

End Conditioning, End Sorrow

Swami Suryadevananda

What

Expression, experience and understanding

Our thoughts, feelings, words and deeds are all different forms of expression which return to us as experience. Usually, we are more concerned with the effect or experience and forget that expression not only shapes experience—it itself becomes the experience on the rebound. It does not matter whether you are a doctor, lawyer, housewife, student or swami—we are all expressing in some manner and environment, and experiencing the effects.

Through the *cycle of expression and experience*, we have an opportunity to know the inner health of the mind as it reacts and to transform the very character or substance of the mind by responding to all that arises in a better way—without separating ourselves from anything.

What are problems?

Problems are effects experienced within when the inner world does not correspond to the outer world. What we want is not coming and what we don't want is here to stay, it seems. This inner world comprises our hopes and expectations, no matter what the justification and our conditioning.

What is conditioning?

Conditioning is habits of the mind that insist on conditioning—interpreting and shaping our lives. There is a condition outside and thought colors it so that we do not see what is actually there—only what thought or inner conditioning tells us is there.

Since childhood, we are trained to take care of everything we consider 'ours' first. Then, we are trained to be competitive with others and doing it better than others or most brings praise and recognition. The inner feeling of 'our things' and 'our people' is trained further into 'our interests' and the idea of self. Once the idea of self or 'who I am' is taught, it becomes a self-feeding circle of self-centeredness and selfishness that will insist on interpreting perception and shaping response.

Gradually, the feeling of 'I', 'mine' and 'better than others' or 'me first' saturates consciousness and the trained 'I' enters life fully conditioned and perhaps eager to win. But there is just one little problem: others have had this self-centered competitive training too so each is out to win—praise, success and even love. Peace and inner balance is lost as every free moment is spent in the quest to take care of one's own interests and get more.

We already carry some natural conditioning—limitations on our senses that makes everything appear outside, apart from each other and the feeling that we 'are' males or females. I use 'are' to show that existence is tied to these conditions in which we find ourselves. If I am aware of something, even these conditions, then they are an object of my awareness and cannot be who I am or the self which is existence.

When you add to natural conditioning things like 'ours' and 'our people' and further 'our interests'—the self which is pure consciousness—who we are—is ignored and the dark clouds of add-ons are taken for self. Just as the sun cannot be subdued by the clouds, self cannot be subdued by the clouds of confusion and ignorance. We just look at these dark clouds as self—as who we are and so do others who have been given this training of ignorance and each fights to protect their interests.

To subtle conditioning due to the limitations of senses and impressions carried across births is further darkened by conditions we find ourselves in this journey—ignorance reigns supreme internally and externally. Our lives are filled with fear as self and self-interests are entangled with existence or who we are.

Today, technology has dissolved barriers of distance, time and purpose. People are always working; thinking and competing becomes normal and there is saturation of conditioning. This is all training but training that hardens individuality till separateness from the whole and self-interests become a natural and vital need for each individual. When this happens in society, corruption rises as a short-cut perhaps, and being a good person becomes an optional and seemingly impractical feature that is practiced with only a very few—one's own people. Virtue practiced selectively is not virtue—it is vice... it is not natural, a part of one's character—and can be turned off for something else. That 'something else' which can be put into gear with those who are not ours or what is not in our best interests must exist within and it is surely not virtue.

I have read someplace: when wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; but, when character is lost, everything is lost.

When one clearly sees one's inner erosion and its heavy price on one's life and happiness, one begins to find better ways to live, to increase one's natural goodness and reclaim oneself. This, not just to be good socially but simply to be good, as it is its own reward. Goodness has to grow

in one and saturate the heart so that it is natural and therefore effortless. Selective goodness is applied goodness and this means that given the right conditions, it is not only possible but natural to be non-good—no good.

Natural goodness and oneself have to become synonymous; then, one is incapable of getting hurt and therefore, incapable of hurting others. Why is this not possible? We love being with infants as they are so natural and hence innocent (inner scent or inner sent). They have not been trained to be self-centered as yet and so they love naturally. Is it ever worth it to lose ourselves for anything and then struggle hard to regain what was lost, cosmetically?

