


**FROM NO SELF TO NEW SELF IN THE LIGHT OF J KRISHNAMURTI**
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**Abstract:**

*In this paper, we bring out the notion of self in J Krishnamurti's philosophy. He believes that there is no metaphysical self. He talks about complete action where the self does not exist in the action, only action is done without the self. Furthermore, he also believes that human beings are engaged agents in society who are constantly engaged in action in the society. The question arises, whom is the one doing the action? Is he/she not the person or entity which we can call as Self? This paper focuses on the concept of no-self and the new self in the philosophy of J Krishnamurti.*

**Keywords:** *Consciousness; choiceless awareness; identity; Memory; Metaphysical self; Substantial Self*

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In the philosophy of J Krishnamurti, memory is the ground on which he establishes his theory of old mind and the new mind. Memory is also the ground for construction of the self. Memory is where the observed data gets stored. From memory the structure of mind and structure of self is created. It is memory which stores recorded reaction or behaviour of the self. This J Krishnamurti call as old mind. Memory superimposes the object of observation, and portrays it to mind, hence as a result, the object is never observed as it is. The object of observation is observed through the filters of the memory which fills or colour the sense data. Hence, J Krishnamurti, mind colours or covers the outside world with memory and then observes it as something. It is called as impure observation where the sense data comes with preconceived notions or belief of the old mind. It happens, according to J Krishnamurti, due to the conditioning of the mind, the conditioning is also done by the memory itself. The conditioning is responsible for impure observation which generates the construct of the self who then acts in the society. Constructed self is in conflicts in everyday life because of its conditioning. The conditioning creates conflictful life for the individual. The cause of this is memory and old structure of mind which creates human being as machine which runs on the program set by the old mind. There is birth of the new mind when one, psychologically, gets rid of the memory and old structure of mind. The new mind, according to J Krishnamurti, is free from the memory. New mind does not create construct of the 'I' or self. Process of observation in new mind and the old mind is different. In the old mind, the observer and the observation exist. The observer is created is created by the thought. The observer is not substantial or metaphysical for J Krishnamurti, it is psychological. In the new mind the observer does not exist, only observation happens. The process of observation also is different in old mind and new mind. In the old mind the process of observation is influenced by the memory and the old structure of the mind and the resultant observation is impure. In the old mind the process of observation is free from the influences. It is free from



the memory and its old structure. The 'I' or self as construct, psychologically, ends and there is birth of the new mind.

J Krishnamurti asks us to free the mind from the animal, meaning, animals are born with a program of survival and procreation, they act according to that throughout their life. Human being has the ability to go one step ahead and not act according to the program like animals, which means freeing oneself from things like greed, envy, fear, and ambition—all of the small things we do that are at the level of the animal instinct. He asks, is it possible to live completely and completely as a human being, not in fragments but so completely that all of your energy is there?

According to him, a teacher or any other kind of guide cannot bring this freedom from outside the mind. It can only come from within through self-effort and self-reliance. Freedom necessitates individual independence. One cannot be taught or told how to do it; as a human, one has to enter it for oneself. He asserts that the individual is the only one who is independent and not dependent on the environment. It is not the politicians or theorists who can bring about a different world; rather, it is only the individual who possesses this mind and is capable of possessing it because each of these political instruments makes people's minds reliant on their ideologies, which in turn shapes or corrupts minds. There is freedom in the individual's understanding of the entire psychological structure of his or her being and the individual's blossoming is brought about by that freedom. Through this freedom, we get free from the old self and bring about the new Self.

The question may arise then, if the construct of the self goes away, then who is the active agent who is doing the observation? We can ask then who is the person living a life in the society? When closely observed, the self appears to be nothing other than thought itself. It is impossible to distinguish the self from thought if it is the sum of all thoughts. However, this process requires thought because it entails steps that must be remembered and used as needed. The self that contemplates making use of a thought is the thought itself. As a result, a method cannot continue to be a method if no one uses it, because this is the old self which is responsible for bringing the observer in the observation. It results in us looking at the world not as it really is, but rather through our preconceptions. This is where the duality of the observer as old self and the object occurs. This duality is a friction point of the life which creates conflict. Life is full of conflicts. The conflict according to J Krishnamurti is a friction between two images. In other words, the movement between 'what is' and 'what should be' is conflict. This 'what should be' is a construct or the ideal of the mind which assumes or decides or expects how world or the things should appear, because of this, mind is taken away from the reality which he calls it as 'what is'. Mind does not observe this 'what is' as it is, rather it is projected by the old self as something else and it fails observe the reality, that is, 'what is,' consequently, the conflict arises; but there is also the possibility of conflict-less life where the self as a construct does not exist, only the observation of 'what is' happens which does not create friction in the process of observation. Conflict stops when there is birth of a new self which is not constructed by old mind and which is not the product of the memory. The new self is engaged self who is active in the life which does not create conflicts. This mental state, according to J



