

Life Without Struggle

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Any form of struggle requires the struggler and that which is struggled with. All struggle is experienced within so the struggler and that which is struggled with must somehow rise in myself. But, I am one and if I somehow preserve this oneness or wholeness – I will find a way for joyful living – no matter how challenging situations get.

When one lives an awakened life, a life where one examines things for himself or herself as they tread – one comes to understand the nature of things and the cause of all suffering to be birth here in this world. The wise regard ending the cycle of birth and death as the only worthy ideal.

To live in this spirit of oneness of being is to live in the yoga spirit and it requires that we first have one single ideal for which we live. This single ideal has to be accepted by one wholeheartedly so the idea of compromise or selectivity does not dare rise against this resolve. This resolve can be as lofty as God-realization or movement towards this ideal which Swami Sivananda puts in two terse aphorisms, “Be Good. Do Good”. These two compact aphorisms cover all the canons of yoga and are the essence of all ethical and moral teachings without leaving anything out but these cannot be interpreted by social or conventional norms.

Can I be good in every thought, feeling, word and action to such an extent so that I become incapable of ‘being non-good’? Can I do good in all ways so that it does not matter what comes at me as my response to anything will be the best response that is possible – one that raises my own inner goodness and is the best for the situation? In talking ‘best’, we are not talking about what I would prefer best or what others may accept best but ‘what is best’?

The inner intelligence will get roused into action if it is empowered to observe each situation and also act as it will be free of the clutches of the ego or personality which is filled with likes, dislikes, desires – all based on ‘I’ and ‘mine’.

The inner intelligence will not get roused if you ask it to observe but act with the conditioned mind – as it is wider and more pervasive than the silly mind and so will never be subservient to it. If you empower the ego or personality – the inner intelligence will let you go ahead and dial for lessons that come at a steep price as ‘your choice’.

So, when you have one clear cut ideal – from God-realization or something you bring closer as, ‘Be Good. Do Good’ – you at once remove all struggle out of life as for any and every situation – there is only one response that satisfies, ‘being good’ and ‘doing good’ without ‘good for me, my

people or my interests'. One single ideal gives you one single standard or perspective to respond from and all struggle just dissolves as struggle requires choice for conflict, "I must do in this way but I would rather do it that way", or, "I must do this but I would rather do that". The first part of no choice in 'how things are done' is quite clear. The second part of 'what needs to be done', versus 'what I would like to do', will also dissolve as you would just not do what does not satisfy, 'being good and doing good' – and, there would only be one single course of action.

But, you may say, "What about consequences?" What about them? The consequences of compromising your innate goodness and acting in a way that is the best way possible are a worse consequence than a little less in quantity of things like money, power, fame, recognition and the sort. Why do we never concern with the consequence of what loss to 'being' or to our innermost self by a degradation of quality of being?

Each time you compromise quality of being – you degrade qualitatively yourself and no amount of quantity in any form can replace, compensate or restore the balance.

You may feel that this high bar may compromise your duties like taking care of your family etc., but, all things will be taken care of better as quality always trumps quantity. Think about it – peace, contentment, satisfaction, happiness and joy are not quantities – they are qualities. Improving quality of life happens when you improve the quality of the one living life or the 'liver'. If quantity led to quality – all who have more would be immensely peaceful, happy and fully satisfied but we know that this is far from how things are.

A clear ideal is an ideal that lived by naturally – without struggle or selective application. This ideal should seat deep in the core of one's being so it is not only why we do things but why we live in the first place – the reason for our existence. They say the cycle of samsara or birth and death is rooted in karma and the cause of karma is ignorance of the true nature of things. The only remedy to breaking this cycle has to be right understanding which is the existing unity as the truth of things which must be embedded at least as deep as ignorance's promptings are with the courage to disregard them and empower wisdom instead.

It is essential to have and wholeheartedly adopt without selectiveness a higher ideal and have this as a resolve, "From this very moment on, I will be good in the best way I know how, without selectivity or concern of consequence and I will do good in all ways starting with what and how I think and feel to every way I communicate and in my actions".

All burdens, concerns and struggle will at once be lifted off your shoulders instantly as you have just given yourself a new standard operating procedure that this resolve is what is going to act in your life. The road will be bumpy at first and it may seem difficult at first but everything is difficult at first because of our own lack of wholeheartedness.

When you examine what your own difficulties are sincerely, you will see that they are your own resistance to things as they are. It is difficult to see this because we are so conditioned to believe that others – people, conditions and things – have much to do with our difficulties. Find out for yourself and you will see through them as they will not stand up to reason and will boil down to these: ‘I don’t want to do this’ whose only justification is ‘It is not my way’ or ‘I just don’t like it’.

