

Jiddu Krishnamurti

The Nature and Total Eradication of Fear

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Sixth Conversation with Dr. Allan W. Anderson in San Diego

Anderson: Mr Krishnamurti, if I recall correctly I think we had begun to talk together last time, just at the point where the question of fear arose, and I think we both, perhaps, could explore that together a little.

Krishnamurti: Yes, I think so. I wonder how we can approach this problem, because it is a common problem in the world. Everyone, or I can say, almost everyone is frightened of something. It may be the fear of death, fear of loneliness, fear of not being loved, fear of not becoming famous, successful and also fear of not having physical security, and the fear of not having psychological security. There are so many multiple forms of fears. Now to go into this problem really very deeply, can the mind, which includes the brain, really fundamentally be free of fear? Because fear, as I have observed, is a dreadful thing.

A: Oh yes.

K: It darkens the world, it destroys everything. And I don't think we can discuss fear, which is one of the principles in life, without also discussing, or going into the pursuit of pleasure. The two sides of the same coin.

A: Fear and pleasure, two sides of the same coin. Yes, yes.

K: So as we are going to first take fear there is conscious as well as unconscious fears. Fears that are observable, that can be remedied and fears that are deep rooted, deep in the recesses of one's mind.

A: At the unconscious level.

K: At the deeper levels. Now, we must be concerned with both, not only the obvious external fears, but also the deep seated undiscovered fears. The fears that have been handed down, traditional fears.

A: Being told what to fear.

K: What to fear and also fears that the mind itself has produced, has cultivated.

A: In one's personal history.

K: Personal. And also in relation to others; fears of physical insecurity, losing a job, losing a position, losing something, and all the positive, not having something, and so on and on. So, if we are going to talk about this question how should we, you and I, approach this? First take the outer, the obvious physical fears, and then from there move to the inner, and so cover the whole field, not just one little fear of an old lady, or an old man, or a young man, take the whole problem of fear.

A: Good.

K: Not just take one leaf of fear, or one branch of it but the whole movement of fear.

A: Yes. We are back to that word 'movement' again.

K: Movement.

A: Good, good. The whole movement of fear.

K: Now, outwardly, physically it is becoming obvious that we must have security, physical security. That is, food, clothes, and shelter are absolutely necessary. Not only for the Americans for the whole humanity.

A: Yes, of course.

K: It's no good saying, 'We are secure and to hell with the rest of the world.' The world is you. And you are the world. You can't isolate yourself and say, 'I am going to be secure' and not bother about the others.

A: Secure myself against them.

K: It becomes a division, conflict, war, all that it produces. So that physical security is necessary for the brain. The brain can only function, as I have observed it in myself, in others, not that I am an expert on brain, or neurology and all that but I have observed it. The brain can function only in complete security. Then it functions efficiently, healthily, not neurotically. And its actions won't be lopsided. The brain needs security, as a child needs security. That security is denied when we separate ourselves - the Americans, the Russians, the Indians, the Chinese. National division has destroyed that security, because wars.

A: Yes, that is a physical barrier.

K: Physical fact. And yet we don't see that. Sovereign governments, with their armies, their navies and all the rest of it, are destroying security.

A: In the name of providing it.

K: So, you see what we are trying to get at is how stupid the mind is. It wants security. And it must have security, and yet it is doing everything to destroy that security.

A: Oh yes, yes. I see that.

K: So that's one factor. And the factor of security is in jobs. Either in a factory, in a business, or as a priest in his job. So occupation becomes very important.

A: Indeed it does, yes.

K: So, see what is involved. If I lose my job I am frightened, and that job depends on the environment, on the

production, business, factory, all that commercialism, consumerism, and therefore competition with other countries. France isolating itself because it wants to... which is happening. So we need physical security and we are doing everything to destroy it. If we all of us said, look let's all get together, not with plans, not with my plan, your plan, or the communist plan or Mao plan, let's as human beings sit together and solve this problem. They could do it. Science has the means of feeding people. But they won't because they are conditioned to function so as to destroy security which they are seeking. So that's one of the major factors in physical security. Then there is the fear of physical pain. Is physical pain in the sense, one has had pain, let's say last week. The mind is afraid that it should happen again. So there is that kind of fear.

