Understanding Our Mind

It seems to me that 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.

I do not know if you have heard it said that the cultural influence of the West is destroying the so-called culture of the East. We accept one part of the Western culture—science and militarism and nationalism—and yet retain our own so-called culture. Though we have only taken a part of the Western culture, a section or a layer of it, this is gradually destroying, poisoning, the other layers of our being. This can be seen when we look at the incongruity of our modern existence in India. I think it is very important to see how we are talking of India as taking on the Western culture, without totally understanding what we are doing. We are not adopting entirely the Western culture but retaining our own and merely adding to it. The addition is the destructive quality, not the total adoption of the Western culture.

Our own minds are being destroyed by the adoption of certain Western attitudes without understanding their attitude and their way of life. So there is a mixture of the Western and the Eastern in our minds. It seems to me
that it is very important to understand the process of our own minds if we are not to be poisoned by an outside culture. Very few of us have really gone into the philosophies, the systems, the ideas of others, but we have merely adopted or imitated some of them.

We do not know the workings of our own mind—the mind as it is, not as it should be or as we would like it to be. The mind is the only instrument we have, the instrument with which we think, we act, in which we have our being. If we do not understand that mind in operation as it is functioning in each one of us, any problem that we are confronted with will become more complex and more destructive. So it seems to me, to understand one’s mind is the first essential function of all education.

What is our mind, yours and mine?—not according to Shankara or Buddha or someone else. If you do not follow my description of the mind, but actually, while listening to me, observe your own mind in operation, then perhaps it would be profitable and worthwhile to go into the whole question of thought.

What is our mind? It is the result, is it not, of climate, of centuries of tradition, the so-called culture, the social and economic influences, the environment, the ideas, the dogmas that society imprints on the mind through religion, through so-called knowledge and superficial information. Please observe your own mind, and not merely follow the description that I am giving because the description has very little significance. If we can watch the
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operations of our mind, then perhaps we shall be able to deal with the problems of life as they concern us.

The mind is divided into the conscious and the unconscious. If we do not like to use these two words, we might use the terms, superficial and hidden—the superficial parts of the mind and the deeper layers of the mind. The whole of the conscious as well as the unconscious, the superficial as well as the hidden, the total process of our thinking—only part of which we are conscious of, and the rest, which is the major part, we are not conscious of—is what we call consciousness. This consciousness is time, is the result of centuries of man’s endeavour.

We are made to believe in certain ideas from childhood, we are conditioned by dogmas, by beliefs, by theories. Each one of us is conditioned by various influences, and from that conditioning, from those limited and unconscious influences, our thoughts spring and take the form of a Communist, a Hindu; a Muslim, or a scientist. Thought obviously springs from the background of memory, of tradition, and it is with this background of both the conscious as well as the unconscious, the superficial as well as the deeper layers of the mind, that we meet life. Life is always in movement, never static. But, our minds are static. Our minds are conditioned, held, tethered to dogma, to belief, to experience, to knowledge. With this tethered mind, with this mind that is so conditioned, so heavily held, we meet life, which is in constant movement. Life, with its many complex and swiftly changing problems, is never still, and it requires a fresh approach every day, every minute. So, when we meet this life, there is a constant struggle between
the mind that is conditioned and static, and life that is in constant movement. That is what is happening, is it not?

There is not only a conflict between life and the conditioned mind, but such a mind, meeting life, creates more problems. We acquire superficial knowledge, new ways of conquering nature, science. But the mind that has acquired knowledge still remains in the conditioned state, bound to a particular form of belief.

So, our problem is not how to meet life, but how can the mind, with all its conditioning, with its dogmas, beliefs, free itself? It is only the free mind that can meet life, not the mind that is tethered to any system, to any belief, to any particular knowledge. So, is it not important, if we would not create more problems, if we would put an end to misery, sorrow, to understand the workings of our own minds? The understanding does not come into being by following anybody, it does not come through authority, it does not come through imitation or through any form of compulsion. But it comes into being when one is actually aware how one’s own mind is working.

Each one of us can observe our motives, our activities, our purposes, can understand them and solve this problem of existence without creating more misery, more wars, more confusion. To understand the workings of the mind is the most essential thing. After all, relationship is the mirror in which the mind can be seen in operation—the way I talk to the servant, the way I create a self-importance. There, I can observe the operation of my mind and see the extraordinary intricacies of motives—

Joiven और संस्कारित मन के बीच केवल टकराव ही नहीं होता रहता है बल्कि जब ऐसा मन जीवन के संपर्क में आता है तो और भी अनेक समस्याएं पैदा करता है। हम सत्यी ज्ञान जमा करते हैं, प्रकृति को जीतने के नये तरीके खोजते हैं, वैज्ञानिक विकास करते हैं। परंतु इस सारे ज्ञान की प्राप्ति के बाद भी मन सशक्तकर्तव्य ही रहता है, किसी खास मान्यता से बंधा रहता है।

अतः हमारी समस्या, जीवन का सामना कैसे करें यह नहीं है, बल्कि यह है कि अपनी सारी संस्कारकदाताओं, मान्यताओं और विविधताओं से मन स्वयं का किस प्रकार मुक्त करें? क्योंकि केवल एक मुक्त मन ही जीवन का ठीक से समाप्त कर सकता है। किसी भी विचार-प्रणाली, विविधता या किसी विशेष प्रकार के ज्ञान में बंधा मन जीवन का सामना नहीं कर सकता। इसलिए यदि हम नहीं चाहते कि और अधिक समस्याएं पैदा हों, यदि हमें विश्वास का, दुख का अंत करना है तो क्या यह अन्तः ज्ञूनी नहीं होगा कि हम अपने मन की कार्य-प्रणालियों को समझ सकें? यह समझ किसी के पीछे-पीछे चलने से नहीं आती, किसी अभिकार के माध्यम से नहीं प्राप्त होती, और न ही अनुकरण या वाक्यों से आती है। परंतु जब कोई अपने खुद के मन की गतिविधियों के प्रति वास्तव में सजग होता है तो यह समझ स्वाभाविक रूप से आती है।