Instead of difficulty or problem solving every day – today this, tomorrow that and who knows what will appear on the mind’s radar the day after tomorrow – isn’t it perhaps easier to first check, then weaken and finally get rid of whatever is experiencing the difficulty or problem. It cannot be you as you are aware that there is some inner grinding or resistance that wants to take issue with someone, some condition or something. If you are aware of some grinding within, you cannot be the grinder. Habit has become strong enough because of the importance we ourselves have given it and now, it seems to want to function as a ‘duplicate I’ or a ‘redundant I’ – if this bundle of habits called the ego, personality or ‘little I’ has not already taken over, it is working on it. The good news is that it can be stopped at any stage though the inner strength needed to break its grip increases when left unchecked longer.

Unless the danger is not seen within, caused by our own selves – a solution is very difficult at best. If the danger of habitual living is not clearly seen, all solutions will be cosmetic at best and will not endure. The clarity with which you see the danger is itself the inner strength needed to check conditioning.

We must very clearly, each for oneself that all struggle, difficulties, problems and the weight in our lives is not caused by anyone else or anything else – it is the reaction of the ego or habit to things just as they are. We know this because when everything is going well with you, you are able to absorb little difficulties in stride but when there have already been a few close encounters and say we are not feeling at the top of our game – the blame game suggests targets.

But, seeing things clearly, just as they are and being aware of the inner grinding or dissatisfaction is half of the equation – a better response must be in the heart so it can flow out effortlessly and say, “I will respond this way – the way of my resolve”. Initially, you may have to say, “Not that way – this way”. Soon, unhealthy choices will weaken by disuse though you will still be aware of their promptings and you will just be able to act in better ways – on the strength of your resolve.

When you see yourself responding in better ways, the things you felt were struggle earlier will no longer seem so as when you respond to situations in healthier and more wholesome ways – the responses spring from your inner goodness and are at once experienced as goodness as well. How can any action that springs from your innate goodness have a negative experience? When you truly do a good deed – you feel good at once – not later but at the moment of doing – whether it is appreciated or not.

All of nature knows this secret and so there is no struggle or sorrow amidst any of its family. The tree exerts to be the best tree it can be in spite of any condition that may come and just look at them – they are always swaying and joyful. The little squirrel runs about to gather its food and some days it may have to work hard and get very less but nonetheless, it does not stress out as we do when less comes because it knows the art of making the very act of finding food as play.

Sit for a while in nature and observe these things. We are very much a part of nature's family and can find the way to be natural, joyful and struggle free if we only let go of our self-assertive ways, preferences and insistences.

Everything changes – let it and if a response is needed, let the strength of your resolve to be good keep the boat steady so that doing good or the best way to maintain inner goodness while responding is seen. Then, just do it and let go as what was in front of you will flow away on its own as newer situations present themselves. The old carts itself off – no need to push it away and it is foolishness to cling on to it as firstly, we will be dragged with it and secondly, we will miss the new that is already here – just now.

Having a clearly defined ideal empowered as a resolve, restores harmony in the mind, eliminates all inner struggles and results in a better state of overall well-being. Let us now bring thoughts together in a practical way.

What is Struggle?

Struggle is being at the crossroads of wanting to go one way while there seems to be some sort of pressure or pull to go another way. Why should this happen at all? Let us look at struggle from a broader perspective than merely choices, likes, dislikes or personal preferences.

Is it not possible to have one ideal or goal of life that can guide all action in all the different aspects of our own life? How we see all of life, is called our vision of life and this does not have to change with what is seen. We are one person, the same one person and if this one person can have one single focus or way of seeing life – it should reduce to eliminate all struggle as not matter what the situation.

If we do not have one single ideal that guides all action – we will experience confusion, struggle and inner conflict as different priorities which lead to different ways of looking at things is what observes different conditions. But, if we have a single ideal, one focus – then what does it matter if the situation is this way or that – we can simply do the very best we can in line with that ideal and be free of struggle.

We may not be able to change things but we can change – return to our original simplicity of oneness within first and then find a way to through action – be one with all things by not acting outside each situation.

All Action has the Same Value

The different aspects of our life like family, work and recreation are not as different as we may think they are – they are just different fields of activity. This may seem odd at first but let's go deeper. What is the purpose of any and all activity when you really get down to it?

You may feel that I need to work to eat or feed my family but if this is so – it makes unethical means even if it is not considered 'illegal' – justifiable if they provide more as then you could probably provide better. At this crossroads, there will be a grinding of conscience or our inner sense of right and wrong versus the feeling or quality which will come if we are able to increase quantity. Quantity can never out-balance quality – they are on different frequencies.

Those who walk the way of righteousness or goodness know that this precious gem called goodness has its own value and it is goodness that gives value to all else. Do not mistake righteousness with merely following the law, procedures or social norms. For example: the traffic law in one area may state, 'No Stopping' – but, if you see someone on the side of the road, desperately in need of help – would you stop or use the convenient and flimsy justification of 'following the law' and nonchalantly drive on by? You can stretch this across all action – just because something is legal or 'not considered illegal' does not make it right. To use justification such as: what is legal, not considered illegal, social acceptable and what others are doing as a yardstick for one's own decision will lead to inner degradation though perfectly acceptable and even laudable in society.

