
Understanding Life : J. Krishnamurti

Rolee Agarwal, Commissioner, Income Tax, Jaipur

1. **What Are You?**

Understand the Mind

Without understanding the way our minds work, one cannot understand and resolve the very complex problems of living. This understanding cannot come through book knowledge. The mind is, in itself, quite a complex problem. In the very process of understanding one's own mind, the crisis which each one of us faces in life can perhaps be understood and gone beyond.

• **What Is the Self?**

Do we know what we mean by the self? By that, I mean the memory, the experience, the intentions, the conscious endeavor to be or not to be, the accumulated memory of the unconscious - the group, the individual, whether it is projected outwardly in action or projected spiritually as virtue, the striving after all this is the self. In it is included the competition, the desire to be. The whole process of that is the self; and we know actually when we are faced with it that it is an evil thing. I am using the word 'evil' intentionally, because the self is dividing: the self is self-enclosing: its activities, however noble, are separative and isolating. We know all this but we also know those extraordinary moments when the self is not there, in which there is no sense of endeavor, of effort, and which happens when there is love.

2. What You Are, the World Is

What is the relationship between yourself and the misery, the confusion, in and around you? What you are within has been projected without, onto the world. If we are miserable, confused, chaotic within, by projection that becomes the world, that becomes society, because the relationship between yourself and myself, between myself and another is society – society is the product of our relationship.

3. Why Are We Seeking Something?

If one has observed oneself, gone into oneself a little bit – so one begins to find out that where there is this sense of inexhaustible loneliness, this emptiness created by the mind's looking upon itself as being empty, there is also an urge, a tremendous drive to fulfil, to get something with which to cover it up with knowledge, a relationship etc. Most of us, being empty, fill ourselves with all kinds of noise, with pleasure and every form of escape.

So we are endlessly seeking. The obvious answer is that we are dissatisfied, unhappy, lonely, unloved, fearful. We need something to cling to, we need somebody to protect us – the father, the mother, and so on – and so we are seeking.

Now, is it that we are seeking happiness or is it that we are seeking gratification of some kind from which we hope to derive happiness? Happiness is derivative; it is a by-product of something else. I am afraid most of us are seeking gratification. We want to be gratified, we want to find a sense of fullness at the end of our search.

• **Happiness Cannot Be Pursued**

What do you mean by happiness? Some will say happiness consists of getting what you want. You want a car, and you get it, and you are happy. So what you call happiness is getting what you want. As long as you want something and

you can get it, you feel perfectly happy; you are not frustrated. But, if you cannot get what you want, then unhappiness begins. The moment you are conscious that you are happy, that you have much, is that happiness? The moment you are conscious that you are happy, it is not happiness, is it? So you cannot go after happiness. The moment you are conscious that you are humble, you are not humble. So happiness is not a thing to be pursued, it comes. But if you seek it, it will evade you. When the mind is free from 'me' there is a happiness which comes without seeking.

So the first thing is not to seek. You all have been told that you must seek, experiment with truth, chase it, and that you must discipline, control yourself. What is it that we are seeking? We are seeking because in us there is such deep dissatisfaction with our family, with society, with culture, with our own selves, and we want to satisfy, to go beyond this gnawing discontent that is destroying. And why are we discontented? We must understand the root cause of discontent before we can examine the whole structure and the meaning of pleasure and, therefore, of sorrow.

4. How can discontent/sorrow be ended?

Sorrow cannot be ended through thought

Man has always exercised thought as a means to get rid of sorrow by right effort, by right thinking, by living morally, and so on. The exercise of thought has been his guide – thought with intellect. But thought is the result of time, and time is consciousness, sorrow can never end. Thus sorrow cannot be ended through thought.

• **Awareness**

So I think our inquiry must be not for the solution of our immediate problems but rather to find out whether the mind – the conscious as well as the deep unconscious mind in which is stored all the tradition, the memories – whether all of it can be put aside. I think it can be done only if the mind is capable of being aware without any sense of demand, without any pressure – just to be

aware. I think it is one of the most difficult things – to be aware – because we are caught in the immediate problem and in its immediate solution, and so our lives are very superficial.

5. How to bring revolution in Your Life

- Understanding comes when the Brain is Quiet
You will see for yourself that you have the flash of understanding, that extraordinary rapidity of insight, when mind is very still, when thought is absent, when the mind is not burdened with its noise. So, the mind that is chattering, that is verbalizing, cannot understand truth. It is the subtlety that is difficult to follow. It is not abstract. It comes so swiftly, so darkly, it cannot be held by the mind. Like a thief in the night, it comes darkly, not when you are prepared to receive it. So, a mind that is caught in the net of words cannot understand truth.

6. Why should we change?

- Inward, not outward, change transforms society
There is no end to talking, to arguments, to explanations, but explanations, arguments, and talking do not lead to direct action because for that to take place, we need to change radically and fundamentally. That needs no argument. No convincing, no formula, no being influenced by another will make us change fundamentally, in the deep sense of that word.

