Inner Peace in Islam

Zuleyha Keskin

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Zuleyha Keskin[*]

Abstract: The notion that Islam means peace has almost become a cliché in a world where Islam's relationship with peace is emphasised in an attempt to reclaim it from any association with terrorism. Islam does mean peace. Not only does Islam mean peace, but it also has a strong affiliation with inner peace through the tranquillity and peace it offers as a result of internalising the Islamic faith.

Despite this strong affiliation with inner peace, there is minimal contemporary English literature regarding the relationship between Islam and inner peace. This is not because there is no connection between the two, but rather, it is a matter of language and conceptualisation. Most of the Islamic literature related to inner peace is encompassed within *tasawwuf* (Islamic spirituality) and extensively discussed in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. On the other hand, contemporary English literature on inner peace is predominantly from a Buddhist perspective, but also includes Hindu, Christian, Jewish and non-religious perspectives.

When *tasawwuf* is delved into, various Islamic concepts can be identified that have a strong association with inner peace. The three concepts that will be analysed in this paper are *riḍā* (contentment), *sakīna* (serenity) and *itmīnā n* (peace). These concepts can be brought together to produce a definition of inner peace that is true to the Islamic tradition: inner peace is attained when life and events are given a *tawḥīd*-centric meaning in a way that satisfies the heart and mind.

Keywords: *Inner peace, Islam, spirituality, contentment, serenity, peace, positive worldview*

Introduction

While the literature on inner peace is growing, most of the sources are based on religions other than Islam or no religion. The lack of literature on inner peace from an Islamic perspective is a matter of language and conceptualisation more than anything else. Otherwise, the strong affiliation between Islam and inner peace cannot be underestimated. First, the very fact that Islam means peace (*salā m*) is an important indicator of this point. This notion of peace also encompasses inner peace through the resultant state experienced when Islamic faith is internalised and there is a willing submission to the one God (*tawḥīd*). In other words, there

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are strong ties between Islam and inner peace, linguistically and spiritually to say the least. Acknowledging that one of God's names is *al-Salā m* (the Source of Peace) is another significant indicator. There are also many Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* that discuss peace (*salā m*) in a way where inner peace is central to their meaning.

Second, most Islamic literature is in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. There are various Islamic concepts that have been written about, particularly from a *tasawwuf* (Islamic spirituality) perspective that have strong affiliations with inner peace. Three concepts that have a direct affiliation with inner peace are: *riḍā* (contentment), *sakīna* (serenity) and *itmīnā n* (peace). When these three concepts are analysed and synthesised, a definition of inner peace emerges that is true to the Islamic tradition: inner peace is attained when life and events are given a *tawḥīd*-centric meaning in a way that satisfies the heart and mind. At the core of this definition is the unique *tawḥīd*-centric worldview offered by Islam that affects the understanding of God, the self and the universe.

Literature on Inner Peace

Since inner peace is a state desired by the natural human disposition, there is a vast pool of literature available on the topic of inner peace; attaining inner peace has become the ambition of both the religious and irreligious. When scanning the literature on inner peace, it becomes evident that most of the literature on this topic has been written from the Buddhist and Hindu perspectives. Considering Buddhism and Hinduism are Eastern religions, the number of books written in a style that appeals to a Western audience is impressive to say the least.

One example of such a book is *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence*,[1] a compilation of essays that highlights the teachings and principles of Buddhism on the topic of peace. Ultimately, inner peace is achieved through detaching the self from the material world, according to Kenneth Kraft (b. 1949).[2] Due to the strong and supported association between Buddhism and peace, as contended in this book, inner peace books that are based on Buddhist teachings have become very popular. The promotion of a state of inner peace by well-known Buddhist religious leaders, such as the Dalai Lama, have also played a key role in reinforcing the association between Buddhism and inner peace. The Dalai Lama not only talks about inner peace in many of his speeches, but his words have filled the content for a number of books. *The Art of Happiness*[3] is such an example, a best seller written in collaboration with Howard Cutler; 1.5 million copies have been sold in the US alone and the book remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for almost two years.[4] The Dalai Lama's comments are often generic and light, engaging people from different backgrounds. The book's website describes the book to have a rational approach that can be practiced by individuals

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[1]   Kenneth Kraft, ed., *Inner Peace*, *World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).
[2]   Kenneth Kraft is a professor of religious studies at Lehigh University, Pennsylvania.
[3]   Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* (New York: Riverhead, 1998).
[4]   http://www.theartofhappiness.com/

from any background, tradition or religion.[5] Comments or reflections like, "The basis for inner peace is love and compassion"[6] are common. Due to the inclusive language, the book is made relevant to everyone.

Sri Chinmoy (d. 2007) is another example of a religious leader who uses inclusive language. Chinmoy, who draws upon Hindu principles, is claimed to have written over 1,500 books, according to his followers.[7] The books have wide appeal as Chinmoy states all religions are divine and therefore embrace people of all faiths. Chinmoy has written on topics such as *The Inner Promise: Paths to Self Perfection*[8] and *The Wings of Joy: Finding your Path to Inner Peace*[9]. His key message is that inner peace is achieved through self-realisation, and self-realisation is God-realisation, "for God is nothing other than the Divinity that is deep inside each one of us."[10] Chinmoy's approach is also practical as he emphasises meditation as a means for inner peace.[11]