Goodness has its Own Value

Righteousness or goodness is much more than following the law, procedures, norms and such. We are not talking about disregarding or violating secular laws but to remember that there are higher laws that cannot be ignored as it is these laws that give our very life purpose.

We did not ask to come here but we are here and we may not ask for many situations that come but they will. The good news is that though we are here – this is a rare opportunity to free ourselves of this cycle of birth and death called samsara. Today, we will not get deeper into samsara but rather, look at 'being good and doing good' from a practical sense.

On Being Good

'Being good' is not as easy as it sounds as it involves the abandonment of all that is contrary. It does not have to take time but it usually does only because we are not able to renounce all that is non-good for many reasons – two of the main reasons are: weakness of resolve and strength of habit, and, our direct understanding of what is non-good is still evolving.

Rather than look at renouncing 'non-good' – we can take the plunge into 'being good' very sincerely. It does not matter what the understanding is and if we slip up as each slip will broaden

the understanding, increase humility and love for God as we see our weaknesses and ask God for inner spiritual strength to overcome them. How can you fail when you make a firm resolve and try your very best each day to live up to it? Each fall will give you more and polish the mind and heart cleaner.

A sincere and wholehearted resolve is essential and requisite to eliminate struggle as with it, we are not struggling to let go and all struggle is in letting go. Instead, with a firm resolve, we are looking at attaining and what must be let go is let go without struggle as the sights are on the positive – on attaining and in attainment – there is always gain.

On Doing Good

Let us focus on ‘doing good’ in a very practical sense. Doing good is doing or action that is in accordance with the truth of things which is unity, oneness and non-separation. For this, there cannot be specific rules for what we call secular action and different rules for other action. What we call secular is just that – something we call or a way of seeing things – let us rise above all notions and take the broadest view.

First rule of doing good: Is it possible to act in such a way so that our actions or responses to life do not stem from notions, habits or what is called conditioning but rather, from real situations as they happen? This is doing what needs to be done rather than what ‘I would like to do’ or ‘what is in my best interests’. This way of action will not strengthen the sense of agency or ego and the source of all problems and pain – both to ourselves and others.

Second rule of doing good: Is it possible to act without concern or expectation for the fruits of action and this includes appreciation for anything done? If the carrot and stick drive our actions (and they can be golden ones), we are slaves to something and not free. Can we do everything that needs to be done (first rule) without concern or expectation of results in any way – just because it needs to be done?

When you free action from results, you actually become more productive and more comes. Why? Because there is no throttling of effort while doing. What else comes? You weaken the ego and find a way to gain inwardly with each action of wholehearted responses in life, thus, doing more, contributing more and finding immediate satisfaction in doing rather than what comes. This takes out hopes, expectations, frustrations and disappointments as joy is found in action rather than result. Don’t worry, results will come – no need to sweat unnecessarily. Sweating or worrying is a habit that you can do without.

Third rule of doing good: Both, while doing or during action and after action – can we keep a balanced state of mind? This can only happen if we follow rule two (above), which is to not be concerned about outcome, result or what comes. The reason we struggle with wholehearted

actions is because of our habit of selectiveness and always looking for personal gain. If you eliminate the cause of imbalance in action (which is selfish action), you learn how to get rid of imbalance from your life period. All mood swings, good days and bad days and the lot are at once let go as just unnecessary.

Wholeheartedness is joy in itself. You must be wholehearted in everything you do – however mundane to train the mind to find delight in action as wholehearted action keeps the mind whole and the deep interest in all things sees satisfaction in a job well-done. Continual satisfaction is contentment and contentment is the biggest gain.

Summary

What does it matter if things go one way or the other as long as you have approached each situation to see what needs to be done, done it without personal expectation and kept your balance in all situations? What you have started is a cycle of freeing yourself from the grip of karma and this cycle is first brought under control by good choices in thinking, feeling and acting which are seeds that must bring better conditions in this life and journeys to come.

Eternal vigilance or keeping the mind unceasingly in the field of observation along with the activity on hand becomes essential if we are to grow and evolve spiritually. Action, any action becomes a mirror to see the mind as the mind which is difficult to observe without getting caught up in its ways cannot resist reacting to situations with its preferences and habitual ways.

Unless we have one single clearly defined ideal as a firm resolve as a needle and thread with which we are willing to thread all our life's activities with – we are bound to struggle with what is more important and susceptible to our own flimsy self-justification or taking refuge in existing little laws and norms at the cost of silencing our conscience and compromising our innate goodness.

When one is awake – it means one has seen through things and has no problem with not even rejecting the old but choosing the new, choosing the good. When one resolutely walks the way of 'good' – there is never any fear of anything – come what may. This does not mean one is calloused but rather, one's sensitivity is fully awakened in its broadest sense without any tinge of selfishness and this expanded mind and heart is very different from self-centered, narrow and constricted ways – all will be well in the very moment and in all moments to unfold.

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