



PEACE ABILITIES JOURNAL ONLINE • ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

An Interview with Homraj Acharya

On the Walk Against Caste Discrimination and Modeling Peace Literacy

At PeaceAbility, we evaluate peace through the intersection of governance, social fabric, and economic fairness. But how do we build the individual and community capacity to change these conditions on the ground? We sat down with international development professional and PeaceAbility Advisor Homraj Acharya to talk about his march across Nepal, the enduring wounds of caste discrimination he observed, and how that grassroots journey gave birth to his framework for systemic change, the PIE Model of Peace Literacy.



Musicians lead the Nepal Pada Yatra procession through a town along the route.

PeaceAbility: *Before you set out on your march across Nepal, what had you observed in your professional work that convinced you a grassroots movement was necessary?*

Homraj Acharya: The model was shaped not only by scholarship but mostly by lived experiences, including my work in the brick industries going back to 2009. The model was strongly influenced by work in Nepal's brick kiln communities where child, forced and bonded labor, young adult opportunity, internal and regional migration, and inequality overlapped.

Efforts to rescue and rehabilitate children revealed that material interventions alone were insufficient. Mistrust, exclusion, and unequal power relations persisted. This experience highlighted a peace literacy gap that educational systems rarely address systematically. Nepal's diversity creates both opportunities and challenges. Diversity without peace literacy contributes to intractable misunderstanding. My conversations on the march revealed that while people deeply desired peace, they often lacked means to develop the competencies necessary to navigate community differences peaceably. Peace resides in how individuals relate to one another, how institutions distribute opportunity, how communities navigate difference, and how societies cultivate coexistence, dignity, empathy, and belonging. Peace is therefore not merely a political condition but a human competency.



Homraj Acharya sits with a village elder during one of hundreds of listening sessions along the walk.

PeaceAbility: That realization led to your Nepal Pada Yatra in 2019. How did that journey unfold, and how were you received by the communities along the way?

Homraj Acharya: The journey took the form of the Nepal Pada Yatra, or Purposeful Journey, from Mahakali to Mechi in 2019. I conducted this walk across Nepal to bring communities together to oppose caste-based discrimination.

During this padayatra, I engaged with more than 100,000 people and representatives of over 80 municipalities, listening to their stories on how caste discriminations harm people, communities and the entire nation, which is still rebuilding civil society after war and revolution. The journey was defined by hundreds of sessions conducted during my walk across Nepal.



A welcome ceremony marks the marchers' arrival — a banner reads, "Let's end the practice of untouchability."



Women gather to take part in a community listening session along the route.

During my earlier work in the brick industries working with 7,000 families and 15,000 children, I detected a microcosm of grievances, hopes, and visions for a peaceful society emerged. A similar dynamic was evident on the road. These conversations revealed that while people deeply desired peace, they often lacked opportunities to develop the competencies necessary to navigate diversity constructively. They welcomed the chance to share how these structural exclusions harm them.



Community members and local leaders sign a public pledge against caste-based discrimination.

100,000+

People engaged along the march

80+

Municipalities represented

15,000

Children reached through earlier brick-kiln work

PeaceAbility: *After walking the length of the country and absorbing those thousands of stories, how did you translate the lessons of the march into a formal framework for peace?*

Homraj Acharya: The PIE framework, for People, Interconnectedness, and Empathy, is represented as a 360-degree circle or Mandala divided into three equal pillars of 120 degrees each. Inspired by the Nepali Odan, the traditional three-legged iron stand traditionally used in kitchen to cook food, the model suggests that peace remains stable only when all pillars remain balanced.