A: That's very interesting with respect to the phenomenon of physical pain, because what is remembered is not the neurological reaction but the emotion that attends what occurred.

K: Yes, that's it. So there is that fear.

A: Right, right.

K: Then there is the fear of outward opinion, what people say, public opinion.

A: Reputation.

K: Reputation. You see, sir, all this is born out of disorder. I don't know if I'm...?

A: Oh yes, yes.

K: Which we discussed.

A: Which we looked into previously.

K: So, can the mind bring about security, physical security, which means food, clothes and shelter for everybody. Not as a communist, as a capitalist, as a socialist, or as a Mao, but meet together as human beings to resolve this problem. It can be done. But nobody wants to do it, because they don't feel responsible for it. I don't know if you have been to India; if you have gone from town to town to village as I have done, you see the appalling poverty, the degradation of poverty, the sense of hopelessness of it.

A: Yes, I have been to India and it was the first time in my life that I sensed poverty, not simply as a privation, but it seemed to have a positive character about it. It was so stark.

K: I know sir. Personally we have been through all that. So, physical survival is only possible when human beings get together. Not as communists, socialists, all the rest, as human beings who say, look this is our problem, for god's sake let's solve it. But they won't because they are burdened with problems, with planning. How to solve that. I don't know if I am...?

A: Yes, yes, you are.

K: You have your plan, I have my plan, he has his plan, so planning becomes most important, plans become most important rather than the starvation. And we fight each other. And common sense, affection, care, love can change all this. Sir, I won't go into that. Then the fear of public opinion. Do you understand, sir? What my neighbour will say.

A: My image, the national image, yes.

K: And I depend on my neighbour.

A: Oh yes, necessarily.

K: If I am a Catholic living in Italy, I have to depend on my neighbour because I would lose my job if I were

a Protestant there. So I accept it. I will go and salute the pope or whatever, it has no meaning. So I am afraid of public opinion. See what a human mind has reduced itself to. I don't mind, say, 'To blaze with public opinion', because that's stupid. They are conditioned, they are frightened as much as I am. So there is that fear. And there is the fear, physical fear of death, which is an immense fear. That fear one has to tackle differently when we come to it, when we talk about death and all that.

A: Yes.

K: So there is the outward form of fear; fear of darkness, fear of public opinion, fear of losing a job, fear of survival, not being able to survive. Sir, I have lived with people with one meal a day and that's not enough even. I have walked behind a woman with a girl, and the girl said, in India, 'Mother, I'm hungry.' And the mother says, 'You have already eaten for the day.' So there is all that, those physical fears, pain, and the fear of recurring pain, and that. And the other fears are much more complicated, fears of dependency, inwardly, I depend on my wife, I depend on my guru, I depend on the priest, I depend on the - so many dependants. And I am afraid to lose them, to be left alone.

A: To be rejected.

K: To be rejected. If that woman turns away from me I'm lost. I get angry, brutal, violent, jealous, because I have depended on her. So dependency is one of the factors of fear. And inwardly I am afraid. I am afraid of loneliness. The other day I saw on the television a woman saying, 'The only fear I have in life is my loneliness'. And therefore being afraid of loneliness I do all kinds of neurotic activities. Being lonely I attach myself to you or to a belief, or to a saviour, to a guru. And I protect the guru, the saviour, the belief and that soon becomes neurotic.

A: Yes. I fill up the hole with this new image.

K: With this rubbish. There is that fear. Then there is the fear of not being able to arrive, succeed, succeed in this world of disorder, and succeed in the so-called spiritual world. That's what they are all doing now.

A: Spiritual achievement.

K: Achievement, which they call enlightenment.

A: Expanding consciousness. I know what you mean. It's very interesting that you just got through describing fear of being left behind. Now we are fearing that we'll never arrive.

K: Arrive.

A: Please go on.

K: Same thing. Then there is the fear of not being, which translates itself in identification with. I must identify myself.

A: In order to be.

K: To be. Identify myself with my country, and I say to myself, that's too stupid. Then I say, 'I must identify myself with god', which I have invented. God has not made man in his image, man has made god in his image. You follow this?

A: Oh, I follow you.

