J. KRISHNAMURTI'S TEACHINGS - RELEVANCE TO MENTAL HEALTH

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The technique of J. Krishnamurti's communication marked by a dyadic style, 'pariprasna', a sense of togetherness, absence of persuasion and authoritativeness could be incorporated into psychotherapeutic sessions. Self-reliance and a genuine feeling of psychological oneness with others and to see things 'as they are' are discussed. The need for desirelessness to avoid conflicts and psychologically dying moment to moment to overcome fears e.g. of death and resolving chronic resentment is explained. A new way of ending sorrow has been pointed out. Krishnamurti's ideas on meditation have been dealt with briefly. Many of these concepts could be assimilated into psychiatric practice and towards promotion of mental health. Krishnamurti's call for a 'total transformation' of instant nature within the individual's psyche to effect a societal change is highlighted. Finally, a brief evaluation of Krishnamurti's contribution has been offered.

Key words: pariprasna, self-reliance, mutation, desirelessness, meditation, sorrow.

INTRODUCTION

The story of mankind, Krishnamurti (1895-1986) says, is one of endless struggles and sufferings. Notwithstanding the advances in science and technology, man's life continues to be one of misery, sorrow and anomic - 'a swim in the ocean of tears' - though not without transient moments of cheer. A tour of J. Krishnamurti's writings is a rewarding exercise to those interested in sane living, since they touch psychologically the very foundational aspects of life. The sayings have a ring of charm, force and authenticity of scriptural 'Mahavakyas'. Several of his postulates could be assimilated into the corpus of theory and practice of mental health sciences as much as they carry preventive, promotive and curative potential. A few of the portions of his writings are discussed below.

TOGETHERNESS AND PARIPRASNA

Krishnamurti conveys his message in a dyadic style even before huge gatherings. "As two friends sitting in the park on a bench in the dipping light; the sun coming through the leaves, the ducks on the canal and the beauty of the earth.... Let us talk it over together as two friends who have lived a long serious life with all its troubles, the troubles of sex, loneliness, despair, despair, depression, anxiety and uncertainty, sense of meaninglessness and at the end of it always death". A feeling of great friendship, affection, relaxation and a sense of sharing, freedom from bias and absence of persuasion permeate this "togetherness". Though Krishnamurti was averse to be looked upon as a Guru and to the gathering of 'disciples' around him, (for they invariably destroyed their gurus), a likeness to the assembly of pupils near a sage and the peace invocation in Upanishads cannot be missed in his talks. Pariprasna consists of intensive questioning to elicit clarification and dispelling of doubts. The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna is characterized by this. In the Gita, the Lord recommends: "pariprasna sevaya" i.e., 'serve them reverentially, question them repeatedly' (Chapter IV, 34). Paramacharya of Kanchi (1991) too recommends this technique to bring out the best from the teachers especially when the latter are not adept in speaking. The Acharya also alludes to the fact that Krishnamurti was employing pariprasna in his discourses.

Krishnamurti is tireless in stating not to follow him and encourages questioning and discussing. There is no authoritative pressure or persuasion. There is a parallel to Krishna’s option to Arjuna; says Krishnamurti: (1989) "Please bear it in mind while I am speaking that you should not accept anything that I say on authority, but rather examine it, analyze it with intelligence and balance. You are bound by your old traditions of teacher and disciple, the idea that teacher gives and the pupil must accept. A true teacher never gives; he explains, he points the way. If a person of little understanding stops and worships at the shrine or a sign post he will remain there for many lives until suffering urges him onward".

Krishnamurti nevertheless recognizes the directing role and not the superiority of the teacher. Nor does he accept the surrendering to the teacher. Krishnamurti’s dialogue is reminiscent of that of Buddha and Socrates. Many aspects of the dialogue could mark psychotherapeutic sessions.
BE A LAMP TO YOURSELF

Krishnamurti is convinced that not one remedy prescribed so far has solved man's problems: external authorities like God, religions, philosophies, ideologies and the revolutions of political, social and economic type, Gurus and the sacred books; nor have the internal guides like one's own beliefs, ideas and images are of any avail. At best they have offered a symptomatic relief. To Krishnamurti, psychoanalysis because of its dissecting nature is paralysis and hypnosis, a self delusion. All these are to be given a coup de grace and one has to become self-dependent and self reliant - "Be a lamp to yourself". "Atma Deepobhava"- Buddha said this nearly two thousand years ago (Diwakar, 1980). All along, men have been living along the mental grooves patterned by others. Such repetitive type of life results in 'False self thereby hiding the True self. To plough a familiar furrow may be easy and hence we incline towards the path of 'preyas', one of pleasantness and comfort avoiding the arduous one of 'sreyas'. Conformity is ennui to Krishnamurti.

