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KRISHNAMURTI  
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## Note on the special issue

The *Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools* has been in existence since 1997. It began with the intention of providing a forum for the teachers of Krishnamurti schools all over the world to share their experiences and insights in education. In the twenty-four volumes published thus far it has also had occasional contributions from other educationists, philosophers, anthropologists and artistes.

This twenty-fifth volume is a special issue that commemorates 125 years of Krishnamurti. Making a departure from our customary compilation of articles written by teachers and educators, largely from the Krishnamurti schools, for this issue we have invited contributions from several eminent individuals. Representing a wide range of fields of endeavour, all of them have either met Krishnamurti, been deeply touched by his teachings, worked in the Foundations set up by him, or are otherwise conversant with his teachings. By their very nature, these pieces reflect the impact of Krishnamurti's teachings on the authors' lives as well as more generally on humanity. The ambit of this volume thus reaches well beyond the concerns of educating young people in schools, to the broader sense of an 'education for humankind', which was the *raison d'être* of Krishnamurti's life and mission.

### EDITORIAL TEAM

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# What Do You Mean by Karma?

J KRISHNAMURTI

Karma implies, does it not, cause and effect—  
K action based on cause, producing a certain effect; action born out of conditioning, producing further results. So karma implies cause and effect. And are cause and effect static, are cause and effect ever fixed? Does not effect become cause also? So there is no fixed cause or fixed effect. Today is a result of yesterday, is it not? Today is the outcome of yesterday, chronologically as well as psychologically; and today is the cause of tomorrow. So cause is effect, and effect becomes cause—it is one continuous movement; there is no fixed cause or fixed effect. If there were a fixed cause and a fixed effect, there would be specialization; and is not specialization death? Any species that specializes obviously comes to an end.

The greatness of man is that he cannot specialize. He may specialize technically, but in structure he cannot specialize. An acorn seed is specialized—it cannot be anything but what it is. But the human being does not end completely. There is the possibility of constant renewal; he is not limited by specialization. As long as we regard the cause, the background, the conditioning, as unrelated to the effect, there must be conflict between thought and the background. So the problem is much more

complex than whether to believe in reincarnation or not, because the question is how to act, not whether you believe in reincarnation or in karma. That is absolutely irrelevant.

From *The Book of Life*, 21 November

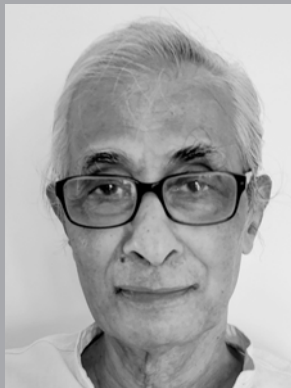




“The inner always  
overcomes the  
outer”\*

Editorial Essay

OR RAO



By manipulating effects we hope to bring about order and peace; but, unfortunately, it is not as simple as all that. Life is a total process, the inner as well as the outer; the outer definitely affects the inner, but the inner invariably overcomes the outer. What you are, you bring about outwardly. The outer and the inner cannot be separated and kept in watertight compartments, for they are constantly interacting upon each other; but the inner craving, the hidden pursuits and motives, are always more powerful.

—Krishnamurti, Ch 11, *Commentaries on Living*, Series 1

All those who are familiar with Krishnamurti's teachings will know that one of his central concerns was the right education of children. In pursuance of this aim he established schools in India, England and the US. He also wrote, talked and discussed extensively with teachers, students and trustees of the Foundations he started, explaining his vision of right education. After he passed away, as part of the effort to keep his educational legacy alive, this *Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools* was started in 1997 as an annual publication. You are now reading its twenty-fifth volume. The contributors to the *Journal* have been mostly teachers of the Krishnamurti schools, as well as educationists and philosophers who are interested in Krishnamurti's vision of education.

While the education of children was certainly one of K's main concerns, the import and impact of his teachings were of course much wider. During the course of his 'ministry' of more than five decades, he gave hundreds of well-attended public talks spread over four continents and had dialogues with numerous persons from diverse backgrounds. Among his varied audiences there were many whose vision of life was fundamentally changed through having been in his presence or having knowing his teaching.

This year, 2020, being the 125th anniversary year of his birth, it was thought fitting that a special issue of the *Journal* be brought out

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\*Krishnamurti, Ch 36, *The Whole Movement of Life is Learning*

and that contributions could be invited from persons whose lives and outlook had been deeply affected by K and his teachings. And that is how we have here a collection of eighteen articles from persons who are eminent in different fields of endeavour and have in their own unique ways engaged deeply with the teachings. Looking at the wide range of fields from which our eighteen authors come—education, academic philosophy, traditional religious teachings, management of organisations, concern with environment awareness and protection and so on—we may be led to ask whether there is any common theme with which they are all concerned.

On a close look at their writings, we find that there is such a common theme: all of them have seen that “the inner always overcomes the outer” and that “what you are within, you bring about outwardly.” This strand appears to run implicitly or explicitly through all the articles. Though the fields of endeavour of each of the authors in the outer world differ, their inner vision is the same: they all share the common insight that if we wish to bring about order in the outer world, it is of much greater and fundamental importance to establish order in the world of our inner experience, rather than simply aim to find solutions to ‘fix’ the problems in the outer world.

*The essential difference between the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ is that while the truths we arrive at about the outer world are conceptual, explanatory and representational, those discovered in the inner world are existential and transformational. Hence, inner transformation is primary while outer changes are secondary. It is with this inner existential transformation that all our authors, each in his or her own way, is concerned, as will be clear in going through the articles.*

Keeping this in mind, we may look at the authors from the point of view of the backgrounds from which they come, without intending to tightly categorise or classify them. It is worth mentioning that we have among our authors those who come from the background of a traditional spiritual teaching—Chidananda Swami,

“The inner always overcomes the outer”

Samdhong Rinpoche, Ravi Ravindra; there are those affected by the sheer presence of Krishnamurti—Friedrich Grohe, Gisèle Balleys; then there are those who write from the point of view of education—Satish Kumar, Tim Boyd and Meenakshi Thapan; there are some who bring in the rigour of academic philosophy—Hillary Rodriguez, Thomas Metzinger, Raymond Martin. Mark Edwards reflects a deep concern for humanity’s relationship with nature and the environment; there are some who have been concerned with nurturing and running organisations—Ananthapadmanabhan and Kiran Khalap. And finally there are the ‘unclassifiables’—David Skitt, Donal Creedon, Javier Gomez Rodrigues and Steve Smith.

In responding to the primordial questions, “who or what am I in this universe; what is my destiny and what is the ultimate destiny of humankind, and indeed of the world itself?”, the mind is drawn in two different directions—the outer and the inner. During the last three centuries, the most intellectually active part of the human spirit has explored deeply and travelled far in the outer dimension of human experience. This exploration that took place primarily in the West had two great periods of creativity, in the seventeenth and in the early twentieth century. The scientific revolution, and technologies based on Newtonian mechanics and electro-magnetism, totally transformed the lives of people in ways unimaginable in pre-modern times. It has electrified millions of homes and made running water available in them. It has produced all our modern means of transport, led to the invention of a great number of labour-saving devices and cures for diseases previously thought of as incurable. Life expectancy of human beings has been greatly prolonged.

The revolutionary science of quantum mechanics has enabled the production of computers, cell phones, laser technology, the internet and much else. These are the devices that actually govern our everyday globalized world. From the humblest plumber who depends on his cell phone to get a call for a job to be done, to the

best trained biologist or engineer or physician, modelling a system on a powerful computer, all rely on the applications of quantum theories. The banking system, international trade and investments, travel, the so-called 'social media', all depend on the virtual space of the internet. The economies of nations and the global economy of trade and commerce would collapse if ever the trillions of bytes in e-space were to vanish. We cannot now envisage or imagine what human life and society would be like if this were to happen. The 'outer' that K refers to in the passage cited above consists of all this and more.

In short, both classical Newtonian theory and quantum theory have created an Aladdin's lamp which has delivered undreamt of power into the hands of human beings in the outer world. But sadly, this power has proved to be a double-edged sword. It has 'conquered' the natural world in order to deliver many benefits, but it has also enabled humankind to assault itself (as well as nature) with death, destruction and suffering on an unprecedented scale.

During the two World Wars, between 100 to 200 million people died or were maimed or displaced through the use of machine guns and battle tanks, poison gas, the carpet bombing of civilians, ethnic cleansing, all topped by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the post-World war period, the violence has continued in ideologically inspired wars, local national wars, civil wars and in recent years in religion-based terrorism within and against nations. There is also the endemic problem of racism which erupts into overt violence from time to time. We now live in a world armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons (and also of course conventional weapons). Modern technology has enabled all this. While it has enabled millions to live comfortably and some to live in great luxury, many more millions who support these comfortable and luxurious lives themselves live in great poverty and often lead migratory lives moving from city to city far from home in search of work.

“The inner always overcomes the outer”

All this relates to the violence that has been endemic in human society. But simultaneous to this form of violence is the violence done to the natural environment by our technology-driven forms of living. No enumeration is needed of the ways in which the environment is being rapidly degraded and destroyed. This has increasingly become part of the common consciousness of thinking people all over the world in recent decades.

What, we may ask, is the fundamental cause of this environmental crisis? Here we recall that at the very beginning of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, Rene Descartes, one of its pioneers, had said that he sought knowledge so that mankind could benefit by becoming “masters and possessors of Nature”. Francis Bacon, another philosopher of the seventeenth century roundly declared “Knowledge is Power”. He wished “to put Nature on the rack” to make her yield her secrets. The three master craftsmen who made Nature yield her secrets were Descartes himself (a philosopher and mathematician, originator of our now ubiquitous Cartesian coordinate system), who said, “I have described this earth and indeed the whole visible universe as if it were a machine”; Galileo who said that the “book of Nature is written in the language of mathematics” and Isaac Newton who said, “It seems probable to me that God, in the beginning, formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, moveable particles...”. This is the threefold grid of Mechanism, Mathematics and Materialism, through which we continue to view the outer world. Children are taught in schools all over the world, tacitly or overtly, that the physical world is a machine made of inert matter functioning on mathematical principles. This is basically a vision of a Universe drained of any meaning or purpose. As Jacques Monod, the Nobel laureate in Biology, put it, “The universe is not pregnant with life nor the biosphere with man . . . . Man at last knows that he is alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he emerged only by chance. His destiny is nowhere spelled out, nor is his duty.” As

Stephen Smith says in his article, it is clear that the modern world has lost its moral compass.

Wolfgang Pauli, one of the founders of quantum mechanics who was also a spiritual thinker said of the quest for power, “I believe that this proud will to dominate nature does in fact underlie modern science, and ... the anxious question presents itself to us whether this power, our Western power over nature, is evil.” In other words, Pauli was pointing out that the problem lies in the human mind itself and its approach towards Nature, in the inner and not in the outer dimension of the mind.

Most thinking persons across the world would agree that there is now an unprecedented crisis in human affairs. Many would also say that the resolution of the crisis has to be sought in more intelligent use of natural resources, better international laws and controls to prevent wars between nations, better legislation to prevent racial and religious conflicts in societies and so on.

Enter Krishnamurti. For him, the crisis is a more fundamental one. It is a crisis in human consciousness itself (as Pauli the scientist too suggested) and unless it is resolved at that level, there will be no end to the conflict among human beings and to the destruction of Nature in which all life forms live, move and have their being: “the inner always overcomes the outer.” As Donal Creedon puts it dramatically and beautifully in his article, “Before the axe has cut the tree down, it is already destroyed by the eye.” Hence the seeing eye and the ‘seer’ have to change for any fundamental change to take place. The authors in this volume describe how seeing this truth has affected their outlooks and changed their ways of living and working.

**Swami Chidananda** comes from a background of long study of the Advaitic (non-dualistic) teachings of Vedanta, which teach how the ego process obscures the seeing of ‘things as they are’, (the ‘what is’ in Krishnamurti’s language), and how the obscuration

“The inner always overcomes the outer”

can be removed by the process of negation (*Neti-Neti*). Chidanada sees in K’s teachings this process of negation expressed in profound and timeless insights couched in contemporary terms. At the core of K’s teachings is the concern with dissolving the separative self which is also the concern of the teachings of *Advaita*.

For **Samdhong Rinpoche**, who comes from a lineage of respected Tibetan Rinpoches the significance of K’s teachings lies in his mission to awaken the humane in our intelligence, which is buried beneath many layers of conditioning. Our task is to uncover these layers of conditioning and discover our inner nature which can be done by paying close attention to what K was saying. He finds that there is an essential similarity between the teachings of K and of the Buddha, in that they both stand for free enquiry into the nature of the self without holding on to any fixed position.

**Ravi Ravindra** in his article refers to the general impression that K was against all traditional religious teachings. However, during many conversations he had with him, it became clear to him that K was not against the essential core of these traditions but was against the betrayal of this core by the official keepers of traditions, who adhered to the words of the tradition but forgot the essence which was beyond words. This article points to many parallels between K’s teachings and those adumbrated in the Upanishads and other non-dualistic traditional teachings.

**Friedrich Grohe** had been strongly drawn to the teachings of K even before he met him; but when the meeting happened, something else also happened. For the first time someone could convey to him “a sense of the sacred—the holiness of life.” He describes how this realisation totally changed the course of his life. He became a vegetarian and gave up whatever interest he had in running the family business. He became a trustee of the Indian and

English K Foundations, and has been totally involved in supporting the Krishnamurti Schools and Centres and in efforts to make K's teachings better known worldwide.

**Gisèle Balleys'** article is a piece of poetic writing. Listening to Krishnamurti's talks in Saanen, Switzerland, proved to be a turning point in her life. For in his presence she became aware, as she puts it "that something completely new was arising in me, something very ancient, something which did not even seem to be related to Krishnamurti but was within me." After this her life changed radically. After six years in the K school at Brockwood in England she was drawn into the work of organising the annual Saanen gatherings. She continues to take the main responsibility for this even after K passed away.

**Satish Kumar**, a former Jain monk and founder of Schumacher College in the UK, finds that modern education has become a matter of training the brain function alone so that the recipient of this training could fit into the market economy, "serving the needs of machines, markets and money." This leaves the other faculties of the child—emotion, moral judgement and bodily health—starved of nourishment. From meeting K and questioning him about his vision of education, he learnt of a 'new pedagogy of freedom', in contrast to the prevailing 'pedagogy of fear' which produces millions of young people who feel "inadequate, incompetent and fearful" in today's world.

**Tim Boyd**, the current International President of the Theosophical Society, too has been involved in the founding of an educational institution—The Adyar Theosophical Academy. In asking the question 'What is education?' and 'How do we educate?', he finds inspiration in K, who "envisioned a world of psychologically free individuals—people capable of responding to life in an effortless

“The inner always overcomes the outer”

manner, beyond the laboured, thought-laden processes of a thoroughly conditioned mind.” He discovers that “true education... [is] a process of unlearning”.

**Meenakshi Thapan**, who as a young student had the opportunity to spend some days in K’s presence, learnt the vital truth that the transcendental sacred dimension does not just lie ‘out there’, but is immanent in the everyday world of our relationships with others and with Nature. The task for us is to live in the light of this vision, expanding the boundaries of the self, outward towards the whole of humanity, and developing a global outlook. She finds that schools and teachers need to develop an ethos which, in spite of the seemingly all-powerful separative pull of the individual self, nurtures the innate goodness of the child and “engenders empathy, compassion and humanism.”

**Hillary Rodrigues**, a professor of Religious Studies, discovered K early in his life. Disenchanted with the inadequacy of science to point to any meaning in life, he serendipitously came across a book by K which spoke to his need for meaning. He found K speaking in clear language to his own condition, pointing to the need for a profound transformation at the centre of one’s being. As a researcher and professor, he now shares through his books, reflections on the teachings from various perspectives and remains committed to deeply exploring K’s teachings.

**Thomas Metzinger**, a cutting-edge philosopher of consciousness, is convinced that K was the greatest mind he has ever met, a conviction that rests on a feeling that K’s ‘presence’ itself ‘conveyed something’ non-verbally. He draws our attention to “the dawning insight that ‘observing without an observer’ might actually be something that already happens all the time.” Metzinger explores the many ways in which we block such pure observation by creating

all kinds of self models which “fragment the ever-present space of the observation-without-an-observer into an individual first person perspective.”

**Raymond Martin**, who has edited the book of talks and writings by K, titled *Reflections on the Self*, sees a similarity between Socrates and Krishnamurti, in that both were questioners of all received wisdom and authority. However, while Socrates’ questioning was by means of ‘critical thinking’, K’s has to do with what Martin calls ‘critical looking’. The difference lies in the fact that in such looking we look beyond the thinking mind into the very way we think, into the content of our consciousness. Martin states that K’s “intention was to engage with people who are passionately interested in understanding themselves and the world in which they live” and in his opinion he “succeeds in this as few others have.”

**Mark Edwards**, listening to K as a young person, was struck by his assertion that there is no such thing as ‘psychological evolution’. An examination of the entire gradualist approach to so-called human ‘progress’ and its consequences shows that the material progress of the Industrial Revolution has not led to any fundamental enrichment of human life. It has on the other hand come at a terrible cost to humanity, evidenced by its “headlong collision with nature” and the “gathering collapse of our life support systems.” A celebrated photographer, Mark has been a single-minded crusader, bringing to attention the outward as well as inward dimensions of this crisis. His involvement with K and with physicist, David Bohm, leads him to affirm that the amelioration of this crisis needs both ‘going upstream’ to observe how thought is working in a fragmented way, as well ‘coming downstream’ to find practical solutions to immediate problems

**Ananthapadmanabhan** (Ananth) took serious heed of K’s contention that “the outer and the inner cannot be separated and kept in

“The inner always overcomes the outer”

watertight compartments, for they are constantly interacting upon each other.” In the ‘outer’ field he has been an ardent activist, having headed several organizations—the Indian branches of Greenpeace and of Amnesty International and Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives. Every work context he has been in has been the ground in which to explore K’s teachings. His special concern has been that of discovering the proper functioning and use of thought and feeling in building and nurturing organizations that seek to change the world.

**Kiran Khalap’s** chance discovery, while still a college student, of a book by K created a storm in his mind. He decided to become a teacher and gave himself up totally to teaching and living with young students at the K school in Varanasi. Life circumstances compelled him to return to his father’s profession as a commercial artist and copy writer. He rose rapidly through the ranks of the advertising world, eventually founding his own brand management company. Kiran recounts his journey, and his deep concern for running an organization on principles he had learnt from Krishnamurti’s teachings: of working together with responsibility and without rigid hierarchical controls.

In **Donal Creedon’s** short poetic piece, the young hero in the old Irish tale has lost sight of “a silver branch of seeing” revealed to him in a dream which will lead him to the source of the living waters. He does not know where or how to look for it, but nevertheless he has somehow to find it. We too do not know how or where to look to find the living waters. We have forgotten the art of right looking and have been looking in a wrong way, the way of looking of Descartes, which looks upon the world as made up of pieces of dead inert matter. The world thus becomes just grist for the gigantic world industrial-economic mill which serves the insatiable greed of the consumer society. No outward actions such

as ecological movements, climate change protests, feminism and so on can save the world from the catastrophe inherent in our very idea of the world. A fundamental change can take place only when we look into ourselves and undertake the solitary journey of self-knowledge, and through that cleanse the doors of our perception and learn to look anew. Then perhaps the divine face of the world will reveal itself to us.

**David Skitt**, as the editor of several volumes of K's talks and dialogues, has engaged with a vast volume of his works. In his article he distils his learnings from the challenges posed by K—the challenge of going beyond the animal survival instinct in the face of life situations; the challenge of going beyond the image-making process in relationships; the challenge of realizing human predicaments as being common to all; and finally, the challenge of seeing through the illusions created by the separative self. In trying to meet these challenges to the best of our abilities, our feelings of alienation in an indifferent universe can perhaps end, so that we start to feel at home in it.

**Javier Rodrigues'** article is a cogent rendition of the major themes in K's teachings, which he sees as an 'education for mankind'. One major theme in the teachings is that 'where there is division there must be conflict'. No amount of environmental manipulation will solve the conflicts caused by our identifications with collectivities, ideologies, traditions and so on, for as K has pointed out, the inner invariably overcomes the outer. This leads to the realization that only the deepening of self-knowledge has the potential to resolve these conflicts. Towards the end of his article he says that K's "grand vision of freedom and wholeness is characterized by the greatest simplicity and immediacy, for it is founded on pure perception". For him, this restores the true meaning of religion, and helps in

“The inner always overcomes the outer”

discovering the inward or spiritual dimension which K called the religious mind.

To **Stephen Smith** it is clear that the modern world had lost its moral compass. The march of Science had resulted in a value-free world which has turned into a value-less and meaningless world. In the history of mankind, we have now reached a moment of existential crisis, a do-or-die moment and it has been Krishnamurti's role to awaken mankind to the dire nature of this crisis. The message of universal compassion of the Buddha and Jesus Christ had elevated mankind to a certain extent but now it is the time to take another existential leap. The courage to take this leap comes when, taught by Krishnamurti, our intelligence awakens and in act of immediate perception we grasp the whole in which the part which includes thought, naturally finds its place. Everything depends on this clarity. No outward action is adequate. With this immediate perception we recover our moral compass and discover the *Dharma*, the moral foundation of the Universe and our *Svadharmas*, our own place and role in it. We can now respond to Krishnamurti's call to “incarnate now!”

At the conclusion of these reflections can we “look at things as they are”, at “what is?” When we do that, we find ourselves staring at the face of the Covid crisis. Do the origins of this crisis lie in ‘the outer’ or in ‘the inner’ or in the interaction of the two? Did the virus jump from an animal species to the human spontaneously, or was the jump caused by a deep inner imbalance between human beings and the rest of the natural world? It seems that these questions cannot be answered with full certainty at the present moment. However, it is clear that action in the ‘outer’ sphere is urgently needed by way of a cure for the disease and for preventing its further spread. While all attention now is focussed on finding the outward cure, the need for looking inward forces itself on our attention. For the

first time in recent history millions of people worldwide have been brought to realize that death is a real and immediate possibility on which we need to meditate. Death can no longer be looked at as something which is the end point of life that can be put off indefinitely by the miracles of modern medicine. Will this realization make us feel deeply the beauty and precariousness of life, so that we pay more attention inwardly, gain a little more clarity of mind and develop a little more charity in our dealings with others?





# Krishnamurti Fascinates Students of Vedānta

SWAMI CHIDANANDA



In the mid-1980s, I was deeply drawn to self-enquiry in the form of the exploration *Who am I?* as found in the literature of Shri Ramana Maharshi. After a few years, however, I felt I was hitting a blank wall where a lot of my intellectual unrest remained unanswered. It was then that the teachings of J Krishnamurti (to be referred to as ‘the teachings’ here onwards) made a significant contribution to my understanding of not only Ramana but also of classical Vedānta (the Upanishads and Shankara’s *advaita* or non-dual interpretation).

## Light on the self

While the Vedānta tradition speaks of the Self, said to be the indestructible essence in everyone, the teachings here are concerned with the movement of the self, of that centre of pride and hurt in us. I could see that this self is indeed the target of the *Who am I?* enquiry. Irrespective of whether something known as the Self (which Paul Brunton calls the ‘Overself’ in his book *The Wisdom of the Overself*) survives the erasure of the self, it is fascinating to note that many of these mystics on the high plateau of spiritual wisdom speak of the ending of the ‘separate I-sense’. What is this separate self after all?

The teachings are a remarkable treasure of innumerable insights into the nature of the self, its genesis, its ways and its structure. I was and am inspired by the teachings for the precious light they throw on the intricacies of the emergence of the self. The part that memories play in the creation of the self, the role of attention in preventing its rise and the place of the pure intelligence within us, are among the shining gems in this treasure chest.

No one can deny that human perception of issues is typically conditioned and hardly anyone sees things as they are. The teachings show with clarity and precision that these conditionings are the breeding ground of the self, following which right action can never rise. The eternal relevance of the teachings lies in the fact

that contemporary challenges of our society as well as those that will come up in future can be handled maturely only if the stakeholders are aware of their conditioned perception of the challenges. In their application to a wide spectrum of problems, the teachings awaken us to see the distortions that beliefs and biases cause in the very understanding of the problems. A professional or an expert, for example, who may be proud of his knowledge of his subject, will wake up in the light of the teachings to notice his inadequacies as a human being. To be human first and then to use his expertise would be the right order of things. Otherwise it would be a case of putting the cart before the horse.

### **Untouched by time**

The teachings will always be a challenge to the best of human intellects. The sages of yore envisioned a truth that was untouched by time and space. The seers of Upanishads looked at *kāla* (time) and *desha* (space) as born of *māyā* (illusion)<sup>1</sup>. K's teachings supply an ingenious approach to the discovery of the truth by asking us to stay with *what is*. In the process, there is no indulgence of thought in the endless visualizations by the self either on the axis of time or on the vast expanse of space.

What fascinates me in the teachings is how they unravel a great science with statements that are at once precise and mind-blowing. This wisdom of seeing the falsity of the self has its bearing on all the facets of conflict and struggle in human life. No wonder, therefore, that the teachings touch upon countless existential issues while maintaining the undercurrent of self-enquiry. Insecurity or loneliness, ambition or self-importance, love or death, the list of topics on which this exploration throws light is endless.

### **Precision**

Look at a statement such as, 'Seeing *what is* transforms it.' It reads like a mathematical equation where a variable is subjected to a

function. We have functions, for example,  $f_1(x) = x + 1$  or  $f_2(x) = x^2 + 2x + 1$ , in each of which the variable  $x$  is transformed. *What is* is the variable here and ‘seeing’ is the function. The function of seeing perhaps is the subtlest of all functions possible in this universe.

Our attention is thus drawn to the mightiest tool for inner change. Understanding, and not doing something, is the special power inherent in every one of us that can usher in radical change. While the whole world is generally obsessed with right action, right speech and right thinking, here comes a fresh breeze of insight that highlights the place of ‘right seeing.’ Thought, word and deed are the nuts and bolts of an industry running into billions of dollars, claiming to rehabilitate humanity. Countless motivational workshops promise us guidance on right ways to act, the best ways to communicate and healthy ways to think. ‘Right seeing’ as the source of right thought, word and deed is mostly neither understood nor appreciated.

‘Right seeing’ (*samyag-darshana* in Sanskrit) takes pride of place in the advanced teachings of Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta. The latter, with which this author is familiar, considers ‘right seeing’ as the culmination of a prolonged study of scriptures (Upanishads). The flavour, therefore, is of arriving at a certain maturity where one sees rightly and is blessed with the insight that the self is false. The flavour of K’s teachings, in contrast, is one of starting with enquiry and questioning one’s own current seeing. Saying that “the first step is the last step”, Krishnaji leaves no room for either engagement with conceptual frameworks or entertaining ideas of gradual arrival.

“The unwise do not arrive at peace either by effort or by staying idle. The wise, on the other hand, are free of all conflict by mere *right seeing*”, says the sage Asthāvakra in Asthāvakra Geetā<sup>2</sup>.

## **Time is bondage**

“Tell me that, knowing which everything is known”, is how a major Upanishad<sup>3</sup> begins. (The verbal root *to know* is not to be

taken here as implying accumulative knowledge but pointing at an insight or a special perception). The query, therefore, envisages a certain understanding where, at one go, all sense of incompleteness vanishes. In K's teachings we find a tremendous thrust on this liberating understanding, to the exclusion of multiple suggestions as to how we may arrive at such an understanding. The teachings seem to abhor any proposal of philosophical constructs that claim to prepare one's mind for the liberating insight.

Time (which means psychological time, of course) is looked at as a major trap where one's mind gets caught. It then amounts to opening a can of worms leading to varieties of exploitation. Time comes in the way of 'right seeing.' Time sustains the countless notions of the self, all of which stand under one banner, namely illusion. Time and (psychological) thought go hand in hand. Therefore, time is bondage.

It is indeed fascinating to note that the way out of bondage is 'here and now.' The old habit of our mind is to visualize emancipation at a distant place and at a distant point of time. We fancy going to a Himalayan cave and getting some extraordinary experience, which then completely transforms us. The teachings, which have nothing against the Himalayas, clarify that this thought of 'there and then' needs to be questioned. What is more, there is first the presumption that I am bound, I am not 'all right,' I need to change or I should live differently. Behind and beneath all these thoughts, there is the self, which itself is put together by thought.

### **Awareness, the light within us**

'Living in attention' is yet another way to appreciate the main aspects of the teachings. "Awareness is the ultimate reality", says an Upanishad<sup>4</sup>. It is fascinating to see the possibility that all the structures of thought collapse like a house of cards in the light of awareness. The flame of attention burns away all psychological baggage without leaving behind any residue. The self is the residue

of experiences in which there is no direct, unbiased perception. This self comes to an end when we stay in awareness, marked by unconditioned observation.

The world brought to us by thought is of questionable reality. That presented before us by the senses is of dubious credentials. Our joys and sorrows, our celebration and mourning, take place on the platform of our psychological conditioning. Enquiry, therefore, is of utmost relevance. Questioning our moments of elation and depression can lead to uncovering a lot of assumptions and presumptions, bias and prejudice. Insight and intelligence operate in us to show how not only are others not as we thought them, we ourselves are not what we took ourselves to be. Discovery of the true nature of the world around and reassessment of our own true nature go hand in hand. The outer world surely has a totally different meaning to us when the falsity of the self dawns upon us.

