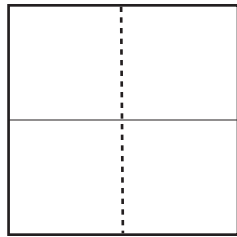
Haven't school children learned the cliché, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind"? Yes, I suppose they have 'learned' it, if learning means memorising and regurgitating on the examination. The problem is that they have not understood it or reconciled it with their other beliefs – it is just a cliché – a platitude that has lost its meaning through overuse.

MAKE A PAPER CRANE

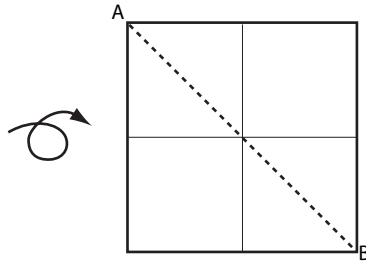
Use a square piece of a thin paper (a 20 cm square of old newspaper works fine).



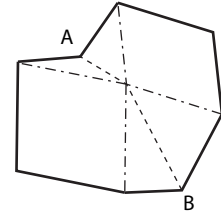
1. Fold in half and unfold, to get a crease.



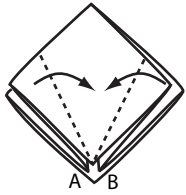
2. Fold in half the other way, and unfold.



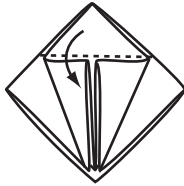
3. Turn the paper over and fold on the diagonal.



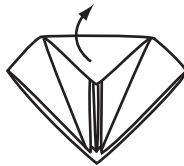
4. Push the centre up while bringing all four corners together, with A and B in between.



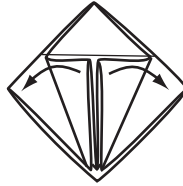
5. With A and B at the bottom, fold the top layer on each side in to the centre.



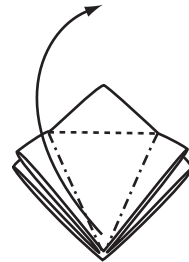
6. Fold the top triangle down.



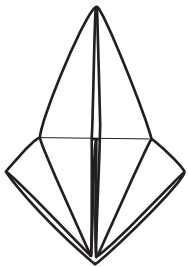
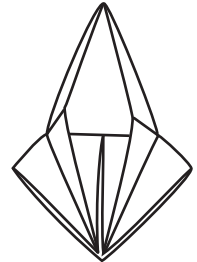
7. Unfold the top triangle.



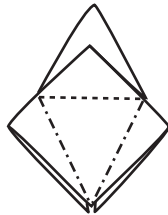
8. Unfold the two side flaps.



9. Raise the bottom point (top layer only), making a valley fold along the horizontal line, and allowing the sides to come together.



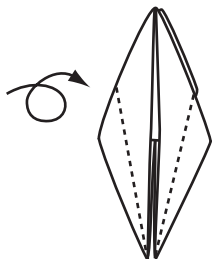
10. Flatten the trapezoid



11. Turn over and repeat steps 5 - 10 on the other side.



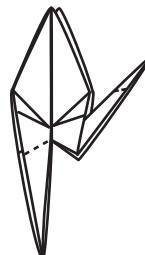
12. Notice that the bottom of the resulting trapezoid is split. Fold the sides to the centre (top layer only).



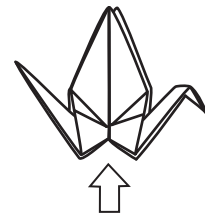
14. Turn over and fold the sides to the centre.



15. While opening slightly at the arrow, inside-reverse fold to bring the neck up from inside.



16. Now, inside-reverse fold to bring the tail up. Also, inside-reverse fold to bring the beak down.



17. Pull the wings slightly apart while gently blowing to inflate the body.