

INNER PEACE
TO
WORLD PEACE



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Peace is sometimes thought of as the absence of agitation, be that in the form of hostility between individuals or nations or in the form of noise. If we go a little more deeply, beyond the superficial level of peace, we will find that peace is actually a quality that emanates from within something. We know that someone may appear serene on the surface but be harbouring inner tensions that belie the outer appearance. The same applies to groups of people – clubs, for example, spiritual groups and organisations of various sizes, families, political parties and so on. People can be polite to each other yet underneath things may not be so friendly.

It is this artificial representation of the true thing, which is put on for the sake of appearances, that ensures that at some point peace is bound to fail. Hostilities may be buried but there they fester, one day to appear again. A deeper peace must be found.

Looking at ourselves as individuals for a moment, at what point do we become truly peaceful? Just like groups, we can enjoy a superficial peace. We can engage in activities, read books and so on and appear both to ourselves and to those close to us to be peaceful. In the ordinary sense, that may be right. But at a deeper level there are currents of thoughts and emotions that spark off feelings, perceptions and random thoughts. Our belief systems, for example, form very strong currents within us which we may not be aware of until something challenges them. Something that is beyond the norm, beyond the boundaries of what we regard as acceptable, will shake our sense of inner peace – which means that our inner peace is

not permanently established. We were fooling ourselves and, like the little pig whose house was made of straw, an unexpected event can turn out to be the wolf that blows our house down.

Peace can only come to us as individuals when we are totally unperturbed by any event, when our inner stability is firmly assured and we have attained absolute flexibility. That is a state of consciousness beyond fear, a state of total trust – not in the mundane, which is entirely fickle, but in the Divine, the Tao, the Absolute, the Universe, God, whichever term we find acceptable. To enjoy such a state of peace is a major stage in spiritual development, yet many people equate such development with the ability to perform tricks, like foretelling the future or claiming to be able to heal. So much rubbish is spoken of by those claiming they can give you this or that yet they still haven't found true peace themselves. Such people are little better than charlatans, peddling services that they do not have the power or ability to give.

Peace can only come to the world when all the individuals within it find peace for themselves. We have to resolve, not bury, all our inner conflicts and fears if we are truly to contribute to world peace. Judging and criticising others are things we are very good at; they are skills quickly learnt but difficult to lose. Our own house is what we have to put in order, not someone else's. It is so easy to condemn the terrorist or the murderer and all forms of violence; but these wouldn't appear at all if true inner peace were more widely established.

Think for a moment of humanity being one organism rather than a multitude of individuals. If collectively humanity has not established peace within itself, is it not inevitable that there will be eruptions on the surface from time to time? And the greater

the inner discord, the greater will be the number and extent of those eruptions. Yet if a boil or a rash appeared on your hand, would you condemn the hand for being stupid and ignorant? Would you punish it or cut it off? Of course the idea is ridiculous but those who perform base or vile acts are only able to do so because of the absence of inner peace, not only within themselves but within humanity as a whole.

How can we find inner peace? Peace can only be truly present if it permeates our whole being. Although much good work can be done by working on the outside – healthy lifestyle, education, correct speech and ethical actions, for example – we also have to allow peace to come from the inside. Notice the word “allow”. Peace cannot be forced; it arises naturally from within when the conditions are right. When we quieten ourselves sufficiently and allow our awareness to settle, peace will start to come. It may be felt initially as only a little more quietness than we normally experience; that is enough to begin with. Some people find this through music, some through art, for some it is gardening or merely being in the open air that helps. Others tackle it a little more directly through meditation, tai chi and other deliberate calm-inducing measures. The wonderful thing is, whichever approach we use because we feel it is the right one for us, the quietness we enjoy and experience begins to heal or transform us. The trick we need to accomplish is not to lose all that quietness as soon as we do something else but instead to learn to deepen it so that it becomes part of us and pervades all our activity.

Being mindful of every moment is crucial to this. “Mindful” in this sense means bringing our full awareness into the present moment. If we are walking, our awareness should be on our walking; if we are listening, we should listen with full awareness and if we are

preparing a meal, a full and relaxed attention will mean the meal is produced in peace. These are just examples; the point is that instead of doing several things at once, like a circus performer keeping many plates spinning in the air, and also thinking of a great number of other things, we bring peace into the present moment – or rather we *allow* it to come – simply by being fully present.

This is all we need to do to contribute fully to world peace and to peace in our own environment. When actions need to be undertaken, the correct thoughts and ideas to do them will arise from our peaceful nature; only wrong actions and speech arise from an unsettled mind.

It is so simple, yet at the same time it is demanding because it involves changing our approach to life. Such is the price we have to pay for peace – but at that price it is an absolute bargain.

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