Pure awareness, free of the self, seems to be hinted at by an Upanishadic line—that (truth) is devoid of breath (*prāna*) and mind<sup>5</sup>. Breath and mind here stand for the numerous components that put together the self. Many factors make us carry an idea of who we are. Our looks, our bank balance, our image in society, our academic qualifications, the positions we have held, all contribute to the collection of memories which build the self. In gentle awareness, and not through analysis by thought, there is the seeing that exposes the self. All our notions of being good or bad, high or low, are then seen to be invalid. Awareness remains as a bright flame and individuality takes a backseat.

### **Negation, the amazing process**

“Not this, not this”, is the celebrated statement<sup>6</sup> of Rishi Yājñavalkya, who points out that the ultimate truth can never be described or defined; one knows it by negating everything that it is not. Words and thoughts fail in their attempt to grasp the truth. Speech and

mind are very powerful tools to define, describe or supply an outline of billions of things, gross or subtle. They are, however, more an entrapment than any help, with one exception. When words are used to show their own limitation, they act differently. In such a case, they are not at all attempting to take 'truth' in their ambit; on the contrary, they are surrendering to the infinite (*ananta*), with the complete submission that the truth is beyond their ken.

'Let go' is often said to be the essence of the high ground of maturity. We hold on to things, stick to relationships and stay attached to positions. On an inner plane, it is an image of the self to which we tenaciously cling, though that image constantly changes with or without our knowledge. It is easy to say, 'let go.' This renunciation can truly take place when there is the insight that what we are holding on to is false. Once more it is understanding or awareness that makes the leap happen. We do not leap; but the leap takes place in the light of the understanding. Questioning leads to that to which we are clinging, being exposed as being hollow or irrelevant. Negation automatically occurs.

## **Being and becoming**

'Staying free of the ego' is regarded as the way to freedom and not any *karma* (action) or *upāsana* (worship, conscious meditation). 'Staying' (*nisthā*) is 'being' while any action—gross or subtle, physical or mental—is aimed at 'becoming'. The least intention of *becoming something or somebody* betrays the presence of ego, the separate self. People with less knowledge of the Upanishadic lore believe it is merely grand concepts, rosy speculations and certain metaphysical suggestions that are intellectually appealing. What is more, the Vedānta is regarded as an endless study of books (scriptures). When they engage in advanced study, they take cognizance of Vedānta's emphasis on 'staying as awareness, free of the self' (*ātma-nisthā*)<sup>7</sup>. Such students of the tradition get pleasantly

surprised when they find the teachings laying stress on ‘doing nothing’ and ‘quiet observation.’

The ego processes fall like a house of cards when there is silent watching. We do not long to become anything any more, even though in the phenomenal world becoming somebody, occupying a chair, holding some position are a part of the running show. Wanting to become—inwardly—is of course different from getting a designation outwardly. We are nobody or nothing when the self is not raising its head. That does not come in the way of functionality.

## Conclusion

Responsible students or teachers of Vedānta, if they study the teachings, abstain from indulging, for mere pleasure, in the exercise of comparison between their holy books and the teachings. They rather take a look at both the disciplines with a discerning eye. They find their understanding of life, more than of any book, becomes deeper by a careful study of either the Upanishads or the teachings. This article too is written in that spirit and has no intention to prove any point. May we understand this marvellous puzzle, filled with much joy and much suffering, called human life, exactly as it is. In seeing things as they are, we can perhaps come upon peace.

## Endnotes

- 1 *māyā-kalpita-desha-kāla...* in Dakshināmurti Stotra of Shankara.
- 2 *aprayatnād prayatnād vā...*, Asthāvakra Geetā, 18.34
- 3 *kasmin vijñāte...* Mundaka Upanishad, 1.1.3
- 4 *prajñānam brahma*, Aitareya Upanishad, 3.1.1
- 5 *aprāno hi amanāh shubhrah*, Mundaka Upanishad, 2.1.2
- 6 *sa esha neti neti* ātmā, Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, 4.2.4
- 7 *mochayet sakalān bandhān ātma-nisthā eva kevalam*, Ramana Geetā, ch 1.





# My Association with Krishnamurti and the Impact of His Teachings\*

INTERVIEW WITH SAMDHONG RINPOCHE



**Question:** Rinpocheji, when and how did you first hear about Krishnamurti and his teaching? When did you first meet him in person?

**Rinpoche:** I think this is a great opportunity to recall how I have been fortunate enough to see Krishnaji and have a long association with him. It was in 1971 that I was appointed as Principal of the Central Institute of the Tibetan Studies in Sarnath near Varanasi. At that time the Head of the Department of Buddhist Studies of the Sanskrit University in Varanasi was a close friend of mine, the late Professor Jagannath Upadhyay. Also, in Varanasi at the time, in the Krishnamurti Centre in Rajghat, was Achyut Patwardhan, a senior trustee of the Foundation who was also a close friend of mine. Achyutji was reading a Buddhist text—Shantideva’s *Bodhicaryavatara*—with Upadhyay and they wanted to clarify some passages in this text which were not very clear, through the Tibetan version or Tibetan commentary. We met and had several discussions on the text.

Then Achyutji told me, “You must see Krishnaji” and gave me a complete set of the publications—about twenty volumes. Of course, I could not read them all. But I could go through a few chapters of these books and naturally my interest and also curiosity about Krishnaji arose. Then I had the intention to see him. But somehow, I could not meet him in Varanasi. During his stay in Chennai I was invited by the Theosophical Society to conduct the ‘School of Wisdom’ there. Radhaji (Radha Burnier) the librarian of the Theosophical Society’s library fixed an appointment for me with Krishnaji, but on that day he was unwell and I could not meet him.

The next year when he was in Varanasi, Achyutji made an appointment for me with Krishnaji. And also, we had dialogues with other Buddhist scholars. We used to have a small group of

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\*This interview was conducted by Alok Mathur during the KFI trustees’ meeting at Vasant Vihar, Chennai, on 22 September 2019

about nine to ten people and we often had a dialogue with Krishnamurti. Radhaji used to interpret for Upadhyay and some of the Sanskrit pandits who did not understand English. So, we used to discuss quite leisurely with them. That is how we started a connection with Krishnamurti.

And after several years, it was in 1980, my root teacher passed away. I was so shocked that I went through a kind of mental imbalance, some kind of depression. Then again Achyut advised me to see Krishnaji. He was in Varanasi for four to five weeks. I had very personal meetings with him. One to one. He tried to console me and practically healed me from that kind of depression. Since then, not only the teachings, but the person with whom I became quite intimate, helped me with my difficulties and mental problems. The person and the teachings both became very important for me. Whenever he came to Varanasi, I tried to attend all the talks and dialogues. Then he would come to Delhi and invariably he used to give one or two talks at Delhi. I also came to Chennai whenever he had major talks here. Radhaji was also interested to see that I managed to come. So, that is the story of how I became very much attracted to, or in other words, had been blessed or protected by Krishnamurti personally. Although to understand his teachings in depth is more difficult, but to receive his affection and love is more natural.

**Question:** Could you say a little more, Rinpocheji, about how your meetings with Krishnaji, both one to one, as well as the dialogues, have had an impact on you?

**Rinpocheji:** Dialogue has an impact on everyone, whosoever attends the dialogue. His dialogues with the Buddhists scholars were a little different from the usual dialogues. Also, you will find two different kinds of dialogues. One is with the Theravadin Buddhists and the other is with the Sanskrit tradition of Buddhists, to

which we belong. Among the Theravadins, the dialogues with the venerable Walpola Rahula of Sri Lanka—he was a great scholar of Pali and Buddhism—are recorded. You can see even today that he used to relate K with the Pali canon. As soon as K concluded his sentence Walpola Rahula used to laugh and say, “Yes, the Buddha has said the same things 2,500 years ago”, and then he would quote extensively from the Pali canon. So that is one kind of dialogue.

With us, of the Sanskrit Buddhist tradition, we would not quote from the Buddhist canon, nor try to compare the Buddha’s teachings with K’s teachings. For us they go parallel. For us, K’s words give a different kind of understanding about Buddha’s teaching, and in the same way, Buddhist philosophy is very useful and helpful for understanding K more easily or more in depth. We try not to compare, particularly myself and Jagannath Upadhyay. We belonged to that group which is against the system of comparative study in religious and philosophical subjects. Comparative study is feasible or appropriate in the social sciences or material sciences. In the sphere of philosophy and religion or spiritual things, no one can make comparisons. Comparison means putting them into ‘positions’, and trying to find the similarities or dissimilarities. And similarity and dissimilarity both are in the sphere of duality. To multiply duality will not help in the understanding of reality or truth. So, we try to understand both in parallel, side by side . . . how to understand the Buddha’s words and how to understand K’s words.

Of course there are many things similar; but we cannot label them as the same. The Buddha’s words are Buddha’s words, and K’s words are K’s words. Apart from that, K speaks in modern English language and Buddha spoke in ancient Indian languages. So, the nature of language is different, and therefore to draw comparisons will not help in understanding. But what kind of negation the Buddha is making, and what kind of negation K is making, both work

on your mind to reduce or eliminate the egoistic holding, that is the root cause or problem of everything. So, in this way, to study the Buddha and K together is very convenient and also helpful for understanding. And anyone can study these two teachings spontaneously and in parallel, without contradicting or making similarities. To understand them in more depth is possible. That is why many of the Buddhist scholars are very much influenced and have been greatly impacted by K's teachings—for better understanding of the Buddha's teaching, and at the same time to internalize what K is talking about.

**Question:** I would like to go back a little bit and ask you a little more about the way you think K's direct engagement with you, one to one, has personally helped you? You said that he played a role at a difficult time in your life. If you can share a little bit with us, in what way did that happen?

**Rinpocheji:** In the one to one stint, when I was in a depressed mood, there was not much talk. He only held my hand and sat very near to me, and spent in that way more than an hour's time... Then after an hour had passed, we might have spoken a few words to each other. Otherwise, it was just silent sitting together... Just sitting with him (it was repeated two to three times) was a kind of healing effect. So that helped me and thereafter I was able to lead a very normal life.

The great impact on the Buddhist scholars is due to the fact that K does not build up or make any position to hold. He also encouraged people all the time to examine, to enquire, not to find a conclusion or solution. So, the way of communicating or teaching is very similar. Buddha also does not give any position to be defended. His first teaching was to encourage the monks and disciples not to accept his words because they have been said by the Buddha, or due to their devotion or commitment to the Buddha. Nagarjuna praised Buddha for dismantling all kinds of positions.

The Buddha has not put any position and all the positions are negated. Thereby his way of looking at things is at two different levels—at the relative truth level and at the absolute truth level. The Buddha always talked at both levels. Buddha's teachings to ordinary disciples are by and large at the level of relative truth. In relative truth there are many things, some things are to be accepted and some things to be negated. When he goes to the absolute level, then nothing holds on. So, this is Nagarjuna's interpretation and commentary.

The one difference between Buddha and K is that K never comes down to level of the listener or to the level of the relative truth. Whatever he has to say, or argue or enquire, he always completely remains at the level of the absolute truth. Therefore, there is a big difference between Buddha's words and K's words. In Buddha's words, we have to differentiate between two categories. The technical terms are *Netharth* and *Neyarth*. *Netharth* means 'to be accepted literally', whatever he said. The other is *Neyarth*, which means 'to be interpreted in different ways', not to be taken literally.

So, in the Buddhist canon, in Buddha's words, there is no consistency. So many differences, contradictions, you will find in the sutras and *Tripitaka*. So, to make them consistent, you have to differentiate between what is to be taken literally and what is to be interpreted in a different way. But K has absolute consistency all the time. In terms of words there may be some differences or some inconsistency, but what he meant or what he used for these expressions, has consistency, because he always talked at the level of the ultimate truth. So, therefore, although we do not compare these two, we never find any contradiction, that is, a real contradiction. Of course, the usage of words is a different matter. At the level of connotation, the intention or the meaning, there is nothing which is contradictory between the Buddha and K. So that is why we find it useful. Many times, we gain a kind of deeper understanding of

Buddha's words, which we were not able to have only through Buddhist teaching or commentary. But listening to Krishnaji's arguments, his logic, or his way of inquiry, when we come back to the Buddhist canon, we gain much more realization and much more understanding.

**Question:** Rinpocheji, I have two slightly connected questions which I am formulating right now because you have already answered fully the question I had in mind. But one thing we are all aware of is that Krishnaji had a very high regard for the Buddha. In fact, there are various situations where he has even said, "The Buddha was here...did you feel it?" So my question is, what do you think was K's relationship with the Buddha, and secondly, do you think K himself had some kind of a special mission in the world?

**Rinpocheji:** I think this is a very difficult question. I don't know how to deal with the question. Just apparently, K used to negate or criticize many teachers, or many traditions; he used to just negate almost every tradition as another cause of conditioning for the human mind, so on and so forth. But we never heard at any time that he used such harsh words towards Buddha or the Buddhists teachings. But he had a kind of impression that the Buddhist philosophy prevailing today has a lot of new inclusions, like the commentators. So, therefore, many times he used to ask the Buddhist scholars and he asked me too several times! "Can you tell me, what exactly the Buddha has said?" At one time, we joked about this. At that time the audience was quite a bit larger than just the Buddhist scholars. It was in Varanasi and I was sitting near him. He was just shaking me and he asked me, "Can you tell me what the Buddha has said exactly?" So, then I said, "I don't know". He said, "Why?" I said, "I was not there when Buddha was teaching" (laughs). He laughed and everybody laughed. I still remember that. So, he tried

to find out what exactly were the Buddha's words, which are not interpolated by later commentators. But of course, no Buddhist scholars will be able to tell that. We consider that the commentators, particularly Nagarjuna and Ashvaghosha, the two great commentators, have commented on Buddha's words based on exactly what the Buddha has meant. That is our belief.

Apart from that, the idea that the Buddha passed through the Rajghat premises when he came from Bodhgaya to Sarnath appealed to him, and K used to tell this story a number of times. He used to say that, "It was said that the Buddha was here." At Rajghat *us paar* (on the other side of the Varuna river), there is a group of mango trees and it was considered that the Buddha rested there on his way to Sarnath. So, I don't say that he was a believer. But he used to take an interest in this kind of tale. So, it is our inference that he had a kind of soft corner, a kind of liking, towards the Buddha and Buddhist teachings.

We could say that K's mission was to awaken the humane in our intelligence, which is buried under so many layers of conditioning. And this conditioning is the root cause of all the miseries, pains and sufferings of all living beings. To relieve such suffering, we have to wake up or to enquire oneself as to how to get free from the conditionings of various things. Whatever we have conceived as the way to de-conditioning ourselves has become further cause of conditioning ourselves—the spirituality, the dharma, the religion, the traditions, the culture, the education. Everything becomes a cause of conditioning. So, he wanted to tell people, the humanity—you are using everything in a wrong way; you are converting everything into a cause of conditioning. That is something we are unable to comprehend by ourselves. So, his task or his mission is to remind us of that dichotomy, that contradiction. We are looking to many traditions to find a way to de-condition ourselves, to get freedom from conditioning. But whatever means or methods we are using,

our thought process very easily converts them to another cause of conditioning. I think his mission was to warn us about this inherited problem and make us more sensitive to feel this predicament and become aware of this. Thereby we might be able to find our own inner nature, and get out of conditioning. So, his mission was to sensitize humanity to all the things which we are unknowingly or unconsciously converting into the causes of conditioning. We must ourselves see this and thereby we might get some different way to awaken. That was his mission and he was very much successful in this mission.

**Question:** I want to pick up from there, Rinpocheji, on two things you say. One is that unlike the Buddha who spoke both at the absolute level and at the relative truth level, Krishnamurti always spoke at the absolute level. You also said earlier on that his teachings are actually *very difficult to really fully grasp*. He had been broadcasting these in multiple ways throughout his life time and you feel that *he has been in some ways successful*. So, I would like to understand from you, what do you think has been the impact of Krishnamurti's lifetime on human consciousness? Given the present state of the world, which is in great chaos, what do you think might be the impact in the times to come? How do you see it?

**Rinpocheji** (silent for some time): The impact of any teaching cannot be measured at the global level or universally. It has to be measured at the individual level. In this world, a number of sages and seers have appeared and they have taught their wisdom. They have had their own impact on countless people. But no one has completely changed the world entirely. And it will not be possible to do so, whosoever may come, whosoever may preach or teach. The impact would be on individuals or at most on communities or groups. The entire humanity cannot be changed over a period of time. Human destiny is infinite and immeasurable and within

that immeasurable or infinite, the impact is always measurable and finite. So that has to be kept in mind. Today, in the world, in mostly the so-called educated society, there are very few who have not heard Krishnamurti's name or who have not heard what he has taught. Of course, there are not many people seriously reading or studying him, his thoughts or his teachings. Their number is not very high. But there is an awareness among people.

Apart from that, it has now been many years since he passed away and yet the work which is carried out, in an organized way, by the various foundations or groups or societies, and much more so by individuals—reading, discussing, listening to him—is quite large. And across the different religious traditions and different philosophical traditions, even among the non-believers, there are many people who are interested in K's words. So that means it has reached an enormous number of people and that is the impact. In India alone how many sages and seers have come. The Buddha appeared. The Shankaracharya appeared. Mahavira appeared. And everybody says that they had a great impact on humanity. Similarly, K's impact is also in that category.

I think in the future also for several hundred years people will not forget K; people will not give up talking about, reading and listening to K's words. It will go on generation to generation. At least the students of our various schools run by the Foundation in India or abroad, they will definitely remember, their children and their grandchildren will remember. So, that is the continuity of the impact of his words and his mission. That will benefit a great number of people, sensitize many people, and through them a great deal of goodness will be shared with even those who have never heard about K or read K. In spite of this, from persons on whom he has had an influence the goodness will radiate to many other people. It is, of course, not a political project, the result of which can be measured through statistics. It is the immeasurable and we

can only feel how very vast a legacy or influence Krishnamurti has left behind.

**Questioner:** Thank you very much, Rinpocheji, for so fully and deeply sharing your responses to our questions.





# Krishnamurti and Tradition

Some reflections  
on the teachings of  
Krishnamurti

RAVI RAVINDRA



In 1981 during a walk in Ojai, Krishnamurti turned to me and said, “What do you think is wrong with India?” By that time, I had learned the futility of trying to argue with him; I was more interested in his insights which emerged from a level of clarity far subtler than mine. I kept silent and looked at him, willing to hear. He said, “The trouble with India is that the Brahmins have forgotten the tradition.”

There is a strong tendency among the adherents of K’s teaching as well as others that he was *against* tradition. There is some truth to it as K was fond of pointing out that the etymological roots of the words ‘tradition’ and ‘treason’ are the same; as the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, a *traditor* is a *betrayor*. Much depends on what one emphasizes under the label ‘tradition.’ If by tradition one means what the priests and ministers keep saying we must believe in without engaging in any serious search, that will certainly betray what the Buddha or the Christ, or Patañjali,<sup>1</sup> or Vivekananda, or Ramana or Krishnamurti lived and taught as the heart of the spiritual traditions. It is in general true that the finesse of all spiritual traditions is betrayed by the official keepers of the tradition. K was not against the living core of the tradition, but he was strongly against the betrayal of it through belief.

It would be surprising if, by the word Brahmin, K meant any specific caste. Almost certainly for him a Brahmin is one who is internally called to explore real Truth without adherence to any particular caste, dogma or religion. I am convinced that K was one of the very few Brahmins who had not forgotten the heart of any serious spiritual tradition, which is that of a passionate and tireless search for the Real and an impartial and deep self-inquiry. This alone can lead to the Truth about one’s real nature, its place in the cosmos, and an experience of the Oneness of all there is.

It is important to comment that a serious tradition succeeds when it assists a searcher to be free of the tradition. Any description

of, or path to, the Ultimate is at best like a finger pointing to the moon. Those who get very attached to the finger can never get to the moon. This, of course, applies to the followers of Krishnamurti's teachings as well. The Ultimate remains beyond description, as emphasized by *neti, neti* in the Upanishads or in K's own often repeated remark that "Truth is a pathless land". A very helpful reminder by the great Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, is "If there were a God of whom I had any idea, it will not be worth having Him as God."

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, many volumes were published under the overall series called *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*. In this many-volume series there are two volumes on Hindu Spirituality. The first one is titled *Hindu Spirituality: Vedas Through Vedanta* and the second one, *Hindu Spirituality: Post classical and Modern*. Whatever K himself or his followers may say, it was only a volume on Hindu spirituality, the second one, which could carry an article on Krishnamurti. It would be surprising that any volume on any of the religions in the Abrahamic tradition—Judaism, Christianity, Islam—would include an article on K. A volume on Buddhism possibly could. As far as I am aware, the only person other than Annie Besant (whom K referred to as Mother) for whom K seemed to have an unmitigated respect, was the Buddha. However, it is highly unlikely that the Buddhist scholars would include K as an example of the flowering of the Buddhist tradition. K's own life, including his fondness for chanting some traditional mantras, practising yoga and other tendencies closely connect him to the religious tradition of his parents, namely Hinduism.

The editor of the second volume on Hinduism invited me to write an article on J Krishnamurti.<sup>2</sup> I prepared and made extensive notes. Since K was still alive, I arranged a special meeting with him to make sure that what I had written reflected his thought accurately. I asked him whether "intelligence beyond thought" was the

central thing that he spoke about. He agreed, but without much feeling. Suddenly, he was animated. “Take the risk, sir. Say what you wish. If you speak from the heart, whatever you say I said, I’ll agree. Take the risk.” I was deeply touched by his own sense of freedom and the implied trust in me.

Many years ago, a new journal had invited me to write an article about Krishnamurti. I decided to write this as a letter<sup>3</sup> to him which I mailed to him. But I was certain that he would not have seen it simply because all sorts of people were likely writing to him and he may not have even received the letter. During one of my visits to Ojai, I gave K a copy of the letter and asked if he would read it and respond to me. He said he would do so next morning at breakfast. Next morning, he prepared breakfast for both of us. Afterwards we had an extended conversation. The last remark in my letter to K was, “I am troubled because I do not know how to reconcile the call I hear from your distant shore with the realities where I am. It is clear that a bridge cannot be built from here to There. But can it be built from There to here?” Krishnaji said, “What you say in the last sentence of your letter is what I have been teaching for the last sixty years.” If I understood what he said, it surely meant that a bridge can be there, but not from here to There; it is from There to here and that what K was teaching is the bridge from his level of being to my level.

Listening to K was like listening to celestial *gandharva* music, but if I wish to play a musical instrument, where do I go to learn to play the scale? I can hardly begin from where K is; I have to begin from where I am—self-occupied and ego-driven like most of humanity. I did not doubt the veracity of what K said; my difficulty lay in wondering about the practical steps needed to connect with the level of reality from where K spoke. Beginning with an increasingly impartial self-inquiry, I can even hope that at some stage my journey will connect me to the bridge extending from his side. I need to see the way I am, even suffer the fact that that is what I am,

not pretending to be free like K, by quoting him, or even wishing to be like him.

Based on my own experience, it is clear to me that awareness is the mechanism of transformation. *Engagement in an impartial and sustained self-awareness, without hankering for this or that result, naturally leads to self-transformation.* K himself had said, “If you begin to understand what you are without trying to change it, then what you are undergoes a transformation.”<sup>4</sup> A good example of this is in what K told me in a conversation towards the end of his life. “I am still very shy, but I used to be much worse. I would stand behind the platform from where I was supposed to speak to an audience, and shake. One day I saw the total absurdity of it, and the shaking left me. I was free of it forever.”

Once, during a walk with K in Ojai, he stopped and turned to me and said, “Sir, never take a public-speaking course.” I was surprised by his remark because it had never crossed my mind to take such a course. K continued, “If you know something, it will ooze out of you.”

For K, as for almost all the sages in the spiritual traditions of India, the right action oozes out of the right quality of being. Therefore, his remark, “Be totally attentive and do nothing.” Laura Huxley, the wife of the well-known writer Aldous Huxley reported that on one occasion in a small gathering at her place, K was saying that one should not go about doing good. She reminded him that he goes around the world doing good. He responded, “Not intentionally!” To use an expression used by K himself, a rose does not decide to smell like a rose; it is from the fragrance that we conclude that it is a rose. Similarly, a sage does not decide to do good or to be compassionate; these kinds of behaviour are a natural outcome of their quality of being. The good do good by merely being good. The needful and the true action will flower from the soil of clear and selfless insight.

Quality of being very much depends on the degree of freedom from the me-I-mind. Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* highly recommends the state of *naishkarmya*—actionlessness or freedom from action or actorless action—but this state is not arrived at by inaction (*BG* 3.4–5). This state is possible only when the action is not initiated by my will or my aim or in self-service. The yoga taught by the *Bhagavad Gita* is a science *par excellence* of self-transformation and Krishna says, “No one becomes a yogi without renouncing self-will (*sankalpa*)” (*BG* 6.2). The action is done by the accomplished yogi who becomes an instrument of the Divine will initiating the action. “Steadfast in yoga, the knower of truth realizes ‘Truly I do nothing at all’” (*BG* 5.8).<sup>5</sup>

What is needed is an impartial and sustained self-awareness, without hankering for this or that fruit, however spiritual sounding. That naturally leads to self-transformation. In a different terminology, coming from a different tradition, we have this remarkable statement of Meister Eckhart: “A man must become truly poor and as free from his own creaturely will as he was when he was born. And I tell you, by the eternal truth, that so long as you *desire* to fulfil the will of God and have any hankering after eternity and God, for just so long you are not truly poor. He alone has true spiritual poverty who wills nothing, knows nothing, desires nothing.”

The ancient text *Shatapatha Brāhmana* says, “Only those may enter the Sun door who can truly respond to the question ‘Who are you?’ with ‘Nobody.’” (*SB* III.8.1.2–3.) Real transformation results from seeing that one is nothing and not trying to be something. K said, “To be absolutely nothing is to be beyond measure.”<sup>6</sup> My heart and my mind agree with this. But I cannot try to be nothing or try to be beyond measure. Can I see what I am—limited and limiting—and stay with seeing? If transformation takes place, it does; if it doesn’t, it doesn’t. Truth cannot be forced; it can only be wooed, primarily by suffering the fact of the absence of truth.

Everything can be abandoned—scriptures, traditions, books, ideas, knowledge, even one’s love for Krishnamurti—but we cannot abandon direct perception of the way it is, inside me as well as outside. In seeing for oneself directly is real living and inquiring. While seeing, one is not occupied with apprehension or approval, nor is one concerned with humility or vanity. One is independent, free, but not isolated. One loves because what loves is not me but something that passes through me; and that something cannot not love.<sup>7</sup>

Krishnamurti’s emphasis on being rather than doing is very much in harmony with the classical teaching of Krishna, emphasizing the importance of the state of *naishkarmya*. K’s emphasis in letting the right action result from the right quality of being—which is essentially freedom from the ‘me’ or from *asmitā* (separate self), a major obstacle in the journey to real Freedom<sup>6</sup>—sometimes resulted in some remarks of his such as “effort is an abomination” being misunderstood that nothing is required from my side for the Truth to descend on me. The sort of effort to be avoided is the ego-driven effort insistent on acquiring this or that benefit for myself even when expressed in very spiritual sounding language. K said, “That which is eternal cannot be sought after; the mind cannot acquire it. It comes into being when the mind is quiet, and the mind can be quiet only when it is simple, when it is no longer storing up, condemning, judging, weighing. It is only the simple mind that can understand the real, not the mind that is full of words, knowledge, information. The mind that analyzes, calculates, is not a simple mind” (*Collected Works*, Vol. VII, 27).

We can see how close Krishnamurti’s teaching is to the real spiritual tradition of India. As Patañjali says in the *Yoga Sutras*, “Yoga is stopping all the movements of the mind...Yoga is for cultivating *samādhi* and for weakening the hindrances (*kleshas*)... The *kleshas* are a sense of separate self, attraction, aversion, addiction to the status quo, all arising from ignorance (*avidyā*)...*Samādhi*

is the state when the self is not” (*Yoga Sutra* 1.2, 2.2–4, 3.3). The sort of knowledge (*vidyā*) the tradition speaks of, “is knowledge beyond thought... This knowledge is different from the knowledge obtained by testimony or by inference... Sacred knowledge (*jñāna*) born of discernment (*viveka*) is liberating, comprehensive, eternal, and freed of time sequence” (*Yoga Sutra* 1.43, 1.49, 3.54)<sup>8</sup>.

I am convinced that K was one of the few Brahmins who did not forget the tradition. Krishnamurti’s teaching is not his in any personal sense. It is the Real speaking through him.

Of course, reading the *Upanishads* or the *Bhagavad Gita* and becoming very knowledgeable does not lead one to the Freedom that the tradition or K speak about. Krishnamurti made many strong remarks such as “thought denies love”, the “observer is the observed”, “if I am, love is not”, and the like. To merely repeat his words and insights can be a betrayal of K. I need to ask, “Is this true for me? When was the last time I actually saw that the observer is the observed?” Otherwise, it is a nice slogan, like ‘Atman is Brahman’ repeated by the Hindu priests. It may be true for someone, but is it true for me? It is necessary to find the sharp razor’s edge of impartial self-inquiry, not an agreement or disagreement with K. There can be no value in imitating him or repeating his conclusions as slogans. If one says something like ‘the observer is the observed,’ one ought to do this with a trembling heart, when one’s lips have been cleansed by a burning coal, as the prophet Isaiah said. Otherwise we simply cheapen K and betray him by repeating these slogans. As long as ‘I’ exists, it is not true that the observer is the observed. Only in dying in love does the truth of unity dawn and make its dwelling in me.

