
Chapter - III
MEDITATION AND SELF KNOWLEDGE

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In the words of Krishnamurti, meditation is self-knowledge, and without self knowledge, there is no meditation. Meditation and self-knowledge is inter-related term in the philosophy of Krishnamurti and both meditation and self-knowledge is the understanding of one's own life. In this chapter, we shall explore these two concepts in the light of Krishnamurti.

Meditation : The term 'meditation' is not a new term for the Indian mind. It is the concept being used from time immemorial in India. Krishnamurti also used 'meditation' in his own peculiar way. It is essential to mention here that though he discarded many old expressions but the term 'meditation' has retained a position or place in his philosophical thought. It is only because of the fact that he takes it as one of the essential part of human life. Rohit Mehta in his book, "J. Krishnamurti and Nameless Experience" gives the reason for this retainment of the term meditation as "this may be because it is difficult to replace this word".¹ Krishnamurti has given a new significance to the concept of meditation.

The concept of meditation plays an important role in the philosophy of Krishnamurti. In most of the book of his writings he discussed about this concept. He says that meditation is inter-related with our life. It is not different from life. It is a part of human life. Meditation is a kind of thinking. It is a pointed reflection. Krishnamurti had in mind a definite and clear notion when he uses this word. We can obtain a valuable indication of this meaning by considering the derivation of the word. The English word meditation is based on the Latin root 'med' which is 'to measure'. The present meaning of the word is to reflect, to ponder (i.e. to weigh, or measure), and 'to give close attention'. Similarly, the Sanskrit word for meditation, which is 'dhyana' is closely related to 'dhyati', meaning 'to reflect'. There are so many Indian terms for this such as manana, nidhi dhyasana, dharana, dhyana, samadhi etc. Of these, manana and dharana are better translated as concentration. And samadhi is the final absorption or transcendental experience. The word 'nidhi dhyasana' means testing repeatedly to determine quality as it is done in case of a gem (ratna). The word comes from that very field. *Ātma Vā are draṣṭavyah, śrotavyah, mantavyo, nididhyāsitavyah* - *The soul is to see, to hear, to think and to be verified (Bṛhadaranyako pañiṣad 7. ch)* It is in the Vedantic term means judge continually and minutely to determine 'the truth' from 'the untruth'.

Meditation is of course the way of silencing and stilling the mind. And it is also important in our day to day life. Radhakrishnan also speaks about the effects of meditation. He says that by meditation one can transform one's inner nature or inner self. He has identified meditation with God. From the Upanisadic period through the Yoga system of Patanjali upto the modern times thinkers entirely devoted to mind control or meditation. Krishnamurti understanding of this faculty of our mind is unique in its own way. He accepts meditation as a rigorously religious affairs but does not accept the orthodox religious meditation's as in Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism or Islamic meditation typified in Sufism. He rejects these, on the ground of traditionalism and he is for going beyond the tradition.

Meditation is a central issue in Krishnamurti's discourses. In his teachings we find that meditation demands an astonishingly alert mind. It is the understanding of the totality of life in which every form of fragmentation has ceased. Meditation is not control of thought because it will breed conflict in the mind. In fact the entire structure of thought, feeling and other experiences has to be understood without any interference and personal involvement. So Krishnamurti writes :

“Meditation is to be aware of every thought and of every feeling, never to say it is right or wrong but just to watch it and move with it. In that watching one begins to understand the whole movement of thought and feeling. And out of this

awareness comes silence. So this silence is meditation in which the meditator is entirely absent, for the mind has emptied itself of the past.”²

Moreover, meditation for Krishnamurti is one of the greatest arts in life. And the beauty of this art is that one cannot learn it from anybody else. This art has no technique and no authority. It will come automatically in one’s mind without any choice and seek. So he writes :

“When you learn about yourself, watch yourself, watch the way you walk, how you eat, what you say, the gossip, the hate, the jealousy, one has to aware all that without any choice. That is the part of meditation.”³

So we find that Krishnamurti’s concept of meditation is a ‘state of mind’, which looks at everything with complete attention, totally not just part of it. Such a meditation can take place anywhere. It does not require time and place.

