

INTERNATIONAL BENEVOLENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION (IBRF)

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**The Scheme of Teaching
Peace, Mercy and Tolerance
Envisaged by the
IBRF**



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The Scheme of Teaching Peace, Mercy and Tolerance At International Benevolent Research Foundation (IBRF)

EMPLOYMENT BASED EDUCATION AT INTERNATIONAL BENEVOLENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION (IBRF) BY TEACHING PEACE, MERCY AND TOLERANCE

Let us, first of all, try to discuss and diagnose intolerance among members of the society for locating respective critical paths for being merciful and tolerant for bringing peace on earth in the twenty first century and the third millennium. Viewing the growing peacelessness and intolerance all over the world, let us also discuss the need for disaster education including disaster preparedness, mitigation and management.

Educating the children and young people with a sense of openness and comprehension towards other people, their diverse culture and histories and their fundamental shared humanity; teaching them the importance of refusing violence and adopting peaceful means for resolving disagreements and conflicts; forging in the next generation feelings of altruism, openness and respect towards others, solidarity and sharing based on a sense of security in one's own identity and a capacity to recognise the many dimensions of being human in different cultural and social context should be the main thrust during the deliberations on peace, mercy and tolerance. Let us discuss these matters in a greater detail :

1. The manifestations of violence, racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and violations of human rights, by religious intolerance, by the upsurge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and by the growing gap separating wealthy countries from poor countries, phenomena which threaten the consolidation of peace, tolerant behaviour and democracy both nationally and internationally and which are all obstacles to development are matters of deep concern.
2. The educational plans and policies have to contribute to the development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals and among ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and sovereign nations. Education should promote knowledge, values, attitudes and skills conducive to respect for human rights and to an active commitment to the defence of such rights and to the building of a culture of peace, tolerance and mercy.
3. We are aware of the great responsibility incumbent not only on parents, but on society as a whole, to work together with all those involved in the educational system, and with non-governmental organisations, so as to achieve full implementation of the objectives of education for peace, human rights and civil liberty and to contribute in this way to sustainable development and to a culture of peace.
4. We understand the need to seek synergies between the formal education system and the various sectors of non-formal education, which are helping to make a reality of education that is in conformity with the aims of "Education for All". We know of the decisive role that

also falls to non-formal educational organisations in the process of forming the personalities of young people.

5. Accordingly we should strive resolutely to base education on principles and methods that contribute to the development of the personality of pupils, students and adults who are respectful of their fellow human beings and determined to promote peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance; to take suitable steps to establish in educational institutions an atmosphere contributing to the success of education for international understanding, so that they become ideal places for the exercise of tolerance, respect for the rights, the practice of democracy and learning about the diversity and wealth of cultural identities.

6. Action should be taken to eliminate all direct and indirect discrimination against girls and women in education systems and to take specific measures to ensure that they achieve their full potential.

7. There is an urgent need to give special attention to improving curricula, the content of textbooks, and other educational materials including new technologies, with a view to educating caring and responsible citizens open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by nonviolent means.

8. Measures must be adopted to enhance the role and status of educators in formal and non-formal education and to give priority to pre-service and inservice training as well as the retraining of educational personnel, including planners and managers, oriented notably towards professional ethics, civic and moral education, cultural diversity, national codes and internationally recognised standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

9. The development of innovative strategies adapted to the new challenges of educating responsible citizens committed to peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development, and to apply appropriate measures of evaluation and assessment of these strategies should be encouraged.

10. In a period of transition and accelerated change marked by the expression of intolerance, manifestations of racial and ethnic hatred, the upsurge of terrorism in all its forms, discrimination, war, violence and the growing disparities between rich and poor, at international and national levels alike, action strategies must aim both at ensuring fundamental freedoms, peace, human rights, and democracy and at promoting sustainable and equitable economic and social development, all of which have an essential part to play in building a culture of peace. This calls for a transformation of the traditional styles of educational action.