Nor is it particularly helpful to become an expert on K; what is needed is to know myself. As one of the *Upanishads* says, “When a Brahmin is done with learning, he returns to himself.” Truth is going to be seen in my own heart, not in any books, videos and compact disks, even of K. Of course, we could learn from K, be

inspired by him and be helped by him even in looking at ourselves. But the real understanding which is needed is not of K's teaching but of truth. And the absolute and fundamental requirement for that understanding is a heart which is aflame with the passion for truth. That flame may be lit or enlarged by the teaching of K, as a new flame is lit by a burning flame. Those of us who love and admire K cannot but take the risk and try to speak from our hearts. Then, as K himself said, he would agree.

## Endnotes

- 1 In this connection see an article of mine titled 'The Wisdom of Patañjali and Krishnamurti,' published in the journal *Integral Yoga* in June 2010. An enlarged version of this article was published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. 133.11, pp. 18–23.
- 2 'J. Krishnamurti, 'Traveller in a Pathless Land,' published in a volume devoted to contemporary flowering of Hindu Spirituality, edited by KR Sundararajan. This is Vol. 7 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, Crossroad Publishers, New York, 1994. This article was included in my book *J. Krishnamurti: Two Birds on One Tree*, Quest Books, Wheaton IL, 1995.
- 3 'Letter to J. Krishnamurti,' published in the *Journal of Our Time* by the Traditional Studies Press, Toronto, 1977 (reprinted in S. Patwardhan and P. Jayakar, eds. *Within the Mind: On J. Krishnamurti*; Krishnamurti Foundation India, Madras, 1982). Also included in my book *J. Krishnamurti: Two Birds on One Tree*, Quest Books, Wheaton IL, 1995.
- 4 *The Little Book on Living: J. Krishnamurti*. Ed. RE Mark Lee, New Delhi, India: Penguin Books, 1999.
- 5 For the translation and discussion of the *shlokas* in the Bhagavad Gita, please see R. Ravindra, *The Bhagavad Gita: A Guide to Navigating the Battle of Life*, Shambhala Publications, Boulder Co, 2017. Also published under the same title in India by Jaico Publications in 2018.
- 6 *The Little Book on Living: J. Krishnamurti*. Ed. RE Mark Lee, New Delhi, India: Penguin Books, 1999.
- 7 Some of these remarks were published in R. Ravindra, *Centered Self without being Self-centred: Remembering Krishnamurti*, Morning Light Press, Sandpoint ID, 2003. This book was later published under the same title by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai in 2011. The book is a transcript of a talk given in Ojai in 2002 under the aegis of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America.
- 8 The various obstacles (*kleshas*) mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras* are discussed in detail in R. Ravindra, *Wisdom of Patañjali's Yoga Sutras*, Morning Light Press, Sandpoint ID, 2009. Also published under the same title by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai in 2012.

# Happy is the Man who is Nothing

J KRISHNAMURTI

You must have a clear mind, a free untethered mind; this is essential, you cannot have a clear, penetrating mind if there is fear of any sort. Fear clogs the mind. If the mind does not face its own self-created problems, it is not a clear, deep mind. To face its own peculiarities, to be aware of its urges, deeply and inwardly, to acknowledge all this without any resistance, is to have a profound and clear mind. Then only can there be a subtle mind, not merely a sharp mind. A subtle mind is a slow, hesitant mind; not a mind that concludes, judges, or formulates. This subtlety is essential. It must know to listen and to wait. To play with the deep. This is not to be got at the end, but this quality of the mind must be there from the very beginning. You may have it, give it a full and deep chance to flower.



Play with this. Don't force it, let it watch itself. Most people who attempt to be simple begin with the outer, discarding, renouncing, and so on; but inwardly the complexity of their being remains. With inward simplicity, the outer corresponds to the inner. To be simple inwardly is to be free from the urge for the more, which does not mean to be satisfied with 'what is.' To be free from the urge for

the more is not to think in terms of time, progress, getting there. To be simple is for the mind to free itself from all results, is for the mind to empty itself of all conflict. This is real simplicity.



One does get agitated, anxious, and sometimes frightened. These things do happen. They are the accidents of life. Life is a cloudy day. It was clear and sunny the other day, but now it is raining, cloudy and cold; this change is the inevitable process of living. Anxiety, fear, suddenly comes upon one; there are causes for it, hidden or fairly obvious, and one can with a little awareness find those causes. But what is important, is to be aware of these incidents or accidents and not give them time to take root, permanent or temporary. One does give root to these reactions when the mind compares; it justifies, condemns or accepts. You know, one has to be on one's toes all the time, inwardly, without any tension. Tension arises when you want a result, and what arises again creates tension which has to be broken. Let life flow.



Deeply, inwardly, there may be a slow withering away; of this you may be unconscious or, being conscious, negligent. The wave of deterioration is always on the top of us, it does not matter who it is. To be ahead of it and meet it without reaction and be out of it requires great energy. This energy

only comes when there is no conflict whatsoever, conscious or unconscious. Be very awake.



What is important is a radical change in the unconscious. Any conscious action of the will cannot touch the unconscious. As the conscious will cannot touch the unconscious pursuits, wants, urges, the conscious mind must subside, be still, and not try to force the unconscious, according to any particular pattern of action. The unconscious has its own pattern of action, its own frame within which it functions. This frame cannot be broken by any outward action, and will is an outward act. If this is really seen and understood, the outward mind is still; and because there is no resistance, set up by will, one will find that the so-called unconscious begins to free itself from its own limitations. Then only is there a radical transformation in the total being of man.



Life is a strange business. Happy is the man who is nothing.

Excerpts from: *Happy is the Man who is Nothing, Letters to a Young Friend*





# Krishnamurti's Teachings Changed My Life

FRIEDRICH GROHE



I was privileged to have met Krishnamurti during the latter phase of my life; but even if I hadn't, my attitude toward the teachings would be the same. In fact, it was coming upon the teachings that made the bigger impression on me. I was fascinated from the first book I read, and am still fascinated. Of course, my interaction with K also made a deep impression on me, because being around him allowed at least some people to glimpse what it means to live the teachings. One could see what a simple life K lived. This contact with him served as inspiration for me to write the book, *The Beauty of The Mountain*, which numerous people have said is a good introduction to the teachings and especially shows K's human side. What I really wanted to convey with the book was the perfume of being around him. But it was much more than I could say.

What changed for me, in coming into contact with K, were my activities. Before attending my first of his public talks, I had stopped eating red meat. Then K said, "We eat dead animals," and I immediately became vegetarian. Earlier I had worked very hard in my family's company, and found it an interesting job. (I never saw myself as a businessman; rather an industrialist—someone who produces something.) I had to leave the company long before I met K; but even at that earlier point I had the feeling that it was a chance to get off the treadmill of running a big family business. Then when I came across the teachings it made even more sense to have left.

Also, before I met K, I had a period of very intense mountaineering. After meeting him I still did some mountaineering but mainly ski-touring. I always had a strong connection with nature, feeling most at home in the open air. I was also ecologically minded, and had an interest in literature and philosophy but never had the time to pursue them much. After meeting K, there was more time

especially for philosophical things. K said on a few occasions that he was a kind of philosopher in the old sense, when philosophy meant 'love of truth'.

But much more than these changes, for the first time, someone could convey to me a sense of the sacred—the holiness of life—something more than the usual esoteric stuff. He helped me to understand so many things, like the implications of conditioning, attachment, dependence, self-pity, that there is no security; all these things which I had felt somehow, but couldn't express or explain.

In 1984, K suggested that I become a trustee of the English and Indian Foundations and an honorary trustee of the American Foundation. From then on, I was very engaged in the schools, study centres and foundations. Later, I brought together some former school staff to help support the work of these places. And we began producing *The Link*, which later became *Friedrich's Newsletter*, along with the Calendar of K quotes and pictures taken by me. We also publish other brochures, like *Krishnamurti for Educators and Learners*, *Reflecting Consciousness: An Overview of Dialogue*, and other teachings-related topics. This is a way to keep in touch with the many friends who also have been moved by what Krishnamurti was living and pointing to.

We also organised a Krishnamurti exhibition at the Saanen Museum for summer 2019, and it was popular enough for the museum directors to extend it to April 2020. We've been surprised at how many people remember the Saanen Talks, or attended them and are still interested in the teachings. Others are coming who are completely new to Krishnamurti, and a good few of them have watched the videos or read the quotes with seriousness.

Of course, the questions that Krishnamurti raised and everything he was talking about have enormous meaning, I suppose even more nowadays, though it seems to be just a few who realise it. Still, K said, "A few people can change the world." K told us on

his death bed that he continued to watch the TV news to see if anything was changing in the world. He also told us that he saw very little evidence of change there.

A statement that touched me recently can be found on page ninety-four of the new book *Walking with Krishnamurti*, about Nandini Mehta's relationship with K, edited by Nandini's daughter, Devi Mangaldas. K says, "The aim of the school is to make the students self-aware and fearless." I think this is a great statement. Unfortunately, nothing like it was part of my education. Being self-aware is something of a mystery—If I believe that I am so, then something I do shows others that I'm not specially aware after all. Concerning fear, I might have been fearless climbing many high mountains in my middle age, but I don't think I've met the depths of fear. If it means being open to 'that vast emptiness', and if each of us would be open to that rather than imagining that we're becoming something, it might change the world.

Another statement that resonates with me is K's answer to his question, "Do you want to know my secret?" ... After a long pause, he is supposed to have said, "I don't mind what happens." It resonates because usually I find it easy to let go of things. Not always! but usually. This might be related to the most deeply meaningful thing I ever heard K say, "Love has no cause." I've never analyzed the statement, but it's there, saying something very important.

One thing I find amazing is how ahead of his time K often appears to have been. Fifty years ago, he was saying that the brain cells can mutate and regenerate themselves, and in the 1980s he claimed that scientists were only then starting to look into how the brain works. In fact, neuroscientists discovered not so long ago that new neurons can grow in the brain. K was also at the forefront in warning about two things—the huge disruptive impact that computers would have on humanity, and the disastrous consequences of human beings lacking a deeply felt relationship with

nature—and maybe these two things are connected. It's clear that living with such insight as K had would meet so many challenges facing the world, but is anyone really listening? Or are we just trying to invent even more technology to try to get us out of our mess?





# My Journey with Krishnamurti and the Teachings

GISÈLE BALLEYS



## Meeting Krishnamurti

I was born in the French part of Switzerland in a small village where my father was a mountain guide. There was no radio in our village, and the only means of communication was a common telephone for the entire village. My parents brought me up with no expectations to conform to societal norms. They gave me a childhood where I was free to observe the snowflakes, the clouds, but also the people! As I grew up, I was eager to discover the world. I travelled to the German part of Switzerland, to England, and then came back to Geneva. I took up a job as a secretary. My thirst for living was not fulfilled, and I decided to change my profession. I took advice from a professional and she suggested that I could become a teacher. I thought why not? Even as we discussed various aspects that this change would involve, she suggested one day that I go to Saanen. She told me that there is a man called Krishnamurti who comes to give talks there, and what he says might be of interest to me. I was reluctant to go, not wanting to get caught in some kind of a sect. But I went.

In Saanen, a large group of people were sitting under a tent. Suddenly, there was a deep spontaneous silence. Krishnamurti came in. He sat on a simple wooden chair, dressed in European clothes. He looked at the large audience and started speaking in English. The vocabulary was new to me—phrases like ‘wholeness of life,’ ‘looking without any image’ did not mean anything to me. I also became aware that something completely new was arising in me, something very ancient, something which did not seem to be even related to Krishnamurti but was within me. This was both intriguing and, in a way, disturbing. I had never experienced this.

Back in Geneva I bought a book by this man whom I had never seen nor heard till very recently and read this book from cover to cover. I sensed the logic of what was written. I did not know then

that what would follow this first encounter would be a new life for me.

### **Becoming a teacher**

I did three years of studies in Geneva in order to become a teacher. I chose to teach young children, because I did not have to give them grades. I also went back to Saanen each summer. These were years of great discoveries: I was listening to Krishnamurti in Saanen—a place where he spoke for twenty-five years—and at the same time the children in the public school at Geneva were also my teachers. One day a child came sliding in with great vigour. I stopped him, adding, “Why are you doing that?” He answered, “But I like it!” He felt offended that I did not understand his right to do what he likes and his need to defend his actions. In these words, I could perceive the basis of most of our actions, whatever our age. I also discovered that there was a simple connection in my heart with the child’s world. I was lucky to have found my profession. I also became intensely interested in the teachings.

With the freshness of what I had received in Saanen, and my presence in Geneva, I thought I should share my discoveries with two friends. When we first met, we could see that there was no listening, but I felt that we should be together more often. This went on for some time, meeting in each others’ homes and talking with each other. Later, I began organizing regular K study meetings and created a private library in my flat in Geneva.

### **Being part of the Brockwood Park community**

The Saanen gathering had a very international flavour, and I was meeting people from England, India and many other countries. One day I met Dorothy Simmons, founder-principal of Brockwood Park School, the Krishnamurti School in the UK. I was keen

to experience the kind of education that was going on at Brockwood. Since there was no teaching position open, Dorothy offered that I could work in the garden or in the kitchen. Though this was not my real interest, I took up the proposal, since I was keen to be in a place established for experimenting with the teachings.

It was a totally new experience living in a community of adults, where there were also students of different ages, backgrounds and nationalities. I had great fun in the presence of this age group. Some of them were keen to be with nature, and to have a close relationship with their teachers; but some were also testing the limits of the freedom they had.

Krishnamurti would stop by at Brockwood on his way to other countries. He came several times during the year. He was innocent like a child. But the 'absolute' would spring up at unexpected moments. Let me illustrate this—Dorothy Simmons was reporting how well the school was doing—more students, better teachers, more money. Krishnamurti interrupted, saying, "Show me the transformed students". There was no more to say. In a school that stood for the transformation of human beings, the 'absolute' could not be compromised. It was evident that this was not something to be discussed.

During his stay in Brockwood, Krishnamurti spoke to the directors, then to the teachers and then to the students. The general atmosphere changed each day. I had the feeling that the presence of Krishnamurti penetrated even the walls. Some of us were fascinated by the teachings; some were fascinated by the man; some liked both the man and the teachings. I was one of the latter. I had intended to be there just for a sabbatical of a year, but eventually stayed for six years at Brockwood! After a year of helping in the kitchen and garden, I became part of the French teaching group and took on more responsibility for the students.

## **Organizing the Saanen gatherings**

After six years, I felt the call to go back to Geneva and experiment with what I had learnt and could express, away from the supportive atmosphere of the Brockwood community. At the same time there was a need for someone to be part of organizing the Saanen gathering. I was asked if I could do it. Several people were travelling from England to Saanen to participate in the conference and to do the video recordings. The students too were happy to join in this. From then on, I participated fully in the work at Saanen.

I could sense the tremendous work that Krishnamurti was doing. Apart from the conference, talks on questions of life and death, Krishnamurti also had discussions on education. He met committees and many individuals coming from far away. In his free time, he loved walking in the mountains. As always, he was very considerate of others. He was, for instance, worried that the cook in Chalet Tannegg where he stayed, had to climb too many steps!

There was a very special atmosphere in the whole valley. It was tangible. Though the population of Saanen chose not to be part of the meetings except for a few, it was a great source of income for them. It was an extremely busy time for me too but I knew that the source of the energy was Krishnamurti and that it was flowing fully. Sometimes, I was worried at a superficial level, but deep down, I felt fully nourished.

I had to talk with him a few times about organizational matters. I could then meet him on his own. Knowing that he was tired after the day's engagements, I kept these meetings brief. We would first settle all the organizational questions. For instance, on one occasion, people were worried that the wooden chair on which Krishnamurti sat was not stable enough. He said matter-of-factly, "A chair is a chair; and nothing can be taken out of this place without permission". And then he looked out of the window. There was only

the action of looking, no sense of division. On another occasion many people asked me if I could tell Krishnamurti how valuable and transformative these meetings were. As I came in and spoke, Krishnamurti started to bow in front of me, probably like the Chinese would do. At first, I thought he was teasing me. But I think this was not so. It felt somehow as if the universe was responding.

In 1985 some people, seeing how tired Krishnamurti (now 90 years of age) was becoming, encouraged him to stop coming to Saanen and keep all the other activities to a minimum. After his three-month travel to India, he passed away in Ojai, California in February 1986. I was in France then and immediately knew that the immense journey of exploring and sharing the dynamism of living was in motion. We may believe that we are creating our own lives. But to me, this is not so. There is in us a kind of vibration which will offer opportunities when we listen to it. Because we are life.

### **The gatherings today**

The vibrations of all that had happened in this beautiful valley in Switzerland prompted people to keep coming to Saanen. They were expecting the exploration to go on. It was easy enough to organize, though on a much smaller scale yet with great intensity and diversity.

Do these meetings still have a quality of the extraordinary river of goodness and wisdom that Krishnamurti brought to the world? It is good to ask this question; but of course, there is no answer. Truth can be explored, and the exploration can be shared. But as Krishnamurti said, it is a pathless land.

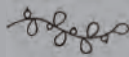


# On Nature

J KRISHNAMURTI

When you look around you, not so much in the human world as in nature, in the heavens, you see an extraordinary sense of order, balance, and harmony. Every tree and flower has its own order, its own beauty; every hilltop and every valley has a sense of its own rhythm and stability. Though man tries to control the rivers and pollutes their waters, they have their own flow, their own far-reaching movement. Apart from man, in the seas, in the air and the vast expanse of the heavens there is an extraordinary sense of purity and orderly existence. Though the fox kills the chicken, and the bigger animals live on the little animals, what appears to be cruelty is a design of order in this universe, except for man. When man doesn't interfere, there is great beauty of balance and harmony.

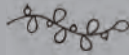
*The Whole Movement of Life is  
Learning: Letters to the Schools, Ch. 70*



When we lose contact with nature, we lose contact with each other. When you lose contact with the birds, the shy and timid quail, then you lose contact with your child and the person across the street. When you kill an animal to eat, you are also cultivating insensitivity which will kill that man across the border. When you lose contact with the

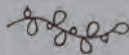
enormous movement of life, you lose all relationship. Then you—the ego with all its fanciful urges, demands, and pursuits—become all-important, and the gulf between you and the world widens in endless conflicts.

*The Whole Movement of Life is  
Learning: Letters to the Schools, Ch. 67.*



It is odd that we have so little relationship with nature. We never seem to have a feeling for all the living things on the earth. If we could establish a deep, abiding relationship with nature, we would never kill an animal for our appetite; we would never harm, vivisect a monkey, a dog, a guinea pig for our benefit. We would find other ways to heal our wounds, heal our bodies. But the healing of the mind is something totally different. That healing gradually takes place if you are with nature.

*Krishnamurti to Himself, 25 February 1983*





# Pedagogy of Freedom

SATISH KUMAR



**T**he word 'education' is derived from Latin *educare* which means 'to bring up,' 'to bring forth' or 'to draw out'. Thus, education doesn't mean teaching, or schooling or giving of knowledge or even acquisition of knowledge. Education simply means the development of qualities which are already present. Socrates compared a teacher with a midwife who helps to bring forth the child.

I compare a teacher with a gardener or an orchard keeper. The tree is already in the seed. The seed knows what kind of tree it is. The gardener doesn't put a tree in the seed, only helps the seed to become a tree. The gardener may find a piece of good soil to plant the seed, put good organic compost to nourish the seed, put a fence to protect the seed, give water to nurture the seed, but a gardener never tries to change an apple seed into a pear tree.

Parents and teachers need to be like gardeners. They need to observe their children, understand them, help them to become who they are, support them on their way to self-realisation, but never try to impose on them their idea of an 'educated person'.

In our modern Industrial Age, education has become confused with training, schooling or acquisition of facts, information and knowledge in order to get a job. Rather than a teacher helping a pupil to become who he or she truly is and realise his or her true potential, a teacher has become a technician or a trainer or even an agent to meet the needs of the market. The teacher is paid to mould the child so that he or she is fit to make a success of the economy. In this kind of educational system, the market and the economy become the masters and the human beings become servants.

This corruption of education worried J. Krishnamurti. When I first met him on the banks of River Ganga in Varanasi in 1960, he said to me, "I want to recover the original and actual meaning of the noble word 'education'. I want schools and teachers to return to the true meaning of the word and dedicate themselves to the cause of helping young people to discover their vocation."

Krishnamurti further said to me, “There is nothing wrong with the market or with the economy. As long as they serve the needs of humans, they have a place in the world. But when humans are required to serve the needs of the market and the economy then we are in real trouble. Unfortunately, that is the problem at this moment in the world. This is why we need a total revolution in our idea of education.”

“I understand the etymological meaning of the word, education”, I said. “But do you have something more to say about it?” I asked.

“Yes, I do. I want to say that we need to liberate ourselves from the idea that education takes place only within the four walls of a school. It is not that you read a book, go to a classroom for your lessons or pass an examination and then you have finished with your education. Education is a life-long process. From the moment you are born to the moment you die you are in the journey of learning” said Krishnamurti.

“What exactly are we trying to learn during this journey of life?” I asked.

“We are learning to be free! Learning is all about liberation. We need to learn to be free from fear, free from anxiety, free from dogmas and doctrines. We need to discover and rediscover that we are born free and freedom is our birthright! Fear is a conditioning of the mind. From our family, from our religious belief, from our media and even from our educational systems we are conditioned to fear. The purpose of true education is to free us from all kinds of fears.”

For me this was a new Pedagogy of Freedom! But our educational system at present is totally unaware of the fact that it is based on the Pedagogy of Fear!

Since that meeting with Krishnamurti, I have keenly observed and realised that schools and universities around the world seem to look at their students and think of them as if they have no bodies! They have no hands, no hearts, no senses, only brains. All education

is focused solely on the head. No wonder that many of our young people feel inadequate, incompetent and fearful. They have never developed their heart qualities. They don't know how to relate to other people and to the natural world. This lack of emotional and spiritual intelligence is a major cause of fear. The usual educational curriculum includes almost nothing about compassion, about a sense of service, about courage or about love! These qualities should be cultivated during the time we are being educated.

Most educated people not only lack this spiritual and emotional intelligence, they also lack body-intelligence. The curriculum ignores all practical or physical skills. Most undergraduates or post-graduates coming out of universities know nothing about growing food, nothing about building a house, nothing about mending or repairing and almost nothing about cooking. They have highly trained heads, superbly capable of complaining, comparing and criticising, as well as a strong desire to control and consume. They have little or no capacity for making, producing, building or creating. There is very little in our educational philosophy or practice which promotes self-reliance and self-confidence.

On top of this, the current educational system is more or less indifferent to the development of the imagination. Music, art, dance, plays, poetry and philosophy are relegated to some distant and specialist corners. Instead of the arts being an integral part of everyday life, they have been exiled to museums and art galleries to be enjoyed by a small minority, and marketed as commercialised commodities, or practiced by a small number of struggling idealists, who can hardly make a living.

The educational system produces millions upon millions of young people to serve the needs of machines, markets and money. And all these young people are struggling to compete and succeed, often afraid of failure.

This fear of failure is one of the most detrimental aspects of the current Pedagogy. In order to compensate for the fear, young

people are encouraged to seek success for themselves: bigger salaries, bigger cars, bigger houses and higher positions with higher expectations. Some succeed, but many fail. This egocentric rat race results in family breakdown, mental breakdown, discontentment, depression and disappointment.

Krishnamurti was pained to see such a state of degradation in education. He called education a noble word which is misunderstood and misused. Therefore, instead of just criticising the present paradigm, he established a number of exemplary schools where learning, living and loving are integrated. In these schools we can witness the education of head, heart and hands. I have had the privilege of visiting them and found that teenage girls and boys there are enjoying a holistic approach to learning, based on a Pedagogy of Freedom. I wish these schools would provide a university level of education so that the students don't have to enter into the Pedagogy of Fear after they leave Krishnamurti Schools.





# Krishnamurti, Education and Unlearning

TIM BOYD



This brief article is the product of a perspective that incorporates a number of streams through which I have experienced Krishnamurti's message—as a beneficiary of Krishnamurti's life and teachings, a member, now President, of the Theosophical Society, and one who has recently participated in the founding of an educational institution (The Adyar Theosophical Academy) motivated by the Ageless Wisdom teachings. All of these found a powerful contemporary voice in J. Krishnamurti. Unless one counts his many videos, audio recordings, and books, I was never in his presence. However, I have had a sense of being with him through stories and conversations with many people who worked closely with him, sat with him and discussed, shared ideas, and recited with him his beloved mantras.

The importance to me of this blended perspective is that it places K in a continuum of unfoldment. From childhood to the completion of his life, there is a dramatic unfoldment of his message and capacity to share. Being a member of the Theosophical Society roots K in a context that adds a certain richness to his message. K's first little book, widely read, was written at the age of fourteen—*At the Feet of the Master (AFM)*. Although many would say that the book was the product of a 'highly evolved' young man, there is no doubt that it is the product of youth with all its advantages and limitations.

The book is a summary of things that were told to K by someone he regarded as a teacher. The teaching presented in it was not new, having been expounded by Sankaracharya in a different language more than a thousand years earlier. Krishnamurti's addition to the material was the simplicity and unelaborated expression of a young mind which gave it clarity and immediacy. Essentially, it was a repetition of someone else's thought, thoughts which profoundly resonated with him, but which could not be called original. *AFM* was a description of a path leading 'from the Unreal to the Real' involving four specific 'qualifications' of mind and behaviour—Discrimination, Desirelessness, Good Conduct (also known as *Satsampatti*), and Love.

It was at this initial stage of K's unfoldment process that many members of the TS, others around the world, and I first encountered him. And it was from these youthful beginnings that an attempt has been made to follow the increasingly original and demanding nature of his message. Although later in life his sense of connection to his previous line of thought diminished, even losing the memories of that other time, the central core around which his lifetime of teaching revolved was always the movement from 'the Unreal to the Real'.

To teach is to communicate in a manner that effects change. K focussed on nothing less than liberation, an 'unconditional freedom' that is only possible as one becomes free *from* obscuring emotion and thought—what the Buddhists describe as 'afflictive emotion'. Freedom is not teachable, neither is liberation. But the cultivation of the observant mind that explores, questions, and is comfortable with stillness is something that can be communicated. The problem for developing educational models capable of this type of teaching is that a different approach to teaching and learning is required—one that involves both teacher and student in a common dynamic.

In the language of Maria Montessori we, "educate the human potential". The Theosophical Society was founded with three main objects, of which the most important was, in the language of 1875, 'Brotherhood', or 'Unity' and 'Oneness of life'. One of the other objects relates to the investigation of 'powers' latent in human beings. Frequently these powers have been interpreted as psychic in nature, an idea which, while true at a certain level, diminishes a deeper understanding. What might be thought of as paranormal becomes completely normal for anyone who attains a certain level of insight.

Krishnamurti, though endowed with such abilities, rightly rejected the desire to place any focus on them, seeing them as yet another binding, personal distraction from a genuine understanding. The real powers, the powers worthy of an educational effort are utterly different in nature. Compassion, truthfulness,

kindness, meditation, courage are the powers latent within us—powers which our relentless conditioning has relegated to the realm of ‘potential’, ‘latent’, and inactive. But what can we do about it?

The question which K asked, and which we are asking as we begin our educational attempt, is ‘What is education?’, and the corollary question of ‘How do we educate?’ A literal sense of what it means to educate is the direction of our effort. Most of us who have had the experience of formal education share a common background of experience. From its earliest stages the process involves a separative approach of teacher and student in which it is the student who is to be acted upon. He is lacking in knowledge and must be filled. She is unacquainted with proper behaviour and must be shaped. They must be periodically tested to ensure that their conditioning is effective. They are compared and rewarded according to the degree of their demonstrated embrace of this conditioning. Furthermore, they are trained to fear the consequences of inadequate acceptance, or ‘inappropriate’ questioning of this teaching process.

By the time we arrive at the higher levels of institutional education we have not only become fully adapted to this process, but find we have developed a certain dependence, a vested interest in furthering this approach. Our career, acceptance in the community, even our sense of self-worth become so intimately linked to the conditioned view of who we are and what is of value, that any movement in an alternative direction can be fearful. Although it is a problem faced at different stages of life, often in middle age one starts to feel with an increasing severity that neither the training of a lifetime, nor the path on which it has placed us, has led to happiness. One starts to feel that, throughout the process, no guidelines or instruction have been directed toward the most fundamental desire of every person, the attainment of happiness, and the search for meaning.

Krishnamurti once commented that “It is no sign of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society”. The educational process from its inception should not be about pouring facts, information,

and behaviours into students, but should be focused on the root meaning of the word ‘educate’, which is ‘to draw out’. We have to draw out the hidden potentials of life and love. It is these that ennoble facts with meaning.

At a certain point one looks at the world one inhabits and becomes acutely aware of its problems. For some it results in despair, for others the problems—personal, societal, environmental—can seem so overwhelming, and one feels so ill-equipped, that denial is the preferred response. Others willingly embark on a process of ‘unlearning’—identifying and removing the obscuring imprints of a lifetime of misdirected education, so that the freshness, openness, and clear seeing of an unfettered mind can reveal itself.

Modern day education necessarily involves more than unfolding of character, self-confidence, and movement toward happiness. Academic excellence is a requirement, as is the need to prepare students to function in today’s world—motor skills development, conceptual awareness across disciplines, in-depth exposure to arts, sciences, and sports. Most important is the need to prepare students to meet and redirect the rapidly mounting consequences of our prevailing educational approach which has pitted people against each other and against the natural world.