Hmann सभी अपनी मूल प्रृथितों को, अपनी गतिविधियों को, अपने उद्देश्यों को देख सकते हैं, उन्हें समझ सकते हैं और इस प्रकार क्लेश, दुःख एवं डरों में वृद्धि न करते हुए अस्तित्व की समस्या को सुलझा सकते हैं। सबसे ज्यादा व बुनियादी बात यह है कि मन के काम करने के तरीकों को समझ जाए। क्योंकि आचरण संबंध ही यह दर्पण है जिसमें मन की उसकी कार्य-विधियों में देखा जा सकता है—मैं नीर्जर से किस तरह बात करता हूं, मैं कैसे अपने आपको महत्व देता हूं, और सभी निर्देशित में मैं देख सकता हूं कि मन किस प्रकार से काम करता है, और साथ ही अपने उद्देश्यों और प्रयोजनों के
for instance, when I do puja, the innumerable rituals, the absurdity of following somebody who offers you a heavenly reward. In the process of our relationship, we can observe the mind, and if we can observe it without any sense of condemnation, without any sense of comparison and judgment, then that observation begins to free the mind from the thing to which it is tethered.

If you will experiment with this, you will see that your mind is tethered to a particular dogma, to a particular tradition. In that very observation, in that very awareness of the particular dogma or tradition to which the mind is bound—mere awareness without condemnation, without judgment, without wanting to be free—you will see that the mind begins, without making an effort, to free itself.

Freedom comes without compulsion, without resistance, without struggle. Take, for instance, the superficial example of your doing puja, a ritual, as a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, whatever you are. You do it out of tradition; there is no thought behind it. Even if you think about it, the very thought about this puja is conditioned because you do it as a Hindu or a Christian. When you think about the puja or the Mass, your thought is conditioned either to accept or reject; you cannot think about it afresh, anew, because your whole background or whole tradition, conscious as well as unconscious, the superficial and the deeper layers, is held in Hinduism or Christianity, and when you do think about it, there is no clarity but only a reaction which provokes another form of complication, another problem.
I do not know if you have observed all this in yourself. If you have observed, how is one to be free from a ritual? I am taking that as a superficial example without an analytical process. I do not know if this is too complex or too difficult. When a particular issue is analyzed, the analysis is bound to be still conditioned because the thinker is conditioned. His analysis is conditioned, and therefore whatever he does will produce problems more complex than the problem which he is trying to resolve. After all, in our thinking, there is the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed. Now, when you do puja, the observer, the thinker, is always analyzing what is wrong, what is right, but the analyzer, the observer, the thinker, is conditioned in himself. So, his analysis, his observations, his experiences, are conditioned, are limited, biased. I think until we see this really very important point, mere self-introspection and analysis—whether psychoanalysis or the analysis which intellectually and theoretically you perform on yourself—are utterly useless.

Is there a thinker, an observer, an analyzer, different from the observation, the analysis? Is there a thinker without the thought? If there is no thinking, there is no thinker. If the thinker were not a part of the mind, part of the consciousness, then that thinker must be free from all conditioning in his analysis and understanding. But if one observes, there is no thinker without thinking. When I am thinking, I am analyzing, I am observing, the ‘I’ is still the result of the experience, the conditioned experience.

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of thought which is conditioned. I, as a Hindu or Communist, observe. The thought which produces the ‘I’ is the result of a Communist background or the result of a Hindu or Christian belief. So, the thinker is always conditioned as long as there is thought because thought has produced the thinker, and thought is conditioned, limited by bias.

Your thoughts continually arise. If you want to go into them deeply, the question arises whether thought can ever come to an end—which is not a forgetfulness but which is really a very deep problem of meditation. As long as there is the meditator, meditation is illusion because the meditator is the result of thought, the result of a mind that is conditioned and shaped by the whole process of living with its fears, apprehensions, ambitions, desires, longing for happiness, longing to be able to live with success, without fear or favour, and so on. All that creates the thinker. We give a quality of permanency to the thinker, who we think is above all passing, transient experience. But the thinker is the result of thought. There is no thinker if there is no thinking. So, there is only thought which is the reaction to a form of experience, and that experience is the result of our conditioning. So, thought can never resolve our problems.

Our problem is freedom from the conditioning which produces limited thought. This is the whole process of meditation, not the stereotyped, traditional, illusory form of meditation, but the meditation that comes into being when we understand the whole process of our thinking, all the worries of our complex living. And in that there is no thinker, but only the uncovering of that, and therefore the
ending of that.

At the time of such meditation, the mind is still. This quality of stillness is not just acquired through some stupid determined effort to be quiet.

The mind has to understand the whole significance of the thought process, and how it creates the thinker, and understand the whole process about the stillness of the mind. It is in this stillness of the mind that the problems are resolved, and not multiplied by the stupidity of the thinker who is conditioned.

I think, really, you must go into this problem, as most serious people must, because the crises are much too many and the problems that are pressing on us are much too intense.

Surely, it is the function of education, not how to meet life, but how to free the mind from all its conditioning, from all its traditional values so that the free mind can meet, and therefore resolve, the innumerable problems that arise daily. Only then is it possible to realize what we call God, truth. It is truth alone that resolves the problems.