Books have also been written from faith perspectives other than Buddhism and Hinduism. Father Gerard Dowling[12] (b. 1932) draws on insights from the Bible and teachings of Jesus in his book titled *Achieving Inner Peace*.[13] The book is written for "people suffering from scruples, whose lives were daily tormented by excessive feelings of guilt and worries about committing sin."[14] *Pathways to Inner Peace*[15] is another book written by a Christian author, Reverend James Webb.[16] However, the book is described as not being based on one religious practice and suitable for people of all religious and philosophical beliefs. Webb explains how one needs to learn to freely receive the pleasures that God endowed so one can live without guilt, fearful expectations or self-destructive patterns.[17]

Personal Kabbalah: 32 Paths to Inner Peace and Life Purpose,[18] written by Penny Cohen,[19] is a book that focuses on the teachings of the Kabbalah, the mystical aspect of Rabbinic Judaism. Cohen explains that life is filled with universal energies that flow at different rates and intensities. When these energies are channelled, it leads to the experiencing of inner peace and passion to fulfil the Divine purpose.[20] Then there is the book titled *Creating Peace*

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[5]   Ibid.
[6]   Rajiv Mehrotra, *All You Ever Wanted to Know from His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Happiness, Life, Living, and Much More: Conversations with Rajiv Mehrotra* (Carlsbad, Calif: Hay House, 2008), 48.
[7]   http://au.srichinmoycentre.org/resource/chinmoy_books
[8]   Sri Chinmoy, *The Inner Promise: Paths to Self Perfection* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).
[9]   Sri Chimnoy, *The Wings of Joy: Finding your Path to Inner Peace* (New York: Fireside Book, 1997).
[10] Chimnoy, *The Wings of Joy*, 13.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Father Gerard Dowling is an Australian Catholic priest and radio personality.
[13] Gerard Dowling, *Achieving Inner Peace* (NSW: St Pauls Publications, 2008).
[14] Ibid, back cover.
[15] James Webb, *Pathways to Inner Peace: Life-Saving Processes for Healing Heart-Mind-Soul* (Virginia: Prism Pub., 1999).
[16] Rev. Jim Webb is an ordained interfaith minister.
[17] Webb, *Pathways to Inner Peace*, back cover.
[18] Penny Cohen, *Personal Kabbalah: 32 Paths to Inner Peace and Life Purpose* (New York: Stirling Publishing, 2005).
[19] Penny Cohen is an author and clinical social worker/therapist.
[20] Cohen, *Personal Kabbalah*, 9.

by Being Peace: The Essene Sevenfold Path.[21] The author of this book, Gabriel Cousens (b. 1943),[22] addresses the increasingly urgent need to transform humankind with the ancient peace wisdom of the Essenes, a Judaic mystical group, where an essential part of inner peace is to let go of the ego.[23]

Not only have many books been written on inner peace, but various journal articles have also been published on the topic. "Journal of Happiness Studies,"[24] a peer reviewed scientific journal devoted to subjective well-being, is such an example. While the journal does not focus on inner peace, it covers many topics that overlap with inner peace, such as life satisfaction and reducing stress levels.

There are also many articles in various journals that address inner peace, making it evident that inner peace is approached by almost all disciplines with many inter-disciplinary studies emerging. "Climate Change and Inner Peace" in *Peace Review*[25] is a point in discussion that deliberates on how individuals with inner peace are more likely to be conscious of their personal ecological impact. According to the article, such consciousness would contribute positively to the environment, which will then have a positive impact on climate change. Another article comprises of research on the relationship between meditation and living longer. The article titled "Does Inner Peace Lead to Longer Life?" in *New Scientist*[26] claims that participants of transcendental meditation, which involves repeating a mantra out loud or in one's mind to achieve inner peacefulness, live longer. Then there is a journal article that seeks to demonstrate that art education leads to inner peace. "Developing Inner Peace and Joy through Art Education" in *Journal of Social Sciences*[27] produces the results of surveying 400 Bachelor of Education students who undertook a workshop on art education. Based on the survey results, the art education gave peace and joy to the participants. The connection of inner peace studies to other disciplines seems endless.

Where does Islamic literature on inner peace fit among this vast collection of literature? The number of sources on inner peace or topics related to Islam in the English language is minimal. Two non-English major sources are written by classical scholars. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzā lī[28] (d. 1111) is one of the scholars who wrote on the topic of happiness. His major work, *Ihyā ' 'Ulū m al-Dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) was summarised and published in Persian as a book titled *The Alchemy of Happiness.*[29]

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[21]   Gabriel Cousens, *Creating Peace by Being Peace: The Essene Sevenfold Path* (California: North Atlantic Books, 2008).
[22]   Gabriel Cousens is an American physician and a spiritual writer.
[23]   Cousens, *Creating Peace by Being Peace*, xx.
[24]   http://link.springer.com/journal/10902
[25]   Paul Wapner, "Climate Change and Inner Peace," *Peace Review* 25, no. 4 (October 2013): 568-575.
[26]   Alison Motluk, "Does Inner Peace Lead to Longer Life?" *New Scientist* 186, no. 2498 (May 2005): 17.
[27]   Susmita Lakhyani, "Developing Inner Peace and Joy through Art Education," *Journal of Social Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2012): 177-181.
[28]   Ghazzā lī had expertise in various fields including theology, philosophy, jurisprudence and Sufism. He was believed to be a *mujaddid* (renewer of the faith). His work has been so highly acclaimed that he has been referred to as *hujjat al-Islam* (the proof of Islam).
[29]   Abu Hamid Ghazzā lī, Jay R. Crook, and Laleh Bakhtiar, *The Alchemy of Happiness (Kimiya al-Saadat)* (Chicago, IL: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2008).