K: So, not being, not achieving, not arriving, brings about tremendous sense of uncertainty, tremendous sense of not being able to fulfil, not being able to be with, and the cry, 'I must be myself'.

A: Do my own thing.

K: My own thing. Which is rubbish! So there are all these fears, both logical fears, irrational fears, neurotic fears, and fears of survival, physical survival. So now how do you deal with all these fears - and many more fears which we can't go into, which we will presently - how do you deal with them all? One by one?

A: Well you just be in the mournful round of fragmentation if you did that.

K: And also there are the hidden fears, which are much more active.

A: The continual bubbling up from below.

K: Bubbling up, when I'm not conscious they take over.

A: That's right.

K: So, how am I to deal first with the obvious fears which we have described? Shall I deal with it one by one, first secure myself? You follow?

A: Yes.

K: Or, take loneliness and tackle that, come to grips with it, go beyond it and so on. Or is there a way of dealing with fear, not with the branches of it but with the root of it? Because if I take each leaf, each branch it will take all my lifetime. And if I begin to analyse my fears, analyse, then that very analysis becomes a paralysis.

A: Yes. And then I even fear that I might not have analysed correctly.

K: Correctly. And I am caught in it over and over again. So how shall I deal with this problem, as a whole, not just parts of it, fragments of it?

A: Isn't there a hint about how it might be dealt with - of course, when I say hint here, I mean terribly, terribly slight. I don't think I would call it a pointer, but fear, no matter how many varieties one imagines he knows, fear does have a common taste, you might say, there is something there that...

K: Yes, sir, but what shall I do with it?

A. Oh, yes, of course, I quite understand. But it interested me while you were speaking, to observe that already when we think of many fears we haven't even paid attention to how we fear, when we fear. Yes, I was interested to have that flash because it seems to be altogether consonant with what you are talking about. And I said to myself, now in our conversations we've been pointing to movement. The movement of fear is one.

K: Yes, a tremendous one.

A: And it is a unified field of destruction.

K: It is the common factor of every human being.

A: The whole field, yes, exactly.

K: Whether I live... whether a man lives in Moscow or India, or in any place, it is the common thing of this fear, and how shall we deal with it? Because unless the mind is free of fear, really, not verbally or ideologically, absolutely be free of fear. And it is possible to be free, completely of fear, and I'm saying this not as a theory, but I know it, I've gone into it.

A: Actual.

K: Actual. Now how shall I deal with this? So I ask myself, what is fear? Not the objects of fear, or the

expressions of fear.

A: No, or the instant reaction to danger, no.

K: What is fear?

A: It's an idea in my mind in part.

K: What is fear, sir?

A: If we have said it's an abiding...

K: No, no. Behind the words, behind the descriptions, the explanations, the way out and the way in, and all the rest of it, what is fear? How does it come?

A: If I have followed you through our conversations up until now, I'd be inclined to say that it is another expression of the observer's disordered relation to the observed.

K: What does that mean? What is the observer... what you say. Look, the problem is this - I am only making the problem clearer so that we can... We have, man has tried to lop off or prune one fear after the other, through analysis, through escape, through identifying himself with something which he calls courage. Or saying, well I don't care, I rationalise my fears and remain in a state of rationalising, intellectual, verbal explanation. But the thing is boiling. So what shall I do? What is fear? Unless I find this out, not because you tell me, unless I find it out for myself as I find from myself that I am hungry, nobody has to tell me I am hungry, I have to find this out.

A: Yes, now there is a difference here in terms of what you have just said. And in so saying pointing to something, and my earlier reply when you asked me what is fear, I did the usual academic thing - 'If I have followed you up until now then it seems clear that...' Whereas let's forget about the following, let's zero in on it right now and then I must say, not I might say, but I must say that I can't tell anybody else what fear is with respect to what it is I am going to discover in me as such. And all my continual descriptions about it are simply a deflection from my immediate issue which is here.

K: Yes. So, I'm not escaping.

A: No.

K: I'm not rationalising. I am not analysing, because analysis is real paralysis.

A: Yes indeed.

K: When you are confronted with a problem like this merely spinning or analysing, and the fear of not being able to analyse perfectly and therefore go to a professional, who needs also an analysis. So I'm caught. So I will not analyse because I see the absurdity of it. You follow sir.

