

When was the last time you communicated properly with another person?

I mean, really communicated. We may live in the communication age yet instantaneous understanding between two people is extremely rare. We seem to relate to each other, as husband and wife, as boyfriend and girlfriend, as two friends or in a group, not in communion with one another but largely through transaction, mutual usage and convenience. We each have our own personal concerns and projections, sourced from deep-rooted unresolved issues which act as a filter. We think we are meeting each other, conversing and engaging, but through these filters what is usually happening is we are conversing only with ourselves.

Most of us have relationship with images of each other. We listen to one another through a screen of pre-formulations, opinions and personal prejudices. We present images of ourselves to the world through these screens of resistance, formed out of desire and fear. Labels help to solidify this screen: a communist, say, or a socialist or a free market man; a Hindu, a Buddhist, Jew or Christian.... Or - perhaps somewhat more relevant here in the 21st century - an atheist, an environmentalist, a sceptic, a rationalist, a humanist. Perhaps, if you have specialised in a philosophical / psychological school of thought, you define yourself as a certain therapist or psychoanalyst. Each of these schools, these 'ism's, has its own technical terms. Unless we spend our lives studying them all, we'll never be able to understand one another. Every school, dogma and structure defends its own corner with its own specialised vocabulary and from that corner it engages in argument to bring others on board and ascertain truth. An astute observer can see that that technical jargon is not going to help us, neither will technique or dialectical discussion. Terminology and theory are more often than not a cover for our own confusion; you and I quoting somebody else, repeating their ideas, their thoughts, aligning ourselves with their views. We become mere spectators reading books, newspapers or listening to speeches on the internet. We don't seem to ever truly participate.

So how can we participate? We can begin by observing our own active thought processes. How do we respond when faced with the propaganda of others? More importantly, how do we commune with what *is*; what it is true and actual in our lives? It is through the veneer of interpretation, either that of our own or of the specialist, that we feel safe and certain about things. All the while inside we are just as frightened and confused as we have always been. This is no need for theory; the evidence is there, just look at the world.

There is a world crisis of consciousness. We can begin by communicating.

Seeking a Sense of Security

Across the world, people are fighting for their own little corner of the earth, fighting to feel some sense of security. We suffer both individually and collectively. We feel physical insecurity because psychologically we are insecure. And so we fight one another, there is division and conflict - either physically or in a psychological game that we may play and act out. Through this suffering, we don't seem to ask the right questions. Can we really feel secure without understanding attachment, and the true nature of our psychological conditioning?

When we are insecure we ask questions motivated by the search for comfort and safety. We form ideologies and belief systems - any structure or theory that claims to be able to show us the way. Dogmas may indeed be going out of fashion but there are always new fads, new teachers coming through or if that is not our thing, new political leaders and movements. Is an outward structure going to help us if inside we are still confused? To be aware that one is confused - following an 'ism', a particular teacher, idealising sensual values or perhaps caught up in the process of accumulation in what is today a lifeless and bland consumerist monoculture - to see the futility of this and the habits in which one is caught is surely the beginning of wisdom. If we don't see our confusion it will overtake us, dominating every aspect of our lives: the way we work, the way we play, the way we bring children into the world. Life becomes a struggle and if we are struggling all the time, as most of us are, it is not possible to be passively aware, to see with clarity, act in right conduct and, in our investigations, ask the correct questions.

Asking the Right Questions

Why do we ask questions about things? What are our motivations? Are we clear that our question is indeed the correct question - one that leads to genuine learning, to understanding? What is important is not necessarily the response to a question or the solution to a problem. What is important is how we approach a problem and why we ask questions. You see, most of us are so eager to solve problems that we forget how to examine a problem for ourselves. We become reliant on others, looking to authority figures for answers. If we do not know how to approach a problem correctly then the problem will remain. Our lives become filled with problems. When one is willing to look into the deeper layers of oneself, with a genuine interest to know oneself completely, what one discovers is that the very nature of a problem is revealed in the question or questions we ask. Our questions reveal everything. It is because we are confused and asking incorrect questions that the world is full of 'ism's - political, religious, psychological and philosophical.

Human history has worked its way through just about every religious or philosophical school of thought there is and we still do not change, not inwardly. Outwardly the world is changing, technologically as well as politically and socially. None of our political leaders, specialists, gurus or philosophical thinkers have solved the problems of humankind, though many have talked about it endlessly. When you observe closely, you'll see that the idealists have been a source of conflict, for the idea becomes more important than the individual. For ideas, people are willing to slaughter each other, make families homeless; for ideas, we accept hierarchical structures and then wonder why some in society are sacrificed economically, politically or militarily by the men in power, those controllers of the system within which we are each complicit. The individual is sacrificed for the sake of the idea, the philosophy or the structure. How can any of this be rooted in clear and intelligent thinking, in anything other than complete and total confusion? Yet this is what is going on out there in the real world. You don't need to be a specialist to see it, just observe. The sorrow of humankind is there to see and no government is ever going to solve it. If the problem is rooted in the power principle, in fear, it makes no sense to look to a power structure to solve it.

