

From *Essays for Self-improvement* by Swami Jyotirmayananda



How to Change Your Life

HUMAN LIFE abounds with changes. There are changes in the body as well as variations in the states of the mind. There is diversity in the objects of the world. However, there are times when a person desires to bring about a total change in his life. He does not want to be the same personality with constant irritability, sustained tension, and a lingering habit of jealousy. He desires to be free from these negative qualities and aspires to become a person abounding with the qualities of endurance, patience, magnanimity, a balanced mind, and a cheerful disposition. Such a wish to change is indeed commendable. It is this inward feeling to alter one's disposition

that marks the commencement of the soul's journey towards the goal of Self-realization.

It is important to understand how to bring about a deep-rooted modification so that an old habit does not reassert itself and a suppressed negative trait does not arise again with greater vehemence. Lacking a profound understanding of the secrets of life, people adopt various methods to deal with their negative qualities. Some try to suppress or hide them. Some try to veil a negative quality by adopting a positive quality. People who are prone to irritability, cruelty and pride often adorn themselves with exaggerated tenderness, kindness, and humility in an attempt

to hide or outgrow their negative traits. But they do not succeed.

YOU MAY deck thorny bushes with ornamental flowers or deprive them of their branches and leaves. You can even cut them down or pulverize them. But as long as their roots are in the ground, they will rise again. Much in the same way, you may suppress your negative qualities, try to modify them, or even cut them down to a very great extent by the practice of good association and meditation; but until you get at the roots of the negativity within, you will not eliminate it fully and completely.

When you have turned away from your anger, greed, and pride for a short time, you have merely changed. But when you turn away from these, saying a final goodbye, you have brought about a spiritual transformation within yourself. You have merely changed when you no longer find pleasure in the toys of your childhood, because you have only changed your toys. Rather than pursuing the love of God through the expressions of your life, an inner weakness drives you to find happiness in the objects of the world. However, when you become free from that illusion, turning to the Divine within, you are transformed.

When you bring about a vital change within yourself as a result of increasing integration of your personality and spiritual understanding, you become transformed. You are filled with vibrant energy, intuitive insight, and dynamic inspiration. In the process of eliminating the roots of your negative traits, you continue to discover increasing expansion of your inner Self. Your life becomes a song of success; it flows with joy, vitality, and spiritual aspiration. But when you simply change in terms of your external surroundings, objects, and relationships, without changing at the deeper level of your personality, your mind gradually becomes burdened with an increasing sense of boredom.

An ordinary clerk may become a government official. A lawyer may become a judge. An ordi-

nary student of philosophy may become a professor. But the deeper aspect of their personalities continues to remain the same. When deprived of their favorite objects, they still grieve and lament just as they have done in their childhood. When encountering objects of their liking, they lose their balance of mind through elation. Veiled by the mask of external prestige and public recognition, they continue to be what they have been all along. The external mask has further hindered them from receiving the healthy atmosphere of nature. A person who masks their old uncultured self with glittering degrees and titles received from the world becomes more uncontrolled with regard to their defects and negative habits.

AS AN EXAMPLE, a short-tempered student becomes a professor. Now, he does not feel the necessity for controlling his temper. Rather, he thinks he is licensed to express his “righteous indignation” towards his students “for their own good.” And at times, overpowered by the grossest form of his uncontrolled nature, he is unable to recognize that he is humiliating and degrading himself in the light of his own reason. A person who continues to ignore the inner voice of conscience and tries to seek consolation in the illusory masks of this glittering world cannot hope to experience true forms of joy and abundance in life.

On the other hand, you may change deeply within yourself without changing your external makeup. You may remain the same old clerk, but not the same old personality. You may re-

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main the same old farmer, but not the same weakling of a few years ago. When you simply change, you remain the same personality. But when you bring about a transformation, you experience the Universal Life that flows through you. This inner transformation of your personality is what is needed to experience a connection with Divinity within.

While a life of undisciplined senses beckons you to the lures of external pleasures, a life dedicated to Yoga urges you to bring about a vital and profound transformation in your life. The external changes are like a piece of iron being molded into different forms, while a mystic change is like iron being transformed into gold—what it is essentially. So too, when you have brought about a spiritual transformation within yourself, your virtuous qualities will reveal themselves with increasing intensity. The Truth of who you are will be revealed. You will not be drawn back to the quagmire of your old uncultured habits.

