

The Many Faces of Peace

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What would you imagine if you heard the word 'peace'? The meaning of peace can change based on culture and language. I lived in Indonesia for 8 years and am now in my second year living in Japan. In this essay, I will examine how my perspective on peace evolved after moving from Indonesia to Japan, and how well-being and culture influenced it.

English and Japanese focus on avoiding conflict, while Indonesian focuses more on restoring relationships, which feels more personal and intimate. I was curious to know if the people in Indonesia, where the country I have spent the most time in, feel happier than those in Japan. Well-being is one way to measure peace. A study called the Global Flourishing Study, conducted by Harvard University, surveyed over 200,000 people in 22 countries. In this study, Indonesia ranked first in overall well-being, while Japan ranked last. This made me wonder: how can a country with fewer material resources feel more emotionally fulfilled?

To me, peace is not just the absence of fighting and noise. It means being able to express who I am, without feeling the pressure to fit in. In Indonesia, I felt closer to this kind of peace. People had different religions, beliefs, and appearances, but we still respected each other. In Indonesia, a majority-Muslim country, Islam was part of daily life, not in a strict way, but as a reminder to stay grateful, calm, and accepting. I believe this helped people live peacefully, without trying to change others.

However, after moving to Japan, I realized that peace could take on a different meaning. While people are kind, I often felt pressured to hide parts of myself to fit in. In contrast, I felt more emotionally free in Indonesia, where religion had a big impact on our lives. As a majority-Muslim country, many Indonesians believe that everything happens according to Allah's will, which helps them stay calm and grateful during tough times. Daily prayers and Ramadan build inner peace by teaching patience, self-control, and appreciation for nature's blessings. Ramadan also brings

communities together as people fast, share meals, and support one another. Even non-Muslims show kindness and respect by learning about fasting and avoiding eating in front of others. I also found it beautiful that Muslims greet each other with "As-salamu alaykum," meaning "peace be upon you," reflecting how peace is a way of life. In Indonesia, I was more comfortable expressing myself, but adapting to expectations in Japan became emotionally tiring for me.

In the end, I believe peace is not just about avoiding conflict; it is about being accepted for who you are. True peace is achieved when people respect each other's differences and live with kindness and honesty. That is the kind of peace I want to see more of, both in the world and within myself.