Ghazzā lī focuses on *ʿibā dā t* (worship) and *muʿā malā t* (dealings) as key components of attaining happiness. Worship refers to matters such as the five pillars of Islam and dealings relates to matters such as manners of eating meals, manners of marriage, manners of journeying and so on.[30] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzī yah (d.1350)[31] also wrote on the topic of happiness with his Arabic book titled *Miftāḥ al-Saʿādah* (Key to the Abode of Happiness).[32] In his book, Ibn Qayyim identifies three contributors to happiness; to be thankful when blessed, to persevere when tried and to seek forgiveness when sins are committed. While both these approaches to inner peace or happiness are most certainly true to Islam, the aim of this article is to develop a concept of inner peace that further broadens the understanding of inner peace which is inclusive of Ghazzā lī's and Ibn Qayyim's works. The new concept is not only inclusive of religious practises and everyday actions but it also takes worldview into consideration.

When the contemporary Islamic literature on inner peace is reviewed, a limited number of sources do emerge. *Heart, Self & Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony*[33] written by Robert Frager[34] (b. 1940) is one such book. It is a book that has a particular focus on purifying the soul, a common focus of Sufism. Frager explains that love of God is at the core of inner peace, a common Sufi approach, while wisdom also plays a critical role in the attainment of inner peace.[35] Khaled Abou El Fadl has also tackled the topic, but from a slightly different angle. In his paper titled "When Happiness Fails: An Islamic Perspective,"[36] Abou El Fadl states there is an inextricable link between knowledge and happiness, where knowledge is about the self, other people, other cultures and the world.[37] It is such knowledge that leads to a state of peace and harmony with the self, with creation and with God. Drawing on this analysis, Abou El Fadl argues that puritanical Muslims are undermining the ability to experience happiness at the individual and social level[38] due to their *jahiliyyah* (ignorance). After this point, Abou El Fadl continues to analyse the puritanical mind-set, which has caused nothing but distress and ugliness for humanity.

Finally, a paper titled "Inner Peace Leading to Outer Peace"[39] has been written by Zeki Saritoprak.[40] The paper quotes various Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* related to peace with the underlying message that belief in God is ultimately what leads to inner peace. Saritoprak states

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[30]   Ghazzā lī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, xxi.

[31]   Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzī yah was jurist, commentator on the Qur'ā n and a theologian.

[32]   Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzī yah, *Miftahü ssaade: Saadet Anahtari: Miftā ḥ al-Saʿā dah,* trans. Muhammed İ hsan Oğuz, (İstanbul: Ahmet Sait Matbaasi: 1968).

[33]   Robert Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony* (USA: Quest Books, 2013).

[34]   Robert Frager is the founder of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, now called Sofia University, in California.

[35]   Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 76.

[36]   Khaled Abou El Fadl, "When Happiness Fails: An Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Law and Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014).

[37]   Abou El Fadl, "When Happiness Fails: An Islamic Perspective," 110.

[38]   Ibid, 121.

[39]   Zeki Saritoprak, "Inner Peace Leading to Outer Peace," *American Baptist Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2012).

[40]   Zeki Saritoprak is the director of the Bediuzzaman Said Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies, John Carroll University, Ohio.

"Attainment of inner peace is a direct reflection of the divine name the Peace."[41] To maintain inner peace, the essentiality of the five daily prayers is emphasised, followed by good character and good deeds. Thus, there is a strong focus on the adoption of Islamic beliefs and practises to attain inner peace.

As can be seen, there is some literature that touches on inner peace from an Islamic perspective, however, it is limited. This literature is a good starting point to bring the Islamic perspective alongside literature that discusses inner peace from other religious and non-religious perspectives. However, contemporary English Islamic literature on inner peace needs further development to include worldview, meaning and perspective. Discussions of inner peace need to be tied back to the theology of Islam.

In relation to this, Said Nursi[42] (d. 1960), a twentieth century Turkish scholar, highlights that classical Muslim intellectual writings were able to articulate matters related to belief and knowledge of God without facing any real external challenges to the theological integrity of Islam.[43] Their arguments were sufficient, quickly dispelling any unbelief arising from doubts.[44] There was a theological acceptance of life and events without questioning or doubting. This is no longer the case, according to Nursi, as everything now needs to be proven and justified; why hardships are experienced, why there is suffering, how good and evil play out, and so on. This obliges the expression and articulation of Islam and its teachings in a way that meets the needs of Muslims who are faced with the challenges of contemporary times and the questioning that comes with it.[45] Therefore, inner peace needs to be expressed in relation to worldview rather than practises, so that life and events make sense from a theological perspective; something that would have been taken for granted in the classical Muslim world. This in no way negates the importance of practises but instead focuses on the worldview which then results in the practises.

An overall observation about how inner peace is conceptualised and addressed in the literature is that many theories have been developed about how one attains inner peace, the benefits of inner peace and how inner peace manifests. However, it is important to highlight there is certainly not one accepted universal definition of inner peace. More often than not, inner peace is not defined, but instead discussed with the expectation that all have an understanding of what inner peace means. Therefore, the discussion on inner peace is often regarding how one attains inner peace, such as through detachment, love and compassion, letting go of the ego, living a guilt free life and so on. There is an implicit suggestion that the definition of inner peace is not important, it is subjective after all, but a state that all nevertheless desire. What is important is the pathway to inner peace, which is, more often than not, the focus of the literature.

