

Struggle and Effort

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Effort is not only necessary to attain anything but effort itself blossoms as the end. If the effort is sincere, it will sustain and fructify just as the seed gradually becomes a full-blown tree. There is no difference between the seed and the tree—the entire tree is contained in the seed. Effort is the journey of the seed to treehood.

Struggle, on the other hand, is unnecessary and a sure indication of something wrong. While effort is energy expended in a given direction, struggle is effort expended in more than one direction at the same time. Struggle must involve friction or some counterforce and is the result of competing interests.

Effort involves hard work and sacrifice, but there is no struggle as the whole being is in movement or onboard towards some end. Whenever all of one, one's whole being, is onboard towards one single goal—it does not matter how challenging the path may be—one keeps moving and struggle simply cannot be. When all of you would like a nice cup of coffee, you get it. But when you would like a cup of coffee and some other feeling rises against having coffee—there is struggle. When you really want something—all of you will rise into action and exert. What was sought may or may not come, but full effort is put forth and only then can one know what is possible. How can you know what is possible before you exert to the fullest?

We never struggle with people, things or conditions—only with our own selves. Struggle is always a war within oneself, waged by oneself and experienced within oneself only. How can you struggle with someone, something or some condition? Something is sought, you work hard, and apply yourself. If you really want it, sacrifices are taken in stride, because what is sought is so worthwhile—this, not from a sense of numbers, but quality.

If you wish better health, you refrain from all that aids ill health and at the very same time, take to all that contributes to good health and strength. Where is the struggle in this? If you really want radiant health, what is the difficulty in letting go of all that aids ill-health? It is not even a sacrifice! The movement towards health is the movement away from ill-health—one single movement. You are not moving towards good health and by some other movement, moving away from ill health—it is one single movement towards that which is good.

Naturally, for this, one has to feel what is sought is 'good' in every cell of one's being and all of oneself has to rise towards it. All of you has to face the new. This clarity of vision immediately dispels what was previously seen as good, for what is now seen is realized as being beneficial and there is no struggle. When one wants to retain the old or habit and move towards the new—

struggle must be felt. If you honestly examine the inner grinding where struggle is felt, you will find dual or competing interests and this is due to lack of clarity.

Clarity is really seeing what is—the true condition of oneself very impartially. Clarity cannot be mechanical—it is something alive and fresh. It is wisdom that rises in direct response to conditions and this is only possible if one learns to avoid the interference of thought with reality—that which we find ourselves facing from moment to moment.

Thought includes all our notions, predispositions and prejudices and it is these that disallow the rise of wisdom. Wisdom or inner clarity does not deal with the 'what ifs' but with reality—what is actually in front of you—and if empowered, acts directly too. The clarity to see is also the power to act or to do what needs to be done.

While driving, if one sees a clear danger, the response is immediate. This happens because the direct perception of the danger was free of thought interference and this direct perception itself acted—did what was needed to avert the danger. It is not till a moment later that thought realizes some wonderful thing has been done and then arrogantly jumps into the driver's seat so to say and feels it did this—accepting the accolades shamelessly.

Inner clarity, wisdom, direct perception and the inner intelligence are all the same thing—the unconditioned. In bringing about change, struggle is felt if the conditioned response or habit is trying to bring about a new condition—the old can never bring about something new! This is what is at the heart of struggle—habit, preference, prejudice or thought trying to bring about something new.

The inner awareness or intelligence is unconditioned and can respond to any situation—regardless of the severity—if this awareness or intelligence is empowered. It is not possible to be selective in its empowerment like an on and off switch for our convenience, as then, the conditioned is still in charge and the conditioned can never use the unconditioned. The habits that cause ill-health cannot select what aspects of health are suitable or agreeable and then select just those. Inner awareness or intelligence is absolutely free of all conditioning and this clarity alone can see what actually is, and this 'seeing' is immediate action as well.

Clarity and the response to what is actually seen are not two different things. When one trips while walking and clearly sees that one is about to fall, the hands move to soften the fall or protect oneself. The seeing is the response—there is absolutely no difference or interval between these.

Struggle happens only when one does not really 'see'. We think we are seeing, hearing, and the lot, but most of it is mechanical. Habit or hope is seeing, listening and functioning. This is why we read and listen to so much, but any change is cosmetic at best. The old cannot usher in change, because it itself is what must be changed—done away with.

Seeking change with the old is futile and at the heart of all struggle. Effort and hard work are never a problem unless one is lazy; but then, change is only wishful thinking. Nothing comes without perseverance, hard work, but it has to be guided by the unconditioned in order for change to come about. Bias of any sort can never chart a new course—it is anchored to the dock of habit.

Effort and hard work is a joy when one is free of habit—free of the conditioned. Success is had at every step as is joy too, because one is interested. Being interested is really what it comes down to. Not a casual interest of the silly old ways like a drifting window-shopper, but interest as something deep and abiding that feels the weight of habit and wants a way out—both of these being one single movement.

It is from the ashes of the direct realization of one's condition that the way out can not only be known, but embarked upon right then and there. All change is instantaneous—space and time are not factors in change, as real change is inner—within the mind and heart. When there is inner change, the outer will reflect in time as a physical reflection of the inner. The outer is always just this—a physicalized expression of the inner so that we can see, as we don't look within. The conditions we see are our own selves.

Effort never involves struggle at all—only hard work. It is energy expended in a single direction. Struggle must have an opposing force, and since struggle is felt within, the opposing force must also be within. When all of oneself is onboard, so to say, how can there be any struggle? Struggle against what? When you are cooking something you really would like to have—there is effort but no struggle, as you really want it. You are interested, very interested, more than interested, and this is perhaps the only factor, as it gives such sharp focus that there is no need for external discipline or to shut off distractions. Absolute focus is the end of distraction; and when there is distraction—there is no focus—no clarity.

