

Jiddu Krishnamurti

First Public Talk in Saanen

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As there are going to be ten talks and seven discussions, I think we ought to go into many things rather carefully and hesitatingly so that we all understand what we are talking about. Don't be impatient. In one talk we cannot cover the whole ground of life. If you are hearing it for the first time and you want everything answered in the first talk, I'm afraid that is quite impossible. What we can do together is to inquire whether it is at all possible, living in this modern world with all its complex problems, with its travail and misery, with the confusion that exists both within and without - whether it is at all possible for a human being, living in this world, functioning so-called normally, to free himself from the many problems that exist not only around him but also in him. We can inquire whether it is possible to be totally free and thereby perhaps enter into a different dimension of existence altogether.

It seems to me that it is worthwhile and necessary to go into this question, and that requires enormous patience. That demands a great deal of examination and investigation, not from the particular point of view of one's own idiosyncrasies, tendencies, nationality, and dogma, but rather we must inquire into the whole human problem. If we could only understand man as a whole - the man that is living in India, Russia, America, China, or here! Perhaps when we understand the whole of man, we can begin to understand the particular man, which is you and me. To understand such an immense problem - and it is a great and very complex problem - we must understand what it is that we each want as human beings, what we are all seeking, what we are all trying to do. I think that if we could put to ourselves the question of what it is that we are seeking, what it is that we want to experience, how deeply we want to be really peaceful and how profoundly in our being we want to be free, then perhaps we would be able to inquire intelligently. Most of us do want to experience something. Our lives are narrow, rather petty, limited, rather bourgeois, if I may use that word without any derogatory meaning.

We all know that, and we want to go beyond and experience something that is much more vital, that has great significance, that will solve all our problems. I think that is what man throughout the world is seeking.

He calls it by different names: religious experience, a heightened sensitivity, great capacity to comprehend the total existence of man, to be free from all this incessant conflict, to find something that is more than the thing put together by thought. Most of us are rather fed up with analysis, examination, inquiry, probing, asking, questioning, doubting. Most intelligent people have been through all that. They have read so much. They know all the answers to almost every question intellectually, but knowledge doesn't seem to satisfy all the questions which the mind puts. It finds an answer for itself which doesn't seem to satisfy completely or to answer the problem totally. The mind is always seeking, seeking to find out what death means, what love means, what right relationship is, how to be free from this constant conflict within and without, how to be free of wars, how to have peace, what freedom means. We are always asking, asking, asking, and in the very asking, in that very questioning, we want someone to reply, someone in authority, someone who knows, someone who has a deep understanding of life. We look to others, and thereby we depend on and are caught in the opinions of the very clever ones, of the ancient teachers, or of the very latest erudite scholars.

We are concerned with opinions, and opinions are not the truth. Discussing opinions has very little meaning. It only leads to dialectical, clever, intellectual argumentation. To find out for oneself as a total human being, it is very important how we put the question, with what purpose we put the question, what the motive is behind that question, because the motive generally answers the question. If you have a purpose in putting a question, that very purpose dictates the answer. Your questioning is already answered, and therefore your questioning has no value whatsoever because you have a motive, a purpose, an intention, a direction towards which you want to go, and you put that question in order to find out if it is right or wrong. A man who puts a question with a motive is really a most shallow person because his answer is already dictated, conditioned by his motive, his purpose, his direction. Can you question without a purpose, without seeking? That is the real issue, and it is very interesting to go into that. Our lives are troubled; we are miserable, confused; we are in sorrow; there are these incessant wars which threaten security; there are these ideologies, theories, dogmas, beliefs, fears, and all the things that we are heir to. We want all these questions answered. It is a normal, healthy demand to ask ourselves if it is possible to be free of them all, but as we said just now, to put a question with a motive has very little meaning.

Can we put a question and leave it, not try to find an answer, not try to find a solution to our problems? There is a solution, a total solution, a complete answer to all our problems, whether the problem is death, love, the cessation of wars, or all the antagonisms and prejudices of races and classes, all the absurdities of the mind. There is an answer, but it is very important to put the question rightly, and that we apparently find very difficult to do. We are so eager to find an answer, a solution, because we are concerned with the immediacy of existence - what will happen now. Impatience dictates the answer. The answer is invariably comforting, gratifying, and we think we have found the answer.