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[41]   Saritoprak, "Inner Peace Leading to Outer Peace," 329.
[42]   Said Nursi is a theologian who write the Risale-i Nur, a *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur'an.
[43]   Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', "How to Read Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur" in *Islam at the Crossroads*, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 68.
[44]   Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler, 1989), 23.
[45]   Abu-Rabi', "How to Read Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur," 68.

When the literature on inner peace is categorised from a belief perspective, it becomes apparent that non-Islamic literature on inner peace is well-established and thriving in the English speaking world. Furthermore, Buddhism is leading the way in its publications on inner peace. So much so that Buddhism has almost become synonymous with inner peace. Nevertheless, inner peace has been discussed from various religious and non-religious angles. On the other hand, there is very limited Islamic literature on the topic of inner peace. This then necessitates the expansion of the research to identify Islamic concepts that have a strong affiliation with inner peace; *riḍā*, *sakīna* and *itmīnā n*. These concepts can then be brought together to develop a definition of inner peace that draws on the essence of these concepts while being conscious of the Islamic theology and worldview. However, it is important to first look at the meaning of Islam and *salā m* to demonstrate that inner peace is at the core of Islam.

The Meaning of Islam

Often the point is made that Islam means peace. Although this notion has almost become a cliché in a world where Islam's relationship with peace is sought to be justified, the topic at hand necessitates its discussion in light of inner peace. How does Islam mean peace? Lexically, Islam means the act of submitting one's self,[46] and in the religious context, it means submitting one's self to the one God (*tawhīd*). Such a submission is the outcome of having a relationship with God that is marked by absolute trust and confidence in God.[47] Linguistically, Islam means a particular kind of surrender; "it is a surrender in which one is in complete tranquility and peace with that who is the object of the surrender."[48]

The words 'Islā m' and '*salā m*' (the Arabic word for peace) come from the same root word.[49] This lexical fact further highlights the connection between Islam and peace. What is meant by peace here is not an absence of war, but an absence of turmoil within the self so inner peace is experienced where one has attained tranquillity and serenity through faith. Islam's literal meaning of peace is also described to be the inner confidence that is born as a result of faith, enabling "the religious believer to face adversity without anxiety or despair."[50]

Inner Peace in the Qur'ān and Ḥadī th

The notion that Islam is peace is further alluded to by the following Qur'ānic verse: "Whereby God guides whoever strives after His good pleasure to the ways of peace (*salā m*) and He leads them by His leave out of all kinds of darkness into light, and guides them to a straight path."[51] Ibn 'Abbā s[52] (d. 687) explains this verse as God guiding those who seek His

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[46]   Jamal Zarabozo, *What is Islam* (Riyadh: Under-Secretariat of Publications and Research, 2005), 110.
[47]   Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 132.
[48]   Ibid, 133.
[49]   Zarabozo, *What is Islam*, 110.
[50]   Thomas Michel, *Insights from the Risale-i Nur: Said Nursi's Advice for Modern Believers* (N.J.: Tughra Books, 2013), 41.
[51]   Qur'ān 5:16.
[52]   Ibn 'Abbā s was one of the cousins of Prophet Muḥa mmad. He was also one of the early *tafsīr* scholars, having written *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbā s* [*Tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbā s].

pleasure onto paths of peace, by which he means the religion of Islam; that is, peace is understood to be synonymous with Islam. Ibn 'Abbā s further points out that peace is actually God (*al-Salā m*),[53] so seeking God's pleasure leads one to God (*al-Salā m*). Thus, according to Ibn 'Abbā s' *tafsīr*, peace means Islam and peace means God, so the word peace (*salā m*) is interchangeable with the religion of Islam and God. In explaining this verse, Maḥa llī[54] (d. 1459) and Suyū ṭī[55] (d. 1505) state that striving for God's pleasure is by believing in God, which then opens the way to peace.[56] Therefore, belief in God is seen as the pathway to peace. With all the *tafsīrs*, both Islam and peace are viewed as synonymous concepts or Islam is seen to lead to peace. Either way, the relationship between Islam and peace is extremely strong.

Furthermore, in this verse, light is used as an analogy; "Islamic guidance is depicted as the light that leads from darkness to the paths of peace."[57] Nursi uses the light analogy in many parts of his writings to indicate that belief sheds 'light' on one's life, such that "belief saves man from seeing the world as empty, grievous, desolate, purposeless, and abounding in perils and enemies."[58] Hence, Nursi explains, if one "attains Divine guidance and belief enters his heart … then the universe will suddenly take on the colour of day and be filled with Divine light."[59]

As further evidence of the relationship between inner peace and Islam, the names of God can be studied; the names of God are important in Islam as they are a means of knowing and relating to God. *Al-Salā m* is one of the names of God that has been well-documented in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. *Al-Salām* is mentioned in the following Qur'ānic verse: "God is He, other than Who there is no deity; the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety …"[60] Based on this verse, peace comes from God, since God is the source of peace. Furthermore, the purpose of life for human beings is to mirror the names of God.[61] When a person mirrors or manifests the Divine name *al-Salā m*, it means that one would feel a sense of peace and tranquillity in their life.[62]