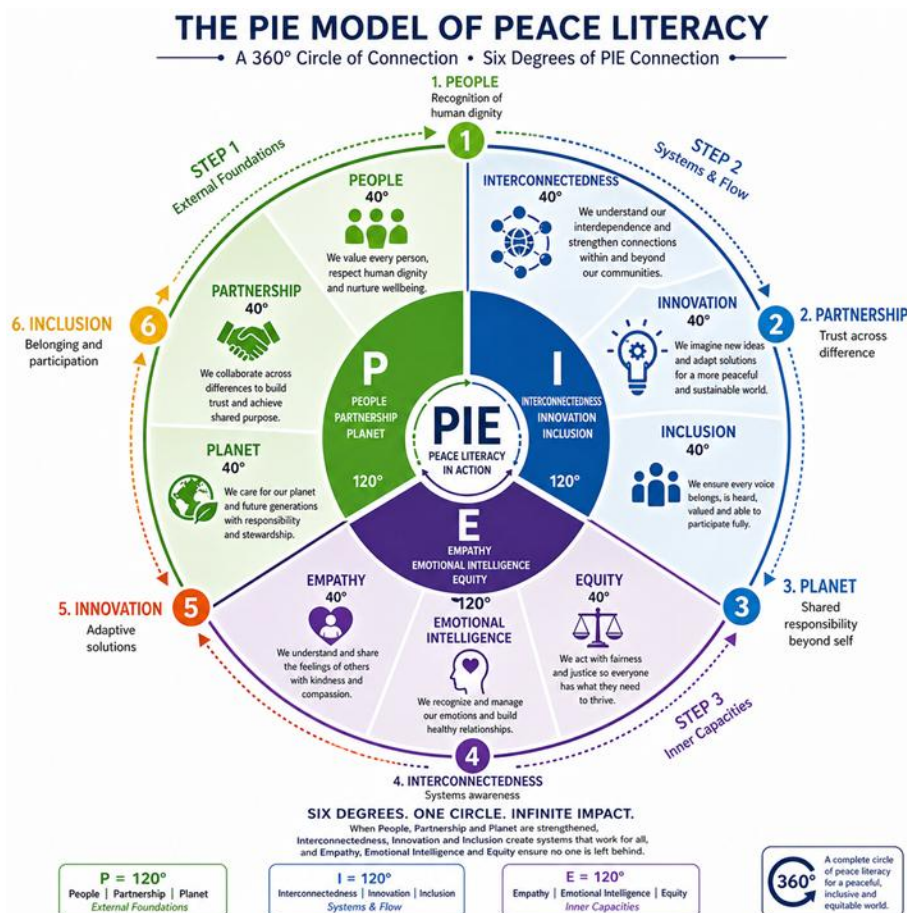
The model draws from Shanti, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family), and Apo Deepo Bhawa (be your own guiding light). Peace begins internally and radiates outward into relationships, communities, institutions, and ecosystems. The three pillars are:

- P:** People, Planet, Partnership
- I:** Interconnectedness, Inclusion, Innovation
- E:** Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Equity

Together these dimensions create a holistic understanding of peace that integrates emotional, social, ecological, and structural realities. The inner circle represents self-awareness, mindfulness, dignity, and emotional grounding. The outer circle represents families, schools, communities, institutions, governance systems, and ecosystems. Sustainable peace requires continuous interaction between these inner and outer dimensions of the mandala.

Peace spreads relationally. Every individual influences others through language, behavior, attitudes, and actions. The framework recognizes six levels of influence: Self, Family, Peers, Community, Institutions, and Society.

Through Training of Trainers approaches, participants become both learners and multipliers of peace literacy. By defining peace in this way with roots in concepts well understood in Nepal, or in Hinduism, PIE is a model that local communities can grasp and learn to apply in their daily lives. And it is a framework that speaks to other conflicted communities around the world, not only in one regional context.



The PIE Model — People, Interconnectedness, and Empathy — as a balanced, three-pillar mandala.

PeaceAbility: *Reaching the eastern border at Mechi marked the end of the walk, but your work has since expanded internationally. How do the lessons of your march and the PIE model translate globally?*

Homraj Acharya: Although developed through Nepal's experiences, the PIE Model speaks to global challenges across regions such as polarization, exclusion, inequality, and declining social cohesion. Lessons from international cooperation, human rights institutions, and peacebuilding initiatives demonstrate the importance of connecting personal transformation with institutional change.

Although I'm a remote advisor for PeaceAbility, based in Maryland and Nepal, we visited Strasbourg in 2024, meeting our long-term friends and one of the PeaceAbility co-founders, Paul Kreutzer. Strasbourg may actually be a powerful real-world example for "Education in Every Home's" PIE Model. The city is a laboratory of peace literacy. For centuries, the Alsace region changed hands between France and Germany. It experienced wars, nationalism, occupation, and deep historical wounds.

Today Strasbourg is home to the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Human Rights. The local education system emphasizes bilingual education in French and German, with many cultural exchanges across the open border. The Strasbourg visit gave me historical validation as I was working on the PIE model; the model works for peace in developed as well as developing countries and interventions. My colleague, Prakriti Nepal, incorporated this model into her master's capstone research at American University in Washington, D.C. This marked the model's formal entry into an academic environment, where it has supported graduate-level research and established a foundation for future academic exploration and learning. So I think globally, the PIE Model seeks to bridge theory and lived reality, local experience and global peace programming, emotional awareness and structural transformation. It positions development and peace literacy as a foundational human competency necessary for coexistence, democratic participation, social cohesion, and sustainable development. This aligns with PeaceAbility's framework and focus on peace-abilities as competencies that can be learned.

PeaceAbility | *Measuring and building the human competencies for peace.*