

What Makes Change Difficult?

Swami Suryadevananda

The old cannot renew or bring new

Rearranging the old or decorating the shelves of our life with some new thing is not change, as the mind that sees it is still old. Whatever this old mind tries to rearrange, decorate or emplace externally cannot be change—as with every instance of rearranging, it gets stronger, more set in its ways and vainly, more hopeful that what it does will result in some newness. The old can renew itself or bring in the new.

What is the old?

Have you ever sat by a stream and just watched the waters and area around? Nothing stays the same for even a moment. The waters we see at one moment flow and in its very place, are new waters. Cast your glance on some flowers and you will see the picture change as you look at it. Birds and bees come and leave, the flowers dance to nature's rhythm without the need for choreography. Clouds take shape, spread out and then disappear into the empty skies in which they arose. All this happens without our trying to change anything at all.

When we try to change nature or anything natural, it results in something quite unnatural and a disaster at best. The landscaped neat lawns are not nature or natural. Nature does not have one species here and something else there as if separated by some invisible lines. Everything is everywhere and things move but that which animates them, from which they arise and in which they change is the changeless.

The mind gathers impressions naturally and this is useful. It is not natural or useful for the mind to infuse gathered impressions or images with preferences—positive or negative. People, things and conditions are going to be as they are regardless of our preference.

Gatherings of preferences heaped on each other constitute the old mind and when this old mind sees the ever changing newness it tries to rearrange things to its taste and fails each time. Frustration builds and one feels that with more resources, change may be more durable—perhaps.

So one works harder, combines 'assets' and tries to bring about a changed external condition by which one can somehow experience change. It is not possible, for how can an old mind experience newness? When the experiencer is old, all that it experiences must be old and one

will tire of any rearrangement very quickly. This is why we are constantly working and trying to bring in more earning so we can upgrade our 'quality of life' and have a 'good life'. Not only do we get fatigued and worn out in this strife but the old mind gets older, more set in its ways, as what it wants has been driving to making more money and the drive strengthens the ideation that drives it.

The old is this old mind, getting older each moment and this aging is not natural, not part of nature's flow which is ever renewing, ever new—*all without our involvement*.

Can the mind be new?

A mind free of conditioning is the ever new mind and the natural mind. This new mind stays ever new by itself and remains unchanged even with the presence of conditioning, just as the sky does not change from sky to something else with the presence of clouds.

When we focus on the clouds, forgetting the wide open unchanging sky or space, we feel it is a cloudy day and then, "Oh, it is not like yesterday" and soon after, "I hope this does not last and it becomes beautiful again just like days we've had...". Clouds are inherent in the skies or space—they come, assume some formations, rain on or cool the area and leave. Our reactions to clouds is the 'cloudy feeling'—cloudiness does not exist in the clouds.

This mind, old mind, is a sort of fixation on moments in time heavily charged with our likes and dislikes which cry for reappearance in the form of hopes and expectations. When these inner longings do not manifest outwardly, one is unhappy and tries ever harder for the 'perfect setting'.

This is self-torment and not natural or part of nature. We suffer because 'we'... the 'we' or 'me' that insists on impossibly standing apart from nature though very much a part of nature is suffering.

The mind can be kept new by keeping the 'me' that colors or ages the mind continually observed. As long as the 'me'—habit, conditioning or the ego—is relentlessly observed, it cannot act, as subject acts and not object. There is no suppression at all in observation—just ongoing vigilance.

The mind and 'me'

The mind is *ever new by its nature*, the 'me' that arises in the mind is a small portion of conditioning that seizes the mind and assumes entityship as the personality. One is always aware of the personality, too. Just how does this object of awareness become the subject? We have never stopped to examine this and continue to feed the demands of personality only to become an object ourselves.

"I feel subjected to stress"—is a common statement and points to the loss of subjecthood by carelessly submitting to conditioning that we have ourselves taken on. The mind is not 'me' as I

am always aware of it. That which is aware of the body, mind and feelings must be more pervasive and more akin to my true self. This awareness never changes even though the body and mind go through many changes.

The unconditioned mind is right here and now—untouched and unchanged. Giving too much importance to the ego, the little conditioned mind, we feel identified with it. Nonetheless, this error upon error cannot eclipse awareness, as if one is even slightly awake, one realizes this awareness is itself aware of the identification. When vigilance becomes unbroken, the identification with the ego snaps completely. Till then, vigilance comes and goes and meditation in these stages is training in vigilance. Vigilance returns the subject impulse, so to say, from the ego to awareness and the ego resumes its place as a *function* rather than entityship which it felt itself to be. The most important thing is to wake up—and having awoken, stay alert.

But, I am awake...