Please, let us be very clear from the first of these talks that you are not merely listening to the speaker. The speaker has no value whatsoever, nor what he says. What has value is how you understand yourself in listening to what he says. He is like a mirror in which you see yourself reflected. Your consciousness, your daily activity, your unconscious demands, pursuits, and fears are exposed. When you so listen, then you begin to discover for yourself not the ideas, the conclusions, the assertions of the speaker, but rather you see for yourself what is true and what is false. The moment you understand for yourself as a total human being what is true, then your whole problem is resolved; but if you are merely listening to the speaker intellectually, arguing with him, concerned with one opinion, your own opinion, and your own knowledge, or the conclusions which you have acquired from some other person, you are everlastingly comparing what the speaker says with what another has said. You remain in the world of words, in the world of opinions, conclusions, and these have very little value. I hope that you will listen, but not with the memory of what you already know; and this is very difficult to do. You listen to something, and your mind immediately reacts with its knowledge, its conclusions, its opinions, its past memories. It listens, inquiring for a future understanding. Just observe yourself, how you are listening, and you will see that this is what is taking

place. Either you are listening with a conclusion, with knowledge, with certain memories, experiences, or you want an answer, and you are impatient. You want to know what it is all about, what life is all about, the extraordinary complexity of life. You are not actually listening at all. You can only listen when the mind is quiet, when the mind doesn't react immediately, when there is an interval between your reaction and what is being said. Then in that interval there is a quietness, there is a silence in which alone there is a comprehension which is not intellectual understanding. If there is a gap between what is said and your own reaction to what is said, in that interval, whether you prolong it indefinitely, for a long period or for a few seconds - in that interval, if you observe, there comes clarity. It is the interval which is the new brain. The immediate reaction is the old brain, and the old brain functions in its own traditional, accepted, reactionary, animalistic sense. When there is an abeyance of that, when the reaction is suspended, when there is an interval, then you will find that the new brain acts, and it is only the new brain that can understand, not the old brain.

I think it is important to understand the operation, the functioning, the activity of the old brain. When the new brain operates, the old brain cannot possibly understand the new brain. It is only when the old brain, which is our conditioned brain, our animalistic brain, the brain that has been cultivated through centuries of time, which is everlastingly seeking its own security, its own comfort - it is only when that old brain is quiet that you will see that there is a different kind of movement altogether, and it is this movement which is going to bring clarity. It is this movement which is clarity itself. To understand, you must understand the old brain, be aware of it, know all its movements, its activities, its demands, its pursuits, and that is why meditation is very important. I do not mean the absurd, systematized cultivation of a certain habit of thought, and the rest of it; that's all too immature and childish. By meditation I mean to understand the operations of the old brain, to watch it, to know how it reacts, what its responses are, its tendencies, its demands, its aggressive pursuits - to know the whole of that, the unconscious as well as the conscious part of it. When you know it, when there is an awareness of it, without controlling it, without directing it, without saying, "This is good, this is bad; I'll keep this, I won't keep that," - when you see the total movement of the old mind, when you see it totally, then it becomes quiet.

Then you have to go into the question of what seeing is, what observation is, what perception is. I wonder how you see things. Do you see them with your eyes, with your mind? Obviously you see things with your eyes, but you see with the mind much more quickly than with the eye. You see the world much more quickly than the eye can ever perceive. You see with memory, with knowledge, and when you so see things, that is, with the mind, you are seeing what has been, not what actually is.

Please, as I said, do the thing that we are listening to, do it actually as we are listening - that is, see how our minds look, with all our knowledge of the past, with all our miseries, anxieties, guilt, despair, hope, and all the rest which we have accumulated, which is the past. With all that we look, and so when we look at the old mind, we are looking at it still with the knowledge of the old mind; therefore, we are not looking at it at all. To look at anything, and it does not matter what it is - your own mind when it is operating, a tree, the movement of the river, the clouds chasing across the valley - to really look, the past must be quiet. In order to look, all knowledge of your own intentions, your worries, your personal problems, and so on must be absolutely set aside, which really means that there must be freedom to look, freedom to look at the complex time-consuming brain, which is the past, freedom to observe all its reactions and really let it come out. Then you can observe.