11. The ultimate goal of education for peace, mercy and tolerance is the development in every individual of a sense of universal values and types of behaviour on which a culture of peace is predicated. It is possible to identify even in different socio-cultural context values that are likely to be universally recognised.

12. Education must develop the ability to value freedom and the skills to meet its challenges. This means preparing citizens to cope with difficult and uncertain situations and fitting them for personal autonomy and responsibility. Awareness of personal responsibility must be linked to recognition of the value of civic commitment, of joining together with others to solve problems and to work for a just, peaceful and democratic community.

13. Education must develop the ability to recognise and accept the values which exist in the diversity of individuals, genders, peoples and cultures and develop the ability to communicate, share and co-operate with others. The citizens of a pluralist society and multicultural world should be able to accept that their interpretation of situations and problems is rooted in their personal lives, in the history of their society and in their cultural traditions; that, consequently, no individual or group holds the only answer to problems; and that for each problem there may be more than one solution. Therefore, people should understand and respect each other and negotiate on an equal footing, with a view to seeking common ground. Thus education must reinforce personal identity and should encourage the convergence of ideas and solutions which strengthen peace, friendship and solidarity between individuals and people.

14. Education must develop the ability of non-violent conflict-resolution. It should therefore promote also the development of inner peace in the minds of learners so that they can establish more firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring.

15. Education must cultivate in citizens the ability to make informed choices, basing their judgements and actions not only on the analysis of present situations but also on the vision of a preferred future.

16. Education must teach citizens to respect the cultural heritage, protect the environment, and adopt methods of production and patterns of consumption, which lead to sustainable development. Harmony between individual and collective values and between immediate basic needs and long-term interests is also necessary. Education should cultivate feelings of solidarity and equity at the national and international levels in the perspective of a balanced and long-term development.

17. Strategies relating to education for peace, mercy, tolerance and disaster education must (a) be comprehensive and holistic, which means addressing a very broad range of factors; (b) be applicable to all types, levels and forms of education; (c) involve all educational partners and various agents of socialisation, including NGOs and community organisations; (d) be implemented locally, nationally, regionally and world-wide; (e) entail modes of management and administration, co-ordination and assessment that give greater autonomy to educational establishments so that they can work out specific forms of action and linkage with the local community, encourage the development of innovations and foster active and democratic participation by all those concerned in the life of the establishment; (f) be suited to the age and psychology of the target group and take account of the evolution of the learning capacity of each individual; (g) be applied on a continuous and consistent basis. Results and obstacles have to be assessed, in order to ensure that strategies can be continuously adapted to

changing circumstances; (h) include proper resources for education as a whole and specially for marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

18. To strengthen the formation of values and abilities such as solidarity, creativity, civic responsibility, the ability to resolve conflicts by non-violent means, and critical acumen, it is necessary to introduce into curricula, at all levels, true education for citizenship which includes an international dimension. Teaching should particularly concern the conditions for the construction of peace; the various forms of conflict, their causes and effects; the ethical, religious and philosophical bases of human rights, their historical sources, the way they have developed and how they have been translated into national and international standards, such as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the bases of democracy and its various institutional models; the problem of racism and the history of the fight against sexism and all the other forms of discrimination and exclusion. Particular attention should be devoted to culture, the problem of development and the history of every people, as well as to the role of the United Nations and international institutions. There must be education for peace, conflict resolution, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance. It cannot, however, be restricted to specialised subjects and knowledge. The whole of education must transmit this message and the atmosphere of the institution must be in harmony with the application of democratic standards. Likewise, curriculum reform should emphasise knowledge, understanding and respect for the culture of others at the national and global levels and should link the global interdependence of problems to local action. In view of religious and cultural differences, every country may decide which approach to ethical education best suits its cultural context.