Krishnamurti, is called as pure observation, in pure observation duality between the self as the observer and the object as the observed ceases to exist.

J Krishnamurti says that the world's problem is that people have given too much importance to thinking, however, for him, thought has very little bearing on life as a whole. By remaining within the field of thought, thought is attempting to articulate or construct the mind as a different dimension. According to him, thought cannot comprehend the mind's dimension in this manner. Because thought operates solely through memory and experience, it has its own little field. According to him, thought cannot search the mind's dimension which does not come under the field of thought. J Krishnamurti equates thought with time. He says "Thought is time and time is thought." The distance between the thinker and the thought about an object is created by thought. With its psychological distinctions of the past, the present, and the future, this division in the mind is the only way that time exists. The identity or "I" is created by thought, which is mistaken for the entirety of one's self. The mind is conditioned by thought and time, according to J Krishnamurti. Insight is impossible while this conditioning persists. One may occasionally have insight into something, but not pure insight, which refers to understanding everything. That insight is the perception of completeness and not of time-thought. For him, insight and pure observation of one's mind is same. An insight is needed by the mind. Insight signifies a 'seeing into.' According to J Krishnamurti, the word seeing, insight into, or comprehension of the entirety, or vastness of something, can only be achieved when thought and time are stopped. This is what he calls pure observation where the new conception of the self emerges. In this pure observation where the observer and the object cease to exist. Only the observation takes place. This pure observation is a complete act according to J Krishnamurti. The self here is not the metaphysical self but a self that is involved in everyday life without being aware of itself as a self. The observer in a state of non-duality, is a lived experience of observing choicelessly, there is no duality of observer and observation.

For J Krishnamurti, consciousness is made up of things we remember like fears, pleasures, sorrow, dogmas, and rituals. J Krishnamurti calls this as the field of consciousness. He says that "not. If it is within the field of our consciousness, isn't it still part of thought? The content of our consciousness is put together by thought. Beliefs, gods, superstitions, traditions, fear, are all part of thought."

He asks if it is possible to observe the totality of consciousness. It is completely observable, even in the unconscious. He says that everything that is revealed in the conscious is revealed when we observe without the observer. According to J Krishnamurti, the observer is the past, the motive, and says things like, "I must not do this." Additionally, the observer provides an intention for their observation. Because the observer likes to divide it and say, "I am different from my consciousness," the observer cannot ever see the entirety of that consciousness that is observing, according to J Krishnamurti. As a result, true observation can only take place when there is no observer to give direction. This is his radical notion on the concept of observation.

J Krishnamurti talks about the art of observation. He says that the most important thing in life is to observe. Not to instruct the observation on how to observe, but rather to acquire the skill of observing without



scepticism or motivation—merely to observe. That way, there is no distortion and we can see things clearly as they are; however, if we make an abstraction of something into an idea and then observe through that idea, there is a distortion. In this context J Krishnamurti emphasises about choiceless awareness. Choices in the process of awareness corrupts and misleads the mind. As per J Krishnamurti, there must be awareness, without the desire to choose between opposites, that is to say, there should not be choice of mind about what it should be aware of and about what it should not be aware of. If the mind makes a decision without being aware of its own demands, pursuits, hopes, and fears, there will undoubtedly be additional limitations and frustration. This creates circumstances that call for more choices, so the mind keeps getting stuck in its own self-created circle of limitation. This happens due to mind's own structure which is called as conditioning.