We cannot observe if we have defenses, if we have resistance, and most of us have very carefully cultivated these self-defensive mechanisms which prevent our looking. We are Christians, Hindus, atheists, communists, or goodness knows what else - we are all these things and through them, through the activity of the old mind, we look at life, and we never look at the old mind with freedom. It is only in freedom that the old mind responds, shows itself. If I am defending myself, in order to find it out I must be free to look, and it is only in freedom that we can look, can understand. It is only in freedom that the old responds

naturally and then we can understand it. It seems to me that we never ask, we never demand to be completely free. We demand conditional freedom, freedom from some immediate pain, anxiety, or problem, but such immediate demand for freedom is not freedom. Freedom implies total freedom. It is only in that freedom that we can discover, as the great scientists do. Only when they are completely free in their laboratories or wherever they work can they discover something totally new. Outside that they are just like any other human beings.

The demand for freedom and the insistence on freedom will reveal naturally and easily the various conditionings and bondages and defenses which man has carefully built up through time. In that revelation of the past one begins to be free, actually free from the past, both the conscious and the unconscious.

Question: How is one to explore the unconscious?

Krishnamurti: First, what is the unconscious? Many people have written about it with various prejudices, biases, conclusions; but if you discard all of those, discard altogether what others have said - and I hope you will - then you can begin to inquire for yourselves what it actually is. Then you are not dependent on what others say. What is the unconscious? Are you waiting for me to tell you, or are you inquiring? How do you inquire? You can only inquire when you are passionately interested. If you really want to know, not casually, intellectually, or with curiosity, if you really want to know passionately, deeply for yourself what this unconscious is, then what happens? What happens when you are tremendously keen on finding out for yourself as a total human being, rejecting all that anyone has said about it? Then what happens? Your mind becomes very sharp; your mind becomes extraordinary active; your mind is looking, not asking but observing, watching. There is a difference between asking and looking. If you are asking, you want to find an answer, and that answer will depend upon your conditioning, your tendencies, your hopes, your fears. But if you are observing, there is no demand, no asking; you are watching. I hope you see the difference between the two: questioning and observing. Now you are observing, which means that you are completely alive, active, not looking to someone to tell you what it is, and therefore you are not afraid to discover. You are not repeating what someone else has said. What is it that you discover?

Question: How am I to understand the unconscious?

Krishnamurti: Aren't we talking of two different things? You are using the word understand in the sense of observe, get to know, become acquainted with, see all its contents, how it operates, how it functions, how it is boiling, the whole of it. I say: Are you discovering for yourself what the unconscious is, or are you looking at it with the knowledge of what others have said about it? Now watch it! Please look at it carefully. If you are looking at it with the knowledge of what others have said about it, it is already part of the unconscious, is it not?

Question: How do we explain to children what happens after death?

Krishnamurti: Madame, we are discussing something entirely different, aren't we? We will go into that question of death and all the rest of it at another time.

Comment: I thought you had finished.

Krishnamurti: Ah, no, no! How can we finish this question in two minutes? You understand what I said just now? If I look at the unconscious with the knowledge of what others have said about it, I am already functioning in the past; I am not looking; and what has been said about it has become the unconscious. I discover that my unconscious is all that has been said about death, God, communism, how I should behave, the race, the racial inheritance, the whole of the past - that is the unconscious. I have discovered it! I don't repeat it; therefore, what I have discovered has vitality.

Question: If we are all that background, the past, who is the observer who is looking at the past? How do we

separate the past and the entity who says, "I am looking at it"?

Krishnamurti: Who is the entity, the observer that is looking at the past? Who is the entity, the thought, the being, whatever you call it who says, "I am looking at the unconscious"?

There is a separation between the observer and the observed. Is that so? Is not the observer the observed? Therefore there is no separation at all! Go slowly into this. If you could understand this one thing, it would be the most extraordinary phenomenon that could take place. Do you understand the question? There is the unconscious as well as the conscious, and I say that I must know all about it; I must know the content and also the state of consciousness when there is no content - which is a step further, which we will go into if we have time.