19. All people engaged in educational action must have adequate teaching materials and resources at their disposal. In this connection, it is necessary to make the required revisions to textbooks to remove negative stereotypes and distorted views. International co-operation in producing textbooks could be encouraged. Whenever new teaching materials, textbooks and the like are to be produced, they should be designed with due consideration of new situations. The textbooks should offer different perspectives on a given subject and make transparent the national or cultural background against which they are written. Their content should be based on scientific findings. It would be desirable for the documents of United Nations institutions to be widely distributed and used in educational establishments, especially in countries where the production of teaching materials is proving slow owing to economic difficulties. Distance education technologies and all modern communication tools must be placed at the service of education for peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance.

20. It is essential for the development of education for peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance that reading and verbal and written expression programmes should be considerably strengthened. A comprehensive grasp of reading, writing and the spoken word enables citizens to gain access to information, to understand clearly the situation in which they are living, to express their needs, and to take part in activities in the social environment. In the same way, learning foreign languages offers a means of gaining a deeper understanding of other cultures, which can serve as a basis for building better understanding between communities and between nations.

21. Proposals for educational change find their natural place in schools and classrooms. Teaching and learning methods, forms of action and institutional policy lines have to make peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance both a matter of daily practice and something that is learned. With regard to methods, the use of active methods, group work, the discussion of moral issues and personalised teaching should be encouraged. As for institutional policy lines, efficient forms of management and participation must promote the implementation of democratic school management, involving teachers, pupils, parents and the local community as a whole.

22. The reduction of failure must be a priority. Therefore, education should be adapted to the individual student's potential. The developments of self-esteem, as well as strengthening the will to succeed in learning, are also basic necessities for achieving a higher degree of social integration. Greater autonomy for schools implies greater responsibility on the part of teachers and the community for the results of education. However, the different development levels of education systems should determine the degree of autonomy in order to avoid a possible weakening of educational content.

23. The training of personnel at all levels of the education system: teachers, planners, managers, teacher educators has to include education for peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance. This pre-service and inservice training and retraining should introduce and apply in situ methodologies, observing experiments and evaluating their results. In order to perform their tasks successfully, schools, institutions of teacher education and those in charge of non-formal education programmes should seek the assistance of people with experience in the fields of peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance (politicians, jurists, sociologists and psychologists) and of the NGOs specialised in human rights, environment and disaster education. Similarly, pedagogy and the actual practice of exchanges should form part of the training courses of all educators.

24. Teacher education activities must fit into an overall policy to upgrade the teaching profession. International experts, professional bodies and teachers' unions should be associated with the preparation and implementation of action strategies because they have an important role to play in promoting a culture of peace among teachers themselves.

25. Specific strategies for the education of vulnerable groups and those recently exposed to conflict or in a situation of open conflict are required as a matter of urgency, giving particular attention to children at risk and to girls and women subjected to sexual abuse and other forms of violence. Possible practical measures could include, for example, the organisation outside the conflict zone of specialised forums and workshops for educators, family members and mass media professionals belonging to the conflicting groups and an intensive training activity for educators in post-conflict co-operation with governments whenever possible. 7

26. The organisations of education programmes for abandoned children, street children, refugee and displaced children and economically and sexually exploited children are a matter of urgency. It is equally urgent to organise special youth programmes laying emphasis on

participation by children and young people in solidarity actions and environmental protection. In addition, efforts should be made to address the special needs of people with learning difficulties by providing them with relevant education in a non- exclusionary and integrated educational setting.

27. Furthermore, in order to create understanding between different groups in society, there must be respect for the educational rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as indigenous people, and this must also have implications in the curricula and methods and in the way education is organised.