To "Be a lamp to yourself" needs a clear and an unconditioned brain. To Krishnamurti the brain in its deconditioned state is the mind. Man's brain is burdened with layers of conditioning through centuries resulting in psychological Assuring. Division, of any kind is an anathema to Krishnamurti. To perceive the wholeness and the syncytial nature of mankind is the summum bonum of his teaching. "What delusion or grief can there be to him who sees everywhere oneness?" proclaims Isa Upanishad (Sarma, 1961).

One has to depend on oneself for matters concerning one's psychological experiences and transformation. To follow the authority of some sources, religious, philosophical, theological and the so-called gurus after all do not furnish a first-hand experience. At best it is second-hand and moreover there is no proof of their validity. It may be an aspect of but not the whole truth. The virtue of self-reliance has been upheld by Emerson in an unexcelled way. "Though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till". To Emerson (1951), 'Imitation is Suicide'. He adds "Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events'.

By following others, man 'carries ruins to ruins'. The Gita indicates that one's own self can elevate him or otherwise; it can be his friend or foe (VI:5). There are two significant events among many in the history of medicine that bear evidence to the fact that uncritical adherence to the authority impedes the progress of science (Nuland, 1989). The dictum was: 'magister dixit': 'the master has said', hence no one can question it.

Andrew Vesalius, the Belgian anatomist dissected the human body and disproved the observations of the Roman physician Galen whose observations on human anatomy were transferred from animals. Galen was not known to have made human dissections. For this 'sin' Vesalius was forced to undertake a penitential journey to the holy land. John Hunter, a Scottish anatomist by self experiments 'proved' that syphilis and gonorrhoea were the same and thus halted the progress of medical science.

"A truth that comes from outside always bears the stamp of uncertainty" remarked the scientist and social philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1970). "We suppress all discussion, all criticism.... we will doom humanity for a long time to the chains of authority confined to the limits of our present imaginations" says Feynman (1989), adding "It is our responsibility as scientists knowing the progress which comes from a satisfactory philosophy of ignorance, the progress which is the fruit of freedom of thought to proclaim the value of this freedom.... and to demand this freedom as our duty to all coming generations".

In a related context of clinical research it has been pointed out that there are two approaches and there is a difference between them: 'It must be because I have evaluated the evidence and found it so' (Anonymous, 1993). To know what others have said may be necessary but to give it the stamp of authority and finality is to abdicate the quality of creativity. At the end of the elaborate teaching, Lord Krishna suggests to Arjuna: "Thus I have imparted the wisdom which is more secret than all other secrets. Reflecting over this whole teaching do as you think fit" (Gita, XVIII, 63).

Deliverers of universal messages like Krishna and Buddha have themselves warned their listeners not to accept their teaching just because it was delivered by them. Krishnamurti often cautions his listeners and never percusses his ideas on to their minds.
PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Krishnamurti persuades us to voyage into our minds to discover for ourselves and thereby understand the root of our problems. Krishnamurti's remedy is a total transformation of the human mind, the cradle of all revolutions. "One has to start near to reach far". (Krishnamurti, 1989). This is contrary to Freud's view that the moment one begins to question the meaning and values of life, he is sick, a view challenged by Victor Frankl and others. The question as to where to start to bring the change, whether from within one's 'psyche' or in society has been a polemical one.

Krishnamurti is firm that nothing short of a total transformation of individual's consciousness can change men's lives. The change is not in the nature of a mere palimpsest. When such a 'mutation' occurs at the individual level, there is a centrifugal spread to the rest of the society. New man should precede new society and not vice versa. Such a metamorphosis of individual psyche touches the consciousness of the rest of the society, since "Your consciousness is not different from that of the world" and "You are the world and the world is you". While the Upanishads speak of metaphysical democracy, it may be seen that Krishnamurti's gospel is one of psychological democracy.

The psychological transformation of the individual is not to be spread over time, but instantaneous and autochthonous. Society, Krishnamurti holds, is the same all along and it is the change in man that alters society. Questioned about his method to change society, Krishnamurti replied, "If there are only five people, who will listen to, who will live, who have their faces turned to eternity, it will be sufficient". This is a reenactment of Buddha's first Sermon to five disciples at Sarnath.

