

Listening

J. Krishnamurti

THE FULL MOON was just coming up over the river; there was a haze which made her red, and smoke was rising from the many villages, for it was cold. There was not a ripple on the river, but the current was hidden, strong and deep. The swallows were flying low, and one or two wing tips touched the water, disturbing ever so little the placid surface. Up the river the evening star was just visible over a minaret in the distant, crowded town. The parrots were coming back to be near human habitation, and their flight was never straight. They would drop with a screech, pickup a grain, and fly sideways, but they were always moving forward towards a leafy tree, where they were gathering by the hundreds; then off they would fly again to a more sheltering tree, and as darkness came there would be silence. The moon was now well over the tops of the trees, and she made a silvery pathway on the still waters.

"I see the importance of listening, but I wonder if I ever really listen to what you say," he remarked. "Somehow I have to make a great effort to listen."

When you make an effort to listen, are you listening? Is not that very effort a distraction which prevents listening? Do you make an effort when you listen to something that gives you delight? Surely, this effort to listen is a form of compulsion. Compulsion is resistance, is it not? And resistance breeds problems, so listening becomes one of them. Listening itself is never a problem.

"But to me it is. I want to listen correctly because I feel that what you are saying has deep significance, but I can't go beyond its verbal meaning."

If I may say so, you are not listening now to what is being said. You have made listening into a problem, and this problem is preventing you from listening. Everything we touch becomes a problem, one issue breeds many other issues. perceiving this is it possible not to breed problems at all?

"That would be marvellous, but how is one to come to that happy state?"

Again, you see, the question of 'how', the manner of achieving a certain state, becomes still another problem. We are talking of not giving birth to problems. If it may be pointed out, you must be aware of the manner in which the mind is creating the problem. You want to achieve the state of perfect listening; in other words, you are not listening, but you want to achieve a state, and you need time and interest to gain that or any other state. The need for time and interest generates problems. You are not simply aware that you are not listening. When you are aware of it, the very fact that you are not listening has its own action; the truth of that fact acts, you do not act upon the fact. But you want to act upon it, to change it, to cultivate its opposite, to bring about a desired state, and so on. Your effort to act upon the fact breeds problems, whereas seeing the truth of the fact brings its own liberating action. You are not aware of the truth, nor do you see the false as the false, as long as your mind is occupied in anyway with effort, with comparison, with justification or condemnation.

"All this may be so, but with all the conflicts and contradictions that go on within oneself, it still seems to me that it is almost impossible to listen."

Listening itself is a complete act; the very act of listening brings its own freedom. But are you really concerned with listening, or with altering the turmoil within? If you would listen, sir, in the sense of being aware of your conflicts and contradictions without forcing them into any particular pattern of thought, perhaps they might altogether cease. You see, we are constantly trying to be this or that, to achieve a particular state, to capture one kind of experience and avoid another, so the mind is everlastingly occupied with something; it is never still to listen to the noise of its own struggles and pains. Be simple, sir, and don't try to become something or to capture some experience.

Mediocrity

J. Krishnamurti

THE STORM HAD lasted for several days, with high winds and torrential rains. The earth was soaking up the water, and the dust of many summers was being washed from the trees. In this part of the country it hadn't really rained for several years, but now it was making up for it, at least everyone hoped so, and there was gladness in the noise of the rain and the running waters. It was still raining when we all went to bed, and the patter of rain was very strong on the roof. It had a rhythm, a dance, and there was the murmur of many streams. Then what a lovely morning it was! The clouds were gone, and the hills all around were sparkling in the early morning sun; they had all been washed clean, and there was a benediction in the air. Nothing was yet stirring, and only

the high hilltops were aglow. In a few minutes the noises of the day would begin; but now there was a deep peace in the valley, though the streams were gurgling and the cock had begun to crow. All the colours had come to life; everything was so vivid, the new grass and that enormous tree which seemed to dominate the valley. There was new life with abundance, and now the gods would receive their offering, gladly and freely given; now the fields would be made rich for the coming rice, and there would be no lack of fodder for the cows and the goats, now the wells would be full and marriages could be performed with gladness. The earth was red, and there would be rejoicing.

"I am well aware of the state of my mind," he explained. "I have been to college and received a so-called education, and I have read fairly extensively. Politically I have been of the extreme left, and I am quite familiar with their literature. The party has become like any organized religion; it is what Catholicism was and continues to be, with the excommunications, the threats and deprivations. For a time I worked ambitiously in politics, hoping for a better world; but I have seen through that game, though I could have gone ahead in it. Long ago I saw that real reformation doesn't come through politics; politics and religion don't mix. I know it is the thing to say that we must bring religion into politics; but the moment we do, it is no longer religion, it becomes just nonsense. God doesn't talk to us in political terms but we make our own god in terms of our politics or economic conditioning.

"But I haven't come to talk politics with you, and you are quite right to refuse to discuss it. I have come to talk over something that is really eating me up. The other evening you said something about mediocrity. I listened but couldn't take it in, for I was too disturbed; but as you were talking, that word 'mediocrity' struck me very forcibly. I had never thought of myself as being mediocre. I am not using that word in the social sense, and as you pointed out, it has nothing to do with class and economic differences, or with birth."

Of course. Mediocrity is entirely outside the field of arbitrary social divisions.

"I see it is. You also said, if I remember rightly, that the truly religious person is the only revolutionary, and such a person is not mediocre. I am talking of the mediocrity of the mind, not of job or position. Those who are in the highest and most powerful positions, and those who have marvellously interesting occupations, may still be mediocre. I have neither an exalted position nor a particularly interesting occupation, and I am aware of the state of my own mind. It is just mediocre. I am a student of both western and eastern philosophy, and am interested in many other things, but in spite of this my mind is quite ordinary; it has some capacity for coordinated thinking, but it is still mediocre and uncreative."

Then what is the problem sir?

"First, I am really quite ashamed of the state I am in, of my own utter stupidity, and I am saying this without any self pity. Deep down in myself, in spite of all my learning, I find that I am not creative in the most profound sense of that word. It must be possible to have that creativeness of which you spoke the other day; but how is one to set about it? Is this too blunt a question?"