It may happen in the crowd or in seclusion, in the woods or in the city, in the full of light and shadows, looking at the face of one’s wife or child, in suffering or in happiness.

Moreover, meditation is one form of life, not something far removed from living. It is in the understanding the way of life in its everyday setting; its misery, loneliness, despair, hope, fear, the urge to be successful or famous etc. i.e. life in

all its aspects. Krishnamurti says :

“Meditation is not something different from daily life; do not go off into the corner of a room and meditate for ten minutes; and then come out of it and be a butcher - both metaphorically and actually. Meditation is one of the most serious things, you do it all day, in the office, with the family, when you educate (your children) to become soldiers, to kill Watching them to enter into this trap of the modern world; watching all that, realising your part in it; all that is part of meditation Meditation is not something different from life.”⁴

So there must be the complete self-knowledge in meditation. It also means that we can know ourselves truly in relationship; and relationship is not only with their people, but also with ideas, with nature and with the things we possess. It is in the mirror of relationship that we can know ourselves as actually are. Meditation is not a control of thought or a system to be practised. It has to be understood by negating the system, method and concentration, then mind becomes very quite. The quietness of mind is the meditation of Krishnamurti.

Meditation and Concentration

In the philosophy of Krishnamurti attention is much needed for the significance of life. It is the total attention of the mind which made the individual stillness and quietness of the mind which Krishnamurti called meditation. His concept of meditation is not concentration. He rejects concentration because there is exclusion. Meditation is not exclusion. It is the complete attention of mind in a particular thing or object without any condemnation and justification. In condemnation and justification, there is some exclusive characteristics of the mind to the objects. Meditation is not the withdrawal from the daily activities of life. Krishnamurti holds that meditation is the part of the daily life. Without meditation, we human beings cannot survive. In every moment of life there is meditation whether consciously or unconsciously.

For Krishnamurti, meditation does not mean concentration on one's self. Nor does it mean control of mind. It means an alert mind, an understanding of the structure of thinking and the origin of all thoughts. With this kind of understanding there will be no interference of thought with one's mind.

Concentration which is brought about through effort, compulsion, direction, imitation is not meditation. Krishnamurti negates the process of meditation which is popularly thought to be meditation. We quote :

“When you sit down to meditate, you fix your mind on a word, on an image, or on a picture but the mind wanders all over the place. There is the constant inter-ruption of other ideals, other thoughts, other emotions and you try

to push them away; you spend your time battling with your thoughts. This process you call meditation. That is you are trying to concentrate on something in which you are not interested and your thoughts keep on multiplying, increasing, inter-rupting, so you spend your energy in conclusion, in warding off, pushing away, if you can concentrate on your chosen thought, on a particular object, you think you have at least succeed in meditation. Surely that is not meditation, is it ? Meditation is not an exclusive process- exclusive in the sense of warding off, building resistance against enchroaching ideas”⁵

So, Krishnamurti rejects the traditional concept of meditation. He resents the proliferating meditation centres all over the world. Meditating three times a day, thinking on a word, a mantra. Get some Sanskrit or Greek word and repeat it. There is also the zen or sitting practice. There are many schools, systems, and methods of meditation. There are systems which say, watch the movement of your big toe, watch it, watch that etc. There is also other system which advocates sitting in a certain posture, breathing regularly or practicing awareness. Krishnamurti shows the absurdity of the thing. These process of meditation make the mind dull. Because by practising so, one will acquire a mechanical mind. In his opinion all effort to meditate is the denial of meditation.

According to Krishnamurti, meditation requires the highest form of sensibility, a tremendous quality of silence, not induced, not disciplined, not cultivated. Sensitivity from the conflict of human daily life. Because human life

is a series of conformities, controls, suppressions and the revolt against all that. So, for him, meditation requires a stillness of mind which is completely free from all these sense of violence and conflicts.