What is unlearning? Krishnamurti envisioned a world of psychologically free individuals—people capable of responding to life in an effortless manner, beyond the laboured, thought-laden processes of a thoroughly conditioned mind. Those who found their way to his teaching normally did so long after the world and its ways had laid its heavy hand on them, requiring a tremendous effort in order to become effortless—to simply observe the flight of a bird, the smell of the rain, the movement of thought. On one occasion in Saanen, Switzerland, after seeing the same faces in the audience year after year, K asked, “Why are you still here?” After hearing his message repeatedly, the question he was asking was, “Why haven’t you understood it yet?” This is the dilemma of unlearning.



# The Sacred and the Everyday

MEENAKSHI THAPAN



first encountered Krishnamurti when I was eighteen years old, studying Psychology at Delhi University. I was a young undergraduate, in search of another way of life, filled with confusion and yearning to be part of ‘something else’ which might help me understand what life is all about. I was clueless as to how I might go about this and wrapped myself up in traditional ways of approaching what to my young mind appeared as the sacred. The pursuit of religion in an organized form was all that was available to me in my limited world of comprehending the sacred. An encounter with Krishnamurti and several weeks spent in his presence revealed that the sacred does not lie out there, to pursue which we need to abandon our lives; it is in fact present in the everyday, in our relationships, and understanding ourselves is the first step in this journey.

Over the next few years, listening to Krishnamurti at Chennai, Rajghat, Delhi and Rishi Valley, I began to see for myself that the sacred is not something ‘set apart’, in another realm that we must relentlessly pursue. The sacred may be viewed as unique and indeed transcendent; but it is present in our ordinary lives, in social relationships, and in the tumult and chaos of our present. At the same time, it is undoubtedly transcendent because it has a quality that connects us to a realm of virtuosity, morality, and well-being. It is in this sense that we may view the sacred as a secular space empty of religious content.

### **The sacred in our lives**

The sacred in the here and now, in our present, in our turbulent experience of the everyday, is suffused not only with our feelings of achievement and success but also with our pain, suffering and alienation. In other words, we are fragmented beings and as Krishnamurti puts it, “our relationship is a process of self-isolation; each one is building a wall of self-enclosure, which excludes love, only breeding ill-will and misery”. This self-enclosure

may be individual, or a collective self-enclosure, and it results in the formation of walls of *othering* and exclusion in terms of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, caste, and other intersecting categories.

To overcome our restlessness and sense of alienation, we spend our time in search of the sacred by looking for salvation, 'self-realisation', seeking out a guru or self-improvement classes, in the hope of attaining individual enlightenment. Krishnamurti rejects this process as striving towards the attainment of value as it were. Krishnamurti invites us to explore the question, what does it mean 'to be', not 'to become' through a kind of spiritual striving, but simply 'to be'.

This is possible if we understand that our life is connected with others, whether these include other humans, nature, objects, or ideas. We are not distinct individuals separated by caste, class, race, gender, ethnicity, region or religion but are more importantly, connected to one another as humans. The idea of the transcendent as being present in the everyday world, in relationships of interconnectedness, and interdependence, is the one that bestows on us the ability to view our relationship with the world as extending outwards from our small, petty selves. Krishnamurti has asserted time and again, "we are the world and the world is us" (1973: 66). We need to understand this and experience this viscerally, emotionally. "To feel that, to be totally committed to it, and to nothing else, brings about a feeling of great responsibility and an action that must not be fragmentary but whole" (1973:66).

To nurture the ability to extend the boundaries of the self, outward to humanity, especially those 'others' who appear so different from ourselves, becomes imperative. In developing empathy, compassion, at a visceral, emotional as well as at social, political levels, it is possible to transform lives in society. Such an understanding of the self in relationship in the everyday is an expression of the experience of the transcendent in everyday life. This understanding will not however be without struggle—as there are exigencies shaped by the intersecting categories of race, gender, religion, and

caste. This struggle, and the contradictions it gives rise to, will undoubtedly influence the shaping of a truly global outlook.

### **Education as a transformative process**

For Krishnamurti, the major means of developing a global outlook, and a spirit of connectedness in the everyday, is through education that focuses on not only the development of cognitive abilities but also on a process of self-inquiry and observation, on developing an understanding of our psychological processes as educators and as students.

The question this raises is, what kind of education does such a perspective envisage? The American educator Howard Gardner, as part of his work on multiple intelligences (Gardner 1999), considers the possibility of ‘moral intelligence’ and emphasizes the importance of education and schooling, alongside the family and the community, for the development of such a morality. The ‘moral’ here is however not any kind of dogma to be enforced by religion. It is more a matter of ‘individual conscience’, celebrating an individual’s ability to cognize her responsibility to the earth and to humanity. The moral domain in this sense is indicative of personal agency whereby the individual has a sense of purpose in the context of relating to others and to their life processes. If the moral is about individual agency, individuals would necessarily assume responsibility in different ways.

To seek to nurture the moral as a form of intelligence through educational processes and practices implies building what we may call ethical subjectivities. In viewing the individual as charged with moral agency, and the role of education in developing ethical subjectivities, I am not however advocating that there is once again a striving for the sacred or a reaching out to a ‘superior’ moral phenomenon to beget a change. It is in the everyday that both the moral and the change lie. Educational institutions inhere in society and it is imperative that we view education as an exercise in

building moral agency as much as in imparting knowledge and skills.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim too was simultaneously committed to an understanding of the psychological bases of the child that took into account 'altruism' as an equal partner to 'selfishness' (1961: 217). He sought to instil the importance of the view that even within our egotism, there is always 'something other than ourselves' (1961: 224). In this duality, there is the possibility of making the child truly social and ready for collective life through the discipline and rigour (albeit, without punishment) of the school environment and the curriculum. This points to the significance of the school's role in promoting ideas and values that may be absorbed and appreciated by the intrinsic goodness in the child. Such a view emphasizes the importance of schools as not only socializing agents, but of providing a moral compass in society, and points to the urgency with which we need to foreground and recognize this aspect of schooling in everyday life.

The ability to realize a child's 'goodness' does not however rest on young children alone, with some help from an educator, as classical educational thought tells us. Significantly, it rests on the ability of schools and teachers to provide an ethos, a culture, wherein cognition and emotion are both equally valued and nurtured so as to enable the development of a morality that is not steeped in religious diktats, nationalism, or petty social virtues, but rests on a sense of the 'moral worth' of individuals. School cultures must enable the development of a secular morality that engenders empathy, compassion, and humanism.

Most educational institutions have taken on the role of merely imparting skills and knowledge in different academic subjects over a period of time to various age cohorts that pass through them. Krishnamurti set up schools where, apart from paying attention to the pedagogic processes and activities associated with certification, there is a simultaneous effort among both students and teachers to

engage with their emotions, behaviour and understand their own agency in the public domain.

One of the aims of the Krishnamurti schools is to ensure that students develop a global outlook. To this end, there is an attempt to not only enrich the curriculum with local knowledge and contexts but to also bring about a deeper understanding of the fragile ecosystem and a consciousness about the need for change at a global level. The idea of translocation is central to this—it is the coming together of the local and the global, the earth and humanity, the individual and the collective, for developing greater consciousness about the fragility of the ecosystem and our attitude towards it. I use the term ‘translocation’ to emphasize the transcending of local or national boundaries, individual selves and self-centred attitudes and goals. It also implies the opening out of the self towards humanity in a very diverse, global sense.

It is possible to translate such a perspective to the cultural context of a school. Since Krishnamurti held that the transcendent is to be discovered through relentless questioning of everyday thinking and the emotions embedded in thought, the boundary between the sacred and the profane, between the transcendent and the worldly, is permeable. There is a fluidity and openness through which we need to comprehend our relationships with others, not merely through a rational understanding but with our emotions and senses. This could enable each of us to experience the sense of interconnectedness, which is the basis of true morality.

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# The Core of the Teachings

**J KRISHNAMURTI**

When asked in 1974 by his biographer, Mary Lutyens, to define his teachings Krishnamurti wrote the following:

The core of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the statement he made in 1929 when he said Truth is a pathless land.

Man cannot come to it through any organization, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique. He has to find it through the mirror of relationship, through the understanding of the contents of his own mind, through observation and not through intellectual analysis or introspective dissection.

Man has built in himself images as a fence of security—religious, political, personal. These manifest as symbols, ideas, beliefs. The burden of these images dominates man's thinking, his relationships, and his daily life. These images are the causes of our problems for they divide man from man. His perception of life is shaped by the concepts already established in his mind. The content of his consciousness is his entire existence. The individuality is the name, the form and superficial culture he acquires from tradition and environment. The uniqueness of man does not lie in the superficial but in complete freedom from the content of his consciousness, which is common to all humanity. So he is not an individual.

Freedom is not a reaction; freedom is not choice. It is man's pretence that because he has choice he is free. Freedom is pure observation without direction, without fear of punishment and reward. Freedom is without motive; freedom is not at the end of the evolution of man but lies in the first step of his existence. In observation one begins to discover the lack of freedom. Freedom is found in the choiceless awareness of our daily existence and activity.

Thought is time. Thought is born of experience and knowledge, which are inseparable from time and the past. Time is the psychological enemy of man. Our action is based on knowledge and therefore time, so man is always a slave to the past. Thought is ever limited and so we live in constant conflict and struggle. There is no psychological evolution. When man becomes aware of the movement of his own thoughts, he will see the division between the thinker and thought, the observer and the observed, the experiencer and the experience. He will discover that this division is an illusion. Then only is there pure observation which is insight without any shadow of the past or of time. This timeless insight brings about a deep, radical mutation in the mind.

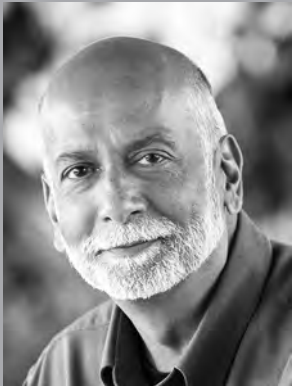
Total negation is the essence of the positive. When there is negation of all those things that thought has brought about psychologically, only then is there love, which is compassion and intelligence.

London, 21 October 1980



# Why I Value Krishnamurti's Teachings

HILLARY RODRIGUES



**A**lthough I am a professor of Religious Studies, my fondness for Krishnamurti's teachings is not solely academic. About forty years ago, I worked with passion at a Krishnamurti school in Canada, before going on to a career in academia, during which I have written books and articles on Krishnamurti's thought. However, I value Krishnamurti's teachings for what they did for me long before my teaching stint and formal research. This is because, to me, the academic study of Krishnamurti's teachings, and even the remarkable efforts and activities that occur daily at the Krishnamurti Foundations and schools, pale in comparison to the value of validating his insights for oneself in one's own life.

In my early twenties, in the final years of my BSc studies in Chemistry in Canada, I began to grow disenchanted with science's ability to point me to a meaningful life. I held rationality and science in high regard, and greatly valued systematic, logical thinking. I still do. But science, despite its extraordinary achievements and promise for future generations, had no compelling answers for me in my personal quest for happiness in my lifetime. I had already abandoned the prospect of finding any comfort in my conventional religious upbringing, which I experienced as a conglomerate of unbelievable beliefs, hollow rituals, platitudes, and guilt-inducing teachings that appraised me as inherently flawed. Since this was the early 1970s, like many in my generation I had been exposed to counter-culture literature, such as the writings of Carlos Castaneda and Zen Buddhism, and Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*. These sources assured me my existential uncertainty was not abnormal and recommended a pivotal realization or shift in ordinary perception as a remedy. Ever on the lookout for popular philosophy/psychology self-help volumes in local bookstores, I first noticed Krishnamurti books there, but initially avoided them. Since I was born in India, I was sceptical of the western fascination with

Eastern gurus and would rather have received gleanings of wisdom from an Alan Watts or Thomas Merton than another Maharishi or Swami, or some guy named Krishnamurti. But, one day, desperate to read something new, I succumbed to buying a Krishnamurti book. Unlike someone anxious to lap up the words of a beloved teacher, I first read Krishnamurti wanting to find something to disagree with. I wanted to say to others, "Oh yes, I've read a bit of Krishnamurti, and I don't really like this or that about what he is saying." You can imagine my surprise when Krishnamurti not only disarmed my negativity but left me repeatedly resonating with his observations. I found his words very accessible. He spoke in clear, simple sentences, free of any foreign religious jargon. And quite importantly, he said I did not have to accept anything he said that did not align with my own experience and understanding. I liked that immediately.

I liked that book so much that I passed it to my friends to read, and went out and bought another, and then another. I had only read three Krishnamurti books by the time I set out from home in the direction of Asia, on what I think of as my Siddhartha quest. My main take-away from my limited readings of Krishnamurti at the time was the enormous value he, like others I had read, placed on attaining a profound psychological realization. To me, Krishnamurti stressed self-reliance, and pointed out the limitations of joining religious organizations, following teachers (including himself), adopting mechanical meditative techniques, and so on. Instead of helping, these could be hindrances, and become instances of the blind leading the blind! This was painfully evident in the many examples of spiritual teachers who led gullible seekers to terrible personal and social actions. When reading Krishnamurti, I found such pointers mostly sensible and several of them clearly stuck with me. In my years of subsequent wandering in search of the frustratingly elusive realization, I encountered appealing opportunities to join Buddhist monasteries or the communities of popular Indian

religious teachers. I am sure that Krishnamurti's words bolstered my decisions to avoid joining those captivating groups. For that, among other things, I am grateful. I honestly can say that I was not following Krishnamurti's teachings, because I don't recall him providing any method to follow. However, my observations had made it painfully clear to me that I was in the grip of a relentlessly thinking mind. So, thereafter, his encouragement to truly find out if thought could end became the only option that made any sense to me in my desperate search.

Years later, I worked at a Krishnamurti school, and eventually returned to university to pursue graduate degrees in the study of religion. But these activities were no longer part of my search. I did not and do not conduct research and write about Krishnamurti's teachings in order to one day discover some hidden secret to the truth to which he points deeply embedded within them. To me, his message is plain to see, everywhere in his words, and verifiable for oneself. In a lifelong career spent studying the religions of humanity, I continue to regard Krishnamurti's teachings as among the most relentless and beneficial pointers to what I have found most valuable in life. My academic writings are simply efforts to share my reflections on his teachings, as honestly and accurately as I can. These contributions take different forms. They may analyze the teachings to reveal internal structures. They may try to explain seemingly paradoxical perspectives. They may draw comparisons to or find contrasts with other similar teachings. They are mostly written for the benefit of those who, like myself, appreciate academic analyses. There is a part of me that hopes this work might inspire some readers in their own searches for a pivotal and radically transformative insight into the nature of thought. But I also know that they can have the unintended effect of encouraging more thinking about Krishnamurti and the analysis of his teachings, enhancing the focus on him rather than on oneself in relationship with the world.

To me, Krishnamurti was adamantly against anyone following him blindly, and I would venture to say he was even against thoughtful followers. Consider this striking comment on influence in one of his talks:

All influence is evil, as authority is evil. There is no good influence or bad influence, as all influence shapes the mind, corrupts the mind.<sup>1</sup>

Krishnamurti wanted us to discover the truth about our own conditioned and conflicted lives. He spent a lifetime encouraging people to do so. He ended that same talk about influence by saying:

So, you begin to discover for yourself how extraordinarily slavish thought is to a word. And you will find, if you will go into it very deeply, that there is no thought without a word. And you will find, if you go still deeper, that where there is a thinker and a thought there is a contradiction, and every form of experience only divides and strengthens the thinker and the thought as a separate process. So, it is only when this whole process which I have explained from the beginning till now, is understood, examined, watched, that the mind comes out of this social, environmental, verbal structure as an uncorrupted, clear, sane, rational mind. It is only then that the mind is no longer influenced, it is completely empty. It is only such a mind that can go beyond Time, and beyond all Space. It is only then the Immeasurable, the Unknowable, can come into being.<sup>2</sup>

To Krishnamurti, such a discovery was not theoretical. “You will find,” he says. Even so, there is a widespread sentiment, tacitly in circulation, that nobody achieved the insight to which he points. It is an open challenge that is yet to be met. Did Krishnamurti spend his life pointing to a realization that he alone attained, insisting on the immense value of that realization for everyone, while knowing that it was virtually unattainable? Did he teach only to illustrate how extraordinarily special he was, knowing “the Immeasurable,

the Unknowable,” and so on, with “an uncorrupted, clear, sane, rational mind,” and thereby propping himself up to a status worthy of veneration? Surely not. Surely, he surmised that his discovery was available to any sincere seeker.

According to Buddhist tradition, right after the Buddha departed the earth, 500 Arhats gathered to compile his teachings. An Arhat is a Buddhist, who, following the Buddha's teachings, attains Buddhahood (i.e., nirvana, enlightenment). Thus, the Buddhist tradition insinuates that the Buddha was highly successful in his lifetime at pointing others to enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhism contends that Pratyeka-Buddhas are those who are somehow inspired to attain enlightenment, and do so not by following Buddhism but in their own ways. After all, Siddhartha Gautama did it that way, becoming a Buddha without following anybody else's prescribed path. By analogy, Krishnamurti encourages us to discover pivotal psychological transformation without following anyone, including him. During his lifetime, the Buddha only travelled in a relatively small region of the Ganges river valley, and probably only spoke to a fraction of the number of people that Krishnamurti must have reached through his books, worldwide travels, and discourses. Writing in 1976, before the explosive proliferation of talks circulating via digital media, the philosophers Troxell and Snyder surmised that Krishnamurti had been, “heard and read by more people than any individual philosopher who is part of the contemporary academic tradition.”<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to imagine, and probably an error to conclude, that among the countless persons who heard his message throughout the world for half a century no one was adequately inspired to attend to and come upon the insight to which Krishnamurti pointed.

Why then does one repeatedly encounter the tacit idea that despite Krishnamurti's long, full life of patient, and arguably intelligent, teachings, ‘nobody got it’? I would like to somewhat playfully and roughly sketch out some lines of thinking in response

to this question. First of all, Krishnamurti did not want to form a religious tradition with a lineage of authorized, authoritative ‘psychologically transformed’ teachers, going out to proselytize ‘his’ message, and to whom ‘seekers’ could come to ask for advice or official acknowledgement of their own realizations. The Foundations direct seekers to Krishnamurti’s teachings, which in turn point the seekers to themselves. Were Krishnamurti to have told anyone, privately or publicly, “you have got it”, that person would have become the second patriarch of a Krishnamurti lineage and tradition, and be hounded by would-be disciples. Krishnamurti’s final recorded comments, of course, have fuelled these ideas, because they may be interpreted as he himself saying that nobody got it and that he was exceptional.<sup>4</sup> However, unless we concede that Krishnamurti knew the states of consciousness of each and every human being on the planet, there is no reasonable way for him to have known if anyone else had attained the realization to which he pointed. So, it is unlikely that this is what he meant. Moreover, it is also unlikely such persons would have sought him out to authorize the validity of their realizations, as is done in Zen Buddhist monasteries and other traditions. Mind you, such authorization is done simply to propagate the lineage, or to inhibit someone who may be deluded about their ‘enlightenment’ from becoming the tradition’s torch-bearer. In many Buddhist schools, falsely claiming to have attained nirvana, and purposely misleading others, can lead to expulsion from the Sangha, the community of monks. So, it is rare for Buddhist monks to proclaim having attained enlightenment. However, Krishnamurti left behind no lineage or community from which one may be expelled. So, we may surmise that people who were inspired by Krishnamurti and who may have attained the realization to which he pointed would likely continue to live with or without public assertions of their pivotal insights. Keeping quiet about it would clearly be the more peaceful option. Opening one’s

mouth might elicit all sorts of reactions from others, many of them unpleasant.

To properly explore whether or not someone who attained the pivotal transformative insight to which Krishnamurti points would, should, or could assert it would require a separate essay. There circulates the implicit notion that since there is no unconditioned 'I', for someone to assert realization is a mark of delusion. Perhaps, but most apparently-realized teachers, including Krishnamurti, asserted their realizations. Therefore, perhaps holding onto the idea that one cannot, would not, or should not assert realization is simply an instance of one's own thought-fixated entrapment. Even so, we may also reasonably assume that there are people that have been inspired by Krishnamurti, who are truly deluded about the nature and depth of their realizations, erroneously believing that they have fully grasped his teachings. Some of these may also keep silent, but offer judgments on others. It is conceivable that some segments from within both those groups (the realized and the deluded) have gone on to teach about their realizations, perhaps initiating some new lineages or inhibiting them from forming, just as Krishnamurti attempted to do.

Since many people worldwide, but particularly in Asia, believe in reincarnation, it would not at all be unusual for someone to claim to be a reincarnation of Krishnamurti. Speculations about reincarnations of Krishnamurti's brother, Nitya, and others who were close to Krishnamurti circulate in some Theosophical circles. Krishnamurti's final recorded message undercuts any such attempts at assertions about his reincarnated consciousness or even that his consciousness might be channelled psychically. He asserted that no portion of 'Krishnamurti consciousness' would endure after his death, or return like that of a reincarnating bodhi-sattva. To me, Krishnamurti's final recorded message was partly intended to circumvent anyone from garnering spiritual authority

by purporting any sort of attachment of their own consciousnesses and/or teachings to his. Thus far, he has been successful, because I am unaware of anyone making any such claims effectively.

Of course, in spite of this, 'Krishnamurti-ism' may be a tradition that inadvertently develops from those following Krishnamurti, against his wishes, under the guise of trying to understand or explicate him more and more deeply. Both the Krishnamurti Foundations and the Krishnamurti schools run the risk of inadvertently fuelling this phenomenon, while struggling to exercise their mandates effectively. It is extremely challenging to make Krishnamurti's teachings widely available or apply his principles of education, while simultaneously generating adequate funds to sustain themselves, without encouraging a 'dependency' on Krishnamurti. And, I have already pointed out how academic studies, such as my own, may also unintentionally nourish this development. Let's face it, if one concedes that the machinations of our conflicted, conditioned, and selfish natures are ever present and active, and incapable of radical change, they eventually could only collectively produce variations of the traditional, divisive, ideological, and conceptually-fashioned, self-serving entities that have existed in the past. If no one has changed, and no one can change, there is little hope for success.

I will conclude by reiterating some other seemingly paradoxical features posed by the profound psychological transformation to which Krishnamurti points, the so-called 'challenge of change' For one, Krishnamurti dismisses the value of 'trying.'

A mind that is not toiling, that is not trying to become something socially or spiritually, that is completely nothing—it is only such a mind that can receive the new.<sup>5</sup>

Krishnamurti urges us ultimately not to struggle, to 'try' to understand him or his pointers with greater and greater intellectual

depth, but to see ourselves as we really are at this moment. We generally do not pay adequate attention to how our thoughts and feelings affect our perceptions. We move away from careful observation of our 'inner' reality, moment by moment, and reinforce our identity through how we analyze and appraise 'outer' reality. Even though we may be looking at, listening to, or reading someone else, such as Krishnamurti or this article, everything is mediated through our own minds. By remaining sensitively aware of whatever is arising within us at this moment, we may see deeply into the play of our conditioning and self-centredness. 'Not understanding' Krishnamurti, or even 'deepening one's understanding' of him, are among the ways in which the thinking mind sustains the self. Similarly, even 'understanding', or purporting to 'explicate Krishnamurti's teachings', as in this article, are other self-creating and self-sustaining activities. So, too, is explicating our own understanding in our own words. On seeing our predicament, we mistakenly think that the conditioned self can become unconditioned through the right kind of lifestyle or knowledge. This fuels our search through our readings, analyses, diets, exercises, social actions, and our host of other self-, social-, and spiritual-improvement regimens. We repeatedly fail to see the mechanisms of conditioning in everything we think and do. Even if we realize that lifestyle and knowledge won't free us, we latch onto the idea that a profound psychological insight will grant us freedom from conditioning. After all, for those of us attached to Krishnamurti's words, isn't that what he seems to be saying? This sets us on our 'spiritual journey' in search of the pivotal realization that will yield the unconditioned mind.

Consider these words by Krishnamurti, "If you are at all serious, the question whether it is possible to uncondition the mind must be one of the most fundamental." And he continues by saying, "If you start out with a formula that one will never be unconditioned,

all enquiry ceases, one has already resisted and answered the problem and there it ends.”<sup>6</sup> So clearly, our minds either give up on the question by jumping to a negative conclusion, or jump to the notion that the mind can be unconditioned. In actuality, both these are conclusions, even if the latter appears like an open-ended inquiry. Krishnamurti notes our predicament. “I know that my mind is conditioned; and how am I to free my mind from conditioning when the entity that tries to free it is also conditioned? Do you understand the issue? When a conditioned mind realizes that it is conditioned and wishes to uncondition itself, that very wish is also conditioned; so what is the mind to do?”<sup>7</sup> However, he then elaborates by inquiring, “What is the state of the mind when it knows that it is conditioned and realizes that any effort it makes to uncondition itself is still conditioned?”<sup>8</sup> And in no uncertain terms, he then answers that question saying, “When you see the truth that whatever the conditioned mind does to free itself, it is still conditioned, there is the cessation of all such effort, and it is this perception of what is true that is the liberating factor.”<sup>9</sup> This stopping of effort is not the capitulation of a pessimistic conclusion, or the optimism of hope for freedom in a yet-to-occur realization. It is the instantaneous and realistic freedom of insight. Krishnamurti urges us to begin from freedom to remain with ‘what-is’, ever aware of the creative unfolding of the unknown, as experience and thought leave ripples of the known in its wake. Is this ‘liberating factor’ completely unavailable, or extremely rare and inaccessible? Consider these words of his:

You must begin, however little, to be conscious, to be aware, and this you can be when you talk, when you laugh, when you come into contact with people, or when you are still. This awareness becomes a flame, and this flame consumes all fear which causes isolation. The mind must reveal itself spontaneously to itself. And this is not given only to a few, nor is it an impossibility.<sup>10</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Public Talk 3, Bombay (Mumbai), India, 28 February 1962
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Eugene A. Troxell and William S. Snyder, *Making Sense of Things: An Invitation to Philosophy*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976, pp. 148–49.
- 4 See Krishnamurti's last recorded words in Mary Lutyens, *Krishnamurti: The Open Door*, London: John Murray, 1988, pp. 148–49, where he speaks more about his own life and realization than that of others, saying, "You won't find another body like this, or that supreme intelligence operating in a body for many hundred years. . . They'll all pretend or try to imagine they can get into touch with that. Perhaps they will somewhat if they live the Teachings. But nobody has done it. Nobody. And so that's that."
- 5 Ojai 3rd Public Talk 13th July 1955
- 6 Part IV, Chapter 1, Brockwood Park, 3rd Public Talk, 12 September 1970, 'The Unconditioned Mind'
- 7 New Delhi, 6th Public Talk, 31 October 1956.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ommen, 3rd Public Talk, 4 August 1937







# Don't look at me! Test it out!\*

THOMAS METZINGER



**F**or the last two decades I have taught as a professor of philosophy at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität in Mainz, Germany. Throughout my academic career I have mostly specialized in the area of analytical philosophy of mind and cognitive science. This has mainly involved working on theories of consciousness, self-consciousness, and subjectivity in a strongly interdisciplinary manner, always keeping an eye on the latest developments in related fields like neuroscience, empirical psychology, or artificial intelligence. I have travelled a lot, have interacted with researchers all over the world, and all in all have taught philosophy in eight German universities.

If you live the life of an academic philosopher, you meet a lot of truly great minds. You regularly encounter extremely sharp and intelligent people, women and men who are much smarter than you have ever been or could ever be yourself. Sometimes you may not even grasp *how* much smarter than you some of your colleagues actually are. But you quickly learn to feel humbled by intellects much clearer and faster than your own. It is certainly true that in academic philosophy, the overall psychodynamics and the social patterns of interaction are often highly pathological. Yet still, it is here that many of humankind's greatest minds gather. Here, you will meet truly impressive scholars, researchers whose knowledge is profound and substantial, deep thinkers with an overview of the history of philosophy and a command of the canonical literature that is utterly unbelievable to an ordinary person. (I sometimes secretly call these people 'libraries on legs'.) You will occasionally witness experts in formal logic and other highly technical subfields who are so brilliant that only a few can follow them. Some of them live lonely lives, because they operate on levels of abstraction so rarefied that few even understand the fundamental importance of the philosophical problems they are trying to solve. And then

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\*I am greatly indebted to Dr Emily Troscianko for editorial help with this contribution.

there are some fortunate ones for whom, by chance, it has all come together—gifted, motivated, and highly intelligent individuals who had the privilege of being born in rich countries during times of peace, young philosophers in affluent countries who received an excellent education in some of the best universities in the world and who were brought into contact with the right kind of mentors at exactly the right moment. Many of us may not be aware how, thanks to systematic and sustained efforts to improve educational systems, the numbers of these fortunate few have been steadily increasing since World War II. But there are now many smart kids around. They are impressive in their own way; they teach the old folks humility—and some of them are shaping up to be the great minds of the future.

Jiddu Krishnamurti was the greatest mind I have ever met. K was not an academic philosopher, and he fulfils almost none of the criteria for philosophical greatness, some of which I hinted at above. If you have never been in his physical presence, listening to his talks in Switzerland, in India, or anywhere else in the world, it will be hard for you to understand why I should say something like this about him. But he *conveyed* something. If you just have his books you will find them slightly unsystematic and repetitive—and if you are an academic philosopher it will be easy for you to isolate dozens of contradictions and all sorts of conceptual ambiguities that may border on unintelligibility. Most of all, you might find K's teachings 'thetic'—he certainly *says* things, but he never really presents an *argument*.