The Transformative Power of Integral Yoga

Take recourse to Integral Yoga. It will bring about a total change in your being. Yet do not

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expect a change overnight. Bring rhythm and balance into your daily life. Your personality is sustained by the pillars of reason, emotion, will and action. A vital change must take place in each of these four foundations of your personality. However, when your reason changes into intuition, the process of spiritual change attains its climax. All the favorable changes that you endeavor to bring about in yourself are completed by the light of intuition. Until you have developed intuitional vision into the nature of the Self, the changes within you remain at the mercy of the subtle processes of spiritual ignorance that operate through your unenlightened mind.

KARMA YOGA gives you the art of changing your mental attitude towards your physical activities. You learn the art of working without seeking the deluded pleasures of your ego. You work with detachment and an increasing insight into the philosophical fact that action should be an expression of glorifying God. When you are spiritually transformed, you delight in performing actions that produce goodness in the world. Rather than being urged by selfishness, greed, and egoism and solely working for perishable worldly results, you are inspired by selflessness, universal love, and inward spiritual revelation to increasingly recognize God expressing Himself through this creation and through your actions. This is the transformation that should be the goal of your life of activity.

RAJA YOGA outlines the art of changing your mental plane. Rather than maintaining a mind that is a perpetual workshop for the “devil” of distraction, you begin converting it into a shrine for the “deity of meditation.” You learn the art of controlling your thoughts, and thus entering into the profound depths of your personality through concentration and meditation. Your egoistic will becomes transformed by the philosopher’s stone of *samadhi* (super-consciousness) into the Divine Will that operates for the good of all.

BHAKTI YOGA presents the art of transforming your sentiments into a stream of Divine Love. Rather than falling into the widespread snares of attachment and infatuation in the name of love, you begin to discover the Love of the Self that is the basis and source of all human love that operates in this relative world. “It is for the sake of Self (God) that all is loved.” This Upanishadic truth is realized. You enjoy spiritual love, which neither comes nor goes. The soul blends into God Himself, enjoying a perennial stream of sweetness. The loving sentiment that flowed like a muddy river in a swampy land now becomes transformed into a silvery stream of freedom that finds fulfillment in the Ocean of Bliss.

JNANA YOGA gives you the art of converting your reason into intuition. It is the culmination in the process of personality integration. By listening to the scriptures under the guidance of a spiritual preceptor, and by reflecting and meditating upon the meanings of the scriptural teachings, a wise aspirant brings about a total change in the perspective of his very identity. Instead of asserting, “I am this body of flesh and blood,” he realizes, “I am the Universal Self.”

Rather than pursuing the desires of the mind led by egoistic vision, one questions the very fictitious existence of the ego. And having discovered that the ego-sense is like a wandering dream-subject in the darkness of spiritual ignorance, one “wakes up” to realize that he is essentially the Divine Self, independent of all desires and cravings.

Intuitional knowledge is the fire that consumes the roots of all evil habits in one’s personality. It is the philosopher’s stone that completes the process of transformation in every plane of existence. The soul becomes transformed into the Divine Self, and the human body becomes a living temple of God.

How long will you continue to change only on the surface plane of your existence? Learn the art of bringing about a profound change in your being. Practice a blend of dedicated ac-

tion, devotion, meditation, and spiritual enquiry in your day-to-day life. Place yourself increasingly in the hands of your purified reason. Allow your personality to bask in the sunshine of wisdom. Enjoy soft showers of Divine sentiments. Breathe in the atmosphere of a joyous mind. You are going to be transformed.

In the light of intuition, you will discover that the Self is beyond all changes and modifications. With the removal of dark clouds, the sun reveals itself in its intrinsic brilliance, bringing about a transformation in the world. The clouds begin to shine with the colors of the rainbow. The trees reveal their greenery, and the rivers flow with glistening exuberance. In the same way, with the revelation of the Self, changes occur in the clouds of the mind, in the river of one’s sentiments, in the summits of one’s thoughts, and therefore in one’s daily life.

Though it seems paradoxical that the Self brings a total renewal in one’s personality, such is the wisdom acquired by the Yogis and Sages. Acquire the wisdom of the immutable Self. This is the secret of spiritual transformation, not only within yourself, but in the world in which you live. It is the basis of all that is good, beautiful, and Divine in this world.

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