A: Yes I do.

K: I won't run.

A: No backing off.

K: Backing off.

A: Flight.

K: No explanations, no rationalisation, no analysis. I am faced with this thing. And what is fear? Wait, wait. Leave that. Then there are the unconscious fears of which don't know. They express themselves

occasionally when I am alert, when I see the thing coming out of me.

A: When I am alert.

K: Alert. When I am watching. Or when I'm looking at something this comes up, uninvited. Now, it is important for the mind to be completely free of fear. It's essential, as food is essential. It's essential for the mind to be free of fear. So I see outwardly what we have discussed. Now I say, what is this, what are the hidden fears, can I consciously invite them come to the surface? You follow?

A: Yes I do.

K: Or, the conscious cannot touch that. You follow?

A: Yes, yes, I do, yes.

K: Conscious can only deal with the things it knows. But it cannot observe the things it doesn't know.

A: Or have access to.

K: So, what am I to do? Dreams? Dreams are merely continuation of what I have lived during the day, they continue in a different form, and so on. We won't go into that for the moment. So how is all that to be awakened and exposed? The racial fears, the fears that society has taught me, the fears that the family has imposed, the neighbour, you know all those crawling, ugly, brutal things that are hidden, how shall they all come up naturally, and be exposed so that the mind sees them completely? You understand?

A: Yes, I do. I was just thinking about what we are doing in relation to what you are saying. Here we are in a university situation where hardly any listening goes on at all, if any. Why? Well, if we were to relate to each other in terms of my sitting back here saying to myself, every time you make a statement, well what do I have to say back, even if my reaction were benign and I say to myself as a professor, I'd say, now that's a very interesting concept. Perhaps we could clear that up a little bit, you know. That nonsense - nonsense in terms of what is immediate here. That's what I mean.

K: I understand.

A: I don't mean demonstrating something on the board. We should never have begun to be together, never started, and yet we might have given ourselves the idea that we were trying very hard to be sincere. Yes I understand.

K: I know, I know.

A: But fear is at the base of that too, because the professor is thinking to himself..

K: ...his position, his...

A: He's got his reputation at stake here. He better not keep quiet too long, because someone might get the idea that, either he doesn't understand a thing that is going on, or he doesn't have anything to contribute to what's going on. All of which has nothing to do with anything. Please go on.

K: Absolutely. Look, sir, what I have found: I cannot... the conscious mind, conscious thought cannot invite and expose the hidden fears. It cannot analyse it, because analysis, we said, is inaction, and there is no escape, I shan't run off to a church, or Jesus, or Buddha, or somebody, or identify myself with some other thing. I have pushed all those aside because I've understood their use, their futility. So I am left with this. This is my baby. So, what shall I do? Some action has to take place. I can't just say, 'Well I've pushed all that aside, I'll just sit'. Now just see what happens sir, because I've pushed all this aside through observation, not through resistance, not through violence, because I have negated all those, escape, analysis, running off to

something, and all the rest of all that, I have energy, haven't I. The mind has energy now.

A: Now it has, yes. Yes it floods up.

K: Because I have pushed away all the things that are dissipating energy.

A: Energy leaks.

K: Therefore I have now this thing. I am confronted with that, confronted with fear. Now, what can I do? Listen to this, sir, what can I do? I can't do anything, because it is I who have created the fear - public opinion...

A: Yes, yes, yes.

K: Right, so I cannot do a thing about fear.

A: Precisely.

K: But there is the energy which has been gathered, which has come into being when all dissipation of energy has ended. There's energy.

A: Yes. Exactly, virtue - right, right - manifested.

K: Energy, energy. Now, what happens? This is not some hocus-pocus, some kind of mystical experience. There is actual fear and I have tremendous energy which has come because there is no dissipation of energy. So what takes place? So, wait, wait, wait.

A: Oh, I'm waiting, I'm waiting. There was something going through my mind.

K: What takes place? So I say, so what has created fear? What has brought it about? Because if I have the energy, you follow, sir, to put that question and find the answer for that question. I've got energy now. I don't know if you are following?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

K: So, what has brought it about? You, my neighbour, my country, my culture?