28. New problems require new solutions. It is essential to work out strategies for making better use of research findings, to develop new teaching methods and approaches and to improve co-ordination in choosing research themes between research institutes in the social sciences and education in order to address in a more relevant and effective way the complex nature of education for peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance. The effectiveness of educational management should be enhanced by research on decision-making by all those involved in the educational process (government, teachers, parents, etc.). Research should also be focused on finding new ways of changing public attitudes towards human rights, in particular towards women, and environmental issues. The impact of educational programmes may be better assessed by developing a system of indicators of results, setting up data banks on innovative experiments, and strengthening systems for disseminating and sharing information and research findings, nationally and internationally.

29. Tertiary / higher education institutions can contribute in many ways to education for peace, non violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance. In this connection, the introduction into the curricula of knowledge, values and skills relating to peace, human rights, justice, the practice of democracy, professional ethics, civic commitment and social responsibility should be envisaged. Educational institutions at this level should also ensure that students appreciate the interdependence of nations in an increasingly global society.

30. The education of citizens cannot be the exclusive responsibility of the education sector. If it is to be able to do its job effectively in this field, the education sector should closely co-operate, in particular, with the family, the 8 media, including traditional channels of communication, the world of voluntary organisations and NGOs.

31. Concerning co-ordination between school and family, measures should be taken to encourage the participation of parents in school activities. Furthermore, education programmes for adults and the community in general in order to strengthen the school's work are essential.

32. The influence of the media in the socialisation of children and young people is increasingly being acknowledged. It is, therefore, essential to train teachers and prepare students for the critical analysis and use of the media, and to develop their competence to profit from the media by a selective choice of programmes. On the other hand, the media should be urged to promote the values of peace, respect for human rights, democracy and

tolerance, in particular by avoiding programmes and other products that incite hatred, violence, cruelty and disrespect for human dignity.

33. Young people who spend a lot of time outside school and who often do not have access to the formal education system, or to vocational training or a job, as well as young people doing their military service, are a very important target group of education programmes for peace, non-violence, mercy, compassion and tolerance. While seeking improved access to formal education and vocational training, it is therefore essential for them to be able to receive non-formal education adapted to their needs, which would prepare them to assume their role as citizens in a responsible and effective way. In addition, education for peace, human rights and respect for the law has to be provided for young people in prisons, reformatories or treatment centres.

34. Adult education programmes where NGOs have an important role to play should make everyone aware of the link between local living conditions and world problems. Basic education programmes should attach particular importance to subject matter relating to peace. All culturally suitable media such as folklore, popular theatre, community discussion groups and radio should be used in mass education.

35. The promotion of peace will require regional co-operation, international solidarity and the strengthening of co-operation between international and governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, the scientific community, business circles, industry and the media. This solidarity and cooperation must help the developing countries to meet their needs for promoting education for peace.

36. In the light of the information provided relating peace, mercy, tolerance and disaster education we must the following resolve :

- i) Alarmed by the current rise in acts of intolerance, violence, terrorism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, racism, anti-semitism, exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination directed against national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, refugees, migrant workers, immigrants and vulnerable groups within societies, as well as acts of violence and intimidation committed against individuals exercising their freedom of opinion and expression - all of which threaten the consolidation of peace, mercy, tolerance and disaster management efforts both nationally and internationally, and are obstacles to development.
- ii) Resolving to take all positive measures necessary to promote peace, mercy and tolerance in our societies, because these are not only the cherished principles, but also a necessity for peace and for the economic and social advancement of all peoples.
- iii) Mercy and Tolerance are respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Mercy and Tolerance are harmony in difference. These are not only a moral duty, but are also political and legal requirements. Mercy and Tolerance, the virtues that make peace possible, contribute to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