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[53]   Ibn 'Abbā s, *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbā s* [*Tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbā s], trans. Mokrane Gezzou (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2008), 135.
[54]   Maḥa llī was a *tafsīr* scholar who first composed *Tafsīr al-Jalā layn* [*Tafsīr* of the two Jalāls].
[55]   Suyū ṭī was a *tafsīr* scholar who completed *Tafsīr al-Jalā layn* [*Tafsīr* of the two Jalā ls], which his teacher Maḥa llī had commenced.
[56]   Jalā l al-Dīn al-Maḥa llī and Jalā l al-Dī n al-Suyū ṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalā layn* [*Tafsīr* of the Two Jalals], trans. Aisha Bewley (London: Dar Al Taqwa, 2007), 243.
[57]   Shin Chiba and Thomas John Schoenbaum, *Peace Movements and Pacifism After September 11* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2008), 114.
[58] Muhammed Rushdi Ubayd, "The Thought of Said Nursi: A Contemporary Approach," *Nur Web Pages*, accessed January 2, 2014, http://www.nur.org/en/nurcenter/nurlibrary/The_Thought_of_Said_Nursi_A_ Contemporary_Approach_191.
[59]   Said Nursi, *The Words*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sö zler, 1993), 322.
[60]   Qur'ān 59:23.
[61]   Nursi, *The Words*, 141.
[62]   Saritoprak, "Inner Peace Leading to Outer Peace," 329.

When explaining this Qur'ānic verse, Zamakhsharī[63] (d. 1144), states the source of peace means granter or donator of peace.[64] That is, it is God who grants inner peace to humankind. Bursawi[65] (d. 1725) states God must be asked for peace in this world and the hereafter. He further describes a peaceful person to have a peaceful and purified heart, with no jealousy, evil inclination, deceit or envy. Also, their organs (eyes, tongue, hands, etc.) are not misused. Such a person's desires have not taken control of their intellect. That is, their reasoning is not blurred by their desires.[66] Thus, Bursawi provides a detailed description of the qualities found within a person of peace which reflects the qualities of God conscious person.

The word *salām* is also the key word in the Islamic greeting, *assalamu alaykum* (peace be with you). Prophet Muḥammad encouraged the use of this greeting in various *ḥadīth*. In one *ḥadīth*, he states, "Offer food generously to others, initiate the greeting of *salām* (peace) to those whom you know and those whom you do not know."[67] In response to this instruction by Prophet Muḥammad, Muslims exchange this greeting when commencing any type of communication or when passing by each other. By offering peace to others, the greeting "helps to relieve hearts of all forms of enmity and grudges and rancor people may keep within them, replacing it with good will, mutual respect, tranquillity, security and happiness."[68] Through this practise, Muslims are praying for each other to be in a constant state of inner peace.

There is also an invocation that Prophet Muḥammad encouraged Muslims to recite after each of the five daily prayers. The invocation focuses on the name of God, *al-Salām*: "O God, you are peace and from you is peace. Blessed are you, the Majestic and Generous."[69] The invocation reaffirms the notion that God is peace and He is the source of peace. Therefore, Muslims are reminded five times a day that they should seek a state of inner peace and they should seek it from God.

Furthermore, in the prescribed five daily prayers, the final stage of the prayer ends with a greeting of peace where the worshipper turns their head to the right and says "Peace and mercy of God be with you" followed by turning the head to the left and repeating the same phrase. This is based on the practise of Prophet Muḥammad, as documented by the *ḥadīth*: Amr ibn Sa'd related that his father said, "I saw the Prophet making the *salām* on his right side and on his left side …"[70] This well-documented and well-established practice is performed by Muslims at the end of each prayer, five times a day, every day. The greeting is "intended to

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[63]   Zamakhsharī was a *tafsīr* scholar who wrote the *tafsīr* titled *Al-Kashshāf* [The Revealer].
[64]   Abu al-Qāsim Maḥmūd Zamakhsharī, "Al-Kashshāf" [The Revealer], accessed July 29, 2015, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=59&tAyahNo=23&tDisplay=ye s&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.
[65]   Bursawi was a Sufi scholar and *tafsīr* scholar. He wrote the *tafsīr* called *Ruhu'l Bayan fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [The Spirit of the Commentary].
[66]   Ismail Haqqi Bursawi, "Rūḥu'l-Bayān" [The Spirit of the Commentary], accessed July 29, 2015, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=36&tSoraNo=59&tAyahNo=23&tDisplay= yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1.
[67]   Ibn Majah, vol. 4, book 29, *Ḥadīth* 3253.
[68]   Abdul Rahman Al-Sheha, *Islam is the Religion of Peace* (Riyadh: Saudi Arabia World Wide Association for Introducing Islam, 2011), 12.
[69]   Abu Dawud, book 8, *ḥadīth* no. 1507.
[70]   Related by Ahmad, Muslim, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.

give peace and mercy to human beings and angels who may be joining them in prayer."[71] Therefore, the notion of spreading peace and encouraging others to attain inner peace is the direct outcome of a *ḥadīth* that inspires such acts.

As evident from the presence of the word *salām* in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, there is an important place in Islam for the concept of inner peace. Not only is it linked to belief, but God is seen as an embodiment of peace and therefore the source of peace. This notion is imperative as it demonstrates the concept of inner peace is not foreign to Islam at all; it is actually at its core. To further augment the notion that inner peace is an integral part of Islam, the next section will discuss concepts that have a close relationship with inner peace. From these very concepts, a definition of inner peace will be formulated.

Islamic Concepts Affiliated with Inner Peace

Concepts strongly affiliated with inner peace – *riḍā*, *sakīna* and *itmīnān* – have been the focus of Islamic scholars for centuries. Not only have these concepts been extensively discussed in Islamic literature, they have also been embraced by *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* scholars, since there are various Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* where these concepts are cited. As a result, *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* scholars have commented on these concepts extensively to shed further light on their meaning and role in the life of Muslims.

