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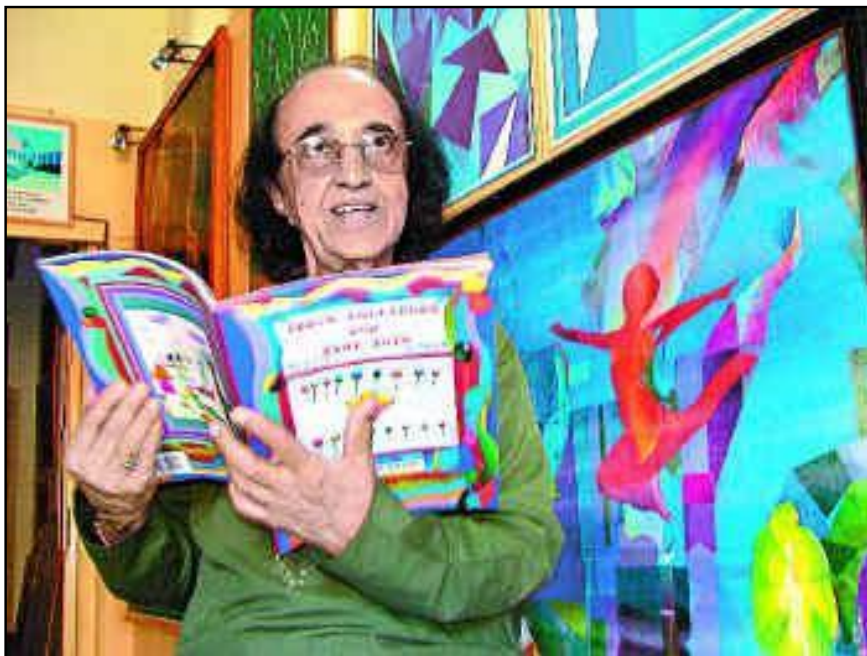
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Songs of peace

Artist V. Balu, convinced that conventional nursery rhymes are too violent, has come up with his own brand



**V. Balu: 'Children have an intuitive understanding of peace.' —
Photo: K. Murali Kumar**

"YOU YOUNG people don't even know how to breathe!" Well, that is V. Balu, self-taught collage artist, working for inner peace and global peace through his medium of art that uses bits of paper one usually junks. According to him, the first step to global peace is attaining inner peace.

Beginning his career as an artist by drawing cartoons and later moving on to oil paintings, Balu discovered his fascination with paper and its infinite possibilities. In the process of creating his intriguing pieces, he

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also discovered its potential to provide that elusive inner peace.

Thus, bits of paper salvaged from magazines and newspapers besides others, have been cleverly crafted to create astonishing pieces, containing a potent message in them.

But why collage, when the message of peace delivered through his paintings and cartoons can be equally compelling?

"There is such a wealth of printed material available in all hues that it seems a waste to use expensive paints. The same message can be delivered as forcefully by using waste paper. Besides, scissors can be as effective as the brush." According to him, there are 7,000 different types of paper out of which he claims to have used about 4,000.

What prompted the septuagenarian to use his art for peace?

"Art helps to focus attention on a theme. There is so much violence in the media. This violence has become a source of entertainment, associating with it a sense of adventurism. Portrayal of peace is construed as boring. This is reflected in the choice of programmes made especially for children. The objective here is to project peace through art as equally adventurous and joyous."

In the 22 years of his courtship with paper, Balu has created some intense pieces where the message of peace is not only forceful, but also dramatic. Sample these. An astronaut looks down at the earth from space and he sees not countries with divisions but just a beautiful globe. *Harmony of Peace* depicts harmony in nature. One of his pieces was chosen for a UNICEF card to carry the message of peace. This portrays three lamps with reflections denoting body, mind, and the soul on the one side and individual, country, and the world on the other.

Balu's activities are not confined to just creating collages. He has also authored books where the target audience is both the adult and the child. Some of these are *Sadae Shanthi*, *Shanthi Darshan*, *Shanthi Sopana*, and *Srishti*. In one of his books, *Shanthi Darshan*, to stress his point, he fitted a mirror in one of the pages, reminding that the reader too is a messenger of peace.

He recently authored a book exclusively for children in the age group of two to five years. The book, *Peace Lollipops for Tiny Tots*, contains rhymes of a different nature, rhymes espousing peace. Thus you have rhymes such as "Peace, not Pieces", "Wars are Bad", "ABC of Peace" in

the book. Incidentally, the ABC of peace stands for `Always Be Calm'.

Talking about his book, he says: "Children are taught nursery rhymes which talk about stars and sheep. Why not peace? That is when I decided to write this book. Children have an intuitive understanding of peace and this book appeals to that."

For details about the book, contact Balu on 98440-08692.

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