I am looking at it. I say: The observer says that the unconscious is the past; the unconscious is the race into which I was born - the tradition, not only the tradition of society, but of the family, the name, the residue of the whole Indian culture, the residue of all of humanity with all its problems, anxieties, guilt, and so on. I am all that, and that is the unconscious, which is the result of time, of many thousands of yesterdays, and there is the 'me' who is observing it. Now, who is the observer? Again, find out for yourself; discover who the observer is! Don't wait for me to tell you!

Comment: The observer is the looker.

Krishnamurti: But who is the looker? The observer is the observed. Wait, wait! Madame, this is very important. The observer is the observed. There is no difference, which means that the observer is the observed. Then, what can the observer do about the unconscious?

Comment: Nothing!

Krishnamurti: No, madame, this is really a very important question. You cannot just throw it off and say, "Nothing." If I am the result of the past and I am the past, I cannot do anything about the unconscious. Do you see what it means? If I cannot do anything about it, I am free of it! Ah, no, no, madame; don't agree so quickly; this requires tremendous attention. If I cannot do anything whatsoever, at whatever level it is, about suffering - physical as well as psychological suffering - if I cannot do anything about it because the observer is the observed, then I am totally free of it. It is only when I feel that I can do something about it that I am caught in it.

Question: What happens when I cannot do anything about it? Is not the past the present? The mind is caught in that, and what can it do?

Krishnamurti: The present is the past, modified. But it is still the past, which is going to create the future, the tomorrow. The past, through the present, is the future. The future is the modified past. We have divided the past into the present and the future, so the past is a perpetual movement, modified, but it is always the past that is functioning. So there is no present! The past is always operating, though we may call it the present and try to live in the present, try to push away the past or the future and say, "The present is the only existence that matters"; yet it is still the past, which we divide as the present and the future. Now, what happens, the questioner asks, when I realize that the past is me, the observer who is examining the past, when I realize that the observer is the past? What takes place? Who is going to tell you? The speaker? If I were to tell you what takes place, it would be just another conclusion which becomes part of the unconscious. You will function according to what has been said and not discover anything for yourself. All that you are doing when you are waiting for the speaker to tell you is merely accumulating. That accumulation gets modified as the present and the future, and you are perpetually living in the current of time. But when you realize that the observer, the thinker, is the past, and therefore there is no division between the observer and the observed, then all activity on the part of the observer ceases, doesn't it? That is what we don't realize.

Comment: But time is an illusion.

Krishnamurti: Ah, no, no! Time is not an illusion. How can you say time is an illusion! You are going to lunch; you have a house, you are going back home; you are going to get on a train, and that journey is going to take five hours or an hour. That is time. It is not an illusion. You cannot translate it as an illusion. It is a fact that the unconscious is the past and the observer says, "I have to empty the past; I have to do something about it; I have to resist it; I have to cleanse it; I have to remove certain neurotic conditions," and so on and so on. So he, the observer, the actor, looks on it as something different from himself, but when you look at it very closely the actor, the observer, is the unconscious, is the past.

Question: How is one to empty the past?

Krishnamurti: You cannot. You empty the past totally when there is no observer. It is the observer who is creating the past; it is the observer who says, "I must do something about it in terms of time." This is most important. It is very important to understand, when you look at a tree, that there is the tree and there is also you, the observer, looking at it. You who are looking at it have knowledge about that tree. You know what species, what color, what shape, what kind it is; whether it is good. You have knowledge of it, so you are looking at it as an observer who is full of knowledge about it, as you look at your wife or husband with the knowledge of the past, with all the hurts and all the pleasures. You are always looking with both the observer and the thing observed present - two different states. You never look at a tree. You are always looking with the knowledge of the tree. This is very simple. To look at another - wife, husband, friend - demands that you look with a fresh mind; otherwise, you cannot see. If you look with the past, with pleasure, with pain, with anxiety, with what he or she has said to you, that remains; and with all that, through all that, you look. That is the observer. If you can look at a tree or a flower or another human being without the observer, a totally different action takes place.