

Krishnamurti and Psychology: The Golden Key

By Dr. S C

The philosopher J Krishnamurti (1895-1986) had revolutionary insights into the human mind. These can be tremendously helpful for resolving psychological conflict and living a life of total freedom. His teachings offer a way to resolve our daily problems and live a life full of clarity and peace.

His approach can be best described as a “self psychotherapy” in which the participant is invited to inquire into the causes of psychological conflict. Any authority, or guide, who helps us understand ourselves, is seen as an impediment to this inquiry. Why? Any sort of escape from the facts of our mind, whether through relying on a guide, or even our own past experiences, prevents us from pure observation. Krishnamurti calls this “observing without the observer.”

Pure observation awakens a new type of intelligence which does not rely on intellect or memory. It is being in this state of observation that heals psychological hurt, and that leads to immediate insight and right action. However, many of our preconceived ideas about the mind, as well as our attachment to memory, prevent this pure observation and lead to endless sorrow.

Krishnamurti sees all psychological suffering as unnecessary. Why? It can be resolved through insight. Therefore, whoever continues to suffer has neglected to develop insight into their mind. What prevents insight? Normally, we think that to resolve a psychological problem, time is necessary. If I am violent today, give me time, and through various breathing exercises, disciplines, and readings, I will resolve the problem of violence. However, when we postpone any immediate psychological problem (be it violence, anger, greed, or attachment), we cease to be in a state of observation.

We create the mental opposite of the fact (non-violence), and thus move away from the fact itself. Krishnamurti’s way of self-psychotherapy therefore advocates no methods, and states that any method will lead us away from the truth of our mind, which only exists in observing here and now. Mindfulness, which is increasingly popular, is often taught as a method, and therefore it does not result in developing a transforming insight. It also often involves developing goals and pursuing ideals, which is the opposite of true insight. Any sort of escape from the fact, whether through method, ideal, or any type of effort, prevents pure observation, and prevents the awakening of intelligence which resolves psychological conflict. Next: The Golden Key – immediate insight

Immediate insight: The Golden Key

By Dr S C

The mind is addicted to time. Whether in the form of regrets in the past, or desire for the future, the mind lives in time. Krishnamurti states that time is the psychological enemy of man, which prevents the real transformation from taking place. This real transformation is immediate insight, that choiceless awareness which pierces through the thick opacity of the mind's structures, and sees things exactly as they are, without any distortion. Unless this transformation has taken place, the inner and outer problems of our life will continue throughout every stage of life, in different forms.

If we were to observe our own mind, we would see that only the objects of desire change, but desiring itself does not change whether we look at our youth, adulthood, or senior years. Krishnamurti, like the Buddha thousands of years ago, sees desire as closely linked with fear (including that of death), misery, attachment, and the whole structure of the self. But unlike Buddhism, Krishnamurti does not prescribe any system of beliefs about suffering, or any sort of organized or scheduled meditation. Instead, his approach (which we described as selfpsychotherapy), is an inquiry into the very nature of thought itself.

With Krishnamurti, the question is profoundly more important than the answer. Why is this? As an example, if we were to give an answer to the question "Who Am I?" which was an inquiry prescribed by the Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, any answer we give would be from the past – we may answer with our family background, our social status, or any sort of professional identity we have been given. But does this transform us, or satisfactorily answer the question? Only if we are not actually seeking the truth. For someone seeking the truth and the truth alone, no verbal answer to any psychological question would suffice, because it would only be from our past, from our accumulated knowledge.

This is where self-knowledge diverges from insight. The goal of psychotherapy is often integrating the story of our lives so that it no longer causes distress – bringing the fragments of our self into one integrated whole. But this relies on knowledge and time, and so at best, it makes misery more tolerable, but does not end suffering. With knowledge (which includes experiences of pleasure and pain, as well as intellectual learning), we bring in a distortion of perception – preprogrammed, conditioned responses to situations that lead to further accumulation of knowledge.

For example, I enjoy a particular meal, and store that memory. The next time I am reminded of that meal, I experience pleasure, and when I am deprived of that meal, I experience pain. When we factor in the thousands of experiences we go through in life, we can begin to appreciate how mired we are in conditioned responses to everything – as we get older, we become more set in our ways and trapped in this conditioning to the point where we cease to question it, or questioning it becomes too painful.

The solution to this conditioning is inquiry – how do we start? First, we must understand what it means to inquire, otherwise our inquiry itself will be conditioned and will not be true inquiry. Krishnamurti likens inquiry more to the very act of listening than any sort of intellectual exercise. “Listening to every paragraph of the mind as it operates in relationship,” is a succinct summary of Krishnamurti’s approach. Why? If we were to try to observe the mind in a scheduled meditation, as people in Vipassana often do, it would have a motive and a goal, which would prevent true observation. A totally passive awareness, which is present in pure observation or listening, is a true choiceless awareness which can shine light on the patterns of our mind. It is this pure observation that is the beginning of psychological freedom.

I feel like I lost my marbles. How can I remain grounded?

By Dr S C

To not lose one's marbles in today's world is very rare. From birth, we are indoctrinated with the ideology of competition, and success at all costs – this is justified as necessary for survival, but have we paused to consider the psychological implications? If we did, we would realize that the root of all violence, the root of all unhappiness, is this constant ambition to achieve and compete.

You ask, "How can I remain grounded?" Rather than asking to achieve a certain positive state, such as being grounded, relaxed, or calm, it is better to ask what is it that makes us ungrounded? If we were to try to achieve a certain state, we have introduced another ambition, and with it, the idea of psychological time: somewhere in the future, there is a better version of myself who is grounded. If we are focused on self-improvement, then we have moved away from the truth of our being here and now.

It is only by being aware of "what is," that any psychological problem is truly solved. Anything that dissipates this energy of observation, must be discarded. Chief among the obstacles to observation is our desire to move away from the fact: to avoid it, to try to justify it, or to practice its opposite. For example, if I were to try grounding exercises, or try to remain calm through my own effort, I would create a new problem: how to sustain that effort in opposition to the reality of my true mental state, being ungrounded.

Let us first then, define the problem: why am I ungrounded? Having discarded the ambition to be grounded, I am now free to observe my own mind. In it, we will find all of the mischief that we had been avoiding: contradictory desires, competing drives, and confusing ideals. To put his house in order is real meditation. Can I have peace if I am constantly disturbed by my neighbor's success? Can I be grounded if I am very concerned with pursuing my own success and achievement?

Real meditation is very delicate – not only psychological time (the idea of self-improvement) must be discarded, but any sort of ideal. To have a purpose or goal in meditation is contradictory, because the only true meditation is choiceless awareness of whatever is the case. When I shine the light of choiceless awareness (observation without any motive or direction), what do I see?

I see what is. And only by shining the light of awareness on what is, does the true transformation take place. Without this, being grounded will only be a cultivated state, which can be disturbed with the slightest provocation. Any state that is achieved through discipline or effort must be constantly maintained, and hence it only masks the problem, and ultimately makes us more ungrounded.