Winnicott, (Philips, 1989) the British psychoanalyst, talks of the change from inner to outer through a transitional bridge which he calls "illusion". Krishnamurti believes that the human mind has reached a stage in its evolution whence it may not be necessary to go further. This seems to be in variance with the anticipation of philosophers like Aurobindo, (Pandit, 1980) and Radhakrishnan (1960). The general view that conflicts are at the root of all troubles is accepted by Krishnamurti. The currency of conflict is the Hamletian tussle between "whether to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" or "to take arms against the sea of troubles and by opposing end them". Freedom from conflicts or their reduction is desired by all. Of diverse nature, they gush out of the cleavings in psychological 'wholeness'. To overcome conflicts, the "me" or "I", which is an illusional creation of our thinking is to be eliminated. In this way, the distinction between the observer and the observed disappears. "The observer is the observed" says Krishnamurti. The observed is not a thing in the field of the observer. Similarly there is no division between the thinker and the thought, the experiencer and the experienced, the watcher and the watched, the seeker and the sought.

There is support for these concepts from modern subatomic physics. With the cessation of duality there is an end to the conflict and restoration of an inner unity. Such a disappearance of distinction is necessary to overcome fears, jealousy and phobias. Consciousness which is nothing but its contents is to be deflated of all the beliefs, ideas, ideologies, memories and thoughts. Once the consciousness is thus vacated what remains is a great emptiness, which is not a vacuum or an anatomical dead space but a "plenum" - a space charged with powerful energy - a "stilled mind", a "great silence". The moment of understanding that the observer is the observed and of the stilling of the mind is the moment of emergence of intelligence (chit), truth (satyam) and awakening (jagrata). There is a great beauty (soundarya), bliss (ananda), knowledge (jnana), compassion (daya) and a sense of timeless-ness. The thought which is the product of memory and of time stops and one gets a glimpse of actual "what we are" and not what we were or what we should be. Aurobindo's "pure and virgin moment" and Maslow's "peak experiences" fit in here with Krishnamurti's ideas.

It is at this level of awakening that one can function in a conflict-free state. Krishnamurti believes that "one moment of full awareness, full conscious understanding, brings about the real lasting peace; not a thing, which is static, but that peace which is continually in movement, unlimited.... Understanding leads to ethical dynamism"; anandalatari and soundaryalatari, waves of bliss and beauty, according to Vedants. "Understanding" as against knowing is the key word for Krishnamurti.

DESIRELESSNESS

Krishnamurti is in agreement with others over the deleterious effects of desires that are generally instinctual and inevitable. Discarding the earlier techniques of taming the desire, namely to restrict, to
Thus the Beyond, the Timeless, Beauty and Intelligence can be reached from within one's own mind or by 'looking' out at the external world.

Meditation and discovery of truth need withdrawal from the world for some time at least. Thereafter meditation can proceed in any place unhindered. There are many methods to reach the inner state of bliss, truth, ecstasy or peace. Whatever be the methods, the goal is the same. The Vedas have declared: "Ekam Satya Vipra Bahuda Vadanti". Krishnamurti talks about what meditation consists of rather than the methods. To follow the prescribed procedures as in the Gita or the gurus may not be required. The essence of it all is to stop the thought process from operating. 'Where the thought is there, meditation is not'.

A meditating mind is capable of compassion, love and experiencing beauty. Though the terms 'Atman' or 'Brahman' do not figure in Krishnamurti's teachings the Advaitic concept 'aham brahmasmi' i.e., 'the unmanifest is in me', does not go unnoticed. Such an experience of beauty is possible when one's perception is tuned properly: a 'look' at the sunrise, sunset, a river, a mountain, a flower or a picture. One looks only at the beauty without being marred by the names and forms. There is a merging of oneself with these beauties. While not excusing human responsibility in destroying the beauty of nature, Krishnamurti never failed to perceive it with his poetic mind. Henry Moore, the British sculptor for example could 'see' beauty even in a drop of paint spilled on the floor. It needs a special frame of mind to see things in such a way.

DYING TO THE PAST

Krishnamurti's discussion on the topic of death has a refreshing quality. He does not talk about the physical death which is the extinction of the biological organism nor of life after death which belongs to the great 'unknown'. "The known is like a barge on the ocean of unknown". Fear is the only thing we know about death. "The psychological struggles, memories, pleasures and pains - all that come to an end, that is actually what one is afraid of, and not of what lies beyond death.

One is never afraid of the unknown: one is afraid of the known all coming to an end". To overcome this fear, Krishnamurti suggests "detachment, psychologically every day from our experiences and approach the next day with a fresh, clear and innocent mind".
Detachment, to Krishnamurti, is not indifference or callousness. Nor is it apathy or withdrawal or a morbid introversion. Contrarily, it is full of energy. "Tyena Tyaktena, Bhunjitha" says the Isa Upanishad (Sarma, 1961). A mind that is being hurt has to die to that hurt every day so that it arrives the next morning unspotted, without any scar. "That is the way to live" says Krishnamurti.