I talked to K all alone only once. This happened in Chalet Tannegg in Gstaad, and it may have been the most helpful personal instruction I have received in my life. I had written a letter to him and completely unexpectedly Mary Zimbalist ('Maria Zimperlich' as we called her at the time) invited me over to meet him. While I was waiting, his personal physician Dr Parchure had a look at me, and I still have fond memories of all the things I learned from him.

He straightened out my *asanas*, adapted my *pranayama* by integrating proper *kapalbathi* exercises into it, forced me to do different kinds of stride jumps with him, and urged me to grow comfrey for my asthma—which I later did in my untidy little hippie garden at home. In my early twenties, I was an arrogant brat who thought of himself as probably the greatest yogi of all time—and the brat was baffled and humbled by how somebody in his fifties could have such a perfect body and be so much more knowledgeable and generally advanced than the brat. Dr Parchure was an impressive man. Visiting him and his wife outside of Pune in November 2013, after some thirty years, was a great pleasure and meant a lot to me.

I will not share the conversation I had with K, because it was simply too personal and intimate. But one thing that can be shared is this simple point, which I have never forgotten, “Everything that creates a sense of effort is wrong.” And I have never known a parting “Good luck, sir!” touch me as deeply as his did.

The main function of a good teacher is to deflect all attention from himself and to bring the disciple into direct contact with his or her own inner teacher. Perhaps what I am most grateful to K for is that he liberated me from the search for a teacher so early in my life. Searching for a teacher—for the *right* kind of teacher—is an obsession that many people get tangled up in. For some, it lasts a lifetime, the delusion that you can only really ‘make progress’ or ‘take the leap’ if you find someone who has already done it and whom you can totally trust—it’s rather like searching for the one great love of your life, that single human being who will make everything fall into place. This creation of a ‘seeker’, a ‘disciple’, or a ‘devotee’ frequently kicks in at an early stage, and it is one of the subtler ways in which the ego-mechanism begins to protect and sustain its own existence once it realizes there is a threat. The threat is created by the discovery of effortless mindfulness, by the dawning insight that, ‘observing without an observer’ might actually be something that already happens all the time.

If you look into the best current-day psychology and theoretical neuroscience, you will find that there are two major mechanisms by which the human self-model constantly recreates and stabilizes itself, fragmenting the ever-fresh space of pure awareness and contracting the primordial state of observation-without-an-observer into an individual first-person perspective. One is mirroring itself in another human being, projecting desires, hopes, and fears into it, attempting to establish a dyad or even a larger social context in which it can sustain itself. The self-model automatically tries to couple itself with other self-models, as the node of a network that helps maintain self-esteem and self-worth, and that, ideally, provides some clever form of mortality denial. The second mechanism has, metaphorically, been called ‘predicting oneself into existence’. By constantly hallucinating goals and making plans for the future, the human brain continuously designs what scientists call ‘action policies’ and tries to change the world in order to make it fit an internal model of reality—a process philosophers and neuroscientists today call ‘embodied active inference’. This process crucially and systematically involves *misrepresentation*, attenuating bodily self-awareness at the very moment of action initiation, redirecting attention to a virtual self, and thereby losing touch with the present moment. The inner experience we call ‘the conscious self’ is created by exactly this process of trying to expand into the future. It is an attempt to make the mind ‘temporally thick’, to successfully predict and bring about future selves, by superimposing a self-fulfilling prophecy onto the timelessness of the present moment. It is an attempt to control an online hallucination. None of this is our fault, there is no reason to despise ourselves in a moral sense—we *are* this process, which in turn is a result of the process of evolution by natural selection. However, the deeper philosophical point is that as long as the self-model is ‘transparent’, as long as we do not directly experience it *as* a model, it will create the phenomenology of identification. We will feel that we *are* this, the content of

Don't look at me! Test it out!

our current self-model. We will have no choice but to act out the content of the model. I think that one of the things K was trying to make people see is that the whole process of creating a teacher-disciple relationship just creates more identification, an even deeper form of entanglement and immersion. The same is true of conjuring up the romantic idea of a 'path' with an oh-so-serious spiritual seeker travelling on it, including complicated action policies and a hallucinated final goal-state. The idea of a 'path' creates a new self-model, a spiritual ego continuously predicting itself into existence.

When I first arrived in Saanen, in the Bernese *Oberland* of Switzerland, I was a politically radical, critical, and sceptical young man. I immediately thought K's hairdo was ridiculous—an obvious sign of vanity and bodily attachment. But, having listened to other Indian masters who narcissistically presented themselves to their devotees in a sea of flowers, often sitting on some huge sofa all covered in white silk, I was impressed that someone of his age could actually sit on a simple wooden folding chair, wearing a plain, clean blue shirt and trousers. He first won me over when, answering a question about how to live a good life in an insane society, he dryly said, "If you buy a stamp, you support war". Here was someone who was in touch with reality, who saw things clearly. What really convinced me was when one time he looked at the crowd in the tent and said something to the effect of, "Am I speaking out of an infinite silence or am I just a confused old man? You will never know. You are all alone in this world."

K certainly hurt me. After first encountering him, many of my old psychosomatic symptoms (which had dissolved after three or four years of regular meditation practice) came back, and it took me years to re-stabilize. This old man certainly pulled the rug out from under my slightly complacent *sadhana*-feet—and not just mine. He shocked a lot of us and plunged some people into crisis. A while ago I had some interesting conversations with Pathik Wadhwa in Germany and in Ojai, exploring the question of

whether some of his listeners might have been traumatized by his charisma, developing a life-long addiction to the speaker himself and being unable to really *look* at the things he was so desperately and passionately trying to point us to. Have I simply been blinded by his charisma? How do I know that K was really the source of that ineffable quality? Might I simply have happened to be particularly receptive at that time and place in my life, and might my enduring conclusion of K being the greatest mind I have ever met be slightly delusional, some sort of *post hoc* attribution? As human beings, we are certainly all vulnerable to this kind of delusion. I remember talks of K's in Vasanta Vihar in Madras, where he relentlessly lashed out at all forms of religious or spiritual authority, at Gurus of all kinds, and ruthlessly investigated the illusions involved in the teacher-disciple relationship. It came to the point where he actually stopped himself in the middle of the talk and said, "I am amazed that nobody throws a brick or a chair at me!" After ninety minutes, when he was trying to make his way off the stage and out, some of his Indian listeners rushed forward and immediately began to prostrate in front of him or hold babies up to be blessed—as if they hadn't heard a single word.

I loved the atmosphere in Madras, when during his evening talks the sun set and the birds went to sleep in the trees. Sometimes there was a moon at the end of it. I remember how one evening I walked out with a quiet mind and an elated mood. As the gates to the street were opened, we were immediately attacked by a group of aggressive beggars, led by an old woman in very bad physical shape, saliva drooling from her half-open mouth with very few teeth left. She rammed an old tin bowl right into my stomach pit and firmly held it here, nailing me to the spot. Her eyes, glowing like coals, stared right into my deepest core, making clear that she demanded to be *seen* and that she would not tolerate any attempt to escape or ignore her. What does it really mean to be in touch with reality? Who or what is it that sees *what is*?

Don't look at me! Test it out!

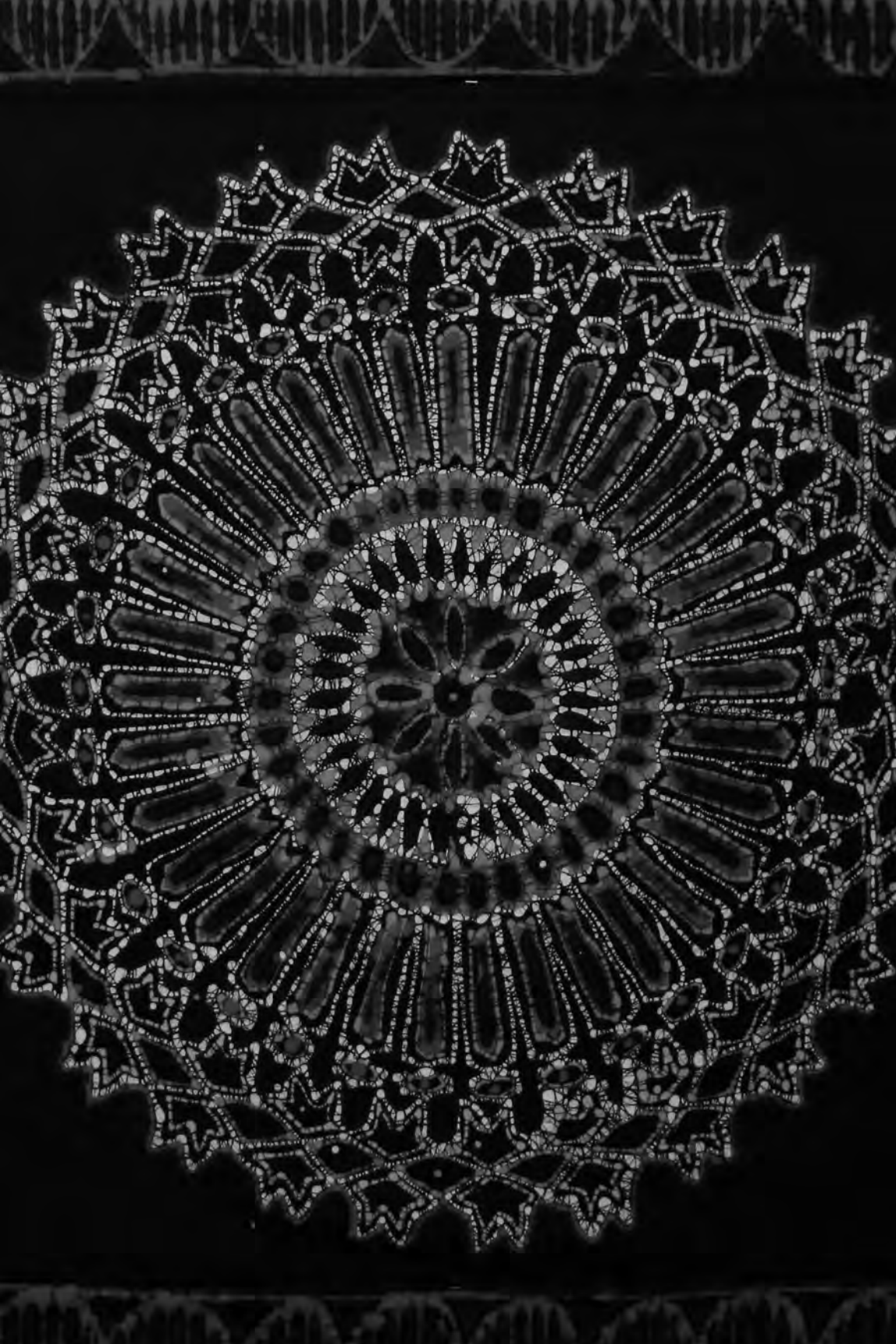
I am still convinced that K is the greatest mind I have met so far. But there were also the K-people—'K-non-disciples'—as Christa Winkler, Shyam Shembekar, and I sometimes called them in a self-ironizing way and not without a touch of sarcasm. I do miss those two thousand people at the Saanen gatherings. What a brilliant crowd! They were the most interesting group of human beings I have ever come across. All colours, all countries, beautiful lunatics, all sorts of strong and deep personalities—real existential seriousness from hippies to old-fashioned theosophists, people to *talk* to and to *learn* from, from theoretical physicists like David Bohm to Zen monks and breeders of the sacred mushroom. Many, potential friends for a lifetime. I also liked the fusion with nature—listening to K's talk one day, getting up at five the next morning with my friend Wolfram Engelhardt and others to climb the Gummfluh. Which year was it when it rained nine nights and nine days without a single break, and we almost drowned in the campsite? At one point even K said, "I am sorry the weather is so foul!" In Saanen they began to hate those soaking-wet figures, who were starting to smell and only had money for a single hot chocolate—and then never wanted to leave. I am grateful to Manfred Schneider and his wife for so many things, one of them being that they ultimately rescued us by organizing some kitchen jobs in Saanenmöser. The size of the vats of chocolate sauce for the vanilla ice cream was amazing.

After K died, I deliberately kept my distance for some three decades. I was deeply disturbed when after his death I saw people continuing to organize 'gatherings'. But talking to young folks in Mürren and Ojai a few years ago, I came to understand that for many of those who come into contact with K's teachings after his death, it is crucial to have a place for exchange with like-minded others. Confronting all the things his teachings make you confront can be a lonely business, and it helps to learn about others' perspectives, about other human beings' insights and difficulties. I still think, though, that it is important to radically confront

impermanence, as exemplified by K's death and by the obvious fact that his teachings receive less and less attention. Perhaps the irrevocable dissolution of the social context he created during his lifetime is a good thing, because nothing new grows under a Banyan tree. When much later I visited Brockwood Park, Ojai, and the Valley School outside of Bangalore, what impressed me most about the excellent work being done by teachers and pupils inspired by K was precisely the freshness of it, and the fact that the teachers were learning from the pupils as much as the other way round.

I may be totally wrong, but precisely because I have spent my professional life as an academic philosopher, I have always thought it would be quite beside the point, absurd even, to introduce K's work into academic discourse. K has been called the 'world philosopher', but what he was trying to make his audience see for themselves is something beyond any intellectual endeavour. To be sure, there is excellent and highly significant academic philosophy going on in many places on this planet, but that is a very different kind of enterprise. Again, I may be completely wrong about this, but I have always thought that the core of K's teachings is not only ineffable but has the kind of importance that means it should probably be actively protected from attempts to drag it into the fray of academic discourse.

I have tried K out with my students, but only a few times. One time, I reserved his work for the very last session of a fourteen-week summer term, our final meeting before the summer break. The week before, I handed out copies of four or five brief excerpts of his writings I had prepared and said, "Next week, we are going to do an experiment with non-academic philosophy. Read this carefully! I want to know what you make of it!" Next week came and there was a clear and almost unanimous verdict. This was excellent stuff, but it was not something that could be discussed. It was something that could only be *lived*. And, given this was now a firmly established insight, a simple point seemingly everybody in the seminar agreed on—could we just call it a day and head off for the summer?



# A Philosopher of the Self\*

RAYMOND MARTIN



Is it possible to live without relying psychologically on authority—either on external authority or even on the authority of one’s own past experience? For Jiddu Krishnamurti that, suitably qualified, is the key question. His answer is that it is possible and that only in this way can one connect fully with what is real.

Krishnamurti was not a philosopher in the classical sense. He wasn’t interested in presenting theories or in arguing for his views. Still what he was up to is continuous with philosophy. Like Socrates, who through his example and questioning encourages his audiences to examine critically the assumptions on which their beliefs depend, Krishnamurti, through his example and questioning, encourages his audiences to examine critically the assumptions on which their very experience of themselves and the world depends. In other words, whereas Socrates encourages what today we would call *critical thinking* (or, simply, *philosophy*), Krishnamurti encourages what we might call *critical looking* (and what he sometimes called *choiceless awareness*).

What Socrates asked the Athenians to do is by now commonplace, at least to philosophers and to students of philosophy. We have learned the lesson he was trying to teach. But to his original audience—the Athenians—what he was asking them to do often must have seemed strange and even pointless. What good could possibly come, many of them must have wondered, from giving the axe to conventional wisdom? Why, they must have asked, should we start freshly when we have accumulated so much? But the distorting weight of what you have accumulated, Socrates tried to point out, is precisely the problem.

At the time Socrates proposed critical thinking there was not much reason for the Athenians to suppose it would bear fruit. But

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it did. Science is part of that fruit. So is the modern disposition to question the authority of received views.

Have we learned all we need to know about questioning authority? Have we gone far enough? Or is our questioning still seriously limited? Contemporary philosophers and students of philosophy tend to think that we have carried the questioning process about as far as it can go...But up to this point we have questioned mainly only explicit beliefs. In addition to these beliefs might we not still take a great deal that is questionable for granted? And if we do, couldn't this also be an obstacle we need to overcome?

Krishnamurti was not the first to propose critical looking. Others, such as the Buddha, had already proposed it. But Krishnamurti's approach was different and perhaps better suited to sceptically minded philosophers and students of philosophy. For one thing, Krishnamurti was anti-authority to a degree that few thinkers have ever been. He had no use for creeds or theories. He discouraged people from examining themselves in an institutional setting or as part of a spiritual discipline. He taught that in examining oneself one should not rely even on what one has learned in previous examinations. The freedom we need to see what is true, he said, is freedom from the known. And because he spoke to us in a contemporary idiom, it may be easier for us to understand what he said.

Krishnamurti had little use for academic philosophy. Occasionally he dismissed it as a waste of time, or worse as a generator of theories that become obstacles in an individual's attempt to understand him or herself. Yet...much of what Krishnamurti said is deeply relevant to philosophy. Its relevance is not that he had theories to propose or critiques of extant theories. Krishnamurti's focus is on insights. His talent as a teacher is that he facilitates them. As it happens, many of the insights he helps his readers to have are centrally relevant to contemporary philosophy, particularly to theories about human subjectivity and values. And if indeed he

does facilitate insights about the human condition, how could it be otherwise?

Rather than a theorist, Krishnamurti was a seer and a teacher. Among the things he thought he saw are certain inherently distorting psychological structures that bring about a division in almost everyone's consciousness between 'the observer' and 'the observed'. This division, he believed, is a potent source of conflict—both internally for the individual, and through the individual externalized for society as a whole. Krishnamurti also proposed a way to remove these damaging structures, or, more accurately, to facilitate their removal. That is what he intends—a radical transformation in human consciousness.

Krishnamurti talked a great deal more than he wrote. His talks were not lectures but, rather, attempts to engage his audience in a dialogue in which he and they are wholly focused on the same aspect of experience or behaviour. His talks were, in effect, guided meditations. That is, they were attempts by Krishnamurti to go through an experiential process with his audiences—with you—the result of which is that something about your understanding of your own experience and its effect on your behaviour is clarified. As such, his talks—transcribed and edited as if they were writings—make unusual demands on the reader, especially if the reader is a philosopher who is accustomed to looking for a theoretical punchline when reading something that seems to put forth philosophical views. In Krishnamurti's thought, rather than theoretical punchlines, there is an opening to important insights, for instance, about the nature of identification and its role in the formation of the self. To have such insights, Krishnamurti suggests, one has to look freshly.

Krishnamurti spoke with a distinctive voice. As an uncompromising enemy of authority, even of the authority of one's own past experience, his focus was on examining current experience

directly. Refusing to discuss books or theories, he encouraged people to look at themselves, particularly in their relationships to other people, things, and activities, and he told them just enough about what he thought they would see if they did look, to get them going. It is as if through the habit of understanding ourselves in familiar ways we are even at the level of experience stuck in theories. Krishnamurti was—is—extremely good at helping people to get unstuck, that is, at helping them to have insights that break the moulds of deeply ingrained patterns of thinking. In other words, his concern was not that his remarks be relevant to theory—although often they are—but that they be relevant to life. His intention was to engage with people who are passionately interested in understanding themselves and the world in which they live. The point of this engagement was to clarify what it means to be oneself and to live in this world. In my opinion, Krishnamurti succeeds in this as few others have.

Philosophers and students of philosophy are surely among those who are passionately interested in understanding themselves and the world. Many of us have devoted much of our lives to this project. We may be surprised, then, to discover how little time and energy we have spent in the sort of inquiry Krishnamurti tried to facilitate. The reason for this is that Krishnamurti's approach to topics of perennial philosophical interest was more meditative than rationally discursive. So, the question for philosophers and students of philosophy in considering how seriously they should take [his teachings], is whether they're willing to try an approach that's philosophical, in a broad sense, but so different from what they're accustomed to doing when they think about or read philosophy that it may be difficult at first for them even to see its relevance. True philosophers are always open to new approaches. Indeed, when an approach has promise, the more radically new, the better.

# Listening, Looking, Learning

J KRISHNAMURTI

If one listens...without effort, with clarity, then I think that very listening is the vehicle of action. You do not have to do anything about it - the very act of listening is action. It is like seeing something, it is like looking at a flower. We never actually look at a flower, because we look with our minds, with our thoughts, with our ideas, opinions, with our botanical knowledge of that flower. So it is thought that looks - not so much the eye, as thought. Our thoughts, ideas, opinions, judgments, botanical knowledge—these interfere with our looking. It is only when you can look at something completely that you are in direct contact with that thing; and to look completely demands a great deal of energy not words, words, words, they don't create energy. What brings energy is this observing, listening, learning, in which there is not the observer; there is only the fact, and not the experiencer looking at the fact.



Learning is an act—an act of the active present. It is the verb to learn, it is a movement. But that which has been learnt has already become a static thing. So in the same way, if we could listen... to everything in life—to all the intimations of one's own demands, urges, the hints of one's own desires, secret longings, to listen to another, whether it is

your husband, or a child, or a wife, or a neighbour, so that the mind becomes sharp, clear, dealing only with facts and not with emotional opinions and prejudices - then perhaps we can come to understand the very complex problems that life hides.

Paris, 1965, Talk#1,  
*Collected Works Vol XV*, p. 155

You know, a boy at school, in class, wants to look out of the window. A bird is flying by, there is a lovely flower on the tree, or someone goes by. His attention is taken away from the book, and the teacher tells him to look at the book, to concentrate on the book. That is how most of our life is. We want to look, but society, economy, religious doctrines force us to conform; and therefore we lose all spontaneity, all freshness. So, the discipline of learning is something entirely different from the discipline of acquiring knowledge. You need to have a certain discipline when you are acquiring technological knowledge or any other knowledge. You have to pay attention, give your mind to something particular, to specialize in a subject; and that entails a certain discipline of conformity, of suppression, and all the things that are happening in the world through discipline. Now, the discipline which we are talking about, has nothing whatsoever to do with the discipline of conformity to a pattern... We are learning, and that learning is never conformity to a pattern—how can it be? Whether the pattern has been laid down by the Buddha, by Christ, by Sankara, or by your own pet guru, learning has nothing whatever to do with it. Because in

that conformity all learning ceases, and therefore there is never originality. And we are discovering through learning, with originality. I do not know whether you see the beauty of what we are talking about. Watching, looking, seeing, listening are all parts of learning. If you do not know how to listen, you cannot learn. If you do not know how to see a flower, you cannot learn about the beauty of that flower. And to listen, to see, to learn implies in itself a discipline which is not conformity.

New Delhi, 1964, Talk#3,  
*Collected Works Vol XIV*, p. 240





# The Sweep of History ... and Krishnamurti's Challenge

MARK EDWARDS



**M**y introduction to Krishnamurti came while I was at art school studying photography in the late 1960s. This was a wonderful time to be young; there was a feeling that everyone should re-invent themselves, and the world at large. It was OK to make mistakes but not to follow in other people's footsteps—especially those of our poor, bewildered parents. Of course, we tripped up all the time—we were busy creating what we felt was an exciting, progressive culture, expressed in music, the arts and science.

A lot of that cultural wave was about the freedom to realise our desires, but it did sweep away the lingering constraints that held society to stale, post-War values and it broke down some of the class barriers that were so prevalent in Britain. Krishnamurti was part of the cultural landscape of that time; his revolutionary approach chimed with a growing audience of young people.

I read every 'K' book I could find—and went to a talk he gave in Wimbledon with my girlfriend. He spoke from a deep silence which made a profound impression on me. I'd been educated at a Quaker School where the gathered silence was the foundation of their meetings. As a schoolboy I found it constrained and brittle. The silence that emanated from Krishnamurti was something totally authentic. I met him by chance after his talk, in a corridor in the Town Hall, and exchanged a shy handshake—the first of many as it turned out.

One element of his talk wouldn't let me go—his assertion that there had been no psychological evolution. We had better bathrooms, he said, but we were essentially the same tribal people we had descended from thousands of years ago.

I had been bought up by very sincere, left leaning parents. They had both been conscientious objectors in the War; they supported Gandhi's civil disobedience movement aimed at Indian independence and spoke up for the left-wing causes of their day. I absorbed the idea of human development—a world gradually improving

as people engaged with problems and campaigned for social and political reforms.

Krishnamurti's dismissal of this gradualist approach stopped me in my tracks. It made me intensely curious to explore the whole idea of progress and transformation. I realized that if you travelled across the world you could visit hunter gatherer bands and 'medieval' farming villages and get a glimpse of our past. Each age leaves evidence of its dominance in remnant communities. Our most recent development, the Industrial Revolution, is still unfolding in cities in rapidly developing countries.

When I left art school, I set myself a fascinating project—to photograph the sweep of history. You can have an interesting life if you follow your passions!

For over a million years everyone was a hunter-gatherer. It was humanity's first and most successful adaptation, occupying ninety-nine per cent of human history. I was privileged to stay with Ashaninka, Yanomami and Surui communities deep in the Amazon jungle, cut off from the modern world. Anthropologists, who spent long periods with contemporary hunter gatherers, all say they were generally happy. This was my impression, but it wasn't Eden as some leading thinkers in the environmental movement claim. They romanticise indigenous people to promote the idea that humans, at our core, can live harmoniously in nature and with each other. They propose that somehow, we might return to the mind-set that operated before we were banished from Eden. It's a tempting idea—that the way forward is to somehow scrape away at the psychological deposits built up over the last 10,000 years and regain our lost innocence. But it doesn't correspond to what I observed.

The hunter-gatherers I met were like any cross-section of humanity. They lack the technologies developed over the last 10,000 years, but they are essentially the same as us. There were story tellers, healers and hunters; some were sensitive to nature and some treated it as a resource to be exploited; there were people

whose gourd was half full and those whose gourd was half empty. They lived without shops or bathrooms or cars. They hadn't even invented the wheel. Why would they? They had rivers and streams to wash in and food in the jungle super-store all around them. They shared everything, food, lovers and children. Their capacity to damage their environment was limited, not by some inherent respect for nature—they simply could not do much damage with the tools available to them. Had their population increased we would have a very different story.

There are many cultural features in these communities to be admired. No two modern hunter-gatherer bands are identical, but they treat everyone more or less the same. No one should be much richer than anyone else or be much more politically powerful. Men and women have roughly equal freedom to live how they think best. People generally enjoyed good health, plenty of leisure time and freedom from any form of government. They had fun. It was wonderful to be in their company.

Then about 10,000 years ago hunter-gatherers started to settle down and farm. We might note that Jared Diamond<sup>1</sup> calls farming the worst mistake humans ever made, a catastrophe we never recovered from. Well, there's no going back; as we climbed the ladder of progress, we kicked out the rungs below.

The plough was the break-through invention that characterised the farming age. Once the plough had been developed, farmers were five or six times more productive than hunter gatherers; a fifth of the population could feed everyone. The other four fifths were freed up to cook, build houses, trade, smelt metal, weave, create cities and establish armies to protect cities.

You need laws to deal with the problems that arise in a more complex society. With laws came rulers and the ruled, masters and servants. Women deferred to men. Very important people appeared. Inequalities developed which were unheard of in hunter gatherer communities.

The great Roman poet, Ovid, expressed his concerns about progress 2,000 years ahead of Jared Diamond in this poem:

*Long ago Earth had better things to  
offer—crops without cultivators,  
fruit on the bough,  
honey in the hollow oak.  
No one tore the ground with ploughshares  
Or parcelled out the land  
Or swept the sea with dipping oars—  
The shore was the world's end.  
Clever human nature, victim of your inventions,  
Disastrously creative, why cordon cities with  
towered walls?  
Why arm for war?*

From *Amores*, Book 3

In Asia, Africa and South America—even on the edges of Europe—you can still find communities living a life that would be familiar to people from the Middle Ages. Familiar not just with the demands of daily life but also with the beliefs and superstitions that arise as technology develops. If you can imagine making a plough, you can also imagine those awful people on the other side of the valley. And you can imagine your death, a disturbing and scary thought if ever there was one. Fear of death is surely the foundation of religion and belief.

It is counter-intuitive to acknowledge that superstition and technology share the same common trait, but both require the capacity to make vivid, mental images. You need to be able to imagine a piece of wood being pulled across soil in order to make a plough. If you can do that you can also imagine your own death. Imagination is one of homo sapiens defining capacities—only a few animal species have this capability, and only to a very small degree.

The third age, the Industrial Revolution, developed as the world turned to fossil fuels to power a new economy. The steam-engine

transformed society. It soon replaced animal powered transport. Engines powered by coal and later by oil fuel soon overtook energy derived from renewables—wind- and river-powered mills—to drive a new economy which again ushered in new values.

In cities in rapidly developing countries, you can still witness the great migration as people leave the countryside to find work in factories—an echo of what happened at the start of the Industrial Revolution in Britain toward the end of the 1700s.

Its beginnings were brutal. It came at a terrible human cost. Workers were essentially slaves to factory owners who focused on meeting a new impulse—consumer demand.

So, what has the Industrial Revolution done for those of us seated at the best tables? Alright, clean hot and cold water, light and power at the touch of a switch obviously, ample food, health care, travel—we can point to a long list of things we could no longer do without. But this progress puts us in headlong collision with nature *and* with human nature.

It takes the earth one year and four months to regenerate what humans use in a year. If we go on as we are, projections show that we will need two earths to support us by the mid-2030s. Annoyingly we have only one.

Has our shopping spree made us happy? An immense and ever accelerating technological development has in principle brought about enormous new possibilities for a creative and happy life. But many of us in the modern world have felt a sense of loss, of missing something, in spite of our great technological gains, which should have made us feel that life has been enriched rather than impoverished.

F. Scott Fitzgerald said the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two contradictory thoughts at the same time. I suggest these—the world is registering important progress, but it also faces mortal threats which result from that progress. The first observation should empower us to act on the second. It doesn't, because we don't see the deeper cause of our problems.