The goodness I am talking about is what is felt and lived when the idea of 'other' is not there. The Upanishad says, "Wherever there is other, there is fear". Otherness is not part of the natural order, we are in one planet, in one solar system, in one galaxy and in one creation—just how do we stand outside it and then insist on others as outside us too? These are notions in our minds only—conditioning that can and must be overcome. Conditioning or limitation cannot be overcome by 'adding' more thought or theory as they are more limitations only. Limitation is overcome by realization of the natural state which is full—free of all limitation.

When one is naturally good, goodness flows from one as his very fragrance and this natural goodness is its own protection. One does not feel the need to accumulate much as one is happy in one's self, just as a rose can never know odor as it is always saturated in its own fragrance. Just as a rose gives off fragrance to one and all, a good person radiates goodness naturally.

Accumulation rises out of fear and selfishness, and the more one accumulates, be it wealth, power, position and even learning, the more selfishness and fear increase. This so because the thirst to get more increases and one becomes even more concerned about protecting what has been accumulated. Contentment is the greatest abundance and blessing. Not a one can give you contentment, it is a gift that has to be bestowed by oneself. Natural goodness blossoms in the rich harvest from the fields of contentment. When you are not thirsty to accumulate, the mind is not stirred up, turbulent, there is inner peace, and goodness flourishes where there is natural peace.

When we perceive things, the mind registers an impression on the mind just like a photograph. There is nothing wrong with this as it is a natural function of the mind—just as a camera registers impressions. But unfortunately, this is not all that happens, it is only the beginning unless we are vigilant.

Right from childhood we have been conditioned in so many ways, and over time we have become identified with our conditioning so much that it is hard to set it aside. This is not anyone's fault—it has just happened—but we *can* do something about it. There are moments in

our lives that scream for freedom from such fetters, but though we work on the situations, we never fix the underlying cause, so problems arise again in the same or different forms.

What or who is 'I'?

We should start right at the water's edge instead of considering theoretical definitions of who 'I' is. I am the personality who has quite some conditioning and this is not only the source of my problems but the problems themselves. I seem bound and I would like to be completely free of all limitation. This now makes me a seeker—one who feels bound and feels he must find a way out.

Problems, conditions or 'I'

Our problems and sorrows are not caused by people, things or conditions, they are the effects experienced when we cannot seem to reconcile the inner world of thoughts and feelings with the outer world of circumstances and conditions.

It may be difficult to grasp, but things are always going to be just as they are—just as they have always been! I am a part of all things or creation; and just like a wave cannot expect the ocean to be a certain way. It is not reasonable to expect things to be a certain way. If we impartially examine why we have a problem with things being a certain way, we may discover that we are not only the cause of problems we experience—we *are* the problem.

Never things outside?

Never. If situations were responsible for our problems, each situation would affect two different people in the same way. Let's say the rain today was the source of my sorrow today, it would have to be the same for you too but you do not mind, you have a nice raincoat and umbrella and besides, your lawn needed the rain so you are happy. There has to be something in me that does not want rain today and that something is the cause of not only my problem with rain today but with all problems.

If we impartially examine problems, not the shape our problems take but problems themselves, we will know where to start: Just what are problems? How come they exist in me? How come I hurt by something in me? Can I not do something about 'things in me' from which I hurt and hurt others?

Our problems are experienced in our own selves as an effect of something. Effects cannot be separated from their cause. Since the effect is experienced in me, the cause must be in me. But I am one person, a whole being with one mind and this phenomena of cause and effect suggests a split, a division within me. A part becomes the cause and acts on another part of itself which experiences the problem as an effect. If I can understand this, not intellectually but

actually see it happening, I could keep the mind from this division by staying whole, as I naturally am.

Why

Isn't there a simpler way?

Yes, this is it: see the cause and stop it, the effects will never come to be. Looking directly at the cause of our problems instead of the effects or the resulting situation and ending it. Damage control may solve the effects of problems cosmetically, but we would like to dissolve not just problems but the cause of problems.

Our problems are experienced in us and that which has a difficulty with any situation is also within us. This something which has a difficulty is the ego, the fragmented mind or personality with which I have gotten mixed up somehow and continue to do. I know it is not me because I am aware of it. If it were wholly me, I could never be aware of it. Our problems may seem different but they are the same because the resulting experience is the same—sorrow and pain. It is also experienced in the mind only and made of the same substance as any other problem. Why not find a way to end the cause—that which triggers problems?