Through his talks and writings, J Krishnamurti wanted people to know that they are living a conflicted life and that there is a better way to live; a conflict that has impact on life, can be resolved. People are unaware that their lives are rife with conflict. People who are aware of the conflict in their lives have come to terms with the fact that they must live with it and accept that it is a conflict. Those individuals have begun to adjust to the conflict, because they cannot get rid of it. However, J Krishnamurti maintains that conflict can be resolved when one discovers the truth of structure of mind, the conflict can be resolved. As a result, J Krishnamurti is encouraging people to become involved in discovering the truth of one's own structure of mind, which will provide solutions to all of life's issues.

In order to live conflict less life, J Krishnamurti instructs us to observe thought with attention as it occurs. One needs to look. When we investigate what J Krishnamurti means when he refers to 'looking' or 'observation,' we discover that such observation must first eliminate the construct of the observer and then be complete. The first requirement is necessary for the second. J Krishnamurti says that the observer is a thought construction made of feelings, beliefs, memories, and other things. Thus, truth cannot be revealed as long as the observer remains. It is obscured or obscured by thought's images. The observer is the central point of thought. The observer can see through images as long as the conditioned old self *qua* observer remains, according to J Krishnamurti. Truth cannot be discovered if a person sees things through mental images. Therefore, true observation cannot take place if the observer is present. The object as imagined withers away when the observer disappears, leaving only the object as perceived. Attention, which calls for complete awareness, is possible in such a state.

An image does not exist in the process of attention, it can help us see things the way they really are, as opposed to how we usually see them, because it reveals our thoughts. This entire attentional process is a learning process. We can break free from using these thoughts that prevent us from seeing by simply observing our thoughts. When one pays attention, one becomes aware of all that is going on in the mind including reactions and responses which one does not identify with. Furthermore, according to J Krishnamurti, perception with attention is referred to as observation. A lack of attention cannot lead to awareness, and vice versa. One is fully aware when they pay attention. J Krishnamurti defines awareness as choiceless awareness. He refers to

it as choiceless because the seeing here is devoid of choice, criticism, or even acceptance or rejection. Because choice is selective, one should not choose to see. Observation would remain incomplete because choosing would select only what the mind wants to see.

J Krishnamurti is against acceptance and rejection of observed things. For both acceptance and rejection, like choice, makes observation incomplete. Rejection is incomplete by direct dismissal and acceptance is partial as it implies accepting one alternative which comes about by rejecting the other. There is no complete picture as a whole in the process of observation. The question of choices implies the presence of motive. As motive involves desire to arrive somewhere, motive makes the mind choose those which serve its end; it excludes all that which does not serve its purpose and leaves out those which do not lead to its fulfilment. In other words, it is motive which lies at the root of making observation fragmentary by choice. So, the secret to choiceless awareness lies in doing away with motive. All motives, according to J Krishnamurti, basically lead to one motive – the motive of improving the ‘I’ or the self, but J Krishnamurti says that there is no psychological becoming. This realization is necessary to do away with motive. If ‘I’ comes to see that it cannot become, it will stop trying to become and thus motive to better itself will disappear. Becoming implies time and J Krishnamurti denies existence to psychological time in pure observation. Psychological time for J Krishnamurti is nothing else but the ‘me,’ the totality of knowledge. Time is the illusion that comes with continuity of ‘me’ or the ‘I.’ The experiences are retained in the mind in the form of memory which gives one the feeling that one has continued from those experiences till now. From this continuity of the past till present one has the vision of continuing in the future as well through intending. This is time that extends from the past to present to future; but there is in reality no continuity except in thought. Continuity is a false feeling. Experiencing gets over; what remains in the mind is thought about it. In other words, it is thought because of which one feels one continues. If thought disappears there cannot be the ‘I’ as well. And if there is no ‘I,’ there is also no time. ‘Thought’, ‘I’, ‘time’ all are connected by the same logic of being psychologically constructed. Memory facilitates the past thought to the present and thereby makes the past continue in the present. If memories were not there, thought would not have continued and if thought does not continue, there will be no ‘I’ and there will be no time.

