



J. Krishnamurti and Education

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Abstract: *Jiddu Krishnamurti was born on 11 May 1895 in Madanpalle, a small town in south India. He and his brother were adopted in their youth by Dr. Annie Besant, then president of the Theosophical Society. Krishna Murti is regarded globally as one of the greatest thinkers and religious teachers of all time. J. Krishnamurti was a philosopher, speaker and writer. In his early life he was groomed to be the new world teacher but later rejected this mantle and withdrew from the Theosophy organization behind it. He didn't expound any philosophy or religion, but rather talked of the things that concern all of us in our everyday lives of the problems of living in modern society with its violence and corruption of the individual's search for security and happiness and the need for mankind to free itself from inner burden of fear, anger, hurt and sorrow. He explained with great precision the subtle workings of the human mind and pointed to the need for bringing to our daily life a deeply meditative and spiritual quality. He died on 17 Feb. 1986 Ojai California United States.*

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J. Krishnamurti is not a new name among the educationists and thinkers not only in India but even abroad. Adopted and trained by Mrs. Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society to be the future messiah, Krishnamurti not only disowned the divine and glamorous role assigned to him but also dissolved the very organization of which he was the head. For around six decades until his death in 1986, he spoke to large and small gatherings the world over on the futility of conventional religion, places of worship, rituals, traditional methods of meditation and all that binds and dictates an otherwise free mind. Having such radical thinking it was but natural for him to be inclined towards right kind of education. But his approach was different. He did not have any ideas to propagate, though many schools founded by him are running in different parts of the world. His aim was to catch hold of the young mind in a pre-corrupt state of being and to make it understand itself through the right kind of education. In his own words:

"The right kind of education consists in understanding the child as he is without imposing upon him an ideal of what we think he should be." This does not in any way imply that children should

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be left scot-free to decide and take risk on their own. Protection of children while they are young by their elders is a natural phenomenon. It is found even in the animal kingdom. But this protection mechanism produces serious side-effects when it extends itself to protect the mind of the child as well. We as parents, teachers or seniors try to navigate as per our own discretion the inclination and aversions of the younger mind. We provide a sort of screen through which the younger mind could see what is good or not good for him. In other words, we try to make the younger one that which we ourselves could not become. We try to implant our hunger, our craving for more, in our offspring and this has a constricting effect on the developing mind. Now when our child fails to excel us, which often happens, we lay blame on him, on his carelessness, on his lack of interest, his disobedience, etc. The far reaching consequences of such unwelcome guidance are reflected by Krishnamurti in the lines that follow:

"We seek to fulfill ourselves in our children, to perpetuate ourselves through them. We build walls around them, condition them by our beliefs and ideologies, fears and hopes - and then we cry and



pray when they are killed or maimed in wars, or otherwise made to suffer by the experiences of life." Now even when, through imposed discipline, these children are able to achieve the goal assigned to them by their parents, their life becomes far from being happy. By the time they are materially settled in life, they find themselves incapable of entertaining even those small things of life which are available free of cost even to the poorest. Indeed, educational is directly responsible for much of the present day crisis. Contemporary education lays more emphasis on technical perfection and less on the capacity to deal with life as a whole. Specialization may be a boon in material terms but inwardly it is a bane. It aims at the perfection of only a small fragment of the mind at the cost of the remaining part. This is like making one out of the four legs of the table longer. Indeed, the remaining faculties of the mind remain under nourished and under developed producing various deficiencies and imbalance in day to day living. Krishnamurti rightly asks:

"The exclusive cultivation of technique has produced scientists, mathematicians, bridge builders, space conquerors; but do they understand the total process of life? Can any specialist experience life as a whole?"