The very same mind that is now conditioned has to be unconditioned. The unconditioned is fully capable of doing what needs to be done. Impressions are never the problem; impressions in the mind that are charged with certain feelings that are not part of the actual situation outside will and do mislead so much so that we mistake them for the reality we find ourselves facing from moment to moment. If you really want freedom from all sorrow, you can have it here and now—the price is the walls called yourself.

How

Lead a ordinary life in an extraordinary way, most intelligently, so as to prevent conditioning that exists from interfering from perception to action. The extraordinary is always hidden in and as the ordinary.

Life intelligently lived will also prevent you from taking on any new conditioning and will diffuse existing conditioning. The points mentioned below are not separate sequential steps but I felt the need to delineate them as such only to talk about some inherent susceptibilities along the way.

Our life is a continual series of events that span from perception through action and into experience. Experience shapes understanding and since it all begins with perception, we have to be very careful every step of the way.

Mere actions and results have little value on their own, as even what we consider important work will find itself in the pages of history sooner or later. Not to diminish the significance of good work but to suggest that perceiving with awareness allows us to see both: the situation clearly but also inner conditioning. Being free of habit shows us the way to do, to act and finally to live without accumulating any more conditioning as well as weakening existing conditioning by disuse.

Having depth in life

You get out of life not only what you put into it and how, but by the depth of inner understanding from which action emanates. If you walk by the water's edge, you get broken shells at best; if you want pearls, you will have to dive in deeper waters. The time and effort may be the same but the depth at which you operate is different.

If your concern is the fruits of your action, very little depth is required, as even mechanical action can generate adequate results. Actions concerned merely with results contribute very little to understanding and personal growth.

But, if your concern is to discover and be free understanding of all limitations—you will need every ounce of sincerity and dedication.

What is understanding?

Understanding shapes our actions, and actions or expressions mature into our experiences. If we are truly concerned with fuller, richer, deeper and more meaningful experiences, we must be very concerned with that which shapes it—with understanding.

Understanding is the state of the inner intelligence—not the intellect which is just the more focused mind. The inner intelligence is pure awareness and though never really bound, can be eclipsed when we choose to continually face conditioning or habit instead of the inner intelligence.

What is this inner intelligence?

The single most distinguishing characteristic of human beings is 'knowing that we know'. This is also called the inner intelligence or awareness. When you think, you also know that you are thinking. Now, which one are you: the one that thinks or the one that knows?

No matter whether you think, feel, speak or act—this knowingness or inner intelligence steadily knows. This is a subtler and more pervasive existence that is perfectly capable of responding to any situation in life. The mind sleeps but this inner intelligence never sleeps. It regulates your body, even pulls the blanket over if you are cold though the mind is asleep.

Unless we find a way not to be susceptible to the pull of habit or conditioning, the inner intelligence stays as a silent witness in the background. You cannot turn it off, tamper with it or corrupt it—you can only choose to face darkness instead. Perhaps this is the only choice we have: to face light or darkness.

Awakening the inner intelligence is also the empowering of the inner intelligence and for this, we have to find a way to act, to live without interference of the ego or existing conditioning, without accumulating any further conditioning.

Is the ego and conditioning the same?

Yes, the ego is the total conditioning that has assumed individuality or entity. Self-limitation and conditioning are synonymous, and when one identifies with this the entity is referred to as ego.

The ego is difficult to see at the start but we know when the ego is operative by what it tries to do—it interferes with perception by interpreting for us what we are seeing, even though it is right in front of us, and telling us how to react (not act but react) even though the inner intelligence is perfectly capable of both perception and decision on action.

This involvement of the ego is the result of allowing conditioning to perceive and act as though it were us. Our heedlessness in the midst of earlier perceptions and actions have left impressions on the mind which rise each time there is image association—whether it be physical or only mental. Freeing perception and action from the involvement of the ego will awaken the inner intelligence as it is called into perception and action instead of the ego; it will weaken the grip of the ego; it will give better responses to each situation, and most importantly, it will immediately free-up tremendous energy that the mind snatches up and uses in wasteful and meaningless thinking.

The inner intelligence uses very little energy as it does not require movement. Each cell is intelligent and capable of collectively seeing what stands before it and what needs to be done. Thought, on the other hand, requires tremendous energy and stores stockpiles of resources which it drains and replenishes continually.