Therefore, J Krishnamurti asks one to be free of memories. He of course does not ask one to get rid of all kinds of memories. Memories as essential for leading life are to be retained. J Krishnamurti calls these as factual memories. He has not given any name to the other kind of memories he wants to deny; but from what he says he seems to be denying the memories that we store with values. We have feelings when we are going through experiencing and when we retain in memory the event, together with it we retain the accompanying feeling. It is this memory that comes with accompanying feeling, which J Krishnamurti asks one to give up. It is this which lies at the origin of self. J Krishnamurti further says that this realization that memories lie at the heart of making self has to be realized instantly or not at all. It is not possible that one gradually comes to see how one comes to construct oneself. The realization that one is made up of thoughts cannot be acquired through



time but comes instantly. And when the realization hits, the 'I' just disappears. If the 'I' has to disappear, mind has to see how the value laden memory gives continuity to the self or in fact creates the self. The knowledge of the things as such does not create the self.

In J Krishnamurti's philosophy, the end of a thought and the beginning of a complete action are closely linked. He claims that man cannot observe the situation because his thoughts prevent him from doing so. Additionally, action cannot be complete if there is no pure observation. Observation is itself a complete action for J Krishnamurti, he says, "In seeing a danger as a mere idea there is conflict between the idea and action and that conflict takes away your energy. It is only when you see the conditioning and the danger of it immediately, like a house on fire, that you act. So, seeing is acting." For J Krishnamurti, when one sees, in that seeing if there is no thought process or memory interfering in the form of responses then one acts directly, spontaneously. Spontaneously action happens immediately when one sees it with pure observation. Thought is the root cause of all human problems because it prevents people from seeing things as they really are. This is what J Krishnamurti means by a new self. For J Krishnamurti, the new self is a metaphysically empty self but socially active self that is engaged in living in a more meaningful way in society.

Our actions arise from a false vantage point when we are unable to perceive the actual. As a result, conflict ensues; it happens due the movement between 'what is' and 'what ought to be.' For J Krishnamurti, thoughts include feelings, memories, knowledge, beliefs, and anything else the mind has stored from the past. Being from the past, thought prevents people from seeing things as they are in the present when applied at the time of inquiry. However, the issue lies in understanding how to 'not use' thought. J Krishnamurti opposes offering a strategy for 'not-using' thought. Although J Krishnamurti has not clearly presented the arguments, there are two ways to comprehend his arguments against method. They are practical and logical. J Krishnamurti's denial of the existence of a self is the foundation of the logical argument. When closely observed, the self appears to be nothing other than thought itself.

According to J Krishnamurti, there is in fact no self. The so-called self is a creation of thought from thought itself, a fiction. He acknowledges that there are physically distinct selves, but he denies that there are psychologically distinct selves. However, the self, as understood psychologically, exists as a collection of thoughts. Now, the self cannot be distinguished from thought if it is the sum of all thoughts. The self cannot use thought because it is not distinct from thought. However, method requires thought because it entails steps that must be remembered and used as needed. The self that contemplates making use of a thought is the thought itself. Again, J Krishnamurti claims that, practically speaking, the very purpose for which method is used in the search for truth is defeated. Method implies that the mind has already established its objectives. It is used to discover the truth. However, the ideal that the mind has selected is a fiction. What does it mean to search for the truth if you already know what you are looking for? The mind cannot conjure up the truth. It ceases to be truth when it is made by thought. The goal or end is just a thought's projection, not a real thing. One loses focus on seeing things as they are when they focus on the ideal goal. Problems arise when the mind rejects the



present in favour of the ideal, the unattainable. Man, already finds himself in conflict when he rejects the reality of things. When the real is rejected and the ideal is pursued, conflict ensues. Instead of bringing one closer to the truth, having a method actually hinders one's progress.

