
LIVING MEDITATION

5. Real Hunger for Change

What is change?

A closer look at change itself, may throw light on the 'why' and 'how' questions that we tend to ask first. Just what is change? Usually, we see change as a different condition that is preferred. Let us go beneath the what, why and how and reexamine change afresh.

Say I visit my doctor and among other things, he asks me to lose some weight. I know that I am about 20 pounds overweight and make this number the thing to change. I ask around and find that a calorie restrictive diet and meal substitution with shakes and bars (that is what actually happens when you rely much on these—you get the shakes, find yourself behind bars or at bars) has worked on friends, and so, off to the store I go. I find the scale I've put away earlier and feel happy that I'm all set now.

There is always a high level of enthusiasm in the beginning but that burst soon becomes an exercise in endurance. We cajole ourselves that starving and having shakes and bars is worthwhile as the scale still shows good results. But soon, the results slow down a little and now we feel that we've hit a plateau of some sort as what must be endured feels more than the 'gains' we see—we've encountered the law of diminishing returns.

Firstly, the body is just not getting good food. We are not talking about satisfying taste but just good wholesome food. Aside from vitamins, protein and minerals, the body needs live cells and these come from fresh fruit and vegetables among some other foods. See, when the goal is 'weight loss'—all factors such as 'is it all worth it?' will come along at some point. But, our goal was to get healthy and losing some weight was just one part of getting healthy. This is what brings in the idea of 'having to endure' as we measure what we are doing with a mistaken sense of purpose. If we keep the crosshairs on weight, we may neglect so many other things being healthy requires and though we may lose weight, we may get further from good health and wellness.

If we keep in mind that we are trying to get healthy—eating healthier, exercise, time in the fresh air and sunlight and other healthy habits will be satisfying in themselves without being obsessed with 'losing weight'. The body will shed pounds naturally when one is determined to be healthy and each effort towards it will be movement towards good health and satisfying. There won't be a need for the stick and carrot or loss of motivation as better choices is itself better health at each step.

Results and effort

Results are effects and not change. Change is the cause which brings about effects or results. Change is not in time process, results are. It will take some time to lose weight but if I have listened well to the doctor and myself felt that carrying the extra pounds is not good for me—I am a changed person instantly, as all choices that follow will be from a 'changed me'. A new, 'healthy me' will make all the healthiest choices possible and each choice will take me from health to better health. The 'old me' cannot bring about a 'new me' anymore than darkness can bring light. A 'new me' is a 'changed me' and this inner change alone can bring about lasting change.

If and when one clearly sees the danger of old ways—there should be action or the danger has *not been seen*—just toyed with intellectually. The only test of clarity is action. All too often we hear, "I got it"—but we get nothing, only words, ideas, catchy slogans, gimmicks and toys. Action is immediate if 'we get it' just as we would if the house is on fire. If we 'get it', we get 'it'.

Why should there be any struggle letting go of the old at all? If we are clear that what we feel must go is not good—it is like taking out the garbage—where does struggle come in? Let's go a little deeper ... we are not even asking to let go—just make better choices instead. You have two hands and instead of carrying what is not good for you—simply carry what is better instead.

If one sees, clearly sees—there will not be any struggle. We struggle only because we don't clearly see and the old tries to bring in the new but it is not possible and we settle for something cosmetic at best.

The core of understanding from which we respond to life must change. This core or understanding is not intellectual understanding—it is the deepest sense of knowing we have. There are errors in understanding and when we see clearly, new understanding should guide all responses. The errors are false values we ourselves have ascribed to people, conditions and things and so it becomes very hard to let go physically what we are inwardly wedded to as 'they promote joy after all'. The other extreme is to see them as 'joyless' or 'painful' and this is foolishness in reverse gear. To directly see that the feeling of 'pleasure' and 'pain' are experienced in the same place so they must be of the same substance is wisdom. Where we experience pleasure one moment, we experience pain the next—both being our reactions and have nothing to do with things as they are.

When this is directly seen, we deal with things as they need a response and weaken the interference and strength of accumulated conditioning by disuse. Going from actual situations to actual situations—we do not use thought in perception or action and this stops the new conditioning from registering. Pain is what is experienced as our reaction to the interference of conditioning with things as they are and we can disengage from this anytime if this is seen at gut

level as both; the desire to have things 'our way' and our reactions when it does not happen 'our way' are self-initiated, self-sustained and self-experienced.

Struggle is resistance to let go what we see is not best for us and this happens because we keep looking in the rear view mirror or habit, sentiment and emotion instead of ahead at the promise every moment holds in its palm. As we've discussed earlier, it is not even letting go—it is always about better choice to better choice.

Hunger for to change

When we clearly see that change is not a result or effect but a cause—a shift in understanding must take place in seeing that what has to change is ourselves within, in understanding and not people, things or conditions. Hunger for change gives way to what must happen, 'hunger to change'.

The long uphill and futile struggle to change people, things and conditions ends not by giving-up but by seeing that external results are shaped by cosmic, not individual causes. Peace, happiness and inner joy are experienced when we stop agitating and being agitated. A hunger to change has tremendous energy as what has to change is oneself—time is not a factor in inner change, tomorrow is not a better day and no equipment or skills are needed. Looking back, one has to see the danger in staying the course or the old ways; and looking ahead, one must see self-change as the cause which will bring a rich harvest in changed effects in its own time. The only requirement for change is wholeheartedly wanting it—hunger to change must be felt.

Change, here and now

We struggle with change because we focus on 'what must come', the result or the effect. Going back to the example of 'losing weight'—it takes time to lose 20 pounds or so but not to be healthy. Being healthy is a choice I can make here and now—at this very moment.

Nothing and no one can stop you from inner change. It cannot be a resolve that dissolves but a wholehearted need felt to change. This can only happen if there is perfect clarity that staying the course is not an option. Change is inner clarity and clarity brings outer change.

Effects manifest in their own time and take their own shape. Our joys and sorrows are never caused by the shape of things but by our desires or preferences that do not actualize. Why not abandon this seed of pain completely—here and now? We can still continue to exert as we should with all our being and find joy in doing or as they say, 'a job well done' in all aspects of our life. Every moment has this possibility of doing what needs to be done wholeheartedly. In this wholeheartedness, there is no division in the mind and desires or preferences do not raise their head as the focus is on doing which is here and now and not on 'what comes'.