Can we think of this problem very simply? What is it that makes the mind-heart mediocre? One may have encyclopedic knowledge, great capacity, and so on; but beyond all these superficial acquisitions and gifts, what makes the mind deeply stupid? Can the mind be, at any time, other than what it has always been?

"I am beginning to see that the mind, however clever, however capable, can also be stupid. It cannot be made into something else, for it will always be what it is. It may be infinitely capable of reasoning, speculation, design calculation; but however expansible, it will always remain in the same field. I have just caught the significance of your question. You are asking whether the mind, which is capable of such astonishing feats, can transcend itself by its own will and effort."

That is one of the questions that arise. If, however clever and capable, the mind is still mediocre, can it through its own volition ever go beyond itself? Mere condemnation of mediocrity, with its wide scope of eccentricities, will in no way alter the fact. And when condemnation, with all its implications, has ceased, is it possible to find out what it is that brings about the state of mediocrity? We now understand the significance of that word, so let us stick to it. Is not one of the factors of mediocrity the urge to achieve, to have a result to succeed? And when we want to become creative, we are still dealing with the matter superficially, are we not? I am this, which I want to change into that, so I ask how; but when creativeness is something to be striven after, a result to be achieved, the mind has reduced it to its own condition. This is the process that we have to understand, and not attempt to change mediocrity into something else.

"Do you mean that any effort on the part of the mind to change what it is, merely leads to the continuation of itself in another form, and so there is no change at all?"

That is so, is it not? The mind has brought about its present state through its own effort, through its desires and fears, through its hopes, joys and pains; and any attempt on its part to change that state is still in the same direction. A petty mind trying not to be, is still petty. Surely the problem is the cessation of all effort on the part of the mind to be something, in what ever direction.

"Of course. But this does not imply negation, a state of vacuity, does it?"

If one merely hears the words without catching their significance, without experimenting and experiencing, then conclusions have no validity.

"So creativeness is not to be striven after, It is not to be learnt, practiced, or brought about through any action, through any form of compulsion. I see the truth of that. If I may, I shall think aloud and slowly work this out with you. My mind, which has been ashamed of its mediocrity, is now aware of the significance of condemnation. This condemnatory attitude is brought about by the desire to change; but this very desire to change is the outcome of pettiness, so the mind is still what it was and there has been no change at all. So far I have understood."

What is the state of the mind when it is not attempting to change itself, to become something?

"It accepts what it is."

Acceptance implies that there is an entity who accepts, does it not? And is not this acceptance also a form of effort in order to gain, to experience further? So a conflict of duality is set going, which is again the same problem, for it is conflict that breeds mediocrity of mind and heart. Freedom from mediocrity is that state which comes into being when all conflict has ceased. but acceptance is merely resignation. Or has that word 'acceptance' a different meaning to you?

"I can see the implications of acceptance, since you have given me an insight into its significance. But what is the state of the mind which no longer accepts or condemns?"

Why do you ask, sir? It is a thing to be discovered, not merely to be explained.

"I am not seeking an explanation or being speculative, but is it possible for the mind to be still, without any movement, and yet be unaware of its own stillness?"

To be aware of it breeds the conflict of duality, does it not?

The competitive way of life

J.Krishnamurti

THE MONKEYS WERE on the road, and in the middle of the road a baby monkey was playing with its tail, but the mother was keeping an eye on it. They were all well aware that someone was there, at a safe distance. The adult males were large, heavy and rather vicious, and most of the other monkeys avoided them. They were all eating some kind of berries that had fallen on the road from a large, shady tree with thick leaves. The recent rains had filled the river, and the stream under the narrow bridge was gurgling. The monkeys avoided the water and the puddles on the road, and when a car appeared splattering mud as it came, they were off the road in a second, the mother taking the baby with her. Some climbed the tree and others went down the bank on each side of the road, but they were back on it as soon as the car had sped by. They had now got quite used to the human presence. They were as restless as the human mind, and up to all kinds of tricks.

The rice fields on either side of the road were a luscious, sparkling green in the warm sun, and against the blue hills beyond the fields the ricebirds were white and slow-winged. A long, brownish snake had crawled out of the water and was resting in the sun. A brilliantly blue kingfisher had alighted on the bridge and was readying itself for another dive. It was a lovely morning, not too hot, and the solitary palms scattered over the fields told of many things. Between the green fields and the blue hills there was communion, a song. Time seemed to pass so quickly. In the blue sky the kites were wheeling; occasionally they would alight on a branch to preen themselves, and then off they would go again, calling and circling. There were also several eagles, with white necks and golden-brown wings and bodies. Among the newly-sprouted grass there were large red ants; they would race jerkily forward, suddenly stop, and then go off in the opposite direction. Life was so rich, so abundant - and unnoticed, which was perhaps what all these living things, big and little, wanted.

A young ox with bells around its neck was drawing a light cart which was delicately made, its two large wheels connected by a thin steel bar on which a wooden platform was mounted. On this platform a man was sitting, proud of the fast-trotting ox and the

turnout. The ox, sturdy and yet slender, gave him importance; everyone would look at him now, as the passing villagers did. They stopped, looked with admiring eyes, made comments, and passed on. How proud and erect the man sat, looking straight ahead! Pride, whether in little things or in great achievements, is essentially the same. What one does and what one has gives one importance and prestige; but man in himself as a total being seems to have hardly any significance at all. He came with two of his friends. Each of them had a good college degree, and they were doing well, they said, in their various professions. They were all married and had children, and they seemed pleased with life, yet they were disturbed too.

"If I may," he said, "I would like to ask a question to set the ball rolling. It is not an idle question, and it has somewhat disturbed me since hearing you a few evenings ago. Among other things you said that competition and ambition were destructive urges which man must understand and so be free of, if he is to live in a peaceful society. But are not struggle and conflict part of the very nature of existence?"