Direct Perception

Perceiving directly without the interference of thought weakens and gets rid of existing conditioning.

1. Direct perception: Perceive every situation directly (which includes every thought, feeling, word and deed in the moment it arises) without the interference of existing conditioning or thought.

Our conditioning constantly adjusts what is perceived and it seems to have become quite normal so that we are not really seeing or listening etc., but only performing cursory perception and applying existing modules of conditioned response. This is called confusion, as we mix-up or confuse what is seen directly with our notions about them. Can we be ever-alert to insure that each and every situation (which is naturally ever-fresh) is perceived as though for the first time and thus, gradually weaken and dispense with conditioning?

2. Direct response: If the situation does not require action, move on without dwelling on it, complaining or hoping someone else should do it. If you feel it requires action, see the best way without standing apart from the situation and without any interference of existing conditioning or thought.

We have a strong sense of ourselves as individuals, apart from all creation and with a vested interest in what we call 'ours'—our people, our family and our work. These fancies do not exist in creation, they are our own creation. This is called delusion because wrong notions are mistaken for reality—we *do not stand outside creation* but somehow feel we do. It seems to have become natural to act from these fancies as our sense of identity is mistakenly anchored to these. Having freshly perceived what is before us from moment to moment, can we intuitively feel what needs to be done instead of thinking what is best for 'me' and 'mine' (which do not really exist)?

These are not two separate phases, I have only mentioned them as two to make things clearer. Both of these at one stroke is what is called direct perception or perception free of conditioning.

Total Action

Action as a response to a situation which begins when it begins, is without interference of conditioning or personal agenda and ends totally when it ends physically, preventing any further conditioning from accumulating.

We are part of all that we perceive and in whatever setting we find ourselves from moment to moment. The setting questions us for a response: to do something or not to do something, and, if to do, in what manner to do. If perception is pure, that is, free of conditioning, there can be a fresh and natural response which is an answer to the situation without the interference of personal gain, and it lets the action complete totally.

1. Action begins when it begins: We tend to over-think all of the possibilities and ways of response before a situation manifests. Unless you are planning something which will develop into physical action, it is best instead to keep the mind in the present or on that which should have your attention.

Merely thinking will lead to endless speculation that goes nowhere except in the direction of further thought, and it settles down like mud in rain water as mounds of conditioning. These will try to influence future action and there is no need to add to the conditioning that already exists.

When a given situation manifests, the inner intelligence (unbound, unconditioned mind) is perfectly capable of seeing what actually is and doing what needs to be done.

2. Fullness in action without selectiveness: If the situation requires your response, the entirety of you must face the situation, giving it your very best effort without any selectiveness or preference which promotes self-interest.

Conditioning is selective; it functions on likes and dislikes and if action springs from conditioning, we will obviously do what we consider more meaningful with all of our being—fully... and other things we consider less meaningful—cursorily, or because it has to be done. Life is a mixed bag and does not politely ask us to very kindly please do what is agreeable, but rather to respond to each situation; and each time we respond faintly—faint-heartedness becomes natural and we lose strength. If you are a runner and each time you run you go a little slower and then a little less—going slower and less will become natural and you will fail to gather the energy to go as much as you can.

Just why do we have to give some situations more and some less? You may feel that situations that involve 'our people and interests' should be given a fuller response but let's examine this: you face one situation at a time and if you give each situation its very best response, what do you lose? You have to do something, do it best! Now, when you face what you consider personal situations—give them the best response too.

This way, you weaken and break-up the inner selective mechanism that creates tremendous mischief and fills us with sorrow when we find ourselves responding to things that we have ourselves decided we would rather not have to get involved with. But more importantly, we become capable of giving each situation 100% of ourselves, and this is very important when you come to meditation.

Meditation requires tremendous alertness and full involvement. Distractions are inner promptings of what are also felt to be important, perhaps more important than sitting there trying to meditate. Training to give each situation its very best response when needed will weaken and dismantle the ego's principle mechanism of selectiveness with which it makes divisions.

Be careful— as conditioning has been successfully kept out so far in what is seen and what has to be done—it is a master of disguise and will try to interfere now in how well it should be

done. It will insist on doing best for 'our people' or 'profitable situations' and not as well or cursorily for others. All these may seem like it makes life a little easier but it makes 'us' more divided because it requires inner division to respond differently.

