

THE SEARCH FOR INNER PEACE (PART 1 OF 4): THE OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVING INNER PEACE

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Description: A look at how people define inner peace and how they strive to achieve it; also a look at the obstacles that prevent us from obtaining inner peace.

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inner peace addresses a universal need. There is nobody on this planet that does not desire inner peace. It is not a desire that is new to our time; rather, it is something that everybody has been searching for throughout the ages, regardless of color, creed, religion, race, nationality, age, sex, wealth, ability or technological advancement.

People have taken a variety of different paths in trying to achieve inner peace, some through accumulating material possessions and wealth, others through drugs; some through music, others through meditation; some through their husbands and wives, others through their careers and some through their children's achievements. And the list goes on.

Yet the search also goes on. In our time we have been led to believe that technological advancement and modernization will produce for us physical comforts and through these we will attain inner peace.

However, if we were to take the most technologically advanced and most industrialized nation in the world, America, then we would see that what we have been led to believe is not factual. The statistics show that in America some 20 million adults suffer from depression yearly; and what is depression but a total lack of inner peace? Furthermore in the year 2000 death rate due to suicide was double the rate of those who died from Aids. However, the news media being what it is, we hear more about those who die from Aids than we do about those who die by committing suicide. Also more people die from suicide in America than from homicide, and the homicide rates themselves are massive.

So the reality is that technological advancement and modernization have not bought inner peace and tranquility. Rather in spite of the comforts that modernization has brought us, we are further away from inner peace than our ancestors were.

Inner peace is for the most part of our lives very elusive; we never seem to get our hands on it.

Many of us mistake personal pleasures for inner peace; we achieve elements of pleasure from a variety of things, be it wealth, sexual relations or other than that. But these do not last, they come and go. Yes we have personal pleasures from time to time and we are pleased with various things from time to time, but this is not inner peace. True inner peace is a sense of stability and contentment which carries us through all the trials and difficulties of life.

We need to understand that peace is not something that will exist in this world around us because when we define peace according to the dictionary definition it states that peace is freedom from war or civil strife. Where do we have this? There is always a war or some sort of civil unrest happening somewhere in the world. If we look at peace in terms of the state level then peace is freedom from public disorder and security, but where in the world do we have this in a complete form? If we look at peace on a social level, family and work, then peace is freedom from disagreements and arguments, but is there such a social environment that never has disagreements or arguments? In terms of location, then yes, we can have a place which is calm, peaceful and tranquil, some islands for example, but this external peace only exists for a small amount of time, sooner or later a storm or a hurricane will come.

God says:

“Verily, I have created man in toil (struggle).” (Quran 90:4)

This is the nature of our lives; we are in toil and struggle, ups and downs, times of difficulties and times of ease.

It is a life full of tests as God says:

“And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to as-Saabirin (the patient ones, etc.).” (Quran 2:155)

To deal with our circumstances, the circumstances of toil and struggle in which we live, patience is the key.

But if we go back to the inner peace that we are looking for, then patience cannot manifest itself if we do not have that inner peace.

We are living in a world of toil and struggle, but yet within ourselves it is possible to attain inner peace, peace with the environment, with the world in which we live.

Obviously there are some obstacles which prevent us from attaining peace. So first we have to identify the obstacles in our lives which prevent us from achieving maximum

inner peace and develop some kind of strategy to remove them. The obstacles will not be removed just by thinking that we need to remove them; we have to develop some steps to achieve this. So how do we go about removing these obstacles so that we can achieve what is possible of inner peace?

The first step is to identify the obstacles themselves. We have to be aware of them, because if we cannot identify them then we cannot remove them.

The second step is to accept them as obstacles within ourselves. For example anger is one of the biggest obstacles to inner peace, for example. If a person is angry, worked up and has blown a fuse, how can he or she have inner peace in that circumstance? It is not possible. So the person needs to recognize that anger is an obstacle to inner peace.

However, if a person states that, "Yes, it is an obstacle but I do not get angry", then such a person has a problem. He has not accepted that obstacle as a problem and is in a state of self denial. As such he cannot remove it.

If we look at the obstacles in life we can put them under a variety of headings: personal problems, family issues, financial dilemmas, work pressures and spiritual confusion. And there are many issues under these headings.

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