J Krishnamurti has enquired into the problem as to why man allows the formation of the psychological self which is a product of the content of consciousness. The thought, memory, experience, beliefs, emotional attachments, the self, structure of mind, the conditioning are all content of consciousness. The present human attitude can be explained by 'conditioning'. The mind that has seen the menace of thought will never register any thought while the mind that has not yet learnt what it is to have thought always runs the risk of acquiring it. When mind is conscious of the dangers of acquiring of thought and its role in structuring the mind, it never registers the thought and that is what J Krishnamurti calls as freedom. Freedom can be attained because we are conscious creatures. For the one who does not have consciousness and does not come to understand the meaning of consciousness, freedom has no meaning. This is why J Krishnamurti talks about learning about oneself, not just knowing about oneself. There is a difference between learning and knowing. In this context, J Krishnamurti holds the view that, understanding is not an intellectual process. Accumulating knowledge about yourself and learning about yourself are two different things, for knowledge that you accumulate about yourself, it is always of the past and a mind that is burdened with the past is an anxious and tense mind. He says that "Learning about yourself is not like learning a language or a technology. This is collecting information about the past and knowledge is always in the past, and as most of us live in the past and are satisfied with the past, knowledge becomes extraordinarily important to us. That is why we worship the erudite, the clever, the cunning. But if you are learning all the time, learning every minute, learning by watching and listening, learning by seeing and doing, then you will find that learning is a constant movement without the past."

J Krishnamurti talks about intelligence as intentionless passion, compassion, love which is the nature of new self. Intelligence as generally understood as smartness or cunningness of mind is not the intelligence according to J Krishnamurti. He has given different meaning to intelligence. He says, "The first one has to discover one has to come upon this passion which is neither lust nor has any motive. Is there such passion or mere sensation etc? There is such passion when there is an end to sorrow, when there is love and compassion and when there is compassion, not for this or that but compassion then that compassion has its own supreme intelligence, that's neither of time neither does it belong to any theorists and its technologies to nobody. It is that intelligence, it is not personal or universal all the world's around it" The new self is intelligent and has human virtues of love and compassion which helps in understanding life and its conflict. Conflict which are created by conditioned mind are comprehended by the intelligence of new mind. A pure observation with intelligence coupled with love and compassion gives insight into the conflicts of life. Consequently, conflicts get resolved permanently and it is the intelligence of the new self which makes it possible to live life without conflict and dilemmas. To learn requires intelligence and intelligence enquires into the root cause of problems and conflicts. It does not use ready - made solutions of the past, but learns to perceive and observe in a totally different way. One sees



and listens with awareness rather than allowing sense faculties to causally form impressions and beliefs in our mind in a passive manner. One actively and attentively observes, resulting in a transformative way of living and acting in the social world.

### Conclusion

For J Krishnamurti, we are instinctively moral human beings. For J Krishnamurti, in a new mind we see and we act simultaneously. There is no veil of thinking while in action. To act is to observe. Pure observation is a complete action for J Krishnamurti. Hence for J Krishnamurti's new self, the self is instinctively a moral self. J Krishnamurti holds the view that the substantial or metaphysical identity which is given to the self is an erroneous construction of the mind. In fact, such metaphysical self, does not exist in actuality or reality as such but J Krishnamurti has given different grounds for his view. J Krishnamurti denies the existence of metaphysical or substantial self but on different grounds. He holds the view that the self is a construct of thought. Thought is created by the memory in psychological time. Thought implies the thinker, the thinker is the image created by the thought as a self, which has its own set of behaviours, patterns of thought, prejudices, recorded reaction, pattern of how to observe the world through memory. This constructed self observes the inner and out world through the veil of experience, belief, and knowledge. As a result, impure observation happens which invites conflicts in life. He also holds the view that there is also possibility of pure observation which can be done by overcoming the old mind by the method (though he rejects any kind of method, he advocates choiceless awareness is the key) of choiceless awareness in self-introspection. Then there will be pure observation where the observer, the self does not exist. For him, it can be interpreted that the self is not the substantial entity present in the mind rather an active agent who is engaged actively in the society and living a conflict less life.

The old Self is assumed to be a substantial Self with conflict (J Krishnamurti) and the new self (Krishnamurti) is a non-substantial Self that overcomes the problem of conflict of dualism (J Krishnamurti) , engaging in a practical and meaningful manner in the empirical world. The new self, in J Krishnamurti arises from an active and sensitive human being based on passion. For J Krishnamurti it is compassion. J Krishnamurti's notion of love and passion is different. In J Krishnamurti's view, human action, when mind is free, are based on intelligence, sensitivity, compassion, and love, such action is a complete action as a result of pure observation. Pure observation where there is no observer or sense of the metaphysical self, is an intelligent action. This is the new self in J Krishnamurti which has intelligence. As a result, the old self then transforms into new self *qua* agentless agent.

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