The values that shaped our development as we turned to farming and later to industry are beautifully expressed in *Genesis*:

*God said to them be fruitful and multiply,  
fill the earth,  
and subdue it.  
Take dominion over the fish of the sea,  
And the birds of the sky,  
and over every creature that crawls upon the earth.*<sup>2</sup>

This approach clearly helped us survive when our ancestors lived in small, isolated groups, struggling to stay alive as they developed the new skills needed to grow their food. But it makes no sense to use the moral law from desert kingdoms in the Old Testament to conduct life in the twenty-first century. We now have a presence so colossal, and technologies so powerful, we could catch every fish in the sea and cut down every tree on earth. And if that were not enough, we have weapons of mass destruction equivalent to the asteroid strike that clobbered the dinosaurs.

The ‘*Genesis*’ approach is imbedded in our thinking. It’s not clear how we adopt values, but they have tremendous power. They affect anger, fear, hate. We’ve not chosen to give them that power, though we may think we have. Values and beliefs don’t seem to be open to examination. They are defended in some automatic way, so there is a failure of reason to operate properly. We are trapped, defending values that don’t work and are no longer appropriate for the conditions we now face.

On the basis of what police call ‘form,’ we are earthly defilers beyond reason. But must it always be so?

In 1983, I took the photograph of Krishnamurti and David Bohm for the book jacket of *The Ending of Time* at Brockwood. This gave me the chance to talk to David about the ‘time travel’ project I’d been working on. I suggested we make a book that showed the span of human development as a backdrop to exploring how a wrong

way of thinking is behind the environmental crisis and most of the troubles of the human race. *Changing Consciousness: Exploring the Hidden Source of the Social, Political and Environmental Crisis Facing our World* was published in 1991.

It was an extraordinary privilege to work with David. He had a boundless intelligence and extraordinary mental energy, even if physically he was becoming frail. Our collaboration came at a point in my life when I'd travelled widely enough to witness the gathering collapse of our life support systems. Nearly thirty years later it's not quite in free-fall, but we have very little time to arrest the decline.

The text in *Changing Consciousness* explores David's ideas and insights about the way thought operates. Readers are invited to join in the enquiry and to go on with it, not only by themselves but also with others who may be interested.

The pictures in the book present environmental problems through the eyes of people at the sharp end of the debate. They bring out a basic human response to help people in need and take the immediate practical steps required to avert a cataclysm that might engulf us all if our problems escalate around the world.

Are these two approaches at odds? Not to me, but there is a tension that tends to divide people who share these concerns. I wanted to bring this out in the book, and in the talks I give. If I'm speaking to people campaigning to deal with the crisis in the environment, some will say, "OK Mark, it's all very well sitting around exploring the process of thought—but *the world is on fire!* We need to act—all hands to the pump". Nods and whispers of agreement all round.

The same talk to those interested in Krishnamurti's approach elicits the counterpoint position, "We need to understand the fundamental cause of our problems. If we don't, we will extinguish one fire only to start another".

Each argument is correct—but incomplete. The world is on fire and we need to act. We also need to go 'upstream' to the source of

our problems to deal with the kind of fragmented thinking that causes our problems.

We do have the technologies to transition to a new, sustainable age. Every week the media report on new ways to align human systems and natural systems. A large part of the world's research efforts is aimed at creating a sustainable civilization. We are not short of solutions to deal with the unintended failures that developed during the Industrial Revolution. We are short of leaders who will take these hard-won solutions to scale. The environmental movement, (now joyfully bolstered by school students around the world) is aimed at giving our leaders the courage to go much further in dealing with the climate, pollution, population bottleneck.

The question is this—can we deal with the threats to our natural environment and very survival, without a fundamental change in consciousness? Our imbedded sense of tribal identity, expressed as nationalism, prevents us dealing with global problems that require unprecedented international cooperation. Political leaders at international meetings sound like... I was going to say kids, but that's not correct; they sound like bigots: "Why should we do anything about our CO<sub>2</sub> pollution if this country or that country doesn't act first?" They all want to make their country great and exploit whatever advantage they can. The result is that they are jeopardizing civilization.

Clearly what is needed is practical action to deal with the problems downstream. But to pull this off we need a radically new, world-wide approach. But such an approach, Krishnamurti maintains, can come about only through freeing the mind from a crippling servitude to self-centeredness, expressed collectively in a destructive adherence to nationalism and sectarian beliefs. And that is just for starters...

Where it goes wrong, is that the practical action and campaigning gets all the attention. Can one influence a wholistic approach?

As David points out, "...you've got to begin with those who can listen, because everything new started with a few people. At the time of Newton, for example, there were not a hundred scientists of

any merit in Europe. They could have said, 'Look at this vast mass of ignorant people, going around just living their lives.' Nevertheless, science had a tremendous effect, though not all to the good. But still, it shows that small things can have big effects—one small thing being, for example, more and more people understanding that something has to happen. Thus, we already see the Green movement growing. They are doing good work, and I think that much more should be done along these lines. But the important point is that they're not considering thought. That is to say, they are not considering the fundamental cause, just the effect."<sup>3</sup>

David Moody points out in his wonderful book, *An Uncommon Collaboration: David Bohm and J. Krishnamurti*, that throughout history radical proposals accumulate to a critical mass that may succeed in sweeping away existing structures and assumptions and usher in new approaches. He gives the example of Galileo and more recently, Gaia.

But, as Krishnamurti was fond of saying toward the end of his life, "Time is our enemy". Natural systems can change awfully quickly if feedback loops kick in. Look at the wildfires, droughts and floods reported daily around the world. More intense weather is consistent with predictions of a warming world and we ain't seen nothing yet—the extreme weather we've triggered is the result of just 1°C warming. Catastrophic climate events won't wait for paradigms to shift. Time is our enemy, both by the clock and of thought. Shakespeare brings our predicament vividly alive:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.*<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, we need a new kind of intelligence if we are not to lose our ventures, because we have created a world that requires it. In the Stone Age ordinary practical intelligence was good enough. People then had an instinctive sort of intelligence developed somewhat by culture. But today we have created a complex world based on the abstractions of thought. To deal with thought we need a much higher sort of intelligence. We tend to think that thought is this sort of intelligence, but it isn't. The key point about thought is that it is like the program, the disk, that responds to the situation. There is no reason why a disk should respond intelligently—a thing might change, and the disk might no longer be appropriate. It responds quickly and automatically according to what has been programmed into it. Similarly, what we have been thinking and learning is programmed into our memory. It's not merely a picture of what happened in the past but a program for potential action. That program is extremely subtle; to deal with it takes much more subtlety than to deal with the objects the program deals with.

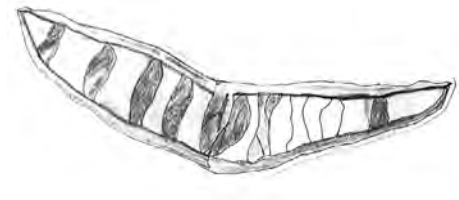
Might the growing awareness of the need for a civilization based on sustainable principles go along with the notion that a wrong functioning of thought lies behind most of the troubles of the human race? If this insight went along with the need for a certain kind of observation of how thought is actually working, a deeper change might occur. It's not a total transformation. It's perhaps what Krishnamurti refers to in the *Future of Humanity* as “the schoolboy end” of his teachings. But that, after all is a pretty good place to start.

David was keen to acknowledge that it was Krishnamurti who made possible the insight that a wrong functioning of thought is driving our troubles. He brought a scientist's rigorous inquiry to the most profound dialogues with Krishnamurti. The books and DVDs they produced are a testament to the meeting of two extraordinary minds from very different backgrounds.

I am more grateful than I can say for the chance to meet them both and for the thirty-year journey around the world, the result of questioning Krishnamurti.

## Endnotes

- 1 Jared Diamond is an American anthropologist, geographer, historian and author of books like *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, and *The Third Chimpanzee*.
- 2 Genesis 1:28.
- 3 The longer passages in quotes are by David Bohm and are from *Changing Consciousness* unless otherwise attributed. The book will be uploaded to the Hard Rain website ([www.hardrainproject.com](http://www.hardrainproject.com)) by mid-2020.
- 4 Shakespeare, William, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3.







# Working with Insights from Krishnamurti

Reflections of a  
'Rolling Stone'

**G ANANTHAPADMANABHAN**



In 2016, I was at The School to give a talk at the annual teachers' conference of the Krishnamurti schools. My talk was scheduled after the morning tea break. When I arrived, it was tea time. I caught up with many people whom I had not seen in some time. The feelings were warm and affectionate. The conversation lively, cheerful and energetic. On that morning, I felt very much at home and in some ways the eighteen years that had elapsed since I left the school had not happened at all!

A chance remark made me realize with a small jolt that I was something of an oddity in that group. "You have been a bit of a rolling stone, haven't you?" I was in the midst of people who have spent a lifetime in the world of K institutions. And in my work life since leaving The School, I had indeed rolled through a few different organizations and subjects. I remember responding with something along the lines of, "I sure have gathered plenty of mass", which indeed I have in the journey into middle age!

This is how the India Development Review, an online journal that I have contributed a few articles to, chooses to describe me:

G. Ananthapadmanabhan (Ananth) works with purpose driven leaders and social sector organizations that aspire to make a difference to the significant issues of our times. He's the former CEO of Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI). Prior to that, Ananth was the CEO of Amnesty International in India and the International Programme Director at Greenpeace. He started his work life as a teacher in The School, Krishnamurti Foundation India. Ananth graduated in 1988 from IIT Madras with a BTech in electrical engineering.

I must say, it is a description that I like. It is bland and makes no attempt to connect it all into a sort of narrative. However, my own sense of myself is that of someone who has persisted and stuck to things. I realize that my own experience of persistence and

continuity comes down to looking to Krishnamurti for insights into situations. And every work context I have been part of has been the ground in which to explore the teachings.

K once asked a group of teachers, “Sir, what can you do alone?” This simple question has over the decades kept me away from fantasies of ‘withdrawing’, including from the messy world of large organizations. It gave me the energy to throw myself wholeheartedly into the organizational context that I was part of at that moment. And building organizations became the ‘problem’ that I spent my energies on. Organizations seem to, very often, be spaces that *distil our individual stupidity into collective dysfunction*. And their very architecture—with its hierarchies, competitive cultures, mechanistic processes—often seems to bring out the worst in the people in it.

In spite of this, or perhaps even because of this, organizations are excellent grounds to observe the nature of thought, a subject that K has been spectacularly insightful about. K, at least to a casual student of his teachings, suggests that there is something wrong with thought. I completely accepted the limits and limitations of thought. I accepted wholeheartedly that thought would always get me into trouble and cause fragmentation and misery. And of course, it did and continues to do so every single day!

*My first lesson was seeing that thought (in spite of its propensity to cause fragmentation and misery) deserves a lot of compassion!* It has an impossible task. It is tasked with producing a complete, coherent account of the world of experience. And yet it is conditioned to divide all of experience into a ‘self’, an ‘I’, and create a narrative that explains the rest of the field of experience from the point of view of this ‘self’. Whenever it tries to do this, it quickly comes to ‘problems’, things that don’t fit the narrative. Then it throws everything at the problem—redefines the ‘self’, tries a different story, makes tremendous efforts to change the experience to fit the story. Quiet heroic, if you think about it. Never gives up. Day and night.

*The second lesson that comes from a slightly more careful look at the teachings suggests that 'thought has its place'.* K often implied that thought has its own place and even suggested that meditation is, "giving thought its right place" (Public Discussion 3, Saanen, Switzerland, 27 July 1979). It is useful for practical matters but in the area of 'relationship' thought has no place whatsoever.

I saw my professional life as a 'practical matter' where thought was applicable. And if used well, it might even be the appropriate instrument. I began to apply what K pointed out about thought to the 'problems' of organization building, development and leadership. And by careful thinking guided by the insights of K on the nature of thought, I realized that I could get better at the practical application of thought—I could and did learn to think 'better'.

This led to an acceptance of the word 'better' as the best that thought could achieve. Thought could never produce that which was 'true', 'whole' or 'complete'. Rather than wasting energy using thought to find 'the right answer', could I and my colleagues use thought to produce 'options' for action? I began to encourage myself and my colleagues to explain our thought processes, lay out its steps as it were, and try to be explicit about why we thought our conclusions were valid. Further, to include in that movement, descriptions of how your feelings had guided your thought.

*The third lesson was about feelings and their relationship to thought.* If not thought, then is it feeling that will lead to the 'true', the 'whole' and the 'complete'? K's use of the word 'love' cues the mind in that direction.

In 1990, I heard David Bohm at Brockwood Park (where I was visiting as a teacher from The School) use the phrase 'thoughts and *felts*'. He was pointing to the nature of feelings as being rooted in the past in exactly the same way as thoughts more obviously are. Organizations are particularly inept when dealing with feelings. Feelings are simultaneously seen as a disorderly intrusion into the 'rationality of thought' and greatly cherished (especially

in organizations like Greenpeace and Amnesty, where a passion for the cause is the *raison d'être*). Rather than getting caught in a 'thought vs feeling' debate, K helped me accept the equally limited nature of both. This helped me create spaces where both feelings and thought had a place.

I have come to understand and articulate to my colleagues (thereby creating common ground) that it is our feelings that direct our attention to something and give us a sense of what is worth thinking about. It is from the subjective experience of strong feelings that, say, 'justice' evokes in us, that we find the energy to make efforts to secure it for ourselves and others. But to secure it, we need to act in ways that are strategic and smart. And in pursuit of effective action, it is necessary to think and think well. Feelings are likely not the best guides in designing action, but without them we would be hard pressed to figure out what to have thoughts about!

*The fourth lesson is that thought is a material, mechanical process and that there is nothing new in thought.* This is hard to get for a modern organization, given the exhortation to 'be creative'! I have seen that thought is the right instrument to achieve a purpose, to chart a 'path' to a 'goal'. While we understand that becoming free is not a meaningful purpose and 'truth is a pathless land', as any such effort requires us to develop a mental image of freedom, we can equally understand that thought *is indeed the right instrument* when one is solving a problem where the end point is well defined.

In an organizational context, this clarity around 'when thought is the right instrument' is often very valuable. No amount of thinking can help organizations find their purpose. This has to come from feeling, a sense that something matters and is worth accomplishing. But once there is a purpose then thought is the right instrument to bring into play.

*The fifth lesson is that thinking is a skill and therefore can be cultivated.* K made it clear that one cannot *become* a better human being. But one could become a better potter—one could cultivate

skills and through effort become better at it. Similarly, with thinking. And in the context of organizations it is a very powerful and valuable skill when it comes to achieving the purpose of the organization.

By and large (and that is not a surprise at all!) it would be accurate to say that my colleagues didn't quite see 'thought' in this way, even at the level of intellectual understanding. For many years, my engagement with the nature of thought remained a private matter. In the last nine years or so, it began to dawn on me that if K was right about thought, the insights would apply to *all* thought and *all* thinkers, irrespective of whether they had any inklings about the 'real nature of thought'! To create a (perhaps simplistic) metaphor—a complete belief in a 'flat earth' does not change the shape of the 'globe'.

This interest in the nature of thought and its applications to the organizational context became something of a public project within the organizations that I was privileged to lead. I began to explore the possibilities of creating training programs for my colleagues and myself to learn to *think better*. K has an intriguing suggestion to make here. In a conversation with Bohm he suggests that thought would be 'perfect' if it can 'vibrate to the emptiness within'—like a 'drum that vibrates to the space within'. The confusion created by thought is itself a result of thought; we are conditioned to imagine that there is a 'thinker who thinks' rather than see thought as a conditioned process with the 'thinker' herself being one of the products of thought.

I began, in 2011 or so, to develop a traditional training program whose premise and explicit purpose was to help the participants think better. Since I was imagining this in the context of social sector organizations whose ultimate purpose was societal change, and the self-image of many of us in the sector was that of being 'change-makers', my early articulation of what I was trying to do was to say that I was creating a 'Cognitive Tool-kit for Social Change Makers'.

I was clear that I wanted to create a tool-kit, a set of tools, organized neatly into a box, each tool with a defined purpose *and* a master craftsman, the social change maker, the human being, who was adept at its use. I was floundering till I came across an extraordinary speech given by Charlie Munger<sup>1</sup>, the vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway and lifelong friend of Warren Buffet. (I am well aware of the irony of finding wisdom in the world's richest men, especially those who got rich by being investors in the stock market!).

I suddenly had the 'tool'. It turns out to be something called a 'mental model'. Here is a quote from the talk that lays out what this is about:

What is elementary, worldly wisdom? Well, the first rule is that you can't really know anything if you just remember isolated facts and try and bang 'em back. If the facts don't hang together on a latticework of theory, you don't have them in a usable form.

You've got to have models in your head. And you've got to array your experience—both vicarious and direct—on this latticework of models. You may have noticed students who just try to remember and pound back what is remembered. Well, they fail in school and in life. You've got to hang experience on a latticework of models in your head.

What are the models? Well, the first rule is that you've got to have multiple models—because if you just have one or two that you're using, the nature of human psychology is such that you'll torture reality so that it fits your models, or at least you'll think it does. You become the equivalent of a chiropractor who, of course, is the great boob in medicine.

It's like the old saying, "To the man with only a hammer, every problem looks like a nail." And of course, that's the way the chiropractor goes about practicing medicine. But that's a perfectly disastrous way

to think and a perfectly disastrous way to operate in the world. So, you've got to have multiple models.

And the models have to come from multiple disciplines—because all the wisdom of the world is not to be found in one little academic department. That's why poetry professors, by and large, are so unwise in a worldly sense. They don't have enough models in their heads. So, you've got to have models across a fair array of disciplines.

You may say, 'My God, this is already getting way too tough.' But, fortunately, it isn't that tough—because eighty or ninety important models will carry about ninety per cent of the freight in making you a worldly-wise person. And, of those, only a mere handful really carry very heavy freight.

As a student of K, I read several things into this that might not have occurred to someone without that exposure.

1. To me, the reference to multiple models spoke directly to what has been called the second lesson above. All models (products of thought) are limited. There is no perfect model of the world. Thought cannot create it. Rather than expend energy on trying to find the perfect model, learn the art of seeing them as useful tools, and invest in the even more challenging art of learning the contexts and conditions in which the model is appropriate. Learn about both the tool and the context—the hammer and the nail! The art of thinking better is to improve the range of tools at one's disposal and the skills to use them for the appropriate problems.
2. It is the nature of thought that it will torture reality so that it fits its models. This seems to reveal the other side of the point made above about thought deserving compassion. It is relentless in its power to create narratives and to fit everything into that narrative—emphasize the parts that fit and obscure facts that don't.

3. Thought is in the end fairly limited, there is nothing really new in it—it is really endless construction and remixing! All it takes is eighty–ninety mental models! When encountering a new area of thought, a new subject, one can come to it with a ‘beginner’s mind’, a mind that is well schooled in the ways of thought and has at its disposal a modest range of highly effective tools. It is quite likely that the new subject is an extension of something you already know, a modification of one of your tools. Occasionally one will encounter a new tool but even then, one will know its place in the tool-kit!
4. The same beginner’s mind can also help active listening—the tool-kit of mental models is not yours; they are sort of applicable to all thinking, including those of others. This creates the space of ‘understanding’—I can understand anybody’s thought. I may not agree with them at all. But I can see that it is merely a matter of them and I using different tools or models to think. And it is quite likely that I know and understand their model.
5. While Munger’s list of mental models presents itself as objective, I know, thanks to K, that the ‘self’ is not ‘outside’ the world and it cannot ‘operate upon the world’. Therefore, the mental models that you cultivate should include insights or models about the self not just the world, i.e., the tool kit must give the craftsman tools to imagine themselves in ways that are closer to reality. The lesson about the relationship between thought and feeling is to my mind one such model.

At around this time, thanks to a friend from the K community, Venu Narayan<sup>2</sup>, I met Rajesh Kasturirangan. Rajesh is a philosopher, mathematician and cognitive scientist. He actually has two PhDs! And he says about himself, “I think, write, meditate, agitate”! Over the last eight years or so, Rajesh and I have developed this line of thought further.

And at the end of 2018, when I was thinking about what next for myself (“You have been a bit of a rolling stone, haven’t you?”), I reached out to Rajesh and broached the idea of co-founding a new initiative dedicated to this exploration and its application to the problems of the contemporary world. This initiative now has an immodest name, SOCRATUS—the academy for collective wisdom!

The real world is messy and *wicked problems*<sup>3</sup> are rife with stakeholders who have competing interests. Wicked problems combine moral and material complexity in equal amounts. They consist of coupled challenges where interventions in one domain lead to changes in another. In complex systems, the good news and the bad news are often due to the same source—fossil fuel energy is at the root of modern prosperity as well as pollution and climate change.

The cornerstone of SOCRATUS is the belief *that complex, ‘wicked’ problems can only be solved by **minds as wicked as the problems they seek to solve***. Unfortunately, the complexity of our mental models and their interconnections hasn’t kept pace with the complexity of the world. We believe that’s the major source of systemic failure. We aspire to be a modern take on Socrates’ claim that, while he himself was incapable of wisdom, his method *was the midwife of wisdom*. In keeping with the growing complexity of the world we aspire to be the midwives of collective wisdom; hence SOCRATUS (rather than Socrates)—using modern tools (of data, design and visceral experiences) in combination with the traditional tools of individual wisdom (contemplation, public reason, universal compassion).

While there are many organizations devoted to systems thinking and systems change, few have identified the lack of wisdom as a stumbling block. We believe that’s a blind spot. Having said that, we are grounded in a partnership architecture where we

don't invent anything that we can acquire through collaboration. SOCRATUS is creating a distributed academy for training 'wicked minds' through deep engagement with problems such as the agrarian crisis and climate change.

*It is 2022, I am again invited to the annual teachers' conference at The School. When I arrive, it's tea time. I catch up with many people that I have not seen in some time. I feel very much at home. And I talk with a kind of wholehearted animation about SOCRATUS—as if it was the only thing I had done in my life!*

## Endnotes

- 1 You can access this speech at: <https://fs.blog/a-lesson-on-worldly-wisdom/>
- 2 Venu Narayan was a teacher at The Valley School, KFI, and is one of the founders of another Krishnamurti-inspired school, Centre For Learning. He is currently Director of the School of Arts and Sciences, Azim Premji University.
- 3 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked\\_problem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_problem))





# “I Want to Know What Truth Is”

Lessons learnt from  
Krishnaji

**KIRAN KHALAP**



It was 1975. I was seventeen years old.

I stood before our family deity, Goddess Shantadurga, in the inner sanctum of her temple in Dhargal, Goa, our family home, along with my Dad.

The priest placed four petals on each shoulder and arm of the heartbreakingly beautiful idol carved in black stone, and my father said, “What do you wish for most in life? Hold that wish in your mind.”

The priest waited for the Goddess to decide my future.

One petal fell.

The priest smiled. “Your wish will be granted.”

What was my wish?

“I want to know what truth is.”

It is 2019, I am 61, and I have no clue what truth is.

But I know with certainty the man who pointed out the pathless path to it.

It was 1977.

In my pursuit of truth, I had read, *The Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant, *Being and Nothingness* by Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Hermann Hesse, the Upanishads, the Vedas, watched my Dad practice kundalini yoga...and understood nothing.

All so confusing, all words and concepts.

Then on a Colaba sidewalk shop, I spotted a book that said, *Talks and Dialogues by J. Krishnamurti*.

It had a striking black and white portrait photograph of Krishnaji (as I later started referring to him in Benares) by Cecil Beaton,

one of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century, and the back of the book blurb said, "...leads you to clear-eyed consciousness without drugs".

I read the book once, twice, thrice, and the scalpel-like words finally cut through my addled brain.

They cut off the mooring of thought and allowed object-less awareness to surface.

I was ecstatic. It was as if my skull was filled with light.

I wrote an airmail letter to the address at the back of the book, stating my intention to help this gentleman in his objective of changing society through education. The addressee was the Krishnamurti Foundation of the USA.

They dutifully sent the letter back to the Krishnamurti Foundation India, who asked me to meet Ms Pupul Jayakar<sup>1</sup> since she was in Mumbai.

She gave me sage advice, "Look son, we don't know how life changes, so at least finish your college degree, you don't know when you might need it, and then go teach. After all, it's just two more years."

Two years later, on the day I finished my practical exams for my organic chemistry degree, I was on a train to Mughalsarai.

My family stood on the platform, helpless against my madness.

"What will you teach?"

I don't know.

"How much will they pay you?"

"I don't know."

"How long will you be gone?"

“I don’t know.”

And so, I landed in Rajghat Besant School in Benares thirty hours later, where the school Principal received answers similar to what Dad had received.

“Where is your BSc certificate?”

“The results are not yet out.”

“Will you pass?”

“Yes.”

“Will you get a First Class?”

“I guess so.”

I stayed in Rajghat for four years, 1979 to 1983, and it changed my life as much as reading Krishnaji’s *Talks and Dialogues* did.

Once there, I learnt about Krishnaji’s epic story—renunciation of the World Teacher role, renunciation of wealth and land and titles and becoming the one human being in history to have conversations with the maximum number of human beings over decades (this being my interpretation).

The first ‘effect’ of Krishnaji’s teachings was a sense of no separation—that the student and I were the same human beings. And therefore, sharing was seamless. I shared every single thing I had learnt in my twenty-one years of life—gymnastics, judo, yoga, calligraphy, swimming, rock climbing, cycling, dumb charades, film screening, general science, botany, English grammar...it was a riot.

The second ‘effect’ was a total loss of ambition. That most insidious four-letter word, ‘more’, vanished.

The third ‘effect’ was a disinterest in Krishnaji the person, even though I ended up going on walks with him, meeting him at breakfast, lunch and dinner in Chennai, Rajghat and Rishi Valley.

“He’s shown the way, now it’s my job to walk”, was the refrain my head.

Nevertheless, I had one final meeting with him in Rishi Valley, where I said I didn’t have any questions, really. So, he had one for me. ‘Will you be a teacher all your life?’

With both parents ill (one with cancer, the other Parkinson’s) I had to return to Mumbai for a job that could pay their medical expenses as well as share with my gallant sister the responsibility of their care.

Since my father was one of India’s best commercial artists, I had grown up with pantographs, Winsor and Newton brushes, 4H and 6B pencils, and since I was a published writer (while in Benares I wrote on the ‘Burning Ghats of Benaras’ for *Celebrity* magazine), I decided to join advertising, hoping this combination of art and words would prove an advantage.

How disappointing...in the eyes of most of my friends and enemies!

From the noble work of teaching in a Krishnamurti school to crass advertising!

I continued spreading the word.

Having experienced the disappointment of the total absence of Krishnaji’s books in my own college (SIES) library, I started a programme to buy a set and donate it to colleges in Mumbai.

The results were amazing. The colleges wouldn’t believe they were getting anything free and some were suspicious enough to refuse the offer!

So, what happened to Krishnaji in my life in advertising?

When I left Rajghat, I was warned of the ‘big bad world’ out there.

As it turned out, I realised my first instinct in Rajghat was right—the place does not change you, you change yourself.

The individual changes society because the individual is a reality, society is a concept.

I had seen a long procession of youngsters who came to Rajghat all charged up, hoping that the environment would lead them to a higher state of consciousness, and left, disappointed, within six months.

I discovered the same law applied to advertising. There were enough individuals who pursued advertising as a profession, but as individuals, were untouched by its ‘reputation’ of a ruthless, shark-eat-shark world.

On day two, I met a creative director who had studied in Rishi Valley. She was easily the most ‘grounded’ person I would meet. On various occasions I met individuals who were compassionate, empathetic, ego-less. That idea of a ‘big bad world’ out there was just another idea.

Between 1983 and 1991, I grew from a trainee copywriter to a creative director, and the role involved looking after a team of ten highly creative individuals. Between 1991 and 1999, I had grown to become the chief executive officer and chief creative officer, a rare combination of roles combining business acumen and creativity, of a multinational advertising agency, and had the sinking feeling that I was disastrous as a business leader, and worse, would not be able to live up to the global directives of ‘management by Excel Sheet’.

We now arrive at a point when I took the plunge and started my own company, *chlorophyll*.

In 1999.

How exactly did the lessons I learnt from Krishnaji manifest in most things, if not everything, I did?

Our brand name, *chlorophyll*, was spelt with a lower-case ‘c’. Our homage to the belief that we are unequal as professionals

(obviously) but equal as human beings, each of us with the same level of access to the next level of evolution.

As an organisation, we urged ourselves to become the highest level of organisations, the ‘Teal’ level<sup>2</sup>, because I realised that many of the practices they prescribed were already *chlorophyll* corporate habits.

*chlorophyll* as an organisation abandoned lucrative and ‘big name’ relationships whenever they compromised the self-respect of our employees. We abandoned designations when we started, but large formal organisations insisted they know who was who. So, ten years later, we added designations.

We abandoned management by fear and control, we adopted management by responsibility. Each member of the community called *chlorophyll* decides when they will arrive at the office and when they will leave, or whether they will arrive at all, or work from home!

At one point, I even requested the employees to decide their own salaries—but that was probably too radical!

All we pursued was excellence—we wanted to be the best at what we did.

Result?

*chlorophyll* has worked with over 300 of the world’s best brands, defining, clarifying, helping aligning behaviour with values...

Telling each one of them that the new social media environment has made all organisations naked.

We have to be totally transparent in what we do.

Contrary to popular belief, the corporate world has understood the new reality.

Most of the world’s biggest brands now explain their actions.

## “I Want to Know What Truth Is”

So, I continue to be involved with the Krishnamurti Foundation work. I am helping align the communication for all schools. I attend the Rajghat Student Reunion every Christmas, when possible, because the students are friends now.