- iv) Mercy and Tolerance are not concession, condescension or indulgence. Mercy and Tolerance are, above all, active attitudes prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In no circumstance can these be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values. Mercy and Tolerance are to be exercised by individuals, groups and nations.
- v) Mercy and Tolerance are the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.
- vi) Consistent with respect for rights, the practice of mercy and tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.
- vii) Mercy and Tolerance require just and impartial legislation, law enforcement, judicial and administrative processes. It also requires that economic and social opportunities be made available to each person without any discrimination. Exclusion and marginalisation can lead to frustration, hostility and fanaticism.
- viii) In order to achieve a more tolerant society, nations should ratify existing international human rights conventions, and draft new legislation where necessary to ensure equality of treatment and of opportunity for all groups and individuals in society.
- ix) It is essential for international harmony that individuals, communities and nations accept and respect the multicultural character of the human family. Without mercy and tolerance there can be no peace, and without peace there can be no development.
- x) Intolerance may take the form of marginalization of vulnerable groups and their exclusion from social and political participation, as well as violence and discrimination against them. Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice confirms 'All individuals and groups have the right to be different'.
- xi) In the modern world, mercy and tolerance are more essential than ever before. It is an age marked by the globalisation of the economy and by rapidly increasing mobility, communication, integration and interdependence, large-scale migrations and displacement of populations, urbanisation and changing social patterns. Since every part of the world is characterised by diversity, escalating intolerance and strife potentially menaces every region. It is not confined to any country, but is a global threat.
- xii) Mercy and Tolerance are necessary between individuals and at the family and community levels. Tolerance promotion and the shaping of attitudes of openness, mutual listening and solidarity should take place in schools and universities and through non-formal education, at home and in the workplace. The communication media are in a position to play a constructive role in facilitating free and open dialogue and discussion, disseminating the values of tolerance, and highlighting the dangers of indifference towards the rise in intolerant groups and ideologies.
- xiii) Appropriate scientific studies and networking should be undertaken to co-ordinate the international community's response to this global challenge, including analysis by the

- social sciences of root causes and effective countermeasures, as well as research and monitoring in support of policy-making and standard-setting action by different countries
- xiv) Education is the most effective means of preventing intolerance. The first step in mercy and tolerance education is to teach people what their shared rights and freedoms are, so that they may be respected, and to promote the will to protect those of others.
 - xv) Education for mercy and tolerance should be considered an urgent imperative; that is why it is necessary to promote systematic and rational mercy and tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance which are the major roots of violence and exclusion. Education policies and programmes should contribute to development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals as well as among ethnic, social, cultural, religious and linguistic groups and nations.
 - xvi) Education for mercy and tolerance should aim at countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others, and should help young people to develop capacities for independent judgement, critical thinking and ethical reasoning.
 - xvii) It is time to pledge to really support and implement programmes of social science research and education for mercy, tolerance, compassion, human rights and non-violence. This means devoting special attention to improving teacher training, curricula, the content of textbooks and lessons, and other educational materials including new educational technologies, with a view to educating caring and responsible citizens open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means.
 - xviii) It is essential that we commit ourselves to promoting mercy, tolerance as well as non-violence through programmes and institutions in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.
 - xix) In order to generate public awareness, emphasise the dangers of intolerance and disastrous actions and react with renewed commitment and action in support of tolerance promotion and education, pledge to design tailor made training programmes of short as well as long duration in the areas of peace, mercy, tolerance, compassion, disaster education and related subjects.
 - xx) People should commit themselves to promote tolerance and nonviolence through programmes and institutions by developing a neological as well as neocratic approach to governance and by designing a masterplan paradigm for peace on earth.

World Society, having emerged from the decades of the cold war, enjoyed for a short time the hopes that the end of this struggle was the beginning of an era in which the destructive consequences of that conflict and the deep divisions imposed by global economic inequities might be addressed. These hopes were sorely tested, however, by the eruption of regional conflicts and the hostilities between people which fragmented nations and drastically changed the political map of the world as it had been for nearly half a century. All over the globe, intergroup tensions, religious hostilities and ethnic conflicts have been erupting. Many long-standing conflicts previously overlooked have come to world attention.