A: Myself.

K: What has brought it about?

A: I've done it.

K: Who is I?

A: I don't mean 'I' as the fragmented observer off from me. It is this... I am thinking what you said earlier about the mind as disordered, which requires to empty itself of the disorder, does it require another mind to do it, yes.

K: I'm asking, what has brought this fear into me, into my consciousness? I won't use that word because we'll have to go into that in a different way. What has brought this fear? And I won't leave it till I find it. You understand, sir? Because I've got the energy to do it. I don't depend on anybody, on any book, on any philosopher, nobody.

A: Would it be the case that once that energy begins to flood, that the question itself disappears?

K: And I'll begin to find the answer.

A: Yes.

K: I don't put the question.

A: No, no.

K: But I find the answer.

A: Right, right.

K: Now, what is the answer?

A: The answer couldn't be academic, a description of something.

K: No, no, no.

A: A change has occurred in the being.

K: What is the answer to this fact of fear which has been sustained, which has been nourished, which has carried on from generation to generation? So, can the mind observe this fear, the movement of it...

A: The movement of it.

K: ...not just a piece of fear.

A: Or a succession of fears...

K: But the movement of this, the whole movement.

A: The movement of fear itself.

K: Yes, observe it without the thought that has created the observer. I don't know if you follow?

A: Oh yes, yes.

K: So, can there be observation of this fact, which I've called fear because I have recognised it, the mind has recognised it, because it has had fear before. So through recognition and association it says, 'This is fear'.

A: Yes, that never stops. Yes.

K: So, can the mind observe without the observer, who is the thinker, observe this fact only? Because the observer, which is thought, the observer as thought has produced this. I don't know...

A: Yes, yes.

K: So thought has produced this, right?

A: Yes, yes.

K: I am afraid of my neighbour, what he may say because I want to be respectable. That is part of the thought. I have divided... thought has divided the world into America, Russia, India, China and all the rest of it, and that destroys security. That is the result of thought. I am lonely and therefore I act neurotically, which is also the fact of thought. So I see very clearly that thought is responsible for that. Right? Right, sir?

A: Yes.

K: So, what will happen with thought? Thought is responsible for this. It has nourished it, has sustained it, it has encouraged it, it has done everything to sustain it. I am afraid of the pain that I had yesterday happening again tomorrow. Which is the movement of thought. So can thought, which can only function

within the field of knowledge - that's its ground - and fear is something new each time. Fear isn't old.

A: No, no.

K: It is made old when I recognise it.

A: Yes, yes.

K: But when the process of recognition, which is the association of words and so on, can the mind observe that without the interference of thought? If it does fear is not.

A: Right. The thing that was hitting me while I was sitting here intently, the thing that was hitting me was that the moment that occurs, the thought and the fear immediately disappear.

K: So, fear then can be put away completely. If I was living as a human being in Russia and they threaten me to be put into prison I would probably be afraid. It is natural self preservation.

A: Of course.

K: That's a natural fear like a bus coming rushing towards you, you step aside, you run away from a dangerous animal, that's a natural self-protective reaction. But that's not fear. It's a response of intelligence operating saying, for god's sake move away from the rushing bus. But the other factors are factors of thought.

A: Exactly.

K: So, can thought understand itself and know its place and not project itself? Not control, which is an abomination. You can't... if you control thought, who is the controller? Another fragment of thought.

A: Another thought.

K: It is a circle, a vicious game you are playing with yourself. So can the mind observe without a movement of thought? It will only do that when you have understood the whole movement of fear. Understood that, not analysed, looking at it. It is a living thing, therefore you have to look at it. It is only a dead thing you can dissect and analyse, kick it around. But a living thing you have to watch.

A: This is very shocking because in our last conversation, just towards the end we came to the place where we raised the question of someone saying to himself, 'I think I understand what I have heard, now I am going to try that'. And then fear holds up a mirror to itself.

K: Of course.

A: And one is suddenly ringed about by a world of mirrors.