My dream is to make a feature film on Krishnaji. I've even written the script.

I believe a feature film would create greater awareness of his teachings, and the world needs his teachings desperately.

Did I answer the question that Krishnaji asked me in Rishi Valley?

I don't know. It's for others in my life to answer.

### Endnotes

- 1 Padma Bhushan awardee, then Vice President of the Krishnamurti Foundation India, confidante of Indira Gandhi and reviver of the handloom movement
- 2 To know what a 'Teal organization' means, refer to the website: <https://www.the-geniusworks.com/2019/10/reinventing-organisations-frederic-lalouxs-transformation-from-corporate-hierarchies-to-living-organisms/>



# On Sorrow

J KRISHNAMURTI

We are concerned with the whole existence of man and whether a human being can ever be free from his travail, his efforts, his anxieties, violence and brutality, and whether there is an end to sorrow. Why have human beings, throughout the ages, sustained and put up with suffering? Can there be an ending to it all?

One must be free of all ideologies. Ideologies are dangerous illusions, whether they are political, social, religious, or personal. Every form of ideology either ends up in totalitarianism, or in religious conditioning—as the Catholic, the Protestant, the Hindu, the Buddhist and so on; and ideologies become such great burdens. So, to go into the enormous question of suffering, one must be free from all ideologies. One may have experienced a great deal of suffering which may have brought about certain definite conclusions. But to enquire into this question one must be utterly free of all conclusions.

Obviously there is biological, physical, suffering, and that suffering may distort the mind if one is not very careful. But we are concerned with the psychological suffering of man. In investigating suffering we are investigating the suffering of all mankind, because each one of us is of the essence of all humanity; each one of us is, psychologically, inwardly, deeply, like the rest of mankind. They

suffer, they go through great anxiety, uncertainty, confusion, violence, through great sense of grief, loss, loneliness, as each one of us does. There is no division, psychologically, between us all. We are the world, psychologically, and the world is us. That is not a conviction, that is not a conclusion, that is not an intellectual theory, but an actuality, to be felt, to be realized and to be lived. Investigating this question of sorrow one is investigating not only one's own personal limited sorrow but also the sorrow of mankind. Do not reduce it to a personal thing, because when one sees the enormous suffering of mankind, in the understanding of the enormity of it, the wholeness of it, then one's own part has a role in it. It is not a selfish enquiry concerned with how I am to be free of sorrow. If one makes it personal, limited, then one will not understand the full significance of the enormity of sorrow.

*The Transformation of Man:  
The Wholeness of Life, p. 180*



# What is Krishnamurti Saying?

A personal and  
unending 'distillation'

DAVID SKITT



O ver the years as one of the KFT editors, I have naturally read or listened to a great deal of K material, though very far from anything like the total of it—estimated as equal to four hundred average-sized books—only half of which is available electronically. Any attempt to summarise this massive output seems, therefore, practically impossible. But does this then rule out any kind of answer to the title of this article—*What is Krishnamurti saying?* Is it a question that should even never be put, because the answer can never be comprehensive? That seems a bit draconian!

Pondering this recently, it has seemed to me that each of us will of course know his or her particular ‘portion’ of K’s teaching, and be struck by particular aspects of it. This would seem to inevitably produce a range of ‘takes’ on what he is saying. Well, what is wrong with that? Nothing, of course, provided one doesn’t get fixated on one’s particular ‘take’ as being exclusively the ‘right’ one—a step on the slippery slope to dogmatic belief.

So, to approach the title of this article in a different way, what has K got me seriously interested in? Above all else, it is clarity in seeing and responding to the other in relationship. It is logically, rationally clear that an image of another based on thought coming from one’s limited knowledge and experience of that person has all the flaws of the stereotype. And how do I react to being the prisoner of such stereotyping by another? With a sense of injustice, perhaps of outrage! So here is something that really needs attending to—the unravelling of that stereotyping process, inwardly and outwardly.

Second—conditioning. Again, it is logically, rationally clear that the human brain has been moulded by millions of years in which day to day physical survival was the only lifestyle on offer. Having food, drink, shelter and safety from predators and rival tribes dominated the agenda. There is much in the world today that suggests

our behaviour is still largely, if not almost entirely, driven by that agenda. “I am asking you”, K says, “to jump a million years.” The aeon-long clasp of our conditioning is something that it seems humanly reckless and irresponsible to ignore and leave intact.

Third—the relationship between brain and mind. K’s final account of this is found in the dialogue with David Bohm on 20 June 1983. The statement that it is the quietness of the brain—with thought in its rightful, limited place—that allows the higher functions of mind—intelligence, compassion, love—to operate is for me a statement of great beauty and explanatory power. It demands to be checked out, verified as far as one can.



Being inspired by live contact with K to explore his teaching is no longer possible nowadays for the new generation, which has to rely on videos, audio recordings, books, and the Internet. And among those who now visit our Centres there are those who ask, “Do you know anyone who has fundamentally changed?” To seek such a guarantee, as one would with an upgrade of Windows, is something K dismisses in the psychological area as dependency. We all have to go solo in looking at how our brains work. Taking responsibility for that is like one’s first dive into a swimming pool.

But if one is asked that question, what can one say? An aloof silence can suggest that I am the holder of a mystique. I think next time I shall say, “Yes, I have changed, but I haven’t the faintest idea of how much, in what way, and how it came about! Nor am I bothered about that.” I am confident I must have changed somewhat because whenever one reads, hears, or sees something serious it fires neurons in one’s brain, but how fully, to what effect ... well, who knows! Of course, the significance of these firings will get reality-checked by life sooner or later, but our grasp of the

relevant psychological process involved is elusive. The best one can say is that, overall, something seems to be OK, even at times great, but don't rely on that, it may not be tomorrow. A leading American physician wrote of every medical diagnosis, "You have to face the stark reality of uncertainty." Not that uncertainty in life has always to be 'stark'—it might turn out sometimes to be blissful!

An all-encompassing area of interest to me in K is his constant stressing of the limitation—inherent limitation—of thought, knowledge and experience, and therefore of action based on that. Except for science and technology, this limitation applies across the board, to personal, family, professional, and international relations. Yet our educational systems award their highest praise to thought and knowledge, placing them firmly on a golden pedestal. K knocks them firmly off this pedestal. But the strong unspoken public assumption remains, as the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy puts it, that 'the most evident display of our rationality is our capacity to think.' We seem to ignore the fact that it is also the most evident display of our irrationality. This hasn't been easy for me to digest. The first one in our family to go to a university, I graduated as a fully paid up, card-carrying intellectual, convinced that thinking was the royal way to go. Part of my further education in the deep sense has been to unpack much, though not all, of my formal education.

Has the meeting of K with the theoretical physicist David Bohm a special significance for us? Perhaps even some kind of allegorical significance? Organized religions tussle with science, are often decried by it. But K says that the scientific mind is part of the religious mind. That is perhaps keenly relevant nowadays when neuroscience willingly describes the self as an illusion created by the brain. When in the late 1960s K began to speak of mutation of the brain cells, at roughly the same time the scientist Fernando

Nottebohm was doing research on neuronal replacement in bird brains that was to lead to the later confirmation of ‘plasticity’ in our brains. The work of Nobel winning psychologist Daniel Kahnemann on cognitive bias also complements in detail much of what K says of perception.

The solitude needed for the greatest human exploits in religion, philosophy, science, art and literature is nowadays side-lined in our culture and seems even feared. Of course, none of these supportive findings by science on the plasticity of the brain will ever replace the ongoing inner and outer personal observing that K invites us to do.

The need to look within with an energy matching or surpassing the energy given to exploring the world outside us is something K points to repeatedly. The alternative is entertainment, whether provided by technology, social media or the rituals of religious belief, all of which distract from serious personal inquiry into what is happening in us here and now inwardly or outwardly. And driven by the isolating pain of the separative self, many of us now get attracted by nationalist fantasy—reviving epochs of past glory that on scrutiny prove to be mirages themselves.

A powerful magnet for me in K’s teaching is its essentially planetary nature. However much they struggle to go beyond them, the traditional religions are constrained by their limited geographical and cultural origins. Yet, as K has pointed out, human beings, wherever they are, act from thinking that is based on the inevitably limited knowledge and experience of the past. Failing to see that every problem is new, (and this demands openness to that), we fall back on what we’ve done before. And at a time when climate change threatens all of us, powerful voices are heard trumpeting ‘My Country First!’ when only unprecedented international cooperation will enable our planet to survive. K reminds us that the failure to see that we are all more alike than different, all variations on

the same great themes of life—relationship, livelihood, pleasure, suffering and death—is a blinkered, doom-laden error of human perception. “We are all in the same boat”, K said many times in one of his last talks (Yet, as we all know, it is only too easy to hear an inner voice objecting ‘can’t my place be a bit special?’).

But the great *leitmotif* in K of the shared human condition has become clearly relevant in a world threatened not only by climate change, but one in which rash mortgage-lending in one large country can wreck the economies of all the others, and where the worldwide spread of diseases like Ebola or influenza or corona virus can be checked only by international action. So here is another basic human perception that needs attending to—the interdependence of our existence.

That last phrase leads well to the other great magnet I find in K—*The Ending of Time*. Like many of us, I can remember when very young, ‘wondering about the stars,’ I even read the books of the popularising physicist Sir James Jeans. And in the last twenty years the question as to what on earth (sorry, unintended pun) the role of human consciousness is in the universe began to nag increasingly. We are on a small third rock from a small star caught up in the expanding billion light-years outreach of the cosmos. Much, if not most, of what we get up to on this rock seems utterly inane in this immense vastness, with the human ego in particular claiming a ludicrously inflated status.

In *The Ending of Time* K cautions that the illusions of the separative self need to end before we can explore deeply the human place in the universe. But he also argues strongly that rational inquiry can clear the way for profound and transforming insight into it. And how such insight can come about is later discussed in detail with David Bohm in the second dialogue of *The Future of Humanity*.

These dialogues are a rich seedbed for one’s own inquiry, and are an effective countering of the absurdist or ‘unintelligible’ view

of human existence. Rather than being a universe in which the human being is a baffled and uneasy outlier, K offers the prospect of one we can feel at home in.

And that seems a rather conveniently ultimate sentiment with which to end this article!





# Krishnamurti

## The uncharted voyage

DONAL CREEDON



*Ridiculous the waste sad time  
Stretching before and after.*

—TS Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

There is an old Irish story. In ancient days a certain clan was beset by a wasting sickness. It was not only physical but the very souls of the people were afflicted. A young man was tasked with finding the solution. He was told by the wise old woman that he had to go to the other world and drink from the waters of the well. This well is the source of all wells and of all rivers, visible and invisible. The difficulty was he didn't know the way. He couldn't see the road to the otherworld. There is no path, no way to that country.

He didn't have the eye to see. Our hero dreamt of a young woman, hair black like a raven's wing, lips blood red, face white as snow. In the dream she gives him a silver branch. He awakes holding the branch. But it vanishes in the morning light. He knows that is what he needs to enter the otherworld. Neither fact-finding mission nor scientific analysis will help our friend, only a change in the seer himself and the eye that sees. He needs the silver branch, silver branch seeing.

Thus began his long journey to recover the silver branch. A sea voyage and a sea change, a dangerous voyage not unlike Ulysses, 'the man of twists and turns', returning home, who relied on the navigator's skill, perceptive subtlety, acute listening and watching.

Now Krishnamurti might say to our hero, as he has said to us:

We are entering upon an uncharted sea, and each one has to be his own captain, pilot and sailor. He has to be everything himself. There is no guide, and that is the beauty of existence. If you have companions and guides, you never take the journey alone, therefore you are not taking the journey at all. The journey is a process of

self-discovery, and as you begin to understand it, you will see what an immense relationship it has to your present existence.

—Madras, 3rd Public Talk, 13 December 1956

Like the hero in the tale, we too have a problem with seeing. The world is blind, humanity is blind, we are blind. Our world is afflicted with a deadly wasting sickness. The individual and the world suffer breakdown, stagnation, depression, and addiction. It is true of persons as well as public systems, and governments. Even buildings can be anorexic, tall, thin, glassy and remote, or aggressive like military fortresses designed to terrify the customer. Cities are obese, junked out, choked on traffic and rubbish. Businesses are paranoid and delusional. There are national obsessions with endless growth. The economy has to be continually expanding, requiring more and more consumption. Both economies and persons become manic consumers. Mother Earth is left a waste land. The new monotheistic god is the economy.

The causes of our malaise, as Krishnamurti has pointed out, are not only the obvious destructive forces roaming and ruling the earth, but human consciousness itself. Consciousness as it manifests in our time is fundamentally ignorant. Not able to see clearly and not capable of seeing, so that action is always blighted. The fault is in the very eye that looks at the world. The world is seen as a Cartesian 'thing' out there, objective, brute and mute. The world, as an economic opportunity to be used and exploited. Before the axe has cut the tree down, it is already destroyed by the eye.

Furthermore, the problem is bound up with the deceptive play of the dualistic mind which constructs the world out of its own habits, then accords it a reality it doesn't have. The dualism of subject/object, of thinker and thought, of observer and observed, of me and you, seems so real.

Krishnamurti tells us:

A bird flying across the sky tells you a great deal, *if you know how to look* (emphasis added), which is not romanticism which is not sentimentalism, but the capacity to look, to look, and not immediately translate it into a poem or into something romantic. But merely to observe with quiet beatitude and affection.

—From the film: *The Seer Who Walks Alone*

‘If you know how to look.’ See things as they are. It sounds so simple. Perhaps it is. But we are not so simple. We are complex and our seeing is occluded. We do not see with ‘the true dharma eye and subtle mind of nirvana.’ For those who listen to Krishnamurti’s call, there is a journey to be taken. He invites us to start from ‘the other shore.’

How? What kind of boat? What provisions? Where is our port of departure? What date? Is it a voyage of a lifetime? Is there a before and after or are past and future cut off? Is there a destination? What is that other shore?

Krishnamurti says there is no ‘how.’ There is no path. Once we go the way of ‘how,’ we are caught in method and strategy and we move away from the living situation.

But there is the sea, the ocean of *samsara* as the Buddhists call it and we are adrift, holding a broken oar, holding a book, holding words.

Zen master Dogēn says:

*To study the way is to study the self,  
To study the self is to forget the self,  
To forget the self is to be illuminated by all things.*

—Genjōkōan

We usually think we read or study something objective called the teachings. The subject ‘I’ wants to understand it. According to Dogen, this is a mistaken way of thinking and a basic problem that

keeps us from seeing reality as it is. Self is studying self, and the act of studying is also the self.

There is no such thing as a seer that is separate from seeing. There is no division between the seer and the seen, the observer and observed. This is how it is, but it appears otherwise to dualistic consciousness.

What do we do?

Neither ecological movements, climate change protests, feminism, personal growth, mindfulness nor yoga can save the world from the catastrophe inherent in our very idea of the world. We are already adrift on the waters between birth and death. But we can attend to what is there, like the Ancient Greek *therapeutes*, 'those who care for the gods', those 'who attend to anything' (Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford 1968). We could attend naturally and affectionately to the winds, to the ebb and flow of the tide, to the currents and undercurrents, to the 'white-maned seahorses, champing, bright wind-bridled'. Attending, where 'I' has lost its grip on itself and the world. Free to look.

"Observe with quiet beatitude", says Krishnaji. Perhaps it is the caring eye, the kind eye that blesses and is blessed, bringing the divine face of 'things' into visibility?

What is the first step? Which is the last step.

We cannot say. Perhaps there is no step; only the life that is given to us.

And K tells us to open our eyes and look. Then he suggests that the bird flying in the sky will tell us a great deal.

Krishnamurti is no longer among us. But the presence does not depend on his visibility; the invisible Krishnamurti is among us. Because of him the basis of the work has already been done. It is for

## The Uncharted Voyage

us to take the journey, to venture on the uncharted sea.

Now our hero finds himself at home. He never left it.

He holds the silver branch.

Stepping "*Through the unknown, remembered gate*"<sup>1</sup>

Seeing the place for the first time.

... "*Costing not less than everything*"<sup>2</sup>

### Endnotes

1 TS Eliot, *Four Quartets*

2. Ibid.





# An Education for Mankind

JAVIER GÓMEZ RODRÍGUEZ



## **The world crisis**

The current state of the world is marked by a series of global challenges whose gravity turns them into veritable crises. These crises are not due to natural phenomena but are the direct result of human action. They are the outcome of our conflicted relationships with nature, with things, with each other and with ideas. We are collectively failing in our total responsibility for peace and cooperation among human beings and for the welfare and protection of the biosphere. The wave of destruction humanity has unleashed has reached such proportions that scientists are talking about a new age of extinctions which they've named the Anthropocene as it is human beings who are causing it.

Our knowledge has given us power and that power has been deployed at the service of self-interest. Our general materialist outlook and our near-total disregard for the whole and wholeness of life are ever being enhanced by our increasingly more sophisticated technical prowess. The predominance of social tribalism and psychological fragmentation continue to ensure that our human condition is plagued by the universal blights of violence and sorrow. These endemic core problems have ever stained the pages of history, which is the story of humanity, the chequered record of both our great achievements and of our inherited brutality. This deeper crisis has been with us from the beginning and no amount of scientific progress is going to resolve it, for it is the result of our profound lack of self-knowledge.

## **The need for transformation of our common consciousness**

In this author's perspective, Krishnamurti's teachings offer one of the broadest and deepest diagnosis of the human condition that has ever come to light. In K's own metaphor, they constitute a reading of the book of humanity, which is our common consciousness.

This consciousness is the repository of our universal history and the very field of time which limits our intelligence and condemns us to a mechanistic and conflict-ridden way of life. Insight into and freedom from this limitation is therefore critical in the transformation of consciousness and the liberation of humanity from its enduring ills and tragic mode of existence. The very perception of this global predicament, that it affects all human beings everywhere independently of race, class, culture, language, ideology and belief, places each of us at the centre of the challenge and makes us all equally responsible, for we are the world.

This is one of the most fundamental insights at the core of K's teachings, and one whose profound relevance and utter urgency is daily demonstrated by the ongoing panorama of social injustice, ecological devastation and war. For K it was a law that where there is division there must be conflict. These divisions are the result of our identifications with nations, ethnic groups, traditions, etc., which then enter into a struggle for power and resources. These separate entities are invested with the fundamental values of our security, happiness and self-worth and become the very definition of what we are. But at their core lies a deep and dangerous confusion concerning being. The insight that we share a common consciousness and, therefore, that we are the world, is a denial of these seemingly entrenched separate realities. Consciousness is not yours or mine, just as the earth is not yours or mine. The perception of the falseness of these conceptual divisions is a fundamental first step in the healing of the traditional psychopathology of mankind and the establishing of a truly wholesome and responsible relationship with the whole.

### **Relationship is life, while thought breeds division and conflict**

Relationship, K never tired of reiterating, is life, for nothing can exist in isolation. And yet we live in a world whose culture is

characterised by an insistence on separateness as the very trademark of identity. This insistence on identity may have its primary source in our animal background and its instinctual territorial, sexual and hierarchical survival strategies. This is an instance of what K called the spilling over of the biological into the psychological. This conditioning becomes the primary drive of thought and blinds it to the broader implications of its own actions. Although we consider that thought represents the glory of man and the pinnacle of evolution, as long as it remains bound to this instinctual background it fails to respond to intelligence and compassion. So, the universal issue of division and conflict has a deeper cause in this biological conditioning that has become the nucleus of our individual and group psychology. And no amount of environmental manipulation will solve it for, as K often said, in human affairs the inner invariably overcomes the outer.

This is another profound insight that seems to be lost on most people and cultures. Most of us appear to put our faith in social reformation and structural change, to the neglect of the inner or psychological dimension, whereas it is in the latter that the key to harmonious relationship and creative order is to be found. We ignore a simple truth, namely, that the troubled reality we face is of our own making, that the world is what it is because thinking makes it so and unless there is an insight into the nature of thought, the world will carry on in the same old way regardless of our best intentions. That brings the whole question of transformation directly home and places it right at the centre of our very psyche and sense of self.

### **Knowledge and the illusion of the self**

Although K was not systematic in his use of language, with regard to bringing about a radical transformation, words such as 'knowledge', 'consciousness', 'thought' and 'self' have a very specific weight. Knowledge, which in its scientific aspect has been

regarded as the ladder in the cultural ascent of man—as opposed to his biological descent—is made to include not only the factual and useful information we need to operate objectively and sanely in all kinds of fields, but also the whole cultural tradition with its inherited patterns of conditioning. In this sense knowledge is also ignorance, for it includes prejudice, superstition and all manner of bias. Not only is such content problematic but, as the result of past experience, it is inherently limited, which naturally reduces its domain of applicability. The past is memory and memory, however vast or ancient, does not encompass and can never encompass the present. It has its place in the management of recurrent features, without which knowledge, which is recognition, would not be possible, but its outlook must of necessity miss out the new, without which we can hardly be said to be alive and, therefore, in relationship.

This memory, experience and knowledge constitute the content of consciousness and thought is its response. From there K infers the inherent limitation and danger of thought as the dominant factor that it has become in human existence. Not only is thought, with its emotional component, seen to be reduced to a mechanical reflex process but the very notion of self, which traditionally has stood for the spiritual in us—the soul, the *atman*—is perceived as a projection from that very same material psychological background, for its essence is the identification with the content of consciousness, however vulgar or refined. Without such content, the self has no substance, which means that it has no independent existence, for the self, the thinker, is the product of thought. This denial of the independent existence of the self is perhaps an even deeper insight, as it concerns the most fundamental and pervasive duality at the heart of the psychopathology of our everyday life.

The encompassing nature of the teachings is amazing. K considered that they covered the whole of life. They move seamlessly

from the outer dimension of the vast scope of relationship to the inner workings of consciousness in a perceptive unfolding of the true nature of the human predicament and its needful liberation. The inner and the outer are a single movement, the ebb and flow of existence. The individual is the world and the world is but the workings of fragmented consciousness. The dissolution of the factors of fragmentation is what allows the so-called individual to become the link between the cosmic and the collective dimensions, thus generating a total and harmonious whole.

### **A vision of freedom and wholeness**

But this grand vision of freedom and wholeness is characterised by the greatest simplicity and immediacy, for it is founded on pure perception. K called it the art of living, the 'art' being to put everything in its right place, therefore implying a quality of unfolding creative order in relationship. The problems of humanity are generated by the persistence of illusion in the way we see, think, feel and act. This illusion is brought about by the interference of the observer, i.e., by the time-bound projections of self-centred thought. What is required is a heightened form of sensitivity in which thought and time do not distort seeing. This sensitivity establishes the facts and permits an action that is free from conditioning. This is the proper meaning of responsibility. Thus, the pure aesthetics of perception becomes the free foundation of a truly ethical behaviour. Laying this ethical ground of order is seen by K as the necessary foundation for a deeper movement. This deeper movement he calls meditation, which involves the emptying of consciousness of its psychological or self-centred content. This is equivalent, in fact, to perhaps the deepest insight of all, namely that psychologically we are nothing which, paradoxically, signals the emergence of being from the delusions of becoming.

## The true meaning of religion

Mankind has lost itself in a labyrinth of its own making and its technical dominance and selfish ways is the greatest threat to its own survival as well as to the sustainability of life on the only living planet in the known universe. Krishnamurti's insights into the nature of consciousness are fundamental in the understanding and ending of violence and sorrow, which are the core endemic problems facing humanity since time immemorial. This author cannot think of a more relevant and urgent endeavour than the unfolding of the liberating potential of self-knowledge that the teachings so sensitively and truthfully reflect. This potential is not merely a matter of bringing about a quality of moral integrity and the corresponding social and universal order, but of discovering the inward or spiritual dimension he called the religious mind.

Again, in K's language words such as 'meditation,' 'wholeness' and 'religion' acquire a profound significance. The word religion, particularly in the West, has practically lost its meaning in our time. And yet K's teachings are essentially concerned, from beginning to end, with awakening the religious spirit. His approach to religion is perhaps the purest there has ever been, for it dissolves all sectarian identity, dogma, authority and practice. It is perhaps the most austere, for at its core lies his essential insight that truth is a pathless land. And yet K also makes it clear that without the total freedom of that timeless truth there cannot be a wholesome culture or a peaceful world.

For this author K's teachings represent a deep mirroring of the human condition and the way of its liberation and wholeness. That's why they deserve the greatest attention, not only within the

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K institutions but in the world at large. They were freely given out of a compassionate concern with the whole of life and that is what they stand for. Anyone equally concerned will find them to be the clearest expression of spiritual wisdom in our time and a veritable and universal education for mankind.



*Dharma and  
Svadharm* in  
the Teachings of  
J Krishnamurti\*

STEPHEN SMITH



One of the last things Krishnamurti said was, “Keep the teachings clean and look after the land,” a statement as remarkable for what it leaves out as it is for the two things he mentions expressly. No mention, for instance, of education or of that broad field he cultivated so carefully, and of which he stated so succinctly, *You are the World, The Observer is the Observed*—the scattered field of consciousness. ‘Keep the teachings clean and look after the land.’ The implications are enormous.

The word *dharma* is derived from the phoneme *dhr*, meaning to hold, to maintain, to keep. It signifies, in Hinduism, behaviours considered to be in accord with *Rta*, the order that makes life and the universe possible. It includes rights, duties, laws, conduct, virtue and the ‘right way of living’. In Buddhism, it means cosmic law and order and is handsomely incorporated in the Noble Eightfold Path with such principles as Right Livelihood, Right Action, Right Attitude—eventually, I believe, Right Meditation.

What strikes one, as one ponders this, is the preponderance, the presence, of the word *right* and its link to the order of the universe. Without this ‘rightness’ there will be chaos and collapse, and we humans are the means by which it holds together. In other words, there is not only a physical/material order, there is a moral order governing the universe. In our drenched-in-materialism modern world it may be difficult to countenance this, even as a possibility, but ‘keep the teachings clean’ is an obvious point of reference. Nothing stays clean by itself—we have to tend our garden, even brush our teeth—so an application to the task is implied, an application moreover that betokens understanding. We need to “keep moving”, as K would say.

According to traditional thought, *svadharma* is ‘that action which is in harmony with your true nature’ (*svabhava*); it is ‘in

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\*For G Narayan, deceased, and for Raman Patel

accordance with your skills and talents’ and ‘that for which you are responsible’ (your *karma*). This brings it down to the level of the individual and implies that not only as a species (*homo sapiens*) are we responsible—via ritual, via attunement, via right living—for the maintenance of the cosmic order, we are at the same time, in our personal lives, duty-bound to fulfil our destiny. That which is in ‘harmony with our true nature’ and ‘in accordance with our skills and talents’ may be part of the picture, but it is surely not the whole of it.

Many things happen to us—a chance encounter, a conversation, a new and different work of art—for which we may be totally unprepared but which thrust us willy-nilly into the next phase of our life. What is implied in all this may remain obscure, hidden under layers of accumulated *karma*, but the feeling, when it happens, is one of release. The opaque prison of our conditioning reveals a hidden skylight—dusty, dirty, cobweb-ridden—but a skylight nonetheless, a light unto the sky. “I am going there,” something within us says.

I never wanted to be a teacher. “There’s always teaching,” a friend of mine said; and another, more bluntly, “Can’t you think of something better?” It was synonymous with drudgery, with recalcitrant students, with the flame of intelligence being gradually dimmed until it ended on the scrapheap of its own exhaustion. A weary, predictable, failed, faltering life. Probably, *faute de mieux*, marriage and children. Probably, in tandem with that, promotion—a borrowed ambition, falsely fulfilled. This is what they called the *real world*.

It was clear to me, at the same time, that the world had lost its moral compass. The march of science over the centuries had certainly given rise to a value-free world, but at a terrible price—it was value-less. The bottom had dropped out of Western culture, and the fervid attempts to fill the void resembled nothing so much as a non-stop shopping spree. The Mall was the ever-open, ever-empty maw, the consumerist monster swallowing its own children. The lost inner meaning of the twentieth century was written in

*The Waste Land* and in *Waiting for Godot*, in the nightmarish narratives of Franz Kafka and the flayed, distorted figures of Francis Bacon. We were living in a world from which God had fled. It was the end of humanism, as well as faith.

It was into this world that Krishnamurti was born, on 11 May 1895. He did not show much promise as a student, but when in 1909 he was ‘discovered’ on Adyar beach by the eminent Theosophist CW Leadbeater who declared that his aura had “not a trace of selfishness”, his life took a totally unexpected turn: he was brought up to be the World Teacher. For some years the Theosophists had been looking for a ‘vehicle’ and they found it in this diffident, rather vacant boy. Though he later dissolved the organisation that had been built up around him, declaring (1929) in his best-known speech that ‘Truth is a Pathless Land’, he never denied that he was the World Teacher. This is stated here as a matter of record.

So far as one knows, only the Buddha and Jesus Christ have been similarly thought of as World Teachers. Their message of universal compassion has elevated mankind, if only partially. The next step, as it were, was to shed light on our darkness, to draw out the potential in human beings—in short, to draw a line under history, which is essentially the history of consciousness, and to bring to the fore the importance of perception. This is synonymous with the awakening of intelligence, which Krishnamurti spent endless patient hours explaining. The gateway to our ‘progress’—the grasping of the ungraspable—lies not through the medium of time and thought (thought-time) but through a direct, immediate perception of the whole in which the part then naturally finds its place. Specifically, thought no longer grasps—it realises its own limitation and falls silent. This is the threshold on which we stand.