Society as at present constituted is based on ambition and conflict, and almost everyone accepts this fact as inevitable. The individual is conditioned to its inevitability; through education, through various forms of outward and inward compulsion, he is made to be competitive. If he is to fit into this society at all, he must accept the conditions it lays down, otherwise he has a pretty bad time. We seem to think that we have to fit into this society; but why should one?

"If we don't, we will just go under."

I wonder if that would happen if we saw the whole significance of the problem? We might not live according to the usual pattern, but we would live creatively and happily, with a wholly different outlook. Such a state cannot be brought about if we accept the present social pattern as inevitable. But to get back to your point: do ambition, competition and conflict constitute a predestined and inevitable way of life? You evidently assume that they do. Now let us begin from there. Why do you take this competitive way of life to be the only process of existence?

"I am competitive, ambitious, like all those around me. It is a fact which often gives me pleasure, and sometimes pain, but I just accept it without struggle, because I don't know any other way of living; and even if I did, I suppose I would be afraid to try it. I have many responsibilities, and I would be gravely concerned about the future of my children if I broke away from the usual thoughts and habits of life."

You may be responsible for others, sir, but have you not also the responsibility to bring about a peaceful world? There can be no peace, no enduring happiness for man as long as we - the individual, the group and the nation - accept this competitive existence as inevitable. Competitiveness, ambition, implies conflict within and without, does it not? An ambitious man is not a peaceful man, though he may talk of peace and brotherhood. The politician can never bring peace to the world, nor can those who belong to any organized belief, for they all have been conditioned to a world of leaders, saviours, guides and examples; and when you follow another you are seeking the fulfilment of your own ambition, whether in this world or in the world of ideation, the so-called spiritual world. Competitiveness, ambition implies conflict, does it not?

"I see that, but what is one to do? Being caught in this net of competition, how is one to get out of it? And even if one does get out of it, what assurance is there that there will be peace between man and man? Unless all of us see the truth of the matter at the same time, the perception of that truth by one or two will have no value whatever."

You want to know how to get out of this net of conflict, fulfilment, frustration. The very question 'how?' implies that you want to be assured that your endeavour will not be in vain. You still want to succeed, only at a different level. You do not see that all ambition, all desire for success in any direction, creates conflict both within and without. The 'how?' is the way of ambition and conflict, and that very question prevents you from seeing the truth of the problem. The 'how?' is the ladder to further success. But we are not now thinking in terms of success or failure, rather in terms of the elimination of conflict; and does it follow that without conflict, stagnation is inevitable? Surely, peace comes into being, not through safeguards, sanctions and guarantees, but it is there when you are not - you who are the agent of conflict with your ambitions and frustrations.

Your other point, sir, that all must see the truth of this problem at the same time, is an obvious impossibility. But it is possible for you to see it; and when you do, that truth which you have seen and which brings freedom, will affect others. It must begin with you, for you are the world, as the other is.

Ambition breeds mediocrity of mind and heart; ambition is superficial, for it is everlastingly seeking a result. The man who wants to be a saint, or a successful politician, or a big executive, is concerned with personal achievement. Whether identified with an idea, a nation, or a system, religious or economic, the urge to be successful strengthens the ego, the self, whose very structure is brittle, superficial and limited. All this is fairly obvious if one looks into it, is it not?

"It may be obvious to you, sir, but to most of us conflict gives a sense of existence, the feeling that we are alive. Without ambition and competition, our lives would be drab and useless."

Since you are maintaining this competitive way of life, your children and your children's children will breed further antagonism, envy and war; neither you nor they will have peace. Having been conditioned to this traditional pattern of existence, you are in turn educating your children to accept it; so the world goes on in this sorrowful way.

"We want to change, but..." He was aware of his own futility and stopped talking.

Self-Esteem

J. Krishnamurti

SHE HAD COME with three of her friends; they were all earnest and had the dignity of intelligence. One was quick to grasp, another was impatient in his quickness, and the third was eager, but the eagerness was not sustained. They made a good group, for they all shared the problem of their friend, and no one offered advice or weighty opinions. They all wanted to help her do whatever she thought was the right thing, and not merely act according to tradition, public opinion or personal inclination. The difficulty was, what was the right thing to do? She herself was not sure, she felt disturbed and confused. But there was much pressure for immediate action; a decision had to be made, and she could not postpone it any longer. It was a question of freedom from a particular relationship. She wanted to be free, and she repeated this several times.

There was quietness in the room; the nervous agitation had subsided, and they were all eager to go into the problem without expecting a result, a definition of the right thing to do. The right action would emerge, naturally and fully, as the problem was exposed. The discovery of the content of the problem was important, and not the end result; for any answer would only be another conclusion, another opinion, another piece of advice, which would in no way solve the problem. The problem itself had to be understood, and not how to respond to the problem or what to do about it. The right approach to the problem was important, because the problem itself held the right action.

The waters of the river were dancing, for the sun had made on them a path of light. A white sail crossed the path, but the dance was not disturbed. It was a dance of pure delight. The trees were full of birds, scolding, preening, flying away only to come back again. Several monkeys were tearing off the tender leaves and stuffing them in their mouths; their weight bent the delicate branches into long curves, yet they held on lightly and were unafraid. With what ease they moved from branch to branch; though they jumped, it was a flow, the taking off and the landing were one movement. They would sit with their tails hanging and reach for the leaves. They were high up, and took no notice of the people passing below. As darkness approached, the parrots came by the hundred to settle down for the night among the thick leaves. One saw them come and disappear into the foliage. The new moon was just visible. Far away a train whistled as it was crossing the long bridge around the curve of the river. This river was sacred, and people came from far distances to bathe in it, that their sins might be washed away. Every river is lovely and sacred, and the beauty of this one was its wide, sweeping curve and the islands of sand between deep stretches of water; and those silent white sails that went up and down the river every day.

"I want to be free from a particular relationship," she said.

What do you mean by wanting to be free? When you say, "I want to be free," you imply that you are not free. In what way are you not free?

"I am free physically; I am free to come and go, because physically I am no longer the wife. But I want to be completely free; I do not want to have anything to do with that particular person."