Acting in fullness is doing your very best and will leave no room for regrets. It will also promote equal-mindedness among many other benefits. Acting without selectiveness will also aid equal-mindedness or sameness which will reduce the mind's activity significantly when it sees that the inner intelligence has now taken over.

3. The action ends when it ends: Usually, most of our actions do not end when they end physically, we tend to continue to perpetuate them mentally. This is called psychological extension as the action continues to extend in the mind.

We tend to continue to dwell on the action mentally—positively, for example, as something we liked and this triggers further thought as to how it could be prolonged or re-experienced, or, negatively as something which should have ended sooner or was never done, and how this can be avoided. These are the psychological extensions that create impressions or increase conditioning and it is these that will shape future actions and increase confusion. They start a nano-second after the action. Please observe this within yourself.

Action continuing in the mind, without a real physical situation requires a mental situation, and so deep grooves are formed in the mind to continue mentally what has ended physically. These grooves are impressions or conditioning infused with as much feeling or your own self as you have invested in them and will push to shape future perception and action.

You do something, anything, let's say you have lunch with a friend you have not met in a while and have a really good afternoon. There is no suppressing the joy experienced, it was a good meal and a good time was had with your friend. But, this ego pops up and suggests that perhaps it should be prolonged somehow or made to repeat soon. You suggest this to your friend, but perhaps he had his mind on something else and you take it as being that he was not interested. Your hopes had climbed high and now they have fallen to rock bottom. What was a good afternoon continued on in your mind psychologically and this extension wanted repetition, and for whatever reason the response was lukewarm—hopes went up to the top of the Ferris Wheel and came down as disappointment. You have to see this happening for yourself to realize that hopes and expectations, which are how things continue psychologically, themselves turn sour and into disappointments on the rebound.

This example may suggest being cold and indifferent to friends but that is assuredly not the intention. We are using this example to understand the mechanism of action in events in our day-to-day life and how they continue psychologically. Please try to see the direction in the examples are pointing to.

When actions end as they end, new situations are already there before you, and you can now give this newness a fresh response. Continuing to play with an action or event that is over physically gets you day-dreaming, while the next situation beacons your response. I'm sure you can relate to this when someone grabs your attention and you have to 'return back to reality', so to say.

The mind uses more energy than the body, it uses the subtlest form of energy available. Mental fatigue acts on the body and suggests that we are more tired than we are. When this idle thinking is eliminated—not by suppressing it but by facing the new—there is tremendous conservation of energy. Energy is at once available for the next situation that is ready to unfold and you will find that you are not tired mentally or physically.

I go back to the example of running for which one runner writes is a purely mental event and suggests that it is the mind that says that the body does not tire,... it is always the mind that gets tired. Think about it, how can the body tire? The muscles can get sore, you can break sweat but that is not tiredness. The connection between soreness or sweat and tiredness and wanting to quit is mental only—made by the mind, by thought, by the ego. It is very important to overcome this, because later in spiritual practice, the mind will throw up these false alarms and tell you that you are tired, it is enough, and get all excited about other things rather than asanas, pranayama, study, kirtan or meditation.

Conditioning interferes not only in these spiritual practices, but also in resistance by other false alarms (including weakening confidence) to any change by stubbornly insisting on its likes and dislikes. These are all inward processes of the mind, ways in which conditioning has a hold on you and every strand of its ropes can and should be unraveled. Freedom is happiness—and giving into the bullying mind is not freedom.

To allow each action to end when it ends is not something at all artificial—it is what is really taking place,... it is natural. You did some such thing and now you must do something else. Give this new situation its best response, and when you keep giving your best, you become capable of more as you reach greater depths within to harness more. You have to go deeper for pearls, in shallow waters you only find broken shells.

In the next situation that presents itself, the freed, inner psychic energy is recycled to repair the body which heals much faster and does not give false signals of physical fatigue. Your health improves tremendously as the body heals itself naturally—without any of the side effects many drugs are known for.

Direct perception and total action together

All our sorrows are experienced within and if the effect is within, the cause must be within as we have already discussed. Unless we clearly see *that what we seek relief from starts, grows and then bursts into experience within*—we will not have the necessary sense of urgency and the energy to awaken and stay alert. Clearly seeing the danger and wanting a way out is what releases inner latent energy to deal with it. We not only manufacture our sorrows, we are the sorrows itself, as there is none else within—only 'us stuff', or me.