Going by the way recruitments for various jobs are done these days, the importance of technical perfection cannot be ruled out. But implementation of common method to train the individuals from different backgrounds is little short of violence. Further, the inculcation of technique excluding the ethical and moral values creates machines, not human beings and leaves their understanding of life primitive as before. Money does solve many of our problems but not all of them. Besides, the pleasure it provides is of an invidious sort - such that cannot be shared, such that can either be stolen or robbed. True understanding of life comes from an integrated education that takes care of the heart as well as of the mind. Understanding of life differs in manner and degree from learner to learner, and one who has understood life for himself can learn any technique in no time. Imparting such understanding

should be the aim of education, as Krishnamurti writes:

"Life is pain, joy, beauty, ugliness, love and when we understand it as a whole, at every level, that understanding creates its own technique. But the converse is not true: technique can never bring about creative understanding."

The experienced mind of the elders still has a great role, though a passive one, to play in the education of a child. The young mind is highly receptive and vulnerable to the slightest of influences. It is therefore the duty of the elder mind to be ever watchful of the influences that come in the way of learning. But the elder one cannot continue to guard the younger one forever. The younger mind should therefore be trained to discriminate for himself between the good and the not good. After all he cannot depend on the elders for ever this is very important because dependence on anybody however close has a crippling effect in the long run. Krishnamurti says:

"The young are so easily persuaded by the priest or the politician, by the rich or the poor, to think in a particular way; but the right kind of education should help them to be watchful of these influences so that they do not repeat slogans like parrots or fall into any cunning trap of greed, whether their own or that of another. They must not allow authority to stifle their minds and hearts."

For right kind of education to take place, right educator is needed, that is rare. An educator has to alter a bit the elements of his method in shade and magnitude to cater to the comprehension of each and every student individually. This is pretty difficult if the number of students is large. He has to have sound understanding of every student of his, regarding his age, sex, socio-economic background, etc. to conduct effective education. But all this demands openness on the part of the educator. Before meeting the students, he has to put aside his own ego, his own private bundle of ideologies and idiosyncrasies. Else he would consciously or unconsciously go on propagating his own ideas among the pupils, talking little care to find out whether they really understand that to which they



readily agree, or merely nod their heads in mechanical affirmation. So the problem of educator is closely linked ix" the problem of right education, as Krishnamurti says:

"The real problem in education is the educator. Even a small group of students becomes the instrument of his personal importance if he uses authority as a means of his own release, if teaching is for him a self-expansive fulfillment."

The play of authority is detrimental to right education. Contemporary education is based on the principle of reward and punishment. If a student fares well he is rewarded by his parents or his school, or gets a lucrative job, desired life partner, and so on. On the other hand if he fails to reach the mark he is either punished or coldly ignored by even his close associates, which is worse than the severest punishment. The teacher is also involved in this heaven-hell duality trap. He is promoted or banished from his job on the basis of the performance of his pupils. Now what we miss here is right education and its significance to life. There are long term consequences just as it here are short term results of an action or inaction. The immediate success in an exam doesn't guarantee a happy and enlightened life afterwards, which should be the aim of right kind of education, as Krishnamurti says:

"If we no longer seek immediate results, we shall begin to see how important it is that both the educator and the child should be free from the fear of punishment and the hope of reward, and from every other form of compulsion."

Indeed an environment devoid of threat and enticement is a prerequisite for the right education. There can be no learning with fear. For

learning of any kind to take place, an environment devoid of fear is indispensable. This is because learning happens in a relationship, and there can be no relationship where there is fear. An environment where a student fears punishment and teacher fears demotion there is no true relationship. One of the objectives of education is to cultivate right relationship, not only between teachers and student or between parents and child but between individual and society. This is because self-knowledge occurs only in a relationship. Only when we see ourselves in relationship with others, the way we behave with them or they behave with us, only then through reflection we come to know what we are. Intelligence comes only after we understand the total psychological process of the mind. And this is not possible in fear. To sum up, with what Krishnamurti says:

"The right kind of education must take into consideration this question of fear because fear wraps our whole outlook on life. To be without fear is the beginning of wisdom, and only the right kind of education can bring about the freedom from fear in which alone there is deep and creative intelligence."

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