In what way are you related to that person, if you are already physically free? Are you related to him in any other way?

"I do not know, but I have great resentment against him. I do not want to have anything to do with him."

You want to be free, and yet you have resentment against him? Then you are not free of him. Why have you this resentment against him?

"I have recently discovered what he is: his meanness, his real lack of love, his complete selfishness. I cannot tell you what a horror I have discovered in him. To think that I was jealous of him, that I idolized him, that I submitted to him! Finding him to be stupid and cunning when I thought him an ideal husband, loving and kind, has made me resentful of him. To think I had anything to do with him makes me feel unclean. I want to be completely free from him." You may be physically free from him, but as long as you

have resentment against him, you are not free. If you hate him, you are tied to him; if you are ashamed of him, you are still enslaved by him. Are you angry with him, or with yourself? He is what he is, and why be angry with him? Is your resentment really against him? Or, having seen what is, are you ashamed of yourself for having been associated with it? Surely, you are resentful, not of him, but of your own judgment, of your own actions. You are ashamed of yourself. Being unwilling to see this, you blame him for what he is. When you realize that your resentment against him is an escape from your own romantic idolization, then he is out of the picture. You are not ashamed of him, but of yourself for being associated with him. It is with yourself that you are angry, and not with him.

"Yes, that is so."

If you really see this, experience it as a fact, then you are free of him. He is no longer the object of your enmity. Hate binds as love does.

"But how am I to be free from my own shame, from my own stupidity? I see very clearly that he is what he is, and is not to be blamed; but how am I to be free of this shame, this resentment which has been slowly ripening in me and has come to fullness in this crisis? How am I to wipe out the past?"

Why you desire to wipe out the past is of more significance than knowing how to wipe it out. The intention with which you approach the problem is more important than knowing what to do about it. Why do you want to wipe out the memory of that association.

"I dislike the memory of all those years. It has left a very bad taste in my mouth. Is that not a good enough reason?"

Not quite, is it? Why do you want to wipe out those past memories? Surely, not because they leave a bad taste in your mouth. Even if you were able through some means to wipe out the past, you might again be caught in actions that you would be ashamed of. Merely wiping out the unpleasant memories does not solve the problem, does it?

"I thought it did; but what is the problem then? Are you not making it unnecessarily complex? It is already complex enough, at least my life is. Why add another burden to it?"

Are we adding a further burden, or are we trying to understand what is and be free of it? Please have a little patience. What is the urge that is prompting you to wipe out the past? It may be unpleasant, but why do you want to wipe it out? You have a certain idea or picture of yourself which these memories contradict, and so you want to get rid of them. You have a certain estimation of yourself, have you not?

"Of course, otherwise..."

We all place ourselves at various levels, and we are constantly falling from these heights. It is the falls we are ashamed of. Self-esteem is the cause of our shame, of our fall. It is this self-esteem that must be understood, and not the fall. If there is no pedestal on which you have put yourself, how can there be any fall? Why have you put yourself on a pedestal called self-esteem, human dignity, the ideal, and so on? If you can understand this, then there will be no shame of the past; it will have completely gone. You will be what you are without the pedestal. If the pedestal is not there, the height that makes you look down or look up, then you are what you have always avoided. It is this avoidance of what is, of what you are, that brings about confusion and antagonism, shame and resentment. You do not have to tell me or another what you are, but be aware of what you are, whatever it is, pleasant or unpleasant: live with it without justifying or resisting it. Live with it without naming it; for the very term is a condemnation or an identification. Live with it without fear, for fear prevents communion, and without communion you cannot live with it. To be in communion is to love. Without love, you cannot wipe out the past; with love, there is no past. Love, and time is not.

Action without Purpose

J. Krishnamurti

HE BELONGED TO various and widely different organizations, and was active in them all. He wrote and talked, collected money, organized. He was aggressive, insistent and effective. He was a very useful person, much in demand, and was forever going up and down the land. He had been through the political agitations, had gone to prison, followed the leaders, and now he was becoming an important person in his own right. He was all for the immediate carrying out of great schemes; and like all these educated people, he was versed in philosophy. He said he was a man of action, and not a contemplative; he used a Sanskrit phrase which was intended to convey a whole philosophy of action. The very assertion that he was a man of action implied that

he was one of the essential elements of life - perhaps not he personally, but the type. He had classified himself and thereby blocked the understanding of himself.

Labels seem to give satisfaction. We kept the category to which we are supposed to belong as a satisfying explanation of life. We are worshippers of words and labels; we never seem to go beyond the symbol, to comprehend the worth of the symbol. By calling ourselves this or that, we ensure ourselves against further disturbance, and settle back. One of the curses of ideologies and organized beliefs is the comfort, the deadly gratification they offer. They put us to sleep, and in the sleep we dream, and the dream becomes action. How easily we are distracted! And most of us want to be distracted; most of us are tired out with incessant conflict, and distractions become a necessity, they become more important than what is. We can play with distractions, but not with what is; distractions are illusions, and there is a perverse delight in them.

What is action? What is the process of action? Why do we act? Mere activity is not action, surely; to keep busy is not action, is it? The housewife is busy, and would you call that action?

"No, of course not. She is only concerned with everyday, petty affairs. A man of action is occupied with larger problems and responsibilities. Occupation with wider and deeper issues may be called action, not only political but spiritual. It demands capacity, efficiency, organized efforts a sustained drive towards a purpose. Such a man is not a contemplative, a mystic, a hermit, he is a man of action."

Occupation with wider issues you would call action. What are wider issues? Are they separate from everyday existence? Is action apart from the total process of life? Is there action when there is no integration of all the many layers of existence? Without understanding and so integrating the total process of life, is not action mere destructive activity? Man is a total process, and action must be the outcome of this totality.

"But that would imply not only inaction, but indefinite postponement. There is an urgency of action, and it is no good philosophizing about it."

We are not philosophizing, but only wondering if your so-called action is not doing infinite harm. Reform always needs further reform. Partial action is no action at all, it brings about disintegration. If you will have the patience, we can find now, not in the future, that action which is total, integrated.