When one adheres oneself to a particular line of thinking, it becomes a barrier through which we then listen. That barrier becomes a fuzz, noise. We rarely listen to one another with deep abiding affection, with a receptive versatile mind and open heart. We never research together, exploring something free of our own backgrounds and history. Instead we are listening to our own noise, our own pre-formulations, conditioning and training. We have relationship with ourselves self-projected onto others – like, *I have my view and I wish to convince you of that. If we agree I like you and if we don't I hate you.* We embrace whatever fits with our existing beliefs and lifestyle, avoiding as best we can anything that disturbs our accumulations or threatens our worldview. If we benefit from the current destruction that is taking place, perhaps we have a fancy job or a successful business, there is little incentive to bring radical transformation into our lives and help others out of their chaos. We may rationalise a future sense of contribution to ourselves and say that we will do it when we have the money to affect change¹, but that is just an excuse not to change now, not to understand oneself in relationship to another right now. One has brought in the time element, *Tomorrow I will do it*; which means I am not interested enough right now to understand myself now, to transform myself now. The revolution can only happen now, love only happens now; when there is the interest to see the danger of how we currently live, psychologically as well as physically. Those who say, *Tomorrow I will help* or, *The system will solve it*, these people are the propagators of the current misery, destruction and brutality. We can blame the big wigs or the bankers but it is

¹ notice those companies which start with noble values often end up selling to the big conglomerates

us who are complicit. A person who has walked slowly, passively through the suburbs of a South American, African or Asian city, with people congregating in greater numbers and density, more and more urbanisation, more shanty towns, can see the truth of the sorrow of humanity. But we choose to ignore the real. Instead, Western tourists only go to resorts, to illusions of paradise; they ignore those starving at the gates. They come back from their holidays recharged to carry on with their mischief, actively participating in the current economic political madness.

Being Receptive to Truth

Can there be understanding when the mind is comparing and evaluating according to like or dislike, according to the avoidance of facts? To make Truth a matter of personal opinion, the result of choice, is to turn it into a means of gratification. What you find may be satisfying, pleasing to you, but please do not call it Truth. There is also no such thing as *my truth*. You cannot choose Truth. It is 'what is' irrespective of your choice or preference. Comparison between what this scientist, philosopher or that guru said, according to like or dislike, according to opinion and therefore pleasure, must be dropped if Truth is to be. Yet here we are in the 21st century still listening to each other through barriers, though screens of resistance. It is these screens that deny direct perception.

Wisdom is to have a direct perception of what *is*. When we know what *is*, or what we are (which currently is total and utter confusion), the process of liberation has already begun. What *is* is a moving thing, it has no fixed abode. Truth has to be discovered, it cannot be told by an orator or a writer. It requires participation and a deep interest in the dialogue and discourse as it is happening. Understanding is an immediate process when one is fully attentive to one's own thought processes, when one is able to listen with an eager ear and open mind and to not be held by one's views, prejudices, inclinations, opinions, desires and fears; which together do nothing but dull the mind and become a force of habit. Habit is not intelligence. To not interpret information according to like and dislike, according to theories, conclusions and inclinations is a very difficult thing to do. It requires the utmost intelligence. It is difficult because we are not completely interested in the understanding of ourselves; we are not prepared sit with ourselves attentively, in passive awareness. We are more interested in sex, stimulation and sensation; instant pure joy through gimmicks, rides and games. If we are a little more serious we may say, *Tomorrow I will understand. I will read about it, listen to the various arguments and evaluate which is the strongest.* We never appreciate that true understanding happens now and instantaneously. For that to happen we must be in a receptive interested state of mind.

I would like to suggest this receptive approach, one that invokes instantaneous understanding between people, between you and I; something that has a deeper significance beyond the simple search for labels with which to codify and categorise one another. This is so that when something new is intimated, considered, asserted, put forward in a dialogue, a discourse, it is no longer met through a screen of resistance or translation; condemned or justified according to fancy. If you balk at what is being said either now or later on, please hang on and stay the course. I may indeed be wrong but together we can find out. To understand something together, at the same time, is, I feel, the main problem of human relationship. To see and see clearly one must be free of psychological conflict and contradiction altogether. One must be free of the endless chitter chatter and bondage of the mind. One must be able to put the views of oneself, and those of humanity, aside for a moment so that there is deep stillness and clarity. If a person or a group proposes an 'ism', a structure, a system - religious, philosophical or otherwise - are they not denying the very nature of Truth?

Is Truth the Word, a theory, a dogma, an 'ism'? Is it static or is it something dynamic we can discover together sensitively, hand in hand, walking along the path of discovery? A book of integrity is not about pleasure or my fancy or your fancy, it is about our relationship to Truth. Relationship based upon like or dislike is what we do all the time in our interpersonal relationships, but it is of no use here. A relationship based on sharing, on looking and investigating together is what is required. Then together we are practicing the art of investigation. This means to think together, not about something, but to think (that being to examine, investigate and explore) together at the same level, with the same intensity at the same time without one's conclusions and inclinations; to be free of one's own backyard and then meet each other. When there is such communication, such communion, there is right relationship and therefore love. Then we can go into a great many things.