

daily sun

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Living in Flux

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There is an old classic movie titled 'Roman Holiday,' released in 1953. The film stars Audrey Hepburn as a Princess of a European country and Gregory Peck as an American journalist. The princess escapes from her royal protection and protocol to enjoy freedom and experience life as an ordinary person, while the journalist encounters her without realising her true identity.

The story progresses through manifestations of romance, self-interest, sacrifice, dreams, and reality. The point is that royals with wealth, prestige, and power may feel monotony and constraint, and they yearn to taste the life of ordinary people. On the other hand, ordinary people dream of the lavish life of the rich.

We have this proverb, "The grass is always greener on the other side".

We often think that other people's life is better than ours. It probably originates from the instinct of envy. But there is another side to it: we are never content with what we have, we always want to see and experience the other side of the river even if we know it's not greener. We look for change.

We seek variety in clothing, food, architecture, everything. Sometimes the old design in clothing comes back after many years which means it's not about novelty or modernity but just from the urge to change, go for something different.

The quest for this kind of change originates from the craving for variety, excitement, and stimulation. We travel to different places, taste various foods, explore newer fashions, and keep up with the latest gadgets, all of which provide us with a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction.

There are, however, other types of changes that we are usually not comfortable with and sometimes even fearful of.

For instance, changes in our workplace or social norms can be unsettling because they often pose a transition to the unknown and uncertain. We have a natural inclination to seek security, stability, and routine.

We create a comfort zone in our lives and don't want to step out of it or allow anything to shake it up. Moving to the uncharted and unfamiliar can evoke anxiety. Thus, there is a natural tendency for people to resist change. In fact, there is a whole subject of change management where they teach you how to introduce change in organisations, motivate employees to accept it, handle resistance to change, and so on.

Our behaviour and our way of life create impressions on others and impact society and the environment, sometimes to the extent of causing undesirable changes. The lavish consumption of the people of the industrialised nations over the last 200 years or so has caused damage to the nature and environment in such a way that we are now suffering from climate change. Unprecedented storms, droughts, and floods have now become commonplace.

The story that we began with features a monotony factor. The princess was bored with her routine life of meetings, audiences, dinners, press conferences, etc. Once in a while, we are indeed affected by monotony. Suppose a person's favourite food is "Mutton Biryani".

Now if he is served "Mutton Biryani" at every meal every day he will soon reach a point where he will lose his appetite at the very sight of his favourite food and look for a change. That's human psychology. We have a kind of impatience or restlessness built into our nature. We are quite susceptible to monotony and boredom.

Changes in a broad range like societal or nationwide transformation are associated with leadership. People's will alone can't make that happen. Of course, leaders have their own objectives and agendas aligning with people's aspirations. Applying emotional intelligence, politicians propose changes to the people and promise to deliver them if voted in.

Often leaders mold the conviction and will of the people through their rhetoric and propaganda. During his election campaign in 2016, former US President Donald Trump influenced a large segment of the American population to believe that America was declining and its glory days were gone and people should rally behind him to "Make America Great Again".

New ideas, philosophies, and doctrines can change the fate of individuals, nations, and even the course of civilisation. The advent of major religions like Christianity and Islam, the evolution of democracy and socialism, and the impact of the Industrial Revolution have caused large-scale changes in societies, countries, and the world at large.

Those who couldn't withstand the winds of change or failed to accept it had to recede from the mainstream and get lost in oblivion or even face persecution and fatality.

Drastic and fast change can bring disastrous consequences. In the late 1950s, the rapid collectivisation of agriculture in China and excessive procurement of crops from the communes, based on inflated production figures, left the countryside with a severe food shortage, resulting in one of the deadliest famines in history. In an article published in The Washington Post, Chinese economist Mao Yushi estimated the death toll in the famine at 36 million.

Life itself is a sequence of changes. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “The only constant in life is change”.

From birth to death, we go through different stages - childhood, adulthood, and old age. Each stage brings huge changes in our bodies and mind. Our knowledge, attitude, and overall psyche change with time.

Adolf Hitler of Germany died as an infamous dictator responsible for the extermination of millions of people. But when he was a toddler, he was no less innocent and adorable than other kids of his age.

The universe is constantly changing, full of activities and motion. On our planet Earth, days change to nights, seasons revolve in a cycle, and we move through the dimension of time experiencing all kinds of vicissitudes in society and the environment. We ourselves transform with age, innocent children turn into both saints and monsters at maturity.

In relationships, love changes to hatred, and enemies become friends. Truly, change is the only constant. Every day of our life is different. And every day we are closer to the ultimate change from life to eternal rest by one more day. So, let's make the best of it.

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