Can purposive action be called action? To have a purpose, an ideal, and work towards it - is that action? When action is for a result, is it action?

"How else can you act?"

You call action that which has a result, an end in view, do you not? You plan the end, or you have an idea, a belief, and work towards it. Working towards an object, an end, a goal, factual or psychological, is what is generally called action. This process can be understood in relation to some physical fact, such as building a bridge; but is it as easily understood with regard to psychological purposes? Surely, we are talking of the psychological purpose, the ideology, the ideal, or the belief towards which you are working. Would you call action this working towards a psychological purpose?

"Action without a purpose is no action at all, it is death. Inaction is death."

Inaction is not the opposite of action, it is quite a different state, but for the moment that is irrelevant; we may discuss that later, but let us come back to our point. Working towards an end, an ideal, is generally called action, is it not? But how does the ideal come into being?, Is it entirely different from what is). Is antithesis different and apart from thesis? Is the ideal of non-violence wholly other than violence? Is not the ideal self-projected? Is it not homemade? In acting towards a purpose, an ideal, you are pursuing a self-projection, are you not?

"Is the ideal a self-projection?"

You are this, and you want to become that. Surely, that is the outcome of your thought. It may not be the outcome of your own thought, but it is born of thought, is it not? Thought projects the ideal; the ideal is part of thought. The ideal is not something beyond thought; it is thought itself.

"What's wrong with thought? Why shouldn't thought create the ideal?"

You are this, which does not satisfy, so you want to be that. If there were an understanding of this, would that come into being? Because you do not understand this, you create that, hoping through that to understand or to escape from this. Thought creates

the ideal as well as the problem; the ideal is a self-projection, and your working towards that self-projection is what you call action, action with a purpose. So your action is within the limits of your own projection, whether God or the State. This movement within your own bounds is the activity of the dog chasing its tail; and is that action?

"But is it possible to act without a purpose?"

Of course it is. If you see the truth of action with a purpose, then there is just action. Such action is the only effective action, it is the only radical revolution.

"You mean action without the self, don't you?"

Yes, action without the idea. The idea is the self identified with God or with the State. Such identified action only creates more conflict, more confusion and misery. But it is hard for the man of so-called action to put aside the idea. Without the ideology he feels lost, and he is; so he is not a man of action, but a man caught in his own self-projections whose activities are the glorification of himself. His activities contribute to separation, to disintegration.

"Then what is one to do?"

Understand what your activity is, and only then is there action.

Celebration, not competition

OSHO

We come with empty hands and we will go with empty hands, so what is the point of claiming so much in the meantime? But this is what we know, what the world tells us: Possess, dominate, have more than others have. It may be money or it may be virtue; it does not matter in what kind of coins you deal— they may be worldly, they may be otherworldly. But be very clever, otherwise you will be exploited. Exploit and don't be exploited— that is the subtle message given to you with your mother's milk. And every school, college, university, is rooted in the idea of competition.

A real education will not teach you to compete; it will teach you to cooperate. It will not teach you to fight and come first. It will teach you to be creative, to be loving, to be blissful, without comparing yourself to others. It will not teach you that you can be happy only when you are the first— that is sheer nonsense. You can't be happy just by being first, and in trying to be first you go through such misery that by the time you become the first you are habituated to misery.

By the time you become the president or the prime minister of a country you have gone through such misery that now misery is your second nature. You don't know now any other way to exist; you remain miserable. Tension has become ingrained; anxiety has become your way of life. You don't know any other way; this is your very lifestyle. So even though you have become the first, you remain cautious, anxious, afraid. It does not change your inner quality at all.

A real education will not teach you to be the first. It will tell you to enjoy whatever you are doing, not for the result, but for the act itself. Just like a painter or a dancer or a musician...

You can paint in two ways. You can paint to compete with other painters; you want to be the greatest painter in the world, you want to be a Picasso or a Van Gogh. Then your painting will be second-rate, because your mind is not interested in painting itself; it is interested in being the first, the greatest painter in the world. You are not going deep into the art of painting. You are not enjoying it, you are only using it as a stepping-stone. You are on an ego trip, and the problem is that to really be a painter, you have to drop the ego completely. To really be a painter, the ego has to be put aside. Only then can existence flow through you. Only then can your hands and your fingers and your brush be used as vehicles. Only then can something of superb beauty be born.

Real beauty is never created by you but only through you. Existence flows; you become only a passage. You allow it to happen, that's all; you don't hinder it.

But if you are too interested in the result, the ultimate result— that you have to become famous, that you have to be the best painter in the world, that you have to defeat all other painters hitherto— then your interest is not in painting; painting is secondary. And of course, with a secondary interest in painting you can't paint something original; it will be ordinary.

Ego cannot bring anything extraordinary into the world; the extraordinary comes only through egolessness. And so is the case with the musician and the dancer. So is the case with everybody.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says: Don't think of the result at all. It is a message of tremendous beauty and significance and truth. Don't think of the result at all. Just do what you are doing with your totality. Get lost in it, lose the doer in the doing. Don't "be"—let your creative energies flow unhindered. That's why he said to Arjuna: "Don't escape from the war... because I can see this escape is just an ego trip. The way you are talking simply shows that you are calculating, you are thinking that by escaping from the war you will become a great saint. Rather than surrendering to the whole, you are taking yourself too seriously—as if there will be no war if you are not there."

Krishna says to Arjuna, "Just be in a state of let-go. Say to existence, 'Use me in whatever way you want to use me. I am available, unconditionally available.' Then whatsoever happens through you will have a great authenticity about it. It will have intensity, it will have depth. It will have the impact of the eternal on it."

Jesus says: Remember, those who are first in this world will be the last in the kingdom of God, and those who are the last will be the first. He has given you the fundamental law—he has given you the inexhaustible, eternal law: Stop trying to be the first. But remember one thing, which is very much possible, because the mind is so cunning it can distort every truth. You can start trying to be the last—but then you miss the whole point. Then another competition starts: "I have to be the last"—and if somebody else says, "I am the last," then the struggle, the conflict, begins again.

