

﴿Inner Peace﴾

A Journey from Awareness to Connection with the Mystery of Creation

Introduction:

Inner peace has been one of the most fundamental psychological needs of human beings throughout history. In a world filled with anxiety, stress, social pressures, and material concerns, attaining inner calmness as a spiritual asset holds significant importance.

Inner peace not only influences the quality of individual life and social relationships but also plays a pivotal role in mental health, sound decision-making, and spiritual growth.

This article explores the concept of inner peace from various perspectives, including psychology, philosophy, religion, and especially the Holy Qur'an.

Understanding Inner Peace from Different Perspectives:

1. General Definition

Inner peace refers to a state of inner stability, balance, and contentment in which a person feels secure, hopeful, and free from need even in difficult or challenging circumstances. This form of tranquillity often results from self-acceptance, emotional regulation, and a deep sense of purpose in life.

2. Psychological Perspective

In psychology, inner peace is directly linked to mental well-being. Concepts such as life satisfaction, self-awareness, acceptance, and mindfulness are considered crucial elements that contribute to achieving inner calm.

3. Philosophical Perspective

Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Plato and the Stoics, viewed inner peace as the outcome of detachment from worldly attachments, rational acceptance of life events, and control over desires. In Islamic philosophy, thinkers like Farabi and Avicenna also emphasised the importance of soul moderation and rationality in attaining peace.

4. Religious Perspective

From religious viewpoints, inner peace is a spiritual blessing that stems from a profound connection with God. Various religious traditions offer different tools and pathways to help individuals attain this form of peace.

Inner Peace in the Qur'an and Islamic Narratives:

According to the Qur'anic texts, inner peace is not just a psychological phenomenon but the result of faith. Concepts such as certainty, remembrance of Allah, reliance on Allah, contentment, gratitude, satisfaction with divine blessings, hope, love, benevolence, avoidance of hatred, seeking refuge in Allah, and intimacy with prayer and the Qur'an are seen as original and lasting sources of tranquillity. These elements not only impact the soul but also contribute to balance and well-being in both individual and social life.

A Comparison of Inner Peace in the Qur'an and Positive Psychology:

Positive psychology, a modern branch of psychology, focuses on human flourishing and life satisfaction rather than psychological disorders. Both the Qur'an and positive psychology stress the importance of inner peace, albeit from different perspectives:

1 - In positive psychology, finding meaning in life is considered one of the foundations of lasting happiness. Similarly, the Qur'an connects peace to a transcendent meaning namely, connection with God.

A believer finds purpose in divine direction and sees life as a journey toward returning to God.

2 - The goal of peace in psychology is to experience a joyful and stress-free life; however, in the Qur'an, peace is a means for spiritual elevation, sincere servitude, and ultimately attaining eternal bliss.

3 - Positive psychology sees adversity as an opportunity for personal growth. Likewise, the Qur'an interprets hardships as purposeful divine tests meant to strengthen faith:

"وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ... وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ"

"We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger... but give good tidings to the patient." (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 155)

Methods for Attaining Inner Peace:

As the most comprehensive guide for human life, the Qur'an offers practical and clear approaches for achieving inner peace. Unlike fleeting techniques, these methods are rooted in faith, trust in God, and spiritual practice, leading to deep, lasting, and constructive serenity in human life.

The Most Important Qur'anic Methods for Attaining Inner Peace:

1. Certainty

Faith and certainty are closely related but distinct concepts. Faith may still contain elements of doubt and fluctuate, whereas certainty is a firm and unwavering conviction that eliminates all doubt. Certainty includes believing in God's supreme power, His justice, the purposeful nature of creation, divine awareness of all affairs, and the wisdom behind divine decrees.

Certainty has both cognitive and psychological dimensions. A believer, due to trust in divine wisdom, remains steadfast even amid hardships:

"مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ"

"No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah, He will guide his heart." (Surah At-Taghabun, verse 11)

The "guidance of the heart" in this verse refers to inner stability and peace during times of trial.

2. Remembrance of God

Remembrance of God implies a continuous mindfulness of the Divine. This awareness calms the heart and provides reassurance even in the most difficult circumstances. The Qur'an expresses this concept vividly:

"أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ"

"Surely, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."

(Surah Ar-Ra'd, verse 28)

This verse emphasizes that the true source of peace is the heart's connection with the Creator. This state of "tranquillity" (طمأنينه) is more than a fleeting feeling, it is a deep, enduring sense of security that arises from continuous communion with God.

3. Trust in God

Entrusting outcomes to God after fulfilling one's responsibilities, is a powerful antidote to anxiety. A believer who relies on God finds reassurance in the belief that a wise and merciful power supports them. The Qur'an confirms this repeatedly:

"وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ"

"Whoever puts their trust in Allah, He is sufficient for them."

(Surah At-Talaq, verse 3)

When a person faces a challenge beyond their control, they turn to a higher power for support. Since God's power surpasses all, and He appoints others as means to help, reason dictates entrusting one's affairs to Him, knowing that He is fully aware of what is best for His servants.

4. Contentment

Contentment is defined as being satisfied with what the All-Sufficient Lord has apportioned, even if it appears little, and avoiding coveting what belongs to others. A person attains asceticism when, through practice and repetition, they free themselves from extravagance and greed and become content with whatever comes their way.

The desire to accumulate wealth excessively, even under the pretext of securing the future for one's children cannot justify greed. A truly content individual lives a pleasant and fulfilling life and offers gratitude for their divine provisions.