Understanding is the very basis, the fundamental process of meditation. Meditation brings about freedom, clarity and integrity where there is understanding in meditation. Understanding means giving right values, right valuation, to every thing. So understanding comes into being when there are right values, when right values are established. One should aware of how to establish these right values i.e. right value of property, the right value of relationship, the right value of ideas. In the opinion of Krishnamurti, for the right values to come into being, one must understand the thinker because if we donot understand the thinker, which is one's own self. There is no meaning for choosing. That means; if I donot know myself, then there has no foundation of my action, my thought and my ideas. So Krishnamurti says that self-knowledge is the beginning of meditation. These self-knowledge is not the knowledge that one pick up from a book, from authorities, from gurus, but it is the knowledge of self awareness that comes through self- enquiry. Krishnamurti writes :

“Meditation is the beginning of self-knowledge and without self-knowledge there is no meditation. If I do not understand the ways of my thought, of my feelings, my pursuit of pattern of action, which are ideas, If I do not know myself, there is no foundation for thinking ; the thinker who merely asks, prays or

excludes, without understanding himself must inevitably end in confusion, in illusion".⁶ So we find in the writing of Krishnamurti that the beginning of meditation is self-knowledge, which means being aware of every movement of thought and feeling, knowing all the layers of my consciousness, not only the superficial layers but the hidden, the deeply concealed activities. But to know the deeply concealed activities, the hidden motives, responses, thoughts and feelings, there must be tranquility in the conscious mind, that is the conscious mind must be still in order to receive the projection of the unconscious. He argues that the superficial, conscious mind is occupied with its daily activities, with earning a livelihood, deceiving others, exploiting others, running away from the problems - all the daily activities of our existence. That superficial mind must understand the right significance of its own activities and thereby bring tranquility to itself. It cannot bring about tranquility, stillness, by mere regimentation, by compulsion, by discipline, it can bring about tranquility, peace, stillness, only by understanding its own activities, by observing them, by being aware of them, by seeing its own ruthlessness, how it talks to the servant, to the wife, to the daughter, to the mother, and so on. When the superficial, conscious mind is thus fully aware of all its activities, through that understanding it becomes spontaneously quiet, not drugged by compulsion, or regimented by desire, then it is in a position to receive the intimation, the hints of the unconscious, of the many, many hidden layers of the mind - the racial instincts, the burdened

memories, the concealed pursuits, the deep wounds that are still unhealed. It is only when all these have projected themselves and are understood, when the whole consciousness is unburdened, unfettered by any wound, by any memory what so ever, that it is in a position to receive the eternal.

Self - knowledge :

It is very important to understand one's own self, because self-knowledge is the beginning of radical revolution of which Krishnamurti is talking. In the vision of Krishnamurti, the problem of the world are so colossal, so very complex that to understand and so to resolve them one must approach them in a very simple and direct manner. That simple and direct manner is the self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is the master-key for solving the multitudinous problem of the society. As he pointed out that the solution of the problem is not to be found through conferences, blue-prints or through the substitution of new leaders for old and so on. The solution lies in the creator of that problem. And the creator of that problem is the individual not the world. The world is not something separate from the individual. Society by itself is non-existent. It is created by us, by our relationship. Society is the outward projection of all our own inner psychological states. So our problems are the world's problems. So world's problems are not to be resolved by the United Nations or by substituting new leaders for the old. For transforming the world, we must begin with ourselves is