I have heard a Sufi parable:

A great emperor, Nadirshah, was praying. It was early morning; the sun had not yet risen, it was still dark. Nadirshah was about to start the conquest of a new country, and of course he was praying to God for his blessings, to be victorious. He was saying to God, "I am nobody. I am just a servant—a servant of your servants. Bless me. I am going on your behalf, this is your victory. But I am a nobody, remember. I am just a servant of your servants."

A priest was also by his side, helping him in prayer, functioning as a mediator between him and God. And then suddenly they heard another voice in the darkness. A beggar of the town was also praying, and he was saying to God, "I am nobody, a servant of your servants."

The king said, "Look at this beggar! He is a beggar and saying to God that he is nobody! Stop this nonsense! Who are you to say you are nobody? I am nobody, and nobody else can claim this. I am the servant of God's servants— who are you to say that you are the servant of his servants?"

Now you see? The competition is still there, the same competition, the same stupidity. Nothing has changed. The same calculation: "I have to be the last. Nobody else can be allowed to be the last." The mind can go on playing such games on you if you are not very understanding, if you are not very intelligent.

Never try to be happy at the expense of another man's happiness. That is ugly, inhuman. That is violence in the true sense. If you think you become a saint by condemning others as sinners, your saintliness is nothing but a new ego trip. If you think you are holy because you are trying to prove others unholy... That's what your holy people are doing. They go on bragging about their holiness, saintliness. Go to your so-called saints and look into their eyes. They have such condemnation for you! They are saying that you are all bound for hell; they go on condemning everybody. Listen to their sermons; all their sermons are condemnatory. And of course you listen silently to their condemnations because you know that you have made many mistakes in your life, errors in your life. And they have condemned everything—so it is impossible to feel that you can be good. You love food, you are a sinner. You don't get up early in the morning, you are a sinner; you don't go to bed early in the evening, you are a sinner. They have arranged everything in such a way that it is very difficult not to be a sinner.

Yes, they are not sinners. They go early to bed and they get up early in the morning... in fact, they have nothing else to do! They never commit any mistakes because they never do anything. They are just sitting there almost dead. But if you do something, of course, how can you be holy? Hence for centuries the holy man has been renouncing the world and escaping from the world, because to be in the world and be holy seems to be impossible.

My whole approach is that unless you are in the world, your holiness is of no value at all. Be in the world and be holy! We have to define holiness in a totally different way. Don't live at the expense of others' pleasures—that is holiness. Don't destroy others' happiness, help others to be happy—that is holiness. Create the climate in which everybody can have a little joy.

Osho, Will you say something more about relaxation? I am aware of a tension deep at the core of me and suspect that I have probably never been totally relaxed.

"Total relaxation is the ultimate. That's the moment when one becomes a buddha. That is the moment of realization, enlightenment, christ-consciousness. You cannot be totally relaxed right now. At the innermost core a tension will persist.

"But start relaxing. Start from the circumference – that's where we are, and we can start only from where we are. Relax the circumference of your being – relax your body, relax your behavior, relax your acts. Walk in a relaxed way, eat in a relaxed way, talk, listen in a relaxed way. Slow down every process. Don't be in a hurry and don't be in haste. Move as if all eternity is available to you – in fact, it is available to you. We are here from the beginning and we are going to be here to the very end, if there is a beginning and there is an end. In fact, there is no beginning and no end. We have always been here and we will be here always. Forms go on changing, but not the substance; garments go on changing, but not the soul.

"Tension means hurry, fear, doubt. Tension means a constant effort to protect, to be secure, to be safe. Tension means preparing for the tomorrow now, or for the afterlife – afraid tomorrow you will not be able to face the reality, so be prepared. Tension means the past that you have not lived really but only somehow bypassed; it hangs, it is a hangover, it surrounds you.

Remember one very fundamental thing about life:

"Any experience that has not been lived will hang around you, will persist: "Finish me! Live me! Complete me!" There is an intrinsic quality in every experience that it tends and wants to be finished, completed. Once completed, it evaporates; incomplete, it persists, it tortures you, it haunts you, it attracts your attention. It says, "What are you going to do about me? I am still incomplete – fulfill me!"

"Your whole past hangs around you with nothing completed – because nothing has been lived really, everything somehow bypassed, partially lived, only so-so, in a lukewarm way. There has been no intensity, no passion. You have been moving like a somnambulist, a sleepwalker. So that past hangs, and the future creates fear. And between the past and the future is crushed your present, the only reality.

"You will have to relax from the circumference.

The first step in relaxing is the body.

"Remember as many times as possible to look in the body, whether you are carrying some tension in the body somewhere – at the neck, in the head, in the legs. Relax it consciously. Just go to that part of the body, and persuade that part, say to it lovingly "Relax!"

"And you will be surprised that if you approach any part of your body, it listens, it follows you – it is your body! With closed eyes, go inside the body from the toe to the head searching for any place where there is a tension. And then talk to that part as you talk to a friend; let there be a dialogue between you and your body. Tell it to relax, and tell it, "There is nothing to fear. Don't be afraid. I am here to take care – you can relax." Slowly slowly, you will learn the knack of it. Then the body becomes relaxed.

Then take another step, a little deeper; tell the mind to relax.

"And if the body listens, mind also listens, but you cannot start with the mind – you have to start from the beginning. You cannot start from the middle. Many people start with the mind and they fail; they fail because they start from a wrong place. Everything should be done in the right order.

"If you become capable of relaxing the body voluntarily, then you will be able to help your mind relax voluntarily. Mind is a more complex phenomenon. Once you have become confident that the body listens to you, you will have a new trust in yourself. Now even the mind can listen to you. It will take a little longer with the mind, but it happens.

"When the mind is relaxed, then start relaxing your heart, the world of your feelings, emotions – which is even more complex, more subtle. But now you will be moving with trust, with great trust in yourself. Now you will know it is possible. If it is possible with the body and possible with the mind, it is possible with the heart too. And then only, when you have gone through these three steps, can you take the fourth. Now you can go to the innermost core of your being, which is beyond body, mind, heart: the very center of your existence. And you will be able to relax it too.