If you are awake, you see the danger of carelessness and awareness becomes empowered. Change is awakening to the truth of the hold of conditioning on oneself. Change seems difficult only because we are not fully awake, just like stirring in bed when we are not quite awake. We mistake this stirring for awakening and try to change, but they are all tries only giving unending results.

Your doctor may tell you to quit smoking as it is affecting your health, but this may not bring about instant change. But, the first time you cough up blood, a strong signal is received of direct perception of the danger on hand, and if there is this clarity—change is in the very moment.

Change does not involve time

Awakening to the reality of any situation is not only the power to change *but change itself*. When you clearly see the danger in staying the course, you change—that is all. Till then, you struggle because though you hear or read about the danger of something, it is at the intellect level at best and the intellect is not capable of change.

The intelligence behind the flow of misdirected energy has to realize the danger in staying the course and there is instantaneous correction. It may take some time to fully reflect materially but that has nothing to do with change. Change happens when there is irreversible change of heart at the gut level.

Clarity is the energy to change

If you see something you have been looking for or have good use for at an excellent price that you can afford, there is no hesitation and you buy it. If you struggle at that moment, you are unsure about it for whatever reason.

Clarity is seeing what actually *is* right now, right here without any interference of conditioning or habit. When clarity is not, do what you may, you will struggle unnecessarily. Clarity sees things as they are and ambiguity is indecisive at best. Clarity cannot be selective; you either choose to be clear about everything or, suffer the consequences till there is sufficient energy to awaken.

Clarity is another name for vigilance or awakening that sustains. Spiritual practices without vigilance or alertness will result in some expertise in doing but not positive enduring change.

Learn to be natural from nature

Everything is perennially renewing without our involvement except for the mind that we allow to age. We are *a part of nature* and if we allow the mind to become static and set in its ways by insisting in its preferences—we will be stuck in time while everything changes.

The door to changelessness is through the face of change. What changes are the appearances that changelessness assumes, but appearances are not the substance. This changelessness is not far off or the purview of specialists but your experience *this very moment* as you are reading these lines—not only are you reading these words, you are also aware that you are reading.

This awareness is changeless and has not aged, though the body and mind have. This awareness is neither male nor female, rich or poor, or of any nationality or religion because it is aware of all these modifications and limitations. Awareness is here and now but we seek the hand of habit and handoff changelessness for the turbulent waters of change. The unchanging that we are finds itself bobbing on the waters of change and it is not necessary at all.

What makes change so difficult?

We or the 'me' makes change difficult as it wants change but it does not want *to* change. So, it introduces the time process, "Tomorrow or next year, I will do this or change that way..." Any resolve that involves time process is not a resolve but the faint hope of an unclear heart. Change is here and now if we are willing to change, not to change anything but simply 'to change' right here and now.

When vigilance is natural, change is natural, as one sees every situation just as it is and the inner intelligence which is not burdened by conditioning responds. These two, vigilance and the awakened inner intelligence, are not different. Vigilance is the awakened inner intelligence that sees and responds to things as they are.

Vigilance or intelligence does not respond to speculation or worry as they have no corresponding reality that can be seen. As long as we prefer conditioning of any sort, we choose thought instead of reality and face habit instead of things as they are. It is not possible to bring about real change when facing the wall of our thoughts.

Face things as they are from moment to moment, as they arise and see that change is not something to be done but the best response to the present moment.

The tussle of giving up

Change does not involve giving up anything real as giving up only comes into question when one holds something. When all things are in process of change, what is it that you are holding onto please? Kindly look at this impartially and very closely. The tussle or struggle of giving up something for something else is not giving up 'things' per se but the ideas, notions, hopes and expectations we have from and about them. These are not a reality and have nothing to do with people, things or conditions—they are notions in our mind and this is conditioning.

Conditioning conditions reality or things as they are and the conditioned mind sees itself—never what actually is. When one is awake to this foolishness, staying awake one sees things as they are without the interference of conditioning and does what is best, without the 'me' which is also a notion and life flows.

If there is one thing change involves it is giving up conditioning that has caused great sorrow and confusion and facing things as they are so the clarity of direct perception, which is perception without the interference of any conditioning, can respond to life. What is the struggle in this?

Down to brass tacks

Our own resistance makes change difficult—nothing else. Outwardly things make take time to reflect inner change but that is not change, only a reflection of change which is always inner. The unawakened old mind resists change because it thinks it finds security in the known—even if it be sheer ignorance. When one is awake, these difficulties do not appear—as the new mind, the ever fresh mind, the mind free of conditioning sees directly and clarity of perception itself acts.

suryadevananda.org

Edited by Sivananda-Usha