Deep hatreds, some of which had previously healed over through reconciliations that permitted ethnic groups to live together in peace and cooperation have surfaced in social behaviour and political movements, and are voiced in the media and at conferences; communities exploded into warfare. The process of settling the disputes, reconciling the hostilities and reconstructing the societies will be one of the most difficult human society has ever undertaken. It may be one of the greatest challenges ever faced by those who seek to educate for peace. Educators should not shrink from facing the realities of history, nor can they avoid the responsibility to taking up the challenge posed by the reconciliation process to those who plan and carry out the social learning process.

Mercy and Tolerance are but the beginning, the first stage in a longer, deeper process of developing a culture of peace. It is the minimal essential quality of social relations that eschew violence and coercion. Without mercy and tolerance, peace is not possible. With mercy and tolerance, a panoply of positive human and social possibilities can be pursued, including the evolution of a culture of peace and the convivial communities that comprise it.

Religion has been a significant factor in the evolution of cultures, peace and nonviolence providing behavioural and social codes. Sadly, it has also been the basis of divisions, intolerance, war and conflict. As we have seen many man made disasters during last few years, teaching for religious tolerance has become an urgent necessity. We must identify a range of strategies and services to help both the perpetrators of violence and victims. This will require of religious people repentance and humility : a recognition that we have hurt one another, we have misused religion to seek power over others, we have allowed institutional self-interest to hide the spiritual heritage entrusted to our care. Too easily we have passed fine resolutions, but failed to live by them ourselves. In this gathering it is we ourselves who need to change. This Global Assembly is a celebration and a thanks giving for all who have pioneered this work and enthused us with their dreams; but it is also a time of dedication, when strengthened by each other's encouragement, we shall commit ourselves to be used in the building of the new and spiritual world home, in which all people enjoy a fully human life.

It is hard to assess the impact that religious people can have on political processes, especially as politicians seldom acknowledge those who have influenced them. Modern communications have given added weight to popular opinion. Religious leaders may play an important role in forming public opinion. They can insist on the relevance of spiritual and moral considerations. They have helped to maintain public alarm at the enormous stockpile of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction. They have voiced public outrage at the starvation of millions of people, as a result of hunger, war, injustice and an unfair pattern of international trade. They have upheld human dignity and protested against torture and racism. They have underpinned efforts to develop internationally agreed standards of human rights and have helped to monitor their application. In all religions there is an increase of extremism, which also alienates others from any religious allegiance. Religious differences sometimes enflame political and economic divisions and sometimes religion is exploited by the powerful as an instrument of social control.

It is easy to deplore intolerance - especially in others. It is harder to understand its causes, which may be psychological or related to a group feeling politically, culturally or

economically marginalised. Intolerance may be caused by fear or ignorance or it may be based on exclusive claims to truth.

The educational task is still far from complete. Increasingly formal and non-formal training, teaching and research will become more practical with an emphasis on ways of cooperating to face urgent problems and to seek a global ethic or consensus on moral values. We should be trying to show that people of all religions and races can agree on the importance of peace, mercy, compassion and tolerance. Only together will prejudice and discrimination be removed, violence and injustice ended, poverty relieved and the planet preserved. In our contemporary world, we are very conscious of the persistence of injustice, war, hunger and environmental damage; and we are conscious too of the many ways in which religions can be used to perpetuate division and misunderstanding. Why not long for a world where men and women of faith strive to know and respect one another's beliefs and ways of life, to work together for the common good of all, to build up a true world community from our diverse communities.

World Peace can be restored at the earliest if we propose the creation of an "Interreligious Spiritual Forum for Cooperation with United Nations" with a view to having all the important religious leaders of different faiths for discussing and resolving to be compassionate, tolerant, humanitarian and good to others.

International Benevolent Research Foundation (IBRF) has decided to assist and cooperate with all the schools, colleges and universities in the Afro-Asian as well as American continent region for designing curriculum as well as instructional materials related to peace, mercy, tolerance and disaster education.

Let us remember what we read in Upnishad - "From the unreal, lead me to the Real; From darkness, lead me to the Light; From death, lead me to Immortality".