It must be highlighted there are other concepts that have a strong affiliation with inner peace, such as *sa'ada* (happiness), *shukr* (thankfulness) and *raja* (hope); however, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss every Islamic spiritual concept that has a strong affiliation with inner peace. Therefore, three concepts that are commonly discussed by *tasawwuf* scholars have been identified. A common thread can be seen between the concepts, which can then be extended to other concepts.

Riḍā (Contentment)

One of the key barriers to inner peace is non-acceptance of life circumstances and events beyond one's control, which may lead to pain and suffering. A notion dealing with this in Islam is the concept of *riḍā*, which is often translated as contentment, but has also been translated as resignation and satisfaction. In essence, it means "showing no rancor or rebellion against misfortune, and accepting all manifestations of Destiny without complaint and even peacefully."[72] There is a true submission to the fate ordained by the one God. Muḥammad ibn Khafif[73] (d. 982) separates *riḍā* into two types: *riḍā* with God and *riḍā* with what comes from God. *Riḍā* with God is when one is content with God's arrangement of affairs, while *riḍā* with that which comes from God is contentment with His decrees.[74] God's arrangement of affairs

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[71]   Saritoprak, "Inner Peace Leading to Outer Peace," 330.
[72]   Fethullah Gülen, *Emerald Hills of the Heart: Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*, vol. 1 (New Jersey, USA: The Light Inc, 2006), 104.
[73]   Muḥammad ibn Khafif was a Sufi scholar from Persia.
[74]   Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism*, trans. Alexander Knysh (UK: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 207.

would be the systems and processes He has put in place in the universe that affect human beings in every way, since human beings are part of that system. Thus, one is content in this system that one finds themselves to be a part of.

Having *riḍā* with God's decree means accepting whatever God has ordained for a person, even if it appears to be negative. Rabi'a al-Adawiyyah (d. 801) sees it as more than accepting God's decree; she describes *riḍā* as "When he rejoices at afflictions as much as he rejoices at bounty,"[75] so a person feels the same state of elation no matter what is experienced – good or bad, positive or negative. Therefore, all types of suffering would trigger the same reaction as a joyful experience. In this understanding of *riḍā*, it "is not a patient bearing and suffering of all the vicissitudes of life, but happiness in poverty and affliction."[76] In a sense, the person with inner peace through *riḍā* would have an unchanging core equally sensitive – in a way, insensitive – to both positive and negative events and circumstances in life, and accept them as an unavoidable and inseparable part of the human condition on earth. There is a conviction that there must be wisdom in the event being experienced. The Qur'ānic verse often quoted in this context is, "It may be that you dislike something, though it is good for you. And it may be that you love something, though it is bad for you. And God knows, and you do not know."[77] The verse encourages one to accept there may be benefit in what one is experiencing, even if it is causing discomfort, enabling one to have contentment with the experience. There is the general understanding that "what comes to a person in his or her life may help a person move closer to God when the response is right."[78] Thus, as bad as an event may appear, the fact it brings one closer to God makes it good. This mind set in itself is a source of peace.

However, the notion of rejoicing at afflictions is not easy for the uninitiated. Therefore, *riḍā* has been understood to have levels according to one's spiritual state, so an ordinary person's experiencing of *riḍā* is different to that of someone who has profound spirituality.[79] For ordinary Muslim believers, *riḍā* means to not be in a state of denial and rebellion to events and circumstances in their lives, since ultimately everything occurs according to God's will and creation. One should have a basic level of contentment "according to God's commandments in willing submission to His Lordship and administrative authority."[80]

For those with a deeper spiritual knowledge of God, *riḍā* means "welcoming God's decrees and ordinances without objection."[81] At this level, one's connection with God is considered constant so no experience causes swerving of the heart.[82] This level marks a state of inner peace that is devoid of critical perception of events and circumstances that may disturb that state. The third level of contentment is that of those who have profound spirituality. At this

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[75]   Ibid, 208.

[76]   Annemarie Schimmel and Carl W. Ernst. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 126.

[77]   Qur'ān 2:216.

[78]   Hamza Yusuf, *Purification of the Heart: Signs, Symptoms and Cures of the Spiritual Diseases of the Heart* (London: Dar Al Taqwa, 2012), 49.

[79]   Gülen, *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol. 1, 108.

[80]   Ibid, 109.

[81]   Ibid.

[82]   Ibid.

level, one is pleased with what pleases God, so anger, joy or grief is not felt for personal reasons. "Such a person, no longer feeling, thinking, or desiring for himself or herself, experiences the pleasure of annihilation in the Lord, for only His Will and decisions remain."[83] Therefore, the self is negated so what God is pleased with becomes the driving force, not the needs and wants of the self. Although this appears fatalistic, it is important to note that in Islamic theology and spirituality, events and circumstances that happen beyond one's control are attributed to the one God (*tawḥīd*) who has power over all things. The reverence a believer feels for God, enables acceptance leading to inner peace.