Whenever you are seriously interested in something, it has your undivided attention—all of you is facing it. But, the interest we are talking about here is not interest as a means, which is what we generally have. We are interested in something new to reinforce something old and this utilitarian method is not interest—it is delusion at best.

When one is seriously interested, the focus of interest is the end—not the means. There is no difference between the journey and the destination—every step in the journey is destination. One goes from destination to destination or end to end. It is only when we view steps as the end that we can get deeply interested to give our whole being towards it and then, success is guaranteed.

We have to get rid of the sense of utility that is the modus operandi or the usual way and learn to see—to really see, and that clarity itself is the energy of real effort in which there is never any struggle.

This sincere interest is not even a wanting—it is something that is felt in every cell of one's being that must happen. When this is felt, abundant energy is released and there is effort without struggle. We want many things and in many ways, but this deep interest is not many things—the whole being is onboard for one thing it feels must happen. Unfortunately, today, interest has very casual connotations, but let us use this word, as it is less loaded than many other words and just call it sincere interest instead.

Sincere interest not only requires your complete attention—it is attention itself. Attention is the response to a deep need—itsself the light on the path and the energy as effort. We have to use some terms for the sake of communication, but let us not get stuck in making words water-tight compartments. All language is symbolic and intended to convey something beyond the words itself.

The ball is well in motion with sincere interest itself, as it brings about attention or focus and this focus sees what needs to be done and does. We feel that we are doing, but is the 'we' that feels it is doing different from the 'we' that saw so clearly? Sincere interest is attention and attention is effort.

Since there is sincere interest and attention—sustained quality of effort is put forth and the attention that was observing is transformed into the attention that *does*. What needs to be done is in alignment with what was envisioned or felt satisfactory. This satisfaction is not the satisfaction of being appreciated, job-satisfaction or even self-satisfaction—all these are too puerile.

Real satisfaction is when the interest and attention feel that what was felt most necessary is being fashioned by effort. Clarity is itself working towards the manifestation of the sought. Tremendous energy is released, as task and standard are one. The sincere element of interest is what shapes everything, as sincerity implies all of one without reserve; and when all of one really wants something, all the effort necessary is expended.

Satisfaction comes when what was whole-heartedly sought is taking shape. Again, this satisfaction is very different from satisfaction *with*—there is no 'with' here. Sincere interest melted into attention; attention put forth effort; effort exerts and its exertion is its satisfaction—not of a sense of complacency at some accomplishment, but effort is continuously put forth in levels of satisfaction, just as to a musician, every note is satisfaction.

A good musician will keep at practice till every note is satisfaction and therefore, he never has to be concerned with the entire piece, as each note is the best possible one and this keeps going. Each time he plays, the bar is raised—not based on some expectation but rather, it is raised by effort guided by deep interest which is itself—attention. He goes from satisfaction to satisfaction. Plenty of effort but no struggle as there is no standard, such as a summit that is to be reached which he knows is complacency—the end of attainment. Each effort is the best effort and the

best is continually drawn from the ocean of possibilities and he feels satisfaction at this being able to draw forth better effort. Each effort is itself the new standard so he never worries about standards—they just come about.

Unless we are cookie-cutting, we can never know the outcome of effort. This is why sincere interest must guide effort. Before every blow of the hammer and chisel, the sculptor looks very attentively at the block of marble slowly taking shape. He knows that something unnecessarily removed is a disaster, and though he has made many similar strikes, each is unique—just what is needed and every one fresh. There may be repetition but it is not repetitive. The unfolding situation guides the next step.

Satisfaction is answering each instant of the situation's unfolding, and somehow being able to respond to what is needed. One learns to fit in to the situation and *be*. In the case of the sculptor, he may not even know if he is carving the statue or the statue is carving itself through him. It is quite possible that the statue is carving itself out. Great satisfaction is felt when one gives oneself so completely and experiences oneself as being one with the effort. Satisfaction melts into joy or happiness.

When we fit in, we discover the existing harmony of which we are a part, nay, not even a part—the harmony which we *are*. Giving ourselves in effort is a giving up of limitations through effort. Sincere interest brings about the attention or clarity and each effort is the best that could be put forth. You go from best to best and the work becomes a way to give up or surrender all limitation—and through it, the limiting agent or the ego. The real satisfaction felt is not so much by what may be taking shape but in realizing that this very process is one of freeing oneself of every limitation, and by giving oneself so completely, one is giving away limitation and thus expanding. Ideas of recompense in any form thwart the whole process, as every step has to be the end—never the finally so to say. Each step has to be the 'end', or there is struggle and definitely no sustaining endurance.

The happiness that results increases the interest and attention and the cycle feeds on itself. There cannot be any competing interests, even something like the end sought, hoped for or subtly wished. All great discoveries have resulted from a sincere need, focus and effort without remission—without the interference of any personal agenda. Selfishness in any and all forms can at best produce mediocrity and must involve struggle in all phases from conception to attainment.

Life is a stream of possibilities—the response to situations is more than that felt needed for personal needs, it is a total response to be rid of all limitation and be free. Effort or action as a reply to limitation and conditioning is also called karma yoga or the yoga of action. Selfless service is not social service or service for the welfare of others but action which, if done in the yoga spirit, holds the possibility of freedom from conditioning and limitations. This is a tremendous gain for

the person and the real fruit of the work. The fact that good work gets done may benefit others and is insignificant if considered a price for inner freedom.

Once the focus shifts from action in the yoga spirit, it is just work which will soon get tiring and another day will have been spent without lasting satisfaction and happiness. The yoga spirit is the spirit of the existing unity or harmony and work becomes the medium of offering one's ego or personality which causes endless suffering to oneself and others for infinite inner expansion.

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