"And that relaxation certainly brings the greatest joy possible, the ultimate in ecstasy, acceptance. You will be full of bliss and rejoicing. Your life will have the quality of dance to it.

The whole of existence is dancing, except man.

"The whole of existence is in a very relaxed movement; movement there is, certainly, but it is utterly relaxed. Trees are growing and birds are chirping and rivers are flowing, stars are moving: everything is going in a very relaxed way. No hurry, no haste, no worry, and no waste. Except man. Man has fallen a victim of his mind.

"Man can rise above gods and fall below animals. Man has a great spectrum. From the lowest to the highest, man is a ladder.

Start from the body, and then go, slowly slowly, deeper. And don't start with anything else unless you have first solved the primary. If your body is tense, don't start with the mind. Wait. Work on the body. And just small things are of immense help.

"You walk at a certain pace; that has become habitual, automatic. Now try to walk slowly. Buddha used to say to his disciples, "Walk very slowly, and take each step very consciously." If you take each step very consciously, you are bound to walk slowly. If you are running, hurrying, you will forget to remember. Hence Buddha walks very slowly.

"Just try walking very slowly, and you will be surprised – a new quality of awareness starts happening in the body. Eat slowly, and you will be surprised – there is great relaxation. Do everything slowly...just to change the old pattern, just to come out of old habits.

"First the body has to become utterly relaxed, like a small child, then only start with the mind. Move scientifically: first the simplest, then the complex, then the more complex. And then only can you relax at the ultimate core.

"You ask me, "Will you say something more about relaxation? I am aware of a tension deep in the core of me and suspect that I have probably never been totally relaxed."

"That is the situation of every human being. It is good that you are aware – millions are unaware of it. You are blessed that you are aware, because if you are aware then something can be done. If you are not aware, then nothing is possible. Awareness is the beginning of transformation.

"And you say, "When you said the other day that to relax is one of the most complex phenomena possible, I glimpsed a rich tapestry in which the threads of relaxation and let-go were deeply interwoven with trust, and then love came into it, and acceptance, going with the flow, union and ecstasy...."

"Yes, relaxation is one of the most complex phenomena – very rich, multidimensional. All these things are part of it: let-go, trust, surrender, love, acceptance, going with the flow, union with existence, egolessness, ecstasy. All these are part of it, and all these start happening if you learn the ways of relaxation.

Your so-called religions have made you very tense.

"Because they have created guilt in you. My effort here is to help you get rid of all guilt and all fear. I would like to tell you: there is no hell and no heaven. So don't be afraid of hell and don't be greedy for heaven. All that exists is this moment. You can make this moment a hell or a heaven – that certainly is possible – but there is no heaven or hell somewhere else. Hell is when you are all tense, and heaven is when you are all relaxed. Total relaxation is paradise."

OSHO, Please talk about tension and relaxation. When I am alert, there is a subtle tension which I need to maintain this wakefulness. It winds me up like a spring and then I feel horrible. How can I stay awake without all this tension? How to find stillness, though busy?

I will just tell a small anecdote.

One day a man from a small village in the mountains sees a tourist driving his car backwards up a narrow road towards the top of the mountain. The man stops him and says, "Why are you driving backwards?"

The tourist replies, "They told me that there is no room to turn a car around on top of the mountain."

The man says, "I have lived here all my life. I know there is enough space to turn around."

Half an hour later, he sees the tourist driving down again, backwards. He stops the car and says, "What are you doing now?"

The tourist replies, "You were right. There was enough room to turn around."

Whatever I have said is simple: Start being aware with day-to-day, routine actions, and while you are doing your routine actions, remain relaxed. There is no need to be tense. When you are washing the floor, what is the need to be tense? Or when you are cooking the food, what is the need to be tense?

THERE IS NOT a single thing in life which requires your tension. It is just your unawareness and your impatience.

I have not found anything -- and I have lived in all kinds of ways, with all kinds of people. And I have always been puzzled: why are they tense?

It seems tension has nothing to do with anything outside you, it has something to do within you. Outside you always find an excuse only because it looks so idiotic to be tense without any reason. Just to rationalize, you find some reason outside yourself to explain why you are tense.

But tension is not outside you, it is in your wrong style of life. You are living in competition -- that will create tension. You are living in continuous comparison -- that will create tension. You are always thinking either of the past or of the future, and missing the present which is the only reality -- that will create tension.

IT IS A QUESTION of simple understanding; there is no need of any competition with anybody. You are yourself, and as you are, you are perfectly good.

Accept yourself.

This is the way existence wants you to be. Some trees are taller; some trees are smaller. But the smaller trees are not tense -- neither are the taller trees full of ego. Existence needs variety. Somebody is stronger than you; somebody is more intelligent than you -- but in something, you also must be more talented than anybody else.

Just find your own talent. Nature never sends any single individual without some unique gift. Just a little search... perhaps you can play on the flute better than the president of the country can be a president -- you are a better flautist than he is a president.

There is no question of any comparison. Comparison leads people astray. Competition keeps them continuously tense, and because their life is empty, they never live in the moment. All they do is to think of the past, which is no more, or project in the future, which is not yet.

This whole thing drives people almost abnormal -- insane. Otherwise there is no need: no animal goes mad, no tree needs any psychoanalysis. The whole existence is living in constant celebration, except man. He is sitting aloof, tense, worried.

A SMALL LIFE, and you are losing it and every day death is coming closer. That creates even more angst -- "Death is coming closer and I have not even started living." Most people realize only when they die that they were alive -- but then it is too late.

Just live the moment.

And whatever qualities and whatever talents you have, use them to the fullest.

ONE OF THE MYSTICS in India, Kabir, was a weaver. He had thousands of followers and still he continued to weave clothes. Even kings were his followers.

The king of Varanasi asked him, "Master, it doesn't look good, it makes us feel embarrassed. We can take care of you. There is no need for you to weave clothes and every week on market day, go into the market to sell your clothes. Just think of us: people laugh at us."