not an isolating process. It is not withdrawal from the world. To be is to be related. Relationship is the process of understanding oneself and to understand oneself moment to moment in daily life is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge in this sense is the beginning of transformation or regeneration. It is important to discover how we can understand ourselves. Krishnamurti says that self-knowledge is not to be found through any book, nor can it be given to us by another. It is to be discovered through intension. He considered that self-knowledge is essential for transforming oneself. There is no basis for right thought without knowing oneself there cannot be transformation. So self-knowledge requires an extra-ordinary alertness of mind, because 'what is' constantly undergoing transformation. In awareness or alertness of mind there is freedom from all beliefs and idealisation as the beliefs and ideals perverts our true perception of anything. If we are violent merely having an ideal of non-violence is of little value. It requires an extra ordinary perception or clarity of thought for to know we are violent. But to pursue an ideal away from 'what is' is an escape as it prevents us from discovering and acting directly upon what we are. The understanding of what we are, whatever it is beautiful or ugly, the understanding of what we are without any distortion is the beginning of virtue. It is only in virtue that one can discover, that one can live but not in the cultivation of virtue. Because cultivation of virtue merely brings respectability but not understanding and freedom. So virtue is essential for freedom. Virtue is not the becoming of

what is not ; virtue is the understanding of 'what is'. Reality can be found only in understanding 'what is', and to understand 'what is', there must be freedom from the fear of 'what is'.

To understand 'what is' requires a state of mind in which there is no identification or condemnation which means a mind that is alert and yet passive. This passive alertness or awareness comes when there is interest, the intention to understand. In this actual state of mind one does not need to force, discipline or control it.

According to Krishnamurti, the fundamental understanding of oneself does not come through the accumulation of experience, because accumulation of experience is the cultivation of memory. The understanding of oneself is from moment to moment. It is not the following of a pattern. By following a pattern, a system, method, a means through which we know ourselves, we thereby shape our thinking, our activities according to that pattern or system. So there is no method for self-knowledge. We seek a method for attaining some result. We want to follow authority or a system, an ideology which will give us security. But we donot want to understand ourselves, that is, our impulses and reactions, the whole process of thinking. The pursuit of a system is invariably the outcome of our desire for security which is not the understanding of self-knowledge. To follow a method may guarantee us for what we desire but it is not the way to self-knowledge. Because authority prevents us from self-knowledge and destroys freedom. There can be creativeness only in freedom which comes through self-knowledge. And creativeness is not a continuous state, it is new movement in

which there is not the 'me' or the 'mine'.

So we come to know that the understanding of oneself is not a result, or a culmination. It is seeing oneself in the mirror of relationship. Self can be discovered in relationship. Krishnamurti is of the opinion that the whole life is only relationship ; relationship with things, people and with ideas. In order to transform the world about us with its misery, wars, class divisions and utter confusion, there must be a transformation in ourselves. And to bring about a fundamental revolution in oneself, one must understand the whole process of one's thought and feeling in relationship. That means, self-knowledge is the only solution to all our problems of human existence.

To Krishnamurti, self-knowledge means knowledge of one's own self as a total human being, the conscious as well as the unconscious, but not according to any pattern or any philosophy, according to any particular leader. Investigation into myself is not possible if I assume anything. Self-knowledge, then is the beginning of the freedom of the mind. There cannot be any understanding of myself, if there is any form of assumption, any authority either of the past or of the present. But the mind is frightened to let go of all authority, any investigation, because the mind is afraid of not arriving at a particular result. So the mind is concerned with achieving a result but not with the investigation to find out, to understand. That is why we cling to authority, religious, psychological or philosophical. Krishnamurti said that one must alone to find out what is true. The

mind who has gone into the question of self-knowledge is capable of discovering reality. The unconditioned mind is required for self-knowledge. This unconditioning is essential for new creative understanding. Any society that does not respond to the new challenge of a group or an individual obviously decays. And it seems to Krishnamurti that if we create a new world, a new society, we must have a free mind. And that mind cannot come about without real self-knowledge.

Thought can never discover anything new because thought is the projection of the past, thought is the result of time, of many many days, and centuries of yesterday.

Krishnamurti holds that there is a way of understanding the whole process of birth and death, becoming and decaying, sorrow and happiness. It can be truly understood and fundamentally grasped only through ourselves, because it is focussed in each individual. We can comprehend this only in our own consciousness. There is a possibility of perceiving the significance of all existence.