The following often quoted Qur'ānic verse encompasses all three levels of *riḍā*: "O you soul at peace. Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him), and well-pleasing to Him. Enter, then, among My servants (fully content with servanthood to Me)! And enter my Paradise!"[84] As indicated by this verse, being content with God's judgment and pleased with Him is described to be a source of spiritual peace and happiness in both worlds.[85] The contentment is reciprocated with God being content with the person who is in a state of contentment. The resultant connection with God is so strong "they trust God, and God trusts them; they love God, and God loves them."[86]

Sakīna (Serenity)

Sakīna literally means calmness, silence and steadiness such that a person experiences tranquillity.[87] In the context of Islamic spirituality, it also means the heart has come to a state of bliss as a result of its connection with the presence of God or in the presence of angelic spirits, so it is not shaken by worldly fear, grief or anxiety, and finds peace, integrity and harmony between their inner world and the outer world.[88] Someone with *sakīna*, therefore, is able to deal with the challenges and difficulties that come with life without being shaken. There is an understanding of life and events in way that does not shudder the individual, but instead leaves them feeling content with whatever is being experienced.

Sakīna is affiliated with the unseen realm rather than drawing its strength from the world the physical eye can see. For example, a substance that resembled vapour or mist is believed to have surrounded Usayd ibn Khudayr, one of the companions of Prophet Muḥammad, while he was reading the Qur'ān, which gave him a feeling of exhilaration. This feeling of exhilaration is attributed to *sakīna*.[89] Thus, it is like a positive energy that surrounds a person, giving them a feeling of peace. But this positive energy is dependent on the state of the person as well as their actions.

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[83]   Ibid.
[84]   Qur'ān 89:27-30.
[85]   Gülen, *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol. 1, 106.
[86]   Abou El Fadl, Khaled, "When Happiness Fails: An Islamic Perspective", *Journal of Law and Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014), 110.
[87]   Gülen, *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol. 1, 139.
[88]   Ibid, 140.
[89]   Ibid, 139.

Sakīna is mentioned in the Qur'ān as a means of reaffirming one's faith: "It is He who sent down tranquillity (*sakīna*) into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith …"[90] Maḥallī and Suyūṭī describe *sakīna* as a spirit of peace sent down by God as a Divine reassurance to those who believe.[91] In this respect, *sakīna* is the result of faith, which is only possible through an intimate connection with God. The feeling of inner peace is generated or granted with having a strong conviction in God and the resultant strong faith. Ibn 'Abbās explains how *sakīna* further reaffirms and strengthens the faith of the believer, adding certainty, belief and knowledge to the faith one already has.[92]

Itmi'nān (Peacefulness)

Itmīnān (peacefulness), on the other hand, is defined as full satisfaction and contentment so one is in a state of complete rest in their inner world. It is a spiritual state surpassing *sakīna*; if *sakīna* is understood to be the "beginning of being freed from theoretical knowledge and awakened to the truth, *itmīnān* is considered to be the final point or station."[93] In other words, *sakīna* leads to *itmīnān*. *Sakīna* is a temporary state gifted by God in times of distress or when one experiences spiritual exhilaration, whereas *itmīnān* is a constant state.

The Qur'ān mentions *itmīnān* as one of the levels of the *nafs* (ego) that one aspires to achieve, known as a*l-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah* (the *nafs* at peace).[94] When one has reached this level of the *nafs*, it means one has attained peace and tranquillity. The Qur'ān mentions this level of the *nafs* as: "O you soul at rest (content). Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him), and well-pleasing to Him. Enter, then, among My servants (fully content with servanthood to Me)! And enter my Paradise!"[95] Zamakhsharī explains that God is talking to the *nafs* at peace directly as he talked to Moses. This is considered a great honour for the *nafs* and therefore a significant outcome of the purification process it has been through.[96] It is also an indication of the closeness to God that one has achieved, deserving to be spoken to directly by God. Bursawi highlights the point that the level of peace will increase as the level of knowledge of God (*ma'rifa*) contained within the *nafs* increases.[97] Therefore, a clear association is made between knowledge of God and the purity of the *nafs*. Rāzī[98] (d. 925) asserts, at the level where the *nafs* is at peace, it means it is at a level of knowing God in this world. That is, true knowledge of

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[90] Qur'ān 48:4.
[91] Maḥallī and Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 1097.
[92] Ibn 'Abbās, *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*, 685.
[93] Ibid.
[94] The Qur'an mentions three levels of the *nafs*: *al-nafs al-ʾammārah* (the evil-commanding *nafs*), a*l-nafs al-luwwāmah* (the self-accusing *nafs*) and a*l-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah* (the *nafs* at peace).
[95] Qur'ān 89:27-30.
[96] Zamakhsharī, "Al-Kashshāf," accessed July 29, 2015, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&t TafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=89&tAyahNo=27&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.
[97] Bursawi, "Rūḥu'l-Bayān," accessed July 29, 2015, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&t TafsirNo=36&tSoraNo=95&tAyahNo=4&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.
[98] Rāzī was a theologian and philosopher. He wrote the *Tafsīr-i al-Kabīr* [The Great Tafsīr] also known as *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* [The Keys to the Unknown].

God has been attained when one's *nafs* is at the level of *muṭmaʾinnah*. Such a *nafs* has calmness and certainty, according to Rāzī.[99]

There is a link between *itmīnā n* and *riḍā* in Qur'ānic chapter 89 verses 27 to 30. When *al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah* is reached, the *nafs* is at the station of resignation (*riḍā*). This state of *riḍā* provides a sense of contentment, acceptance and peace for a person at this level of the *nafs*. At the same time, resignation and acceptance (*riḍā*) lead to greater tranquillity (*itmīnā n*) of the heart. This is a critical aspect of how inner peace is nurtured by various states of the inner self.

