

## KARMA

J. Krishnamurti, *Commentaries On Living Second series*

"I have come to talk over karma with you. Of course I have certain opinions about it, but I would like to know yours."

Opinion is not truth; we must put aside opinions to find truth. There are innumerable opinions, but truth is not of this or of that group. For the understanding of truth, all ideas, conclusions, opinions, must drop away as the withered leaves fall from a tree.

"I want to find out what karma means to you."

Sir, let us take the journey of discovery together. Merely to repeat the words of another has no deep significance. It is like playing a gramophone record. Repetition or imitation does not bring about freedom. What do you mean by karma?

"It is a Sanskrit word meaning to do, to be, to act, and so on. Karma is action, and action is the outcome of the past. Action cannot be without the conditioning of the background. Through a series of experiences, through conditioning and knowledge, the background of tradition is built up, not only during the present life of the individual and the group, but throughout many incarnations. The constant action and interaction between the background, which is the 'me', and society, life, is karma; and karma binds the mind, the 'me'. What I have done in my past life, or only yesterday, holds and shapes me, giving pain or pleasure in the present. There is group or collective karma, as well as that of the individual. Both the group and the individual are held in the chain of cause and effect. There will be sorrow or joy, punishment or reward, according to what I have done in the past"

You say action is the outcome of the past. Such action is not action at all, but only a reaction, is it not? The conditioning, the background, reacts to stimuli; this reaction is the response of memory, which is not action, but karma. For the present we are not concerned with what action is. Karma is the reaction which arises from certain causes and produces certain results. Karma is this chain of cause and effect. Essentially, the process of time is karma, is it not? As long as there is a past, there must be the present and the future. To-day and to-morrow are the effects of yesterday; yesterday in conjunction with to-day makes to-morrow. Karma, as generally understood, is a process of compensation.

Karma is the process of time, the past moving through the present to the future; this chain is the way of thought. Thought is the result of time, and there can be that which is immeasurable, timeless, only when the process of thought has ceased. Stillness of the mind cannot be induced, it cannot be brought about through any practice or discipline. If the mind is made still, then whatever comes into it is only a self-projection, the response of memory. With the understanding of its conditioning, with the choiceless awareness of its own responses as thought and feeling, tranquillity comes to the mind. This breaking of the chain of karma is not a matter of time; for through time, the timeless is not.

Karma must be understood as a total process, not merely as something of the past. The past is time, which is also the present and the future. Time is memory, the word, the idea. When the word, the name, the association, the experience, is not, then only is the mind still, not merely in the upper layers, but completely, integrally.