Question: Why do we feel shy?

Krishnamurti: It is good to be a little shy, is it not? A boy or a girl who is just pushing everyone without reservation, without a sense of hesitation, is not as tender and sensitive as a shy person. A little shyness is good because that indicates sensitivity. But to be very shy implies also self-consciousness, does it not? What does the word self-conscious mean? To be conscious of oneself, to be conscious of one’s person, to be conscious of one’s own dignity. Such a person is shy in the wrong way because he is the centre of comparison. He is the centre from which he looks out. When a boy is always comparing himself with somebody, he becomes self-conscious, he is conscious of himself.

Most young people are self-conscious; as they grow to adulthood, they feel a little awkward, a little shy and sensitive. I think one has to have throughout life that sensitivity, that sense of being tender, being slightly timid, because that implies great sensitivity. This is denied when I say, ‘I belong to this class; I have position, authority; I am somebody.’ When you think you are somebody, you have lost all sensitivity, all tenderness, and the beauty of being timid goes out of life. You know, one must be hesitant, timid, to inquire, to find out. If you can be hesitant in approach, very sensitive, then you will find out the whole complication, the beauty, the struggle of life. But without that feeling of hesitancy, the effort to keep up in the class, the prestige, the recognition, the beauty of being timid, the beauty of self-consciousness, the beauty of the struggle of life, the beauty of being a person is lost.
a timidity which is not tinged with fear, you will never see the delicate things of life, you will never see the trees and their shades or the bird sitting quietly on a telegraph post.

Question: How can human beings progress when there is no ambition?

Krishnamurti: Do you think inventions are the result of ambition? Do you think the inventor, the scientist who really thinks out a problem, or the true research worker has ambition? Do you think the man who invented the jet plane, the jet engine, was ambitious? He invents; then the ambitious people come along and use the invention for their purpose—to make money, to make wars, to make an end for themselves.

Have you done anything through ambition? You may have moved from here to there. You may get a better job, or a better position; you may become the principal or the governor or the collector. But is that really living, is that progress? There is the bullock cart and there is the jet plane; that is generally called progress. There has really been a tremendous progress from the bullock cart to the jet plane, from the post chaise to teletype and instantaneous communication. Our idea of progress is always in one particular direction, and we do not take into account all the implications of ambition. Suppose an oil well is discovered here. Then, what do you think will happen? There will be all the machinery of exploitation. It is not that there should not be an oil
field in Banaras, but the idea of progress is to use that oil and produce more and more, without understanding the whole complex problem of ambition.

Take a very simple example. A missionary in the South Seas regularly held Sunday classes and read the Bible to his parishioners. When he read the Bible stories, they listened very attentively. After some time, he thought how good it would be if they all knew how to read. So he went to America to collect money. He came back and taught them how to read and write. But, to his great disappointment, he found that they were reading comic magazines, not the Bible.

So, real progress is in what is happening to your mind. Are you making progress there, or are you just gramophone records, repeating over and over again the same old comic, tragic, or stupid stories?

Question: Why are people born in the world?

Krishnamurti: For various reasons—sex, passion, the desire to have children. It is a very simple reason. You look at a tree or a bush that flowers. Nature wants to keep on breeding its own species, does it not? You understand? The mango tree has flowers; the flower is pollinated and becomes the fruit. There is a stone in the mango and that stone you throw away; it falls in fertile soil and grows into a tree which produces many more mangoes. There is a continuity in this process, is there not? So in human beings also there is continuity in the way a child is born in the world. The soul is continuous from one generation to another generation.

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the species. But the mangoes do not fight among themselves; tigers do not kill each other; only we human beings destroy each other; we are the only species that kill each other, and the capacity to kill is, by us, called progress. Is this progress?

Comment+: Some say, ‘Mystery, thy name is woman.’

Krishnamurti: Is this a conundrum or a puzzle that you are asking me? Do you know what a conundrum is? It is a puzzling question which you have to think over and work out. Why do you bother about all this? You see, first we read something in a book and then we try to work it out. Some say, ‘Mystery, thy name is woman.’ What does that mean? Women are not such mysterious organisms, are they? The real mystery is not that. But we are satisfied with superficial mysteries, we like a conjurer, a dark room, mysterious people. We look for mysteries. But, there are no mysteries. What we think are mysteries are all inventions of the mind.

If you can understand the workings of the mind and go beyond them, there is the real mystery. But very few of us go beyond and reach that mystery. You are all satisfied with the superficial mysteries of a detective story or of a shrine. If one can understand the workings of one’s own mind and go beyond that, then one will find extraordinary things.

Question: How do we dream?

Pran : हम स्वभाव कैसे देखते हैं?
Krishnamurti: Do you have dreams? What kind of dreams do you have? If you go to bed with a full stomach, you have some kind of dream. There are various other kinds of dreams.