For him, understand life and the significance of existence is to understand oneself as related to and involved in others, which is society, which is the whole. There is the very much need for self-knowledge, because without self-knowledge it is not possible to act properly, in harmony with the law inherent in the manifestation of life. In other words, without self-knowledge it is not possible to

establish right relationship, to establish order in society and to have peace in the world. Right relationship proceeds from right action, and right action proceeds from right thinking which comes only with self-knowledge. More-over, the purpose of relationship is self-discovery, relationship is the mirror in which one can see the true image of the self, in which one can discover oneself ; for the self reveals itself in its responses to the challenges of life. Krishnamurti writes :

“Relationship has significance only when it is a process of revealing oneself to oneself ; and it, in that process, one proceeds deeply, widely and extensively, then in relationship there is peace - not the contention, not the antagonism between two people. Only in that quietness, in that relationship in which there is the fruition of self-knowledge, is there peace.”⁷

Self-knowledge, thus, forms the basis of true social order, of harmonious society. But the fundamental hindrance in perceiving the reality, according to Krishnamurti, is that ignorance with respect to oneself, with respect to the functioning of the I-process. He holds that the solution of the problems of existence can only be arrived at through the discovery of the truth ; because it is truth that liberates the ignorance of the individual and self-knowledge is important here because self-knowledge is the first step to the discovery of truth.

Krishnamurti holds that self-knowledge is not only an intellectual discipline ; it is also a way of life. He considers self-knowledge as the only state of being in which the individual and the society created by him, can look at and

see what is, can there by transcend the level of consciousness that breeds problem, contradictions and inconsistencies. Krishnamurti observes :

“ It is essential in all things to understand the process of oneself, because without knowing oneself, no human problem can be resolved. Any resolution of a problem without self-knowledge is merely distraction, leading to further misery, confusion, and struggle - this, when one thinks about it is fairly obvious.”⁸

So he rightly considers any other approach at solving the problem of existence as distractions, as a ruse for not attending to ‘what is’ as an escape from reality. Without understanding and the awareness of the true significance of the self, all human perception is bound to be distorted causing further confusion and conflict. So we can say that self-knowledge, in the vision of Krishnamurti, is necessary not only for solving our various problems but also for living sanely, truly and in freedom, peace and prosperity.

So self-knowledge is also necessary to free man from his self-imposed limitation, from his illusions, from suffering and sorrow. Without self-knowledge, there cannot be any understanding of the whole, the ignorance of which is responsible for the fragmentation of consciousness and the problem arising out of it. It will find these when Krishnamurti emphatically points out :

“If you donot understand yourself you will not understand anything else, you may have great ideals, beliefs and formulations, but they will have no reality.

They will be delusions. So you must know yourself to understand the present and through the present the past. From the known present the hidden layers of the past are discovered and this discovery is liberating and creative.”⁹

Another important features of self-knowledge is that it leads to the silence of mind which makes choiceless awareness possible, and it is choiceless awareness only that can transform the structure of human consciousness by putting an end to the perpetuation of duality. Since all our problems are the product of fragmentation in consciousness, self-knowledge is the only way to arrive at their resolution. In the words of Krishnamurti :

“Truth comes into being only when there is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge brings understanding and when there is understanding, there are not problems. When there are no problems, then the mind is quiet, it is not longer caught up in its own creations. When the mind is not creating problems, when it understands, each problem immediately as it arises, then it is utterly still. This total process is awareness, and it brings about a state of undisturbed tranquility which is not the outcome of any discipline, of any practice or control, but is the natural outcome of understanding every problem as it arises.”¹⁰

Traditional concept of meditation wants to remove us from the reality of life, the 'what is'. But for Krishnamurti, a mind that is extra-ordinarily aware, intelligent, free and awake does not require any experience at all. Light is light, there is no question of more or less in it. Our complete life is at our disposal, shunning it and seeking for a higher, deeper, illusory life is a mistake. What is, is already given. We only do not know it. Krishnamurti is ever so eager to help us to have the right perspective of the world around us to have the right perspective of the world around us. Seeing it without a conditional mind is meditation. Once we recondition ourselves, free ourselves from the known- we achieved the goal .

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