To bring, via consciousness, the entire human species to this existential moment is what he came to do. It is not something that can be worked up to, striven for, envisaged or imagined. It is here-and-now—or it is not. But, somehow, everything depends on

it—without this clarity, we are doomed. No outward action is adequate. To bring this home, in terms of consciousness, is the whole import (and impact) of the teachings. It is also why the teachings are *dharma*. They are ‘right’, just-so, immarcessibly, imperishably true.

I was living with friends in Montreal when I first heard tell of Krishnamurti in person. We travelled to New York to hear him speak. He sat bolt-upright on a straight-backed chair, in a blue suit, impeccably dressed. It was as if the ancient oracle spoke. His statements came from a deep well—unprepared, resonant, rich with meaning, “Prosperity without austerity leads to violence.” The evidence lay all around.

A chord had been struck, but the follow-up was not obvious. Nor was my life, at that time, very stable. The following year, in the summer of 1969, I came to India for the first time. It was the revelation of a new dimension, like visiting a place of which one hardly knew the name. I felt it as soon as I stepped off the plane. I think this question of dimensionality is vital.

I lived for six weeks, and later for a whole year, in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. It was there, perhaps, that I began to feel that education could have some meaning beyond an amiable transmission of knowledge. I was not yet ready to go the whole hog and drop the idea of transmission altogether, but I taught at the school. It is a good school. One thing that distinguishes it from other schools is that it had no examinations, internal or external. Most schools do have examinations, and the change in the atmosphere is palpable as soon as the ‘exam season’ comes along. Anxiety increases by leaps and bounds, stress-related behaviours emerge, and examinations and exam-taking become prime topics of conversation. It is a well-to-be avoided state of affairs, but very few schools manage to avoid it.

To paraphrase the *Bhagavad Gita*, “When unrighteousness flourishes and *adharma* is rife, I am born again and again.” Thus speaks the Blessed Lord, Sri Krishna, in his conversation with Arjuna.

J Krishnamurti lived once only, uniquely. His teachings are not like any others'. But he initiated a chain reaction in consciousness, the reverberations of which are constant and unfathomable. Even much of the upheaval we see around us may be attributable to his continuing 'effect'. Certain it is that consciousness needs a shakeup and that nothing new can come about without a dismantling of the old. Are we ready for it, are we strong enough for it? Actually, it is touch-and-go. And, Krishna's being 'born again and again' may be transferred, existentially, to the moment's being born—ever-young, ever-fresh—to the individual's being born. **Incarnate now!**

This revelation bears directly on the topic of *dharma* and *svadharma*. The rightness and righteousness of the *dharma* of the teachings isn't something that can be learnt and stored: it is not the outcome of the past at all. Thought begets time and time begets sorrow, and once we are taken over by them, we are caught. There is no escape within this loop. That is why perception is so important, why, indeed, it takes on a moral tone. We cannot live, as we have done, by the past, following ancient injunctions and laws. It is not commandments and obedience that matter—which is itself a psycho-social model from the past—but clear, fresh thinking and original insight. Only these can take us through the current miasma.

To **incarnate now** is to touch the cosmic order, which is moral and spiritual as well as material. It is to find again one's proper place in the universe, the rounded space in an angular world. Indeed, the world itself may lose its angularity once it is seen for what it is—a construct. It may loosen its terrible hold on us. For the darkness we live in is of our own creation though it goes back for millennia. Like time itself, we have built and believe in it—just as we believe in the afterlife, in reincarnation and a continuing time-existence. We are the prisoners of our own scope and the willing slaves of our own ignorance.

Krishnamurti, as the World Teacher, has shown us the extent and the depth of our entanglement, using the light of rationality

when that would do, and inviting us, at the same time, to take the existential leap beyond the boundaries of our own making. It is an ongoing, moment-by-moment invitation. It is not in high heaven, or even deep in earth. It is exactly where we are. And, it is *who* we are.

This congruence of perception and identity, this ‘ever-newness’ of the entity, is in itself a step beyond time. We are prone to think even of the timeless in terms of time—as something remote, ethereal, impossible—whereas it may not be like that at all: it may be closer than our own breath. The very ‘push’ of thought may take us past it.

Other than stating what it is not, the timeless has no relationship to time. It simply *is*. And, as it *is*, it is also *what is*—the underlay, the source, of consciousness as well as its substance in daily life. There is not the source and the content: all is one. Our sense of the ‘new *dharma*’ depends on this perception, which may make it difficult if the terms are not clear.

After years of travelling and ‘experiments in living’ which included a variety of communities—alternatives, quite common at the time, to the bourgeois nuclear family—I arrived at Brockwood Park in 1975. Krishnamurti didn’t like the word *community* which, to him, implied exclusivity. But *community* speaks to *communication* and, at a deeper level, *communion*. This obviously lay at the heart of Brockwood’s intentions.

Between May and November Krishnaji spoke with us—once a week with the staff, once a week with the students, and once a week with the community at large. Since there was some vague idea of incorporating adults, it was originally called the *Krishnamurti Education Centre*, but the exigencies of a growing student body quickly ensured that it became a school, that it established itself in the world as a school. All new enterprises, businesses, foundations face the possibility of not surviving, and it is thanks to the

dedication of the staff—especially the initial three (Dorothy and Montague Simmons and Doris Pratt)—that it was well-stocked and flourishing when I arrived.

Brockwood provided three things I was looking for—an intentional community with a spiritual basis, a group of people with whom one had a ‘wavelength’, and a means of earning a livelihood. The latter was meagre, to say the least, but like everyone else I accepted it. Being a full-time teacher also went with the job, along with other responsibilities, but I pitched in—we all did—and was soon at home.

This sense of feeling or being at home is crucial. Most schools are cold, bleak institutions and uncannily align themselves with the definition of being an extension of ‘the military-industrial complex’. They are. But in summer, when Krishnaji gave public talks at Brockwood, the whole place was transformed once again into a country seat, a Hampshire manor, of which Jane Austen could be proud. It had none of the reek and nervous tension of a school as, indeed, it did not during term-time. Students as well as staff felt it was their home.

This ties in with the sense that these schools—all these schools—are places where care and affection are paramount, where the human individual counts—not the numbers—and where one is given permission to be oneself. While most schools condition, subtly or grossly, here the attempt is made to unravel conditioning, to see it for what it is and to go beyond it. In this sense, the timeless is always present.

The Buddha-Christ-‘Maitreyic’ consciousness was synonymous with the consciousness of J Krishnamurti. At no point did he need to ‘stretch’ for it: it flowed easily through him in daily life. What manifested outwardly as a separate human being did so only in the eyes of others; in his own view, he was never separate. The fact is, we are so inured to feeling separate that we can scarcely imagine,

let alone live, a different state. Yet the daily presence of this singular man brought home to us—with or without words—that such a state is, indeed, quite natural, that it is, in fact, the Natural State. The total relaxedness of his body as well as the resonant peace of his mind proclaimed wordlessly that division was false. It was no concept, no ideological imposition: it was here-and-now reality; it was *what is*.

I became a teacher by default. I found that I could do it, that there was more to it than met the eye, and that the field of learning was limitless. This brought a quality of excitement to it—the excitement of ‘newness’, not novelty. Nowhere was this more in evidence than in the team-taught courses of the early 1980s which began to forge a link between the teachings and academics. The shift of emphasis was wholly beneficial. These courses—One Man, One Earth, Modern Movement, etc.,—went under the title of General Studies, but by implication and often expressly they dealt with the ‘matter of consciousness’. This is the substratum of our thought and action, the general ground from which they arise. It is living and moving, not static as we assume, and the fact that we are not alive to its movement is part of our ‘sorrow of ignorance’.

These courses, while attempting to redress this balance, did wonders for us as ‘teacher-learners’. It also alerted me to the fact that the *learn-it, teach-it* approach is false. It is part of the time-worn view of things: replication, repetition and the persistence of *what was*. Hierarchy and authority are germane to it.

But learning is linked to limitlessness, and limitlessness partakes of the timeless. This is the fulcrum, the moment, of release. But it depends on the balance, the ‘rightness’ of things. If there is chaos and disorder there is no release, there is no basis for liberation and release; hence, the importance of *dharma*, of rightness, of our needing to maintain a steady course. The psychological revolution of which Krishnamurti speaks has nothing immature about it; it

is not bomb- and bottle-throwing, it is not even ideational. It lies much deeper than thought and word, and it cannot be accessed by the mind as we know it. This mind, this conscious mind, must die to itself; it must cease to exist as a separate entity. Only then can one enter the Ocean.

These things, of course, are easily said; they are much, much harder to realise. But there are pointers, and even a little understanding helps. We should not mix K up with other teachers and teachings, but understand him on his own terms. This is part of the *dharma* of the teachings. We should *live* our understanding, however small, and refuse to proselytise or preach. We should give importance to attention, even consciously, as attention or observation is the key that may open the door to another dimension and, hence, to a new and different way of living.

There is nothing arbitrary or haphazard about transformation. Although it is in the natural order of things—organic—it has been worked for step by step, day by day. There are no handouts or lottery winners. It is part of the *dharma* of the teachings that they are supremely rational. Without that, we couldn't be involved at all; we couldn't even ask to be involved.

It was my *svadharma* to be a teacher. It carried no illusions of changing the world nor even improving it very much. But perhaps the very ordinariness of it, the lack of display and self-importance and the imperative to think of others, were quiet lessons in themselves. Perhaps one shed a little pride. If Krishnaji's humility is anything to go by, it has been a sufficient, and necessary, learning.



# On Goodness

J KRISHNAMURTI

To bring about a good society has been the dream of ancient Hindus, the ancient Greeks and Egyptians. And a good society can only exist when mankind is good because being good he creates goodness, brings about goodness in his relationship, in his actions, in his way of life.

Good also means that which is beautiful. Good also means that which is holy; it is related to God, to the highest principles. That word good needs to be very clearly understood. When there is goodness in you, then whatever you do will be good, your relationships, your actions, your way of thinking. One may capture the whole significance of that word, the extraordinary quality of that word, instantly.

Please, let's carefully think this over together, because if you really go into it very deeply it is going to affect your consciousness, it is going to affect your way of thinking, it is going to affect the way of your life. So please give a little attention to the understanding of that word. The word is not the thing. I may describe a mountain most beautifully, paint it, make a poem, but the word, the description, the poem, is not the actual. We are generally carried away emotionally, irrationally by the description, by the word.



Examine it, look at it. Goodness is not the pursuit of conformity. If you conform to a belief, to a concept, to an idea, to a principle, that is not good, because it creates conflict. Goodness cannot flower through another, through a religious figure, through dogma, through belief; it can only flower in the soil of total attention in which there is no authority. The essence of goodness is a mind that is not in conflict. And goodness implies great responsibility. You can't be good and allow wars to take place. So a person who is really good is totally responsible for his whole life.

We are asking if one who has lived in a society with the pressures of institutions, of beliefs, of authoritarian religious people, can be good, because it is only if you are good, if you, as a human being, are totally and absolutely good—absolutely, not partially—that we will create a different society. Is it possible, living in this world, being married, with children, jobs, to be good? We are using the word in the sense that implies great responsibility, care, attention, diligence, love. The word good contains all that. Is that possible for you who care to listen? ...

What prevents every human being from being utterly good? What is the barrier? What is the block? Why don't human beings—you—be utterly, sanely good? One who observes realizes what the world is and that he is the world, that the world is not different from him, that he has created that world, that he has created society, that he has created the religions with their innumerable dogmas,

beliefs, rituals, with their separations, with their factions. Human beings have created this. Is that what is preventing us from being good? Is it because we believe, or because we are so self-concerned with our own problems of sex, fear, anxiety, loneliness, wanting to fulfil, wanting to identify with something or other? Is that what is preventing a human being from being good? If those things are preventing us, then they have no value. If you see that to bring about this quality of goodness any pressure from any direction—including your own belief, your own principles, your own ideals—utterly prevents that goodness from being, then you will naturally put them aside without any equivocation, any conflict, because they are stupid.

From *This Light In Oneself*, Chapter 3



## About the Contributors

ANANTHAPADMANABHAN works to nurture and mentor purpose-driven leaders and social sector organisations that aspire to make a difference to the significant issues of our times.

Ananth is the former CEO of the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives. Prior to that, he was the CEO of Amnesty International in India and the International Programme Director at Greenpeace. After twenty years of serving large social sector organisations, he is now (in the summer of 2020) eighteen months into the journey of being a social entrepreneur. He is founder and chairperson of four social sector organizations which are engaged in a range of actions from serving young people who leave child care institutions to an effort to cultivate the collective wisdom that is needed to tackle Wicked Problems.

Ananth began his work life as a teacher. He taught for eleven years at The School, Krishnamurti Foundation India. He graduated in 1988 from IIT Madras with a BTech in electrical engineering. He is delighted that his daughter, who is a teacher, proudly declares that she comes from a family of teachers!

He and his partner Kavitha (an activist who works on farmers' issues) live in Bangalore. Their flat overlooks a magnificent rain tree that has been a particular source of delight during the lockdown of 2020.



GISÈLE BALLEYS was born in 1935 in Bourg-St-Pierre in the Swiss Alps. Not being satisfied with her first job as a secretary, she took advice from a professional who suggested a change to teaching and a visit to Saanen where Krishnamurti was holding talks. This was in 1963. She graduated from the University of Geneva in 1967 with a degree that would allow her to teach primary school children. This was followed many years later by a bachelor's degree in

education, in case a possibility of starting a Krishnamurti school in Switzerland offered itself.

Between 1979 and 1985 she was on the staff of Brockwood Park School, engaging first in the garden and later teaching French. During that period, she was also responsible for the Saanen gatherings held in July and August. She has travelled extensively in Europe and India visiting the various schools and centres. Gisèle continues to organize the well-attended annual Krishnamurti Gatherings in Switzerland.



TIM BOYD currently serves as International President of the Theosophical Society with its headquarters in Chennai, India. He is director for a number of theosophical organizations and editor of *The Theosophist* magazine. He is a founding member of a spiritual community which was active in Chicago for more than twenty-five years. The group worked with troubled youth, taught meditation and healing methods, established organic food gardens on vacant lots, purchased and renovated numerous residential buildings in the area, and placed bee hives on the roofs of buildings. His involvement with the Theosophical Order of Service and the Chushul orphanage in Tibet led to an audience with the Dalai Lama which resulted in the TS sponsoring his visit to Chicago in July of 2011 for a two-day event attended by 10,000 people. He speaks and conducts workshops around the world.



SWAMI CHIDANANDA, an electronics engineer from Mysore University and IIT Madras, developed a deep fascination for Vedanta during his student years. He became a senior disciple of Swami Chinmayananda, while also drawing inspiration from Sri Ramana Maharshi. For several years he was an ordained teacher with the Chinmaya Mission and was based in the United States in the

mid-1990s. On coming into contact with the teachings of Krishnamurti, he later joined the Rajghat Education Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation India, and served there in executive positions from 2003 to 2013. He currently runs his own NGO called FOWAI FORUM and is a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation India. He travels widely and speaks on many spiritual topics to diverse audiences.



DONAL CREEDON was born and educated in Dublin. He worked for some years in the Irish civil service. At the age of nineteen he came across Krishnamurti and attended some talks in Saanen. He was deeply affected by Krishnamurti's presence and the teachings. The message seemed straightforward and unambiguous. However, after some years listening at 'the feet of the master', he felt utterly stuck and went to study with Buddhist masters from Tibet. He states he "had no interest in becoming a Buddhist" but quickly got involved with retreats. He spent twelve years in enclosed retreats during which time he was appointed retreat master for a three-year three-month retreat. In spite of appearances, Krishnamurti remained a constant and invisible presence, challenging at every step.

Later, wishing to further ignite the flame of inquiry, he visited India and particularly Rajghat. At the invitation of Rajesh Dalal, he took up the Buddha Krishnamurti scholarship. The outcome was published in book form as *The Main of Light: Common Ground and Dividing Lines in the Teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Buddhism*, which he says is an inquiry into the modes of exploring the fundamental questions of life. The time in Rajghat exploring with serious friends was wonderful beyond words.

He continues to facilitate retreats in various parts of the world as part of the move to change humanity.



MARK EDWARDS is one of the most widely published photographers in the world. He was profoundly affected by listening to Krishnamurti when he was at art school in the 1960s and this influenced his approach to photography. He is now recognized as the first to specialize in photographing environmental issues and has travelled to over 100 countries to bring alive our “headlong collision with nature.”

In 1990, he collaborated with the eminent scientist and philosopher, David Bohm, on the book, *Changing Consciousness: Exploring the Hidden Source of the Social, Political, and Environmental Crises Facing our World*. In 2004 he produced *Hard Rain*, an exhibition, book and film, with Bob Dylan. It has been seen by some fifteen million people around the world and has attracted huge public and critical acclaim, along with the support and endorsement of political and environmental leaders around the world.

Mark has presented his illustrated talk at hundreds of universities and schools around the world, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, to MPs in Europe, to the National Assembly in Cuba, at prisons, to IPCC scientists and at music festivals including Glastonbury in the UK.

All his works reflect the urgent need for a radically new, world-wide approach and introduce his audience to Krishnamurti's message that this can only come about through the freeing of the mind from a crippling servitude to self-centredness, expressed collectively in a destructive adherence to nationalism and sectarian beliefs.



FRIEDRICH GROHE was born in Germany. During the last three years of the Second World War, he attended school in Switzerland. After further studies and working for several years in the family's brass faucet company, he was appointed CEO by his father. When the majority of the company was sold, he left the business world

and moved his own family to Switzerland, where he did much high-mountain ski-touring and climbing. In 1980 a friend handed him the book, *The Only Revolution*. In his memoir, Friedrich writes, “It was the strangest thing: though Krishnamurti appeared to be saying the opposite of what I’d learned and experienced, he also seemed to be saying—in simple, clear and overwhelming language—what I’d always vaguely felt.”

He first met Krishnamurti in Gstaad in 1983 while K was giving his annual talks in neighbouring Saanen. From then until K’s death, he continued to see him in Saanen, Brockwood, Ojai, and India. He is an emeritus/honorary trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundations.

“It was overpowering to listen to him. He emanated so much energy that I felt I simply couldn’t sit in front of him. He spoke simply and clearly, with few gestures and no rhetoric.” Of all of K’s statements, the one that struck Friedrich most deeply was, “Love has no cause.”

A few years after K’s death, and because K had asked the trustees whether they would be able to convey the perfume of what it was like to be around him, Friedrich wrote his memoir of that time, *The Beauty of the Mountain*. “When people ask me what Krishnamurti was like as a person, I reply that he was full of love and affection and humour.”



**KIRAN KHALAP** was born in 1958. He juggles three passions and one career, his passions being writing, rock climbing and spiritual evolution. Inspired by Krishnamurti early in his life, he joined the Rajghat Besant School, Varanasi, as a teacher. Even as he took to enthusiastically engaging with his students, he came into extensive contact with Krishnamurti and his teachings. Life situations later took him into the field of advertising, where he joined Lintas as a copy writer. He quickly rose to become a creative director

and CEO of well-known advertising companies. He later founded his own company, *chlorophyll*, a brand consultancy firm, where he has tried to incorporate lessons learnt from his engagement with Krishnamurti's teachings. Kiran was Chairman of the committee that consulted with UIDAI, the Government of India's arm that developed Aadhaar, the world's largest biometrics-based identity project. He is an invited member of the India Chapter of The Marketing Society of UK, founded in 1959. Kiran was the very first speaker at TED University at TED's first Indian meet in 2009 and at TEDx Bandra in 2017. He is a published author of several travel writing articles as well as three novels, *Half Way up the Mountain*, *Black River Run* and *Two Pronouns and a Verb*.



SATISH KUMAR is a former Jain monk and long-term peace and environment activist. In 1962 he undertook an 8,000 kilometre-long 'peace walk' to all the nuclear capitals of the world, and met with several well-known thought leaders, including Bertrand Russel and Martin Luther King. During the 1960s he also had the opportunity of meeting with Krishnamurti in India, and parts of their discussions are included in his book, *You are, Therefore I am*. He settled in the UK in 1973, where he went on to found Schumacher College, a unique institution dedicated to an education that responds to contemporary global concerns. He also became editor of the 'Resurgence & Ecologist' magazine in 1973, essential reading for those in the environmental movement and anyone interested in contemporary spirituality. He continued in this role for forty-three years, sharing his unique perspective and wisdom through its pages, and is currently editor emeritus for the magazine. Other books by Satish Kumar include *No Destination: Autobiography of a Pilgrim* and *Elegant Simplicity: The Art of Living Well*. In July 2000 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Education from the University of Plymouth, and in July 2001, he received an

honorary doctorate in Literature from the University of Lancaster. In November of that same year, he was presented with the Jannalal Bajaj International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Abroad. He continues to teach and run workshops on reverential ecology, holistic education and voluntary simplicity and is a much sought-after speaker both in the UK and abroad.



RAYMOND MARTIN is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland College Park. He is also Research Professor of Philosophy at Union College in Schenectady, New York. His special areas of research interest have been in the Philosophy of Historical Methodology and in the Philosophy of Self and Personal Identity. He is the author, with John Barresi, of *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self*.



THOMAS METZINGER (born in 1958 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany) was Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz until 2019. He is past president of the German Cognitive Science Society (2005–07) and of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (2009–11). In the English language, he has edited two collections on consciousness—*Conscious Experience*, and *Neural Correlates of Consciousness*. He has also published one major scientific monograph, *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity*. In 2009, he published a popular book, which addresses a wider audience and discusses the ethical, cultural and social consequences of consciousness research, *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self*. Important recent Open Access collections (2015) are *Open MIND* and *Philosophy and Predictive Processing*. In 2018 Metzinger was appointed a member of the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence. Apart from his in-depth

work as a philosopher of consciousness, Metzinger has long been passionately engaged with Krishnamurti's teachings.



RAVI RAVINDRA obtained BSc and MTech degrees from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, before going to Canada on a Commonwealth Scholarship to do an MS and PhD in physics from the University of Toronto. Later, he did an MA in philosophy also, and at different times, held post-doctoral fellowships in physics (University of Toronto), history and philosophy of science (Princeton University) and in religion (Columbia University). He is now Professor Emeritus at Dalhousie University in Halifax (Canada) where he served for many years as a professor in the departments of comparative religion, philosophy, and of physics.

The author adds, "I first met Krishnaji in Delhi in 1965 without knowing who he was. I was very struck by his presence. I recognized the person I had met to be the world teacher, J Krishnamurti, when I had a formally arranged meeting with him at Rajghat a few months later. As I was leaving, he put his hand on my shoulder and said simply, 'We shall meet again.' And we did meet many times, the last time being in 1985 when we spoke at length about death. He was very affectionate and generous in the amount of time and attention he gave to me. On one occasion, in a semi-public seminar, I said in despair, 'There's no sense in carrying on. We keep going around the same mulberry bush. It's totally frustrating.' He asked, 'Sir, then why do you keep coming?' I knew that my coming had nothing to do with any reasons; so, I said what was true, 'Because I love you.' I did not decide to love Krishnamurti any more than an iron filing decides to move towards a magnet. I have described some of these meetings in a couple of small books about Krishnaji. But in my judgement, it is not possible to capture his greatness in any description."



SAMDHONG RINPOCHE is a renowned Tibetan Buddhist monk and a close associate of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He was born in 1939 in Jol, in Eastern Tibet. At the young age of four he joined the Gaden Dechenling Monastery in Jol. At the age of five he was recognized as the reincarnation of the fourth Samdhong Rinpoche, and from 1952 he received his higher education at Drepung Monastery in Central Tibet. At the age of twenty, after the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, he took refuge in India along with the Dalai Lama. Having completed his later studies in India, he was charged with multiple responsibilities for the schooling and higher education of the Tibetan community in exile.

In 1971 he was appointed Principal of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies at Sarnath, and in 2001 he was appointed Director of the Tibetan Institute. In spite of the challenges of working under a government system, he was successful in being true to his tradition and at the same time deeply engaging with and developing lifelong relationships with thinkers from other traditions.

While he was principal of the Tibetan Institute, he met Krishnamurti in Varanasi. He became a close associate and friend, participating in several dialogues with Krishnamurti along with other Buddhist and secular thinkers.

From 2001 to 2011, Samdhong Rinpoche served for two terms as the Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister) of the Tibetan Government in exile. He has travelled extensively around the world giving talks and teachings to audiences in a number of different countries. He was recently appointed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the Alternate Chairman of the Gaden Phodrang Office or the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He continues to be a long-standing trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation India.



HILLARY RODRIGUES is a Religious Studies professor at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada. He specializes in the study of Eastern religions and philosophies. As a young man, reading a few books by Krishnamurti heightened his drive for transformative realization, which he passionately pursued during many years of low-budget travel around the world. He later taught at a Krishnamurti school in Canada, and when returning to university for higher studies, closely examined Krishnamurti's teachings on insight. He has authored several books, including *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, *Introducing Hinduism*, and *Krishnamurti's Insight: An Examination of His Teachings on the Nature of Mind and Religion*. He has been honoured with the University of Lethbridge's Distinguished Teaching Medal.



JAVIER GÓMEZ RODRÍGUEZ was born in 1958 in the seaside county of Rianxo, in Galicia, the Celtic north-western region of Spain. At the age of fourteen he came across a book by Krishnamurti and was instantly struck by its ring of truth. In 1975 he joined Brockwood Park School as a student, where he stayed until 1978. He then took a BA degree in humanities from St John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, and later an MA degree in Spanish language and literature from the University of Texas A & M, where he also taught briefly as a lecturer. In 1990 he returned to Brockwood as a teacher and worked there for two years. During this period, he had the occasion to meet David Bohm, whose dialogical approach to K's teachings made quite an impact on him. After a spell as a resident scholar at the KFI headquarters in Chennai he returned to Spain and worked for the FKL (Fundación Krishnamurti Latinoamericana), translating several K books into Spanish and eventually becoming a trustee of this foundation. During this period, he joined KLI (Krishnamurti Link International) and has been one of the editors of its magazine 'The Link'. He also initiated a K-inspired Bohm dialogue group that

continued for four years. He moved to the Netherlands in 2000, where he married and started a family. Javier currently lives in the Netherlands, from where he supports the work of the Krishnamurti committees and centres in Europe, and continues to participate in dialogues and gatherings. For him, the teachings are an education for mankind and it is up to us, individually and collectively, to undertake this participatory journey of discovery.



STEPHEN SMITH first heard Krishnamurti speak in New York City in 1968. Beginning in 1975, he was sometime Acting Principal, some years Academic Director, and twenty years a teacher at Brockwood Park School in England. Here, both personally and as a staff member, he had direct contact with Krishnamurti until the latter's death in 1986.

Between 1998 and 2003, while resident in California, he was Coordinator of the Krishnamurti Centre in Ojai, organising events and initiating outreach. It was here that he developed a deeper interest in dialogue, an interest he furthers when the occasion arises and as a facilitator in the more formal setting of the Krishnamurti Centre, Brockwood Park.

Stephen is a writer-cum-editor. He is the editor of the Krishnamurti book *Insights into Education* and the author of numerous articles on the teachings. His article 'Dharma and Svadharma' in the *Teachings of J Krishnamurti* is an attempt to articulate, both objectively and subjectively, the meaning of the teacher and the teachings for his life.



Born on 17 April 1931, DAVID SKITT was educated at Cambridge and at the College of Europe, Bruges, where he studied the politics and economics of European unification. From 1955 to 1985, he was a translation reviser/editor in the Organisation for Economic

Cooperation and Development and the European Space Agency [ESA], both of them in Paris. He was also for some years Chairman of the Institute of Tibetan Studies at Vevey in Switzerland.

In 1986 he left ESA, went often to the Krishnamurti Centre at Brockwood, and was for many years a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust, for which he still works as an editor. He was drawn naturally to Krishnamurti's teaching because of a lasting interest in conflict, whether in personal, working or international relationships; also, because Krishnamurti took a planetary view of the human condition.



DR MEENAKSHI THAPAN is a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation India and currently the Director of Rishi Valley Education Centre. She encountered Krishnamurti and his teachings early in her life, and from then on has had an on-going engagement with his educational thought as well as institutions. During her university years, she taught briefly at the Rishi Valley School and later conducted her field research within this school community, resulting in the publication of her first book, *Life at School: An Ethnographic Study*.

Subsequently, she went on to become a highly accomplished academician, based at the University of Delhi, both in the Department of Education, and later at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics. She has travelled widely, teaching, speaking and contributing to university departments all over the world. She is the recipient of a number of prestigious awards, apart from being the author of numerous books as well as research papers and articles in several prominent publications.

Prior to joining Rishi Valley Education Centre in 2019 as its Director, Dr Thapan held the positions of Professor of Sociology and Director, Delhi School of Economics as well as Head of the DS Kothari Centre for Science, Ethics and Education, University of Delhi.



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**O**n the 125th anniversary of Krishnamurti's birth, it was thought fitting that a special issue of the Journal be brought out with contributions invited from persons whose lives and outlook have been deeply affected by his teachings. We have here a collection of eighteen articles from persons who have in their own unique ways engaged deeply with the teachings. Our authors come from varied fields of endeavour—education, academic philosophy, traditional religious teachings, management of organisations, concern with the natural environment. A common theme that recurs implicitly or explicitly across these writings is that all of them have seen that “the inner always overcomes the outer” and that “what you are within, you bring about outwardly.” Though their fields of endeavour in the outer world differ, each of them appears to share in the insight that if we wish to bring about order in the outer world, it is of much greater and fundamental importance to establish order in the world of our inner experience, rather than simply aim to find solutions to ‘fix’ the problems in the outer world.



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