An old mind, however experienced, is never innocent. When one reincarnates each day, life acquires a different meaning altogether. To such a mind, old age has a totally different meaning. To such an innocent mind, there can be no fear of facing the death, the great unknown. "No man is said to have lived until he is dead", goes an old saying.

This dying to one’s past is to be practiced by oneself and also advised by the therapist during sessions with patients. It is well recognized that anger in response to injustice suffered early in one’s life as a reaction to unhealthy parental attitudes, their lack of approbation and failure to instill self-esteem and above all a lack of love to the child - all these form a locus of deep seated ‘anger’ and chronic resentment predisposing to the later psychiatric symptoms of depression, phobias, hostility and disturbed interpersonal relationships, among other disorders. The person has to die to these angers and hurts to achieve positive mental health. With such a mind one would even allow the noise of the barking dog to pass through him without being perturbed.

**SORROW**

Krishnamurti talks about grief and sorrow in an unorthodox way different from the prevailing schools. Sigmund Freud talks about its sublimation. Anthony Storr (1981) recommends a retreat to solitude during depression and bereavement which may prove creative. To seek a substitute for the lost object is another method. A psychological burial of the dead alone resolves grief and completes the act of mourning, according to yet others.

Krishnamurti on the other hand sees a great beauty in sorrow. Sorrow is not any one individual’s: "One’s sorrow is the sorrow of the rest of mankind". Sorrow, whether it is in the high or the low is the same. Krishnamurti says that sorrow must be ‘observed’ and allowed to blossom out like a flower, offering no resistance or modification or replacement. Like a flower the sorrow blossoms, withers and dies. The ‘Me’ and the ‘I’ do not participate in the process; "with the ending of the sorrow, there is new and fresh beginning." Such an ‘observation’ is akin to attaining Atma Vidya. Have not Upanishads declared "Tarati Sokam Atmavit"?

**EVALUATION**

Krishnamurti does not teach anything new. This is the author’s hypothesis wherein Krishnamurti’s contribution is not disregarded. For example, Buddha’s First Truth was the world was filled with sorrow, which he attributed to desires (Trishna). Taittiriya Upanishad states that highest happiness is achieved through ‘akamahata’ (desirelessness) (Sarma, 1961). Krishnamurti (1989) himself says "There is nothing new under the sun. Everything has been thought out, every manner of expression has been given to thought, every point of view has been shown. What has been said will always be said and therefore there can never by anything new from ordinary point of view....But to a man who desires to test anything, any idea for himself, everything becomes new. If there is a desire to get beyond the mere illusions of words, beyond the expressions of thought, beyond all philosophies, and all sacred books, then, in that experiment, everything becomes new, clear, vital".

It is this dying to the past and looking at the same thing as new, that instills freshness. He helps to break the barrier between man and truth. By insisting on attention, observation self-reliance and to discard authority and with a promise of ‘making man free’, Krishnamurti almost declared the ‘independence of man’ from sterile distractions. These are the hallmark of a scientific approach.

Will and Ariel Durant (1968) declared: "No one man, however brilliant or well-informed, can come in one lifetime to such a fullness of understanding as to safely judge and dismiss the customs or institutions of his society; for these are the wisdom of generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history". Nietzsche, on the other hand warned "Not only the wisdom of centuries - also their madness breaketh out in us. Dangerous is it to be an heir". (Thomas & Thomas, 1960).

Krishnamurti (claimed to have experienced the Truth and credited with earlier incarnation) challenges the Durantian judgement and tries to proves Nietzsche right. Did he succeed? After more than sixty years of his tireless and sincere teaching, the question remains unanswered. Yet, like Buddha, in the words of Barth (Nehru, 1982), Krishnamurti was "the finished model of calm and sweet majesty,"
infinite tenderness for all that breathes and compassion for all that suffers, of perfect moral freedom and exemption from every prejudice”.

CONCLUSION

The technique of communication marked by a ‘dyadic’ style, ‘pariprasna’, ‘a sense of togetherness’, absence of persuasion and authoritativeness could be incorporated into psychotherapeutic sessions. ‘Self-reliance’ and a genuine feeling of psychological oneness with others and to see things ‘as they are’ are discussed. The need for ‘desirelessness’ to avoid conflicts and ‘psychologically’ dying moment to moment to overcome fears, e.g. of death and resolving chronic resentment is explained. A new way of ending sorrow has been pointed out. Krishnamurti’s ideas on meditation have been dealt with briefly. Many of these concepts could be assimilated into psychiatric practice and towards promotion of mental health. Krishnamurti’s call for a “total transformation” of instant nature within the individual’s psyche to effect a societal change is highlighted. Finally, a brief evaluation of Krishnamurti’s contribution has been offered.

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