

As Things Are

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What is the need to alter everything so much so that its fundamental character is changed? When we talk of altering things, we generally think of changing things physically, but we even alter things psychologically far more and it is this psychological altering that eventually results in physical altering.

Say someone was rude to me yesterday at work. Firstly, that is their business—why should someone’s behavior or attitude control *my* behavior and attitude? This is how we literally throw away our innate wisdom and goodness. If my being good and doing good is conditioned by others or by conditions—both my being good and doing good are cosmetic at best, and I should be thankful for the rudeness that has thrown a floodlight on the heart of the problem.

Let’s return to someone who was rude to me yesterday at work... I see them approaching and... ‘Oh, it’s *that* person again!’ But, ‘that person’ is not coming, ‘this person’ who is walking towards me, in this moment, is coming. Why can’t I deal with whatever arises, even if the person behaves the same way as he did yesterday or worse without yesterday’s memory? Because, I’ve psychologically altered the fact that ‘this person’ is approaching—which is actually what is happening—to ‘that person’ is approaching which implies a rude or hurtful person. He may have been rude yesterday but he may be coming to apologize today. It is quite possible that he may be rude today again, but won’t I discover this at the encounter?

So, we are talking about this psychological altering that is a habit of the *mind*. It does this because it cannot understand things as they are. Things *as they are* is the function of the *inner intelligence* which is not individual. The understanding faculty has to be broader, more pervasive, than that which it is trying to understand.

From where you see things is what you see and this is called our vision of things. The *mind’s* vision can only be individual—and what we see or live amidst cannot be individual, as all individuals are included in it, so there is and will continue to be conflict. What we cannot change physically, we change psychologically by a stubborn and unreasonable insistence that ‘this is that’—end of chapter. From now on, we see ‘this’ as ‘that’ and deal with it that way. This is how conditioning works: all the ‘inner that’s’ dealing with what actually *is* from moment to moment.

If we always alter things, we never experience anything, have *new* experiences—only our preferences. Though it is ever fresh, life becomes monotonous when we experience the same thing repeatedly—even if it be our preferences.

Altering things is quite different from adapting things for our use. For example, cooking makes a meal of foodstuff but overcooking destroys the nutritional value as well as the natural taste of foodstuff used. When we cook, one way is to adapt the recipe to bring out the flavor and texture of foodstuffs without loss of nutrition; the other way is to adapt the foodstuffs to the recipe more for the sake of the palate, and this changes the flavor, texture and even the nutritional value of the foods as the recipe, or what is wanted, is more important than the foodstuffs themselves—which is what actually is.

Similarly, in our watching the workings of the mind, can we recognize at once if adaptation is at all necessary—and if so, just how much? If I have been out in nature, in need of water, and find a source of open water—I think of a way to purify the water with what is available if I feel it is necessary. This is adapting the water for drinking. If I am at home, I have other options which I may not have in the outdoors though the end result is the same. To know *how* to do what is felt necessary—with what is needed—is adaptation.

For this, we have to face or deal with things as they are first. Say it is a cold and windy day. We know this because we rely excessively on reports; but can we just step outside for a few moments to get a feel for the weather? In those moments outside, you feel how things are *now* and also have a sense as to how they may change in the near future—and you have gotten a feel for the weather. This ‘feel for the weather’ takes into account that the initial cold felt may be a reaction to the warmth of indoors you were accustomed to and it is not really that cold. One also realizes that as the day dawns, it will get warmer and there is no need to overdress. When we overdress, we take some of the feeling of warmth we had indoors, outdoors, and continue to experience *that* feeling and not the actual weather—missing out on the brisk cool air of the refreshing morning and becoming uncomfortable as it gets warmer. But, if we get a feel for things at the moment, the inner intelligence is roused into action as there is no reliance on data or memory.

We have lost this ability to get a *live feel for things* because we have gotten into the habit of relying excessively on reports which have benefits if used—as and when needed, though quite possibly at the cost of losing one’s innate ability to get a feel for things. Relying on reports and data is not different from relying on memory, but from the point of view that the inner intelligence looks at something *other* than what actually is from moment to moment. This applies not only to the weather but to all things, each other included.

What makes people, conditions and things seem difficult is *memory*—never people, conditions or things in themselves. Our ideas or hopes that spring from memory interfere with things *as they are* and thus, there is inner conflict. There are steep costs to relying on data or memory: we lose our ability to get an innate feel for things and *conditioning* starts responding in our lives instead of intelligence. This is a downward spiral that once ignited feeds on itself, and it is very hard to dismantle.

But why is all this important? It is of tremendous importance if we are going to meditate, as the mind we cultivate and use in our day-to-day lives is the very same mind we are going to face in meditation. The data and memory—all the ‘thatness’ we have discussed earlier—replay on the screen of awareness like an impenetrable, forced slideshow.

When we insist on seeing things as they are, existing conditioning weakens by disuse and the mind becomes thin and clear since we do not rely on memory. The inner intelligence is awakened and empowered and it responds across the whole spectrum of perception and action. The only loss is selfishness and self-centered interests. One who is still enmeshed in desires will find this unpalatable. The yogi or spiritual seeker rejoices at this deal.

Let any situation come, whatever at all it may be—can we see it afresh, as though for the first time, and respond as it feels best? Where is the ‘difficulty’ in this? When we see ‘difficulty’ *before* the situation, we are facing our predispositions and these are the stresses: fears and hopes in our life. We then fear the not desirable will happen and hope the desirable happens. Initially, the mind will not rest in a vacuum and if there is diminished activity, it is good to have a background of thought so the mind can exhaust its energy without loss of awareness. The practice of japa or repetition of the name of the Lord, with attention, is most beneficial in dissipating the mind’s steam.

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