Definiton of Inner Peace

When all three of these states are considered together, a collective understanding of inner peace emerges. It is an understanding of inner peace that evolves around the belief in the one God as highlighted by the Qur'ānic verse "Verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest."[100] After all, believing in the oneness of God (*tawhīd*) is at the core of the Islamic faith, described as the "the cornerstone of Islam."[101] It is the first tenet of the Islamic faith upon which all other beliefs of Islam are assembled. It is the belief there is no other deity but God, with a whole theology defining its understanding.

Furthermore, at the core of *tawhīd* is the belief in a God "who has created everything in the best way."[102] Many *tafsīr* scholars have commented on this verse. Ṭabarī explains this verse to mean, not only did God create everything perfectly, but everything is also perfectly calculated with a measure that demonstrates complete knowledge.[103] In relation to this Qur'ānic verse, Ṭabarī focuses on the notion that everything is created beautifully, with his focus being the perfection in design, symmetry and measure – the physical beauty of creation. Ibn Kathir has a similar focus. He explains that God is informing humankind of how He has created everything well and formed everything in a goodly fashion. He quotes Zayd bin Aslam's[104] (d. 754) comments regarding this verse, who said: "'Who made everything He has created good" means "He created everything well and in a goodly fashion.'"[105] Zamakhsharī's explains that everything is created with wisdom and for a purpose: "Whatever God created, He surely made it beautiful."[106] The wisdom in creation can be understood in various ways. It can either suggest that creation has been created wisely and therefore everything serves multiple roles, which

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[99]   Rāzī, "Mafatih Al-Ghayb," accessed July 29, 2015, http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsir No=4&tSoraNo=89&tAyahNo=28&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.
[100] Qur'an 13:28.
[101] Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 651.
[102] Qur'ān 32:7.
[103] Ṭabarī, "Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī," accessed June 20, 2015, http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&t TafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=32&tAyahNo=7&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.
[104] Zayd bin Aslam is a scholar and *Tabi'* (third generation after Prophet Muḥammad). He narrated many *ḥadīth*.
[105] Ibn Kathir, "Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm" [Tafsīr of the Qur'ān], accessed June 20, 2015, http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1805&Itemid=88.
[106] Zamakhsharī, "Al-Kashshā f," accessed June 20, 2015, http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsir No=2&tSoraNo=32&tAyahNo=7&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.

means it has been created with a good purpose. Or it can suggest that everything has been created with wisdom and therefore there must be good in all of creation.

Baqliyyi explains that God created everything in a beautiful way. The things that look indecent or ugly are created as a test, according to Baqliyyi, because anything that God created cannot be ugly or indecent since creating an ugly thing is ungodly.[107] When studying this commentary, it is important to point out the focus of creation is not only the creation of entities, but also creation of events. Although events may appear ugly or evil, there is good in the outcome they produce, whether it be in this life or the afterlife.

From this *tawḥīd*-centric approach to life and events, alongside the various states affiliated with inner peace, emerges a definition of inner peace. It is a definition that focuses on approaching life and events from a *tawḥīd*-centric perspective. Such a *tawḥīd*-centric worldview leads to seeing the good in all of creation, seeking to understand the wisdom in all that happens. This, in turn, creates a state that encompasses *riḍā*, *sakīna* and *itmīnā n*.

By having *riḍā*, there is no resentment against misfortune, and accepting all manifestations of Destiny, whether they appear good or bad, without complaint and even peacefully. It requires intellectual ability to understand the wisdom in events so that one is not negatively affected by its surroundings. While the mind is content, so is the heart, as the conviction in *tawḥīd* allows submission (*taslīm*) and peace (*salā m*) at the highest level.

Sakīna is also encompassed in inner peace as it refers to the ability to deal with the challenges and difficulties that come with life without being shaken by them. There is an understanding of life in a way that does not shudder the individual but instead leaves them feeling content and calm with whatever is comes their way. There is a further feeling of tranquillity granted as a result of the strong faith in the one God (*tawḥīd*) at times when hardship is experienced.

Itmīnā n is the concept that has the strongest affiliation with inner peace. It is the state where one is at complete rest in their inner world as a result of being pleased unconditionally with their Lord, which stems from knowing God. It is the outcome of contentment, contentment that comes with knowing one's Creator and the way His Divine decree manifests over the universe and the self, leaving one satisfied with all that happens, and for that matter, does not happen.

When all three states are considered together, a definition of inner peace emerges that is true to all the states; inner peace is attained when life and events are given a *tawḥīd*-centric meaning in a way that satisfies the heart and mind. Not only is the mind satisfied as it gives a positive meaning to life and events in line with one's belief in *tawḥīd*, but the heart is also satisfied and content. This is not a blind acceptance of events, but instead an intellectual ability to grasp the wisdom in the events that take place. As a result, the heart has no resentment nor pain with the experiences it encounters, which at face value can appear negative and

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[107] Baqliyyi, "Araisu'l Bayan fi Haqaiqi'l Qur'ān" [Muses of Explanation in the Truths of the Qur'ān], accessed June 20, 2015, http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=32&tSoraNo=32&t AyahNo=7&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.

destructive. Instead, the heart is at peace, satisfied that everything is happening for a reason in the best possible way since everything is under the power of the one God (*tawhīd*).

Thus, inner peace is part and parcel of Islam. The Islamic faith, which is founded on the belief in one God, provides a *tawhīd*-centric worldview that allows one to trust in God's decree and have no qualms with the hardships that may be encountered. Furthermore, a *tawhīd*-centric worldview provides *riḍā*, *sakīna* and *itmīnā n*, which come together to offer a state of inner peace.