5. Gratitude and Satisfaction with Divine Blessings

Gratitude means recognizing, remembering, and expressing divine favours. It wards off affliction and attracts more blessings, hence the emphasis on practicing it. The first step is verbal gratitude, followed by appreciation even for what was withheld, acknowledging that certain unfulfilled desires may have saved one from greater harm. Ultimately, gratitude includes using every blessing in a way that pleases the Giver.

"لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ"

"If you are grateful, I will surely increase [My blessings] for you."

(Surah Ibrahim, verse 7)

Yet, not everyone reaches this level of awareness:

"وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ"

"And few of My servants are truly grateful."

(Surah Saba', verse 13)

Gratitude is not only a beautiful emotion and a form of mental and spiritual cultivation, but it also fosters a sweet sense of peace in life. A grateful person focuses on blessings rather than shortcomings. This mindset leads to inner satisfaction and tranquillity. Gratitude is not only a religious duty but also an effective psychological practice.

6. Hope

Hope is the most significant factor in fostering the spirit of effort and perseverance. It serves as a powerful motivator in human life, driving individuals toward the achievement of their goals and reinforcing their resolve when facing challenges. For instance, the act of supplication is rooted in the hope of divine acceptance:

"ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ"

"Call upon Me; I will respond to you." (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 186)

If an individual believes that their actions bear no impact on their life, they will make no effort toward self-improvement or moral refinement. As a result, they will make no progress in ethical development, the removal of moral vices, or the pursuit of eternal happiness. Therefore, hope is a key element in overcoming despair and contributes to one's vitality, progress, and inner peace.

7. Kindness and Benevolence

Kindness is a divine attribute and a prominent trait of the Infallibles (peace be upon them). It characterises those who distance themselves from selfishness and instead embrace compassion.

Benevolence refers to acts of charity and goodness performed without expectation of reward. Its effect is the cultivation of inner tranquillity, a phenomenon observable not only in humans but in all living beings. The importance of kindness is emphasized in numerous Qur'anic verses and traditions and is considered a criterion for human excellence. Kindness is among the ethical virtues, and in encouraging it, God promises both worldly and eternal tranquillity to those who embody compassion.

Benefactors and those who serve others not only bring comfort to those around them but, through divine assistance, also attain peace in this world and the hereafter.

It is worth noting that benevolence encompasses good deeds directed toward both oneself and others. A true believer is humble before God and kind toward people, an essential duality for attaining serenity and success.

8. Avoiding Hatred

Hatred is a negative moral trait that leads to psychological and even physical afflictions in those who harbour it. Cleansing the heart of resentment increases piety and spiritual purity, dispels inner darkness, and facilitates a deeper connection with the Divine. Human beings can truly hope for God's mercy and forgiveness only if they strive to cultivate such virtues. Indeed, there is a sweetness in forgiveness that revenge cannot match.

"ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ..."

"Repel evil with that which is better..." (Surah Fussilat, verse 34)

Hatred is one of the most dangerous spiritual afflictions, as it gives rise to a host of other vices, such as disrespect, foul speech, mockery, quarrelsomeness, injustice, intrusion into others' affairs, backbiting, falsehood, envy, and more.

9. Seeking Refuge in God

In moments of fear, anxiety, anger, and sorrow, the human being requires a refuge that provides security and reassurance. These emotional states often signify a lack of remembrance of God and the influence of Satan. The Merciful Lord presents seeking His refuge as the surest way to attain calm and spiritual safety.

وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing." (Surah Fussilat, verse 36)

Seeking refuge in God is among the most effective means of achieving spiritual serenity. There is no creature that, under the shade of divine mercy, does not experience a sense of safety. However, this act requires sincerity in supplication, and such sincerity is only attained through repentance and the abandonment of wrongful actions.

10. Intimacy with Prayer and the Qur'an

Another pathway to inner peace is companionship with virtuous friends. Just as the body is nourished by food and water, the soul requires companionship, empathy, and heartfelt connection, a yearning that stems from the depths of human nature.

However, it is nearly impossible to find a companion who is ever-present, at all times and under all conditions, as every human being is limited in time, space, knowledge, and perception.

Thus, we must acknowledge the profound truth that the One Creator is the best and most powerful companion. His companionship knows no limits; He is with us not only in this world but throughout eternity. Therefore, none but God is the truest friend, confidant, and companion.

According to some traditions: *“If you wish to speak with God, perform prayer; and if you wish for God to speak with you, recite the Qur'an.”* Hence, prayer and the Qur'an form a vital bridge of communication between the servant and their Lord. Allah describes the Qur'an with attributes such as light, growth, guidance, blessing, and healing:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
“O mankind, there has come to you a counsel from your Lord and a healing for what is in the hearts, and a guidance and mercy for the believers.” (Surah Yunus, verse 57)

Closeness to the Qur'an brings peace to the heart and strengthens faith. However, this intimacy is not achieved merely through recitation, but through reflection, contemplation, and adherence to its teachings. As the Qur'an states:

وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا

"And recite the Qur'an with measured recitation."

(Surah Al-Muzzammil, part of verse 4)

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

"[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded." (Surah Sad, verse 29)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) states: *"Whoever finds intimacy in the recitation of the Qur'an will not feel lonely in the separation from friends."* (Ghurar al-Hikam)

Among the most beautiful states of the human heart, soul, and body is humble and devout connection with the One True God. Ultimately, inner peace is not a destination but a spiritual and intellectual journey, one that leads us both toward God and toward a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Conclusion:

Inner peace is not a final destination; rather, it is the fruit of a journey rooted in meaning, self-awareness, knowledge of Allah, and an understanding of the purpose of creation.