Kabir said, "I can understand your problem but I have only one talent and that is to weave beautiful clothes. If I stop doing it, who will do it? And God comes in different faces, in different bodies, to purchase clothes every week in the marketplace."

He used to address every customer, "Lord, be very careful of the cloth. I have been weaving it, not just like any other weaver -- my songs are in it and my soul is in it. I have poured my whole being in it. Be careful, use it with tenderness and love and remember: Kabir has woven it especially for you, Lord."

And it was not something that he was addressing to anybody in particular -- any customer! This was his contribution. He used to say to his disciples, "What else can I do? I am doing my best: I can weave, I can sing, I can dance -- and I am immensely contented."

WHATEVER YOU ARE doing, if there is contentment and a feeling that this whole existence is nothing but the manifestation of godliness, that we are traveling on holy earth, that whomever you are meeting, you are meeting God -- there is no other way; only faces are different, but the inner reality is the same -- all your tensions will disappear. And the energy that is involved in tensions will start becoming your grace, your beauty.

Then life will not be just an ordinary, routine, day-to-day existence, but a dance from cradle to grave.

And existence will be immensely enriched by your grace, by your relaxation, by your silence, by your awareness.

You will not leave the world without contributing something valuable to it. But people are always looking at others, at what others are doing -- somebody is playing the flute and you cannot, and immediately there is misery; somebody is painting and you cannot, and there is misery.

WHATEVER YOU ARE doing, do it with such love, with such care that the smallest thing in the world becomes a piece of art. It will bring great joy to you. And it will create a world without competition, without comparison; it will give dignity to all people; it will restore their pride, which religions have destroyed.

In my whole life, I have never judged any person. If God is happy with him, why should I be worried whether he is a thief or a murderer? Perhaps that is the function existence wants him to do. All that is needed is that he should do it with as much artfulness and as much intelligence as he can gather -- with his totality.

Any act done with totality becomes your prayer.

Question - Why is there so much Frustration in the World?

Osho - Because there is so much expectation. Expect, and there will be frustration. Don't expect, and there will be no frustration. Frustration is a byproduct: the more you expect, the more you create your own frustration. So frustration is not really the problem, it is the result. Expectation is the problem.

Frustration is just a shadow which follows expectation. If you don't expect even for a single moment, if you are in a state of mind where there is no expectation, then it is simple. You ask a question and the answer comes; there is a fulfillment. But if you ask with any expectations you will be frustrated by the answer.

Everything we do, we do with expectations. If I love someone, an expectation enters without my even knowing it. I begin to expect love in return. I have not yet loved, I have not grown into love yet, but the expectation has come and now it will destroy the whole thing. Love creates more frustration than anything else in the world because, with love, you are in a utopia of expectation. You have not even been on the journey yet and already you have begun to think of the return home.

The more you expect love, the more difficult it will be for love to flow back to you. If you expect love from someone the other will feel it as bondage; it will be a duty for him, something which he has to do. And when love is a duty it cannot fulfill anyone because love as a duty is dead.

Love can only be play, not a duty. Love is freedom and duty is bondage, a heavy burden that one has to carry. And when you have to carry something, the beauty of it is lost. The freshness, the poetry, everything is lost, and the other will immediately feel that it is only something dead which has been given. Love with expectation and you have killed love. It is abortive -- your love will be a dead child. Then there will be frustration.

Love as play not as bargain, not because there is something you want to get out of it. Rather, love the other as an end in itself. Thank God that you have loved and forget about whether it is returned or not.

Don't make a bargain out of it and you will never be frustrated; your life will become filled with love. Once love has flowered in its totality there will be bliss, there will be ecstasy.

I use love only as an example. The same law applies to everything. There is so much frustration in the world that it is difficult to find someone who is not frustrated. Even your so-called saints are frustrated: frustrated because of their disciples, frustrated because they begin to have expectations about them that they should do this and not do that; they should be like this and not be like that. Then frustration is bound to come, it has come.

Your so-called workers are all frustrated because they have expectations. Whatever their ideal is, society must conform to it; whatever their utopia is, everyone must follow it. They expect too much. They think that the whole world must be transformed immediately according to their ideals. But the world goes on in its own way, so they are frustrated.

It is very difficult to find a person who is not frustrated. And if you find such a person, know that he is a religious person. It makes no difference what the object, the cause, the source of frustration may be. One can be frustrated because of power, because of prestige, because of wealth. One can be frustrated because of love. One can even be frustrated because of God.

You want God to come to you. You begin to meditate and expectation comes in. I have seen people who meditate for fifteen minutes each day for seven days, and then they come to me and say, "I am meditating and I have still not realized the divine. The whole effort seems to be useless." They have devoted fifteen minutes to meditation for seven days and still God is nowhere to be seen. "I am still no nearer to God, so what should I do now?" Even in the search for the divine we have expectations.

Expectation is the poison. That's why there is frustration; it has to be so. Realize the falsity, the poisonousness of the expecting mind. By and by, if you can become aware of it, the expectations will drop and there will be no frustration.

So don't ask the question, "Why is there so much frustration in the world?" Ask "Why am I so frustrated?" Then the whole dimension changes. When someone wonders why the world is so frustrated, there is again an expectation that the world could be less frustrated. But whether the world is frustrated or not, you will remain frustrated.

The world is frustrated – that is a fact. Then you go and try to find out why you are frustrated. You will find that it is because of your expectations. That is the seed, the root cause. Throw it out!

Don't think about the world, think about yourself. You are the world and if you begin to be different the world begins to be different. A part of it, an intrinsic part, has begun to be different: the world has begun to change.

We are always concerned with changing the world. That is just an escape. I have always felt that people who are concerned with others' changing are really escaping from their own frustrations, their own conflicts, their own anxieties, their own anguish. They are focusing their minds on something else, they are occupying their minds with something else, because they cannot change themselves. It is easier to try to change the world than to change oneself.

Remember to find out the cause of your own frustrations. And the sooner you do so, the better. Situations differ, but the source of frustration is always the same: expectation.