Pure perception free of all conditioning has to and can respond to the situation directly—free of any and all personal interest. Any interference in perception and action will only add to existing conditioning, confusion and delusion. We must know what we are really facing (this is why it is most important to be able to clearly 'see' without interference of thought) and be able to respond to the situation, not our interests—both of these seamlessly and naturally.

What we are together looking into is not vain theory or dry philosophy. Look within and find out for yourself. We are talking about weakening and ending the grip of conditioning and returning misappropriated energy and agency to yourself—it is your life, after all. Direct perception and total action have to happen *at the same time* as a response to every situation.

What is response to a situation?

Each situation, if seen clearly without interference of conditioning, solicits its own response if not interfered with by the ego-personality and the situation does its own work unless we place ourselves outside situations. We are a part of each and every situation whether or not our response is to do something or to do nothing.

A response is not a reaction, they are quite different. Reactions usually suggest two things: one thing reacting with another. Response is doing what needs to be done as part of the same situation without standing outside it from perception to action and fruition. Response is not what I would like, what suits me or what is in my best interests, but simply responding to whatever needs to be done. Response is a way of discovering our oneness with everything through life and the largeness of existence from which we do not and cannot stand apart.

Every musician in an orchestra is a full player and not only a member, but the orchestra itself. In a certain piece and at a certain time or movement, one or more instruments may be heard prominently, though others may be silent. Silence is what is being played at that moment! Then, they join the other instruments and perhaps, they take the lead. This response to do something or response to do nothing is still a response, but not to the individual—to the music and orchestra which involve the musician.

This is quite a task, isn't it?

Yes, but we have made this mess ourselves and we must clean it up ourselves too. Nothing and no one can and will help with the work on hand, as it lies within and only we can give up our ignorance. You may get some guidance from different means but you have to gird up the loins and get into it—do the work your own self. Just like each day lived on credit adds to one's overall indebtedness,... each day lived in ignorance adds to the work we ourselves will have to do to cut through the debt of heedlessness.

Just how do you tackle all this?

If you have tried to light a fire outdoors on a windy day, you know how difficult this can be. There are few who live in the rugged outdoors who may not have a problem, but for most of us it is quite a task. You may have to start a small kindling slightly sheltered and quickly move it to the prepared logs and fan it to a steady flame. Similarly, it is a tremendous undertaking to live the spiritual way—which is to make life and our own selves the field and medium. This is where what is called spiritual practice comes in.

Why spiritual practice?

Spiritual practices are complete processes of action performed in a relatively quiet area that involve the whole of us without the interference of ego or personality. Since we are a blend of many aspects: heart, mind, body, intellect etc., Swami Sivananda recommends a marvelous integral approach or a synthesis that emphasizes each aspect just a little more but not to the exclusion of all others.

I remember learning how to drive in a quiet parking lot so I could learn without the interference of cars coming at me. Once I had a feel for the car, its operation, the road, parallel parking and driving—it was time to enter the open roads. Similarly, in the initial stages, spiritual practice gives us the opportunity to learn a good many things about ourselves, including how to look within and observe the mind while engaged in some activity or the other. Devoid of this, the action may not be as meaningful, as life and relationships are an open field where everything happens and I must know how to live or respond to life while continually watching the mind.

A good deal has gone into losing ourselves: our natural, innate goodness and peace; we now have to live carefully—expertly. Expertness requires sincerity, protracted effort without remission, and enthusiasm.

I feel that 'training' is a better word than practice but not the training we receive from others as any kind of instruction. Training is not instruction, it is *wisdom acting* to change oneself. We see the need for some change and make a full effort towards it. If it comes about in the first effort—great, you're done. If not, learn from the failure by directly seeing within what was short and exert again. We will look into spiritual practice or training in another dialogue in

depth. For the moment, let's keep the focus on action without the interference of thought or conditioning in life.

Are we talking about a long time?

No and yes. Time is not a factor in change per se as is psychological. It may take time for inward change to reflect in outer conditions, but the actual change is mental and hence it can be immediate if all of you wants it right now. If you have the resolve and inner strength to completely sever the past and live from this moment without conditioning—you are free of all confusion and resulting sorrow this very moment.