What do you think dreams are? A dream is a very complex thing. Even while you are awake, while you are wandering along a street or sitting quietly, you may be dreaming because your mind is thinking of various things. You may be sitting here, but you think you are in your home, and you imagine what your mother is doing, or what your father is doing, or what your younger brother is doing. That is a kind of dream, is it not? Though you are sitting quietly, your mind is off, imagining, speculating, wandering.

Similarly, when you are asleep, your mind goes off, imagining, wandering, speculating. Then there are dreams born out of your deep unconscious. And there are dreams which foretell, which give you a warning, which give you hints. It is possible for human beings to have no dreams at all but to sleep very profoundly, and in the deep profundity, to discover something which no conscious or unconscious mind can ever discover, an intimation of something which no mind can ever conjure up.

The mind is such an extraordinary thing. You spend eighteen or twenty years learning the same subjects and passing several examinations, but you do not spend an hour or even ten minutes to understand this extraordinary thing called the mind. Without
understanding the mind, passing examinations, getting jobs, or your becoming a minister has very little meaning. It is the mind that creates illusions, and if you do not understand the maker of illusions, your life has little meaning.

Do you understand all the things that I am talking about? The difficulty is, I am speaking in English. But I doubt very much whether you would understand even if I spoke in Hindi. You would understand the words, but not the meaning, the implications that lie behind the words. You have to find out the implications by asking your teachers or your parents.

What I have said is a question of your whole existence. It is not enough to find out for a day or two; you have to find out the implications as you live, throughout life. But you cannot live, you cannot find out if you are merely driven by ambition, by fear. To find out, there must be a sensitivity, a freedom in the psyche, and all that is denied if you do not understand the workings of your mind.

Question: How should we think out any problem?

Krishnamurti: That is quite an intelligent question—how should we think out a problem? Most people want an answer to a problem. But that boy wants to know how to think out a problem—which is quite different. He is not looking for an answer; at least I hope not.

There is no answer at all to a question of your whole existence. It is not enough to find out for a day or two; you have to find out the implications as you live, throughout life. But you cannot live, you cannot find out if you are merely driven by ambition, by fear. To find out, there must be a sensitivity, a freedom in the psyche, and all that is denied if you do not understand the workings of your mind.

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problem, and so it is foolish to seek an answer. But if I know how to think out a problem, then the answer is the very thinking out of the problem. Look, sirs, you have a mathematical problem. You do not know the answer, but the answer is at the end of the book, so you keep turning to the end of the book to find the answer. But life is not like that. Nobody is going to give you the answer. If anybody thinks he can give you the answer, he is stupid. But if you know how to think out a problem, how to look at it, how to approach it, the very thinking, the very looking at it, is the solution.

You want to know how to think out a problem. The first thing, obviously, is not to be afraid of the problem. You understand? Because, if you are afraid, you won’t look, you will run away from it. The second thing is not to condemn it, not to say how terrible, how awful, how miserable it is. Then, not to compare that problem with any other problem, or have a comparative value when you approach the problem. All this is a bit difficult. When you approach a problem, if you have already got a definite judgment, an answer to that problem, you do not understand the problem. So, to understand the problem, there must be no comparison, no fear, no judgment; those are the essential things which will help you to understand the problem. There are really no problems except those which are created by comparison, fear, and judgment.

Please discuss all this with your teachers and among yourselves.

आप यह जानना चाहते हैं कि किसी समस्या पर विचार कैसे किया जाता है। पहली बात जो विल्कुल स्पष्ट है वह है कि समस्या से भयभीत न हुआ जाए। आप समझ रहे हैं न कि कई बार आप उसका अलोकन नहीं करेंगे, आप उससे भाग खड़े होंगे। इसे बात यह है कि उसकी निर्देश न करें, यह न कहें कि यह विषम कठिन हैं, कठिनी, भयावह हैं, कठिनी कठिन पद है। फिर किसी समस्या से उसकी तुलना न करें या समस्या से संपर्क करते समय उसका तुलनापर्य समझ करें। यह सब कुछ थोड़ा कठिन है। यदि समस्या से संपर्क करते समय आप पहले ही से कोई विशिष्ट निर्देश ले कर, उस समस्या का कोई तय उत्तर मानकर आगे बढ़ते हैं तो आप उस समस्या को समझ नहीं पाते। अतः समस्या को समझ पाने के लिए यह ज़रूरी है कि तुलना न की जाए, भय न हो, निर्देश न लिया जाए—समस्या को समझने के लिए ये सारी बातें अपरिहार्य रूप से सहायक होती हैं। तुलना, भय एवं निर्देश से उदारता होनेवाली समस्याओं के अतिरिक्त वस्तुत: समस्याएँ, कहीं होती ही नहीं।
Let these ideas, let these words, go through your mind so that you are familiar with all these issues. Then, you will be able to face the problems of life.

January 13, 1954