To bring about a good society, human beings have to change. You and I must find the energy, the impetus, the vitality to bring about this radical transformation of the mind, and that is not possible if we do not have enough energy. We need a great deal of energy to bring about a change within ourselves, but we waste our energy through conflict, through resistance, through conformity, through acceptance, through obedience. It is a waste of energy when we are trying to conform to a pattern. To conserve energy we must be aware of ourselves, how we dissipate energy. This is an age-long

problem because most human beings are indolent. They would rather accept, obey, and follow.

We are talking about the necessity of gathering all energy to bring about a radical revolution in consciousness itself, because we must have a new mind; we must look at life totally differently.

7. What is the purpose of life?

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The significance of life is living. Do we really live, is life worth living when there is fear, when our whole life is trained in imitation, in copying? In following authority, are you living when you follow somebody, even if he is the greatest saint or the greatest politician or the greatest scholar? If you observe your own ways, you will see that you do nothing but follow somebody or another. This process of following is what we call “living” and then at the end of it we say, “What is the significance of life?”

How can one know the significance of life when all that one is seeking is success? That is our life; we want success, we want to be completely secure inwardly and outwardly, we want somebody to tell us that we are doing right, that we are following the right path leading to salvation...All our life is following a tradition, the tradition of yesterday or of thousands of years, and we make every experience into an authority to help us to achieve a result. So, we do not know the significance of life. All that we know is fear – fear of what somebody says, fear of dying, fear of not getting what we want, fear of committing wrong, fear of doing good. Our minds are so confused, caught in theory, that we cannot describe what significance life has to us.

Life is something extraordinary. When the questioner asks, “What is the significance of life?” he wants a definition. All that he will know is the definition, mere words, and not the deeper significance, the extraordinary richness, the sensitivity to beauty, the immensity of living.

Life is not permanent. Like the leaves that fall from a tree, all things are impermanent, nothing endures; there is always change and death. We cling to our children, to our traditions, to our society, to our names and our little virtues, because we want permanency; and that is why we are afraid to die. We are afraid to lose the things we know. But life is not what we would like it to be; life is not permanent at all. Birds die, snow melts away, trees are cut down or destroyed by storms, and so on. But we want everything that gives us satisfaction to be permanent; we want our position, the authority we have over people, to endure. We refuse to accept life as it is in fact.

The fact is that life is like the river: endlessly moving on, ever seeking, exploring, pushing, overflowing its banks, penetrating every crevice with its water. But, you see, the mind won't allow that to happen to itself. The mind sees that it is dangerous, risky to live in a state of impermanency, insecurity, so it builds a wall around itself: the wall of tradition, of organized religion, of political and social theories. Family, name, property, the little virtues that we have cultivated - these are all within the walls, away from life. Life is moving, impermanent, and it ceaselessly tries to penetrate, to break down these walls, behind which there is confusion and misery. The gods within the walls are all false gods, and their writings and philosophies have no meaning because life is beyond them.

Now, a mind that has no walls, that is not burdened with its own acquisitions, accumulations, with its own knowledge, a mind that lives timelessly, insecurely - to such a mind, life is an extraordinary thing. Such a mind is life itself, because life has no resting place. But most of us want a resting place; we want a little house, a name, a position, and we say these things are very important. We demand permanency and create a culture based on this demand, inventing gods which are not gods at all but merely a projection of our own desires.

A mind which is seeking permanency soon stagnates; like that pool along the river, it is soon full of corruption, decay. Only the mind which has no walls, no foothold, no barrier, no resting place, which is moving completely with life, timelessly pushing on, exploring, exploding - only such a mind can be happy, eternally new, because it is creative in itself.

8. What is Life?

So, in discussing what is the purpose of life, we have to find out what we mean by “life” and what we mean by “purpose” Surely, life implies everyday action, everyday thought, everyday feeling, does it not? It implies the struggles, the pains, the anxieties, the deceptions, the worries, the routine of the office.

So, if that is what we mean by life, then has life a purpose? We want a purpose so that we can guide our everyday life towards an end. To find life’s purpose we must go through the door of ourselves; consciously or unconsciously we avoid facing things as they are in themselves and so we want God to open for us a door which is beyond. But if I understand how to live, then the very living is in itself sufficient, is it not?....

After all, it is according to my prejudice, to my want, to my desire, to my predilection, that I decide what the purpose of life is to be. So, my desire creates the purpose. Surely, that is not the purpose of life. Which is more important – to find out the purpose of life, or to free the mind itself from its own conditioning? And perhaps when the mind is free from its own conditioning, that very freedom itself is the purpose. Because, after all, it is only in freedom that one can discover any truth. So, the first requisite is freedom, and not seeking the purpose of life.