The difficulty is that we do not know, or are unable or unwilling to give ourselves completely. We have gotten so used to giving very measuredly and the difference between no and yes in regards to change taking time is just this—can you give yourself to it completely? Sincerity and resolve are different words for being able and willing to give yourself completely.

Inability and unwillingness to do so is like walking a long while each day only to get water in a bucket with holes—a struggle. This is called the law of diminishing returns where you put in more effort than any result received; and here, it is because of harboring other interests. The difficulty is not in quantity of effort but in quality, and if one has rightly resolved, which is when one is fully prepared to give oneself completely—all things are possible.

Struggle requires friction and friction is always with an opposing force. Since struggle is experienced within, friction and the opposing force must also be within. Find out where the mind likes to go—these are the holes in the bucket. Forcing the mind to go a certain way will not work, it is usually disastrous. If you have seen and felt the need for change, why does the mind still go in old paths? The force of habit and the security of the known have been seen as shelter for a long time—and if this is so, it will take some time to bring about a total change in the mind.

The mind has to taste the new in order for it to let go of the old, and spiritual practice or training is a nursery for this. Training is action of some sort, whether it involves just the mind or feelings and the body as well. Can we first act totally?

Where

In Life

We are not only a part of life, we are one with life. We cannot divide life any more than a wave can divide the ocean. The mind too can never be divided, as if it could, it could never be whole again. Division appears in the mind and we get confused and identify with one fragment of the apparent division.

But, I experience division...

True but you are also aware of the experience of division, so the whole mind must be the intact background which is continually aware. This is also called awareness or the inner intelligence.

The challenge before us is to live from there and not from one limited fragment of the apparent division. The fragmented mind is finite and only capable of finite perception and action, whereas life is a whole and the finite can never respond to the whole fully. When the whole mind responds to everything before us at all times—the fragment with which we have identified ourselves for so long ceases to be and wholeness lives *in* wholeness *as* wholeness.

When

The whole mind or undivided mind has to live life in such a way so as to discover and experience its universal nature. Just like a boat one wishes to sail on the high seas must be unmoored from the dock, one wishing to walk the spiritual way must let go of all limitations completely.

Just walk away from it all?

Before making any major change of the environment, change the mind or the inner environment. When the mind changes, external changes will be natural. Later, some adjustments may have to be made, but you cannot really call these changes as the mind will be adjusting the outer to the inner changes which have now become joyfully natural.

Often in enthusiasm, some seekers are quick to make drastic external changes first without bringing about a change in the mind. This old mind will insist on having its ways and the seeker will go through great turmoil trying to understand and solve the inner war.

How do you change the mind?

The mind is nothing but a bundle of habits. First, you may find the need to make new habits that support and reflect your aspiration. But, be careful—as habits are habits and all habits are an open door to mechanization. You have to be alert so that while making use of new habits to wean off the old, you do not get stuck in them.

You change the mind in life by perceiving correctly, without the interference of conditioning or thought, and then responding or doing what needs to be done,... not what I want to do in each situation. When the ego is not involved in seeing or acting, you see and act as part of the largeness there is. Experience which is *expression on the rebound* is always of the very character of its seed—action. You experience the largeness of being and littleness fades out of memory, weakened by disuse.

The only difficulty experienced in inner change is the appetite we still inwardly harbor for the old. When your money is tied up, you have very little capital for investment opportunities. Similarly, the more we are internally tied up in conditioning, the less we are able to do or to change. Freeing yourself from conditioning is not only freeing yourself from sorrow, but it gives you immediate returns in increased energy and overall improved health.

What has conditioning to do with health?

The conditioning or mental habits we have today were not there at one time and can be changed—hence are not part of the natural conditioning. They are patterns of thought that require energy to sustain. The more the conditioning, the more energy is required to maintain and the less that is available for important functions, including body repair and cell replacement.

There are not different energies, just energy, life-force or prana. The mind uses the subtlest form of energy; physical actions that do not involve the mind use coarser forms of the same energy. Other processes like digestion and semi-mechanical activity are somewhere in the middle.

Direct perception does not involve thought at all, it is always working—just not always used. It takes very little energy, as all energy comes or is made available from it being light and power at the same time. Thought takes a good deal of energy because it is the movement of energy in consciousness or the inner intelligence. Its limitation is brought about and sustained by energy that takes apparent static formations making them individual impressions seemingly having value. The more the value they have in the form of likes and dislikes, the more energy is tied into them to make it possible.