K: You don't say, sir, when you see a dangerous animal, 'I will think about it'. You move. You act. Because there is tremendous destruction waiting there. That is a self-protective reaction which is intelligence says, get out. Here we are not using intelligence. And intelligence operates when we have looked at all these fears, the movements of it, the inwardness of it, the subtlety of it, the whole movement. Then out of that comes intelligence and says, I have understood it.

A: It's marvellous. Yes, that's very beautiful, very beautiful. We were going to say something about pleasure.

K: Ah, that must be dealt with.

A: Right, exactly.

K: So, sir, look, we said there is the physical fears, and psychological fears, both are interrelated, we can't

say, that's one and this is the other. They are all interrelated. And the interrelationship and the understanding of that relationship brings this intelligence which will operate physically. It will say, let's then work together, co-operate together to feed man. You follow, sir?

A: Yes.

K: Let's not be national, religious, sectarian. What is important is to feed man, to clothe him, to make him live happily. But you see unfortunately we are so disorderly in our ways of life that we have no time for anything else. Our disorder is consuming us.

A: It's interesting in relation to tradition, I don't mean to start an entirely new conversation now, but just to see what is immediately suggested, among many other things that would be, but just this one. What we could say about the misuses of tradition would be that we are actually taught what to fear. In our language we have an expression, don't we, that expresses part of this, old wives tales we say, an accumulation of warnings about things that, that are simply imaginary. Not in the creative sense of imagination, and I'm using the word creative there very loosely, very loosely, but fantasia, phantasmagoria, from the little ones' earliest years, gets this stuff with the bottle. And then when we get into adolescence we reflect on these things we have learned and if things go wrong we feel that perhaps it's because we haven't sufficiently grasped what we have been told. And then some young people will say at that point, 'I'm going to junk the whole thing'. But then immediately the loneliness question arises. Yes, yes.

K: They can't, sir, it is life, this is life, you can't reject one part and accept the other part.

A: Exactly.

K: Life means all this. Freedom, order, disorder, communication, relationship, it's the whole thing is living. If we don't understand, say, 'Well, I don't want to have anything to do with', then you are not living. You are dying.

A: Yes, of course. I wonder how much, I wonder - I keep saying I wonder, and the reason I wonder is because what we have been saying about this movement, as a unified field, is when stated, taken by thought and, you might say put in the refrigerator, and, that's the reality to the person.

K: Quite, sir.

A: And when we want to look at it, it's one of the ice cubes we break out and have a look. Don't we?

K: That's right, sir. What place has knowledge in the regeneration of man? Look, our knowledge is: you must be separate. You are an American, I am an Hindu, that's our knowledge. Our knowledge is you must rely on your neighbour because he knows, he is respectable. Society is respectability, society is moral, so you accept that. So knowledge has brought about all these factors. And you are telling me suddenly, asking me, what place has that, what place has tradition, what place has the accumulated knowledge of millennia? The accumulated knowledge of science, mathematics, that is essential. But what place has knowledge which I have gathered through experience, through generation after generation of human endeavour, what place has it in the transformation of fear? None, whatsoever.

A: None. Clear, clear.

K: You see.

A: Because of what we reached before that upon the instant that this is grasped, the thought that was operating as a fragment and the fear vanish; and it isn't that something takes its place in succession.

K: No nothing takes its place.

A: No, nothing takes its place. Nothing takes its place.

K: It doesn't mean there is emptiness.

A: Oh, no, no, no. But you see it's right there when you start thinking about that as a thought, you get scared.

K: That's why it's very important to find out, or to understand the function of knowledge and where knowledge becomes ignorance. We mix the two together. Knowledge is essential, to speak English, driving, and a dozen things, knowledge is essential. But when that knowledge becomes ignorance, when we are trying to understand actually 'what is', the 'what is' is this fear, this disorder, this irresponsibility. To understand it you don't have to have knowledge. All you have to do is to look. Look outside you, look inside you. And then you see clearly that knowledge is absolutely unnecessary, it has no value in the transformation or the regeneration of man. Because freedom is not born of knowledge; freedom is when all the burdens are not. You don't have to search for freedom. It comes when the other is not.

A: It isn't something in place of the horror that was there before.

K: Of course not. I think that is enough.

A: Yes, yes, I quite follow you. Maybe next time we could carry on into this with pleasure as such, the opposite side of that coin.