When you start perceiving directly, there is no demand placed on thought; mental activity slows down tremendously, and large reserves of energy that were set aside to maintain these charged impressions are released or made available once again for other functions, like body repair.

Is thought useless?

There is a difference between thought and thinking. Thought rises and falls in the mind just like the heart beats and the breath rises and falls. It is natural and useful. Thinking is something I do,—I think in some determinate manner. But, when *thought starts thinking* and I get mixed up with thought, the empowered thought assumes entityship or 'me' and starts to demand action or act. This is a helpless state where conditioning or habit takes over and we do things only later to wonder how and why we did them.

If there is a quite a bit of conditioning, more thoughts will rise and fall in the mind plane naturally. You have demanded these so the mind is only preemptively making all this available to you on demand. Just like a computer works much more slowly when many resources or programs are working at the same time and is therefore more susceptible to crash or breakdown, the human body and mind that insist on carrying much mental baggage and keeping alive many conditioned thought patterns, will wear out sooner.

When we learn to live *using thought instead of being used by thought*, and empower the inner intelligence—a good amount of energy is released back to the body and mind from the psychic reserves. We know that when we are mentally fatigued, we are physically drained too and often feel pain in the body as well. The return of energy is done by the inner intelligence when it sees that you are now functioning differently, healthily, and there is tremendous benefit to your overall wellness and capability. You think more clearly, more deeply, because the mind is not always over-stretched and committed like a rubber band that loses its elasticity when kept taut.

The new availability of energy will also help you in your spiritual practices or self-training about which we will talk soon. It is your life, your health and suffering is optional; it is not a stock feature, it did not come with you—you have picked up some baggage along the way unnecessarily and continue to carry this burden out of habit. The only thing you have to lose is your sorrows, the weight of carrying them and the drain on your overall wellness. You have much to gain: a life without sorrow, pain, suffering—and not only to yourself; one who does not hurt, does not hurt others. Radiant health, abundant energy and increased productivity come unsought.

From where you are to who you are

When we see that perceiving and acting directly in response to each situation is not only possible but a better way of living, we act naturally,... as part of each situation, as conditioning is drained of its energy by disuse. The burden of individuality is let go and universality becomes natural.

When we express universally, we experience universality, and this universalizes understanding. We become naturally incapable of many limitations and vices that were so difficult to shake off earlier. All limitations loosen internally by giving up their root—individuality. We begin to see our place in the universe when we are not asserting our identity, just like a musician feels his place in an orchestra when he does not consider himself separate from it.

When you function clearly, you can know where you are; and when you know *where* you are, you can inquire and know *who* you are. Let's talk about this in the next dialogue.

Closing Thoughts

As long as 'you' stand outside your aspiration, the means becomes something you do and there will be struggle, as the old conditioning is who you are and your aspiration is something you are working towards. You have therefore not become your aspiration and so there must and will be struggle.

You have to *become* your aspiration and as soon as you have embraced it, it guides your thoughts, feelings, words and actions. This is not a blind hypnotic state, but one of full awareness. For example, if you fully embrace radiant health over the ill health that you have been experiencing—the power of your embrace or becoming one with it will protect you by rejecting food, lethargy and other things that are not conducive to good health, and instead, you find yourself doing all that enhances health.

Wisdom is empowered when what you wants becomes you or you become it. You have to be one with light to never again know darkness. Most seekers struggle with this and it comes down to sincerity—being one with your aspiration is being sincere, whole—without cracks within—and sincere.

Any struggle is friction, and friction requires an opposing force. If abandoning conditioning is a struggle, it is experienced within; and so the cause or the opposing force must also be within—it has to be. You see the tremendous gain in a life without sorrow, which is a life of clarity and freedom from conditioning. Why not embrace it so it is who you are, and then *it* acts or does? If you approach it as something you try to do first, there must be struggle, as 'who you are' is different or dissimilar from what you do, so it is without any real energy because you have stood outside it.

You have to be—not become but 'be'— your own aspiration; and who you are—unconditioned, 'I'-less— has to do what needs to be done. Now is always the right time and the only time for change. What do you say?

suryadevananda.org

Edited by Sivananda-Usha