CHAPTER II
THE LIFE AND MISSION OF J. KRISHNAMURTI

Introduction
Jiddu Krishnamurti was undoubtedly one of the greatest philosophical minds of the 20th century. His entire adult life was spent giving passionate discourses on the myriad ways the human mind turns to self-delusion in its never-ending search for psychological fulfilment. He is considered to be the World Teacher. His leitmotif was to ‘set man absolutely, unconditionally free’. As a great philosophical mind J. Krishnamurti more than half a century, he travelled ceaselessly all over the world giving talks and holding dialogues, not as a guru but as a lover of truth.

2.1 A Short Biographical Sketch of J. Krishnamurti

2.1.1 Childhood and Education

J. Krishnamurti was born at Madnapalle in Andhra Pradesh on 11 May 1895. His father was an official in the Revenue Department of the colonial administration and Krishnamurti was one of five children. After his retirement from public service, Krishnamurti’s father offered his services to the Theosophical Society in Chennai (then called Madras) in exchange for
accommodation for his sons and himself. They eventually moved to Adyar, Chennai, in 1909.  

Even before Krishnamurti was born, his mother Sanjeevamma, had a premonition that her eighth child would be an exceptional being. 

During one of the rare times in which Krishnamurti spoke about his own past he touched upon this early phase in his childhood. "The boy, who totally innocent and unaffected, still had to be protected, as that evil could not touch him, could not enter him. Suddenly, in the middle of the conversation, Krishnamurti was strange, his body gathered itself together. 'Can you feel it in the room?' The room was pulsating. Strong forces were alive and in movement. Krishnamurti was silent for a time. When he started speaking again, the atmosphere in the room was transformed; there was silence, an active quality of goodness. Krishnamurti continued." These words indicate how deeply Krishnamurti's destiny was intertwined with another reality. Even as a youth the beings and energies of a higher realm surrounded him, beings and energies perceptible by other people as well. "I felt a harmony that was beyond anything I had known before and it lasted throughout the period I was associated with them."

His unusual charisma is described once more in a document written about Krishnamurti by P.G. Woodhouse in 1919, again referring to the

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15 Jayakar, p. 292.

quality of selflessness: "What struck us particularly was his naturalness... of any kind of a side or affection there was not a trace. He was still of the retiring nature, modest and deferential to his elders and courteous to all. To those whom he liked, moreover, he showed a kind of eager affection, which was singularly attractive. Of his 'occult' position he seemed to be entirely unconscious. He never alluded to it – never for a movement, allowed the slightest hint of it to get into his speech or manner... Another quality was a serene unselfishness. He seemed to be not in the least preoccupied with himself. We were no blind devotees, prepared to see in him nothing but perfection. We were older people, educationalists, and with some experience of youth. Had there been a trace in him of conceit or affection, or any posing as the 'holy child' or a priggish self-consciousness, we would undoubtedly have given an adverse verdict."

2.1.2 Entry into Theosophical Society

At the age of 14, when he was in Madras, he happened to come into contact with Annie Besant, who recognized his spiritual evolution and adopted him. Three years later she took him to England for his education. Annie Besant and Leadbeater wanted to groom J. Krishnamurti as a future Messiah. They were fully convinced of his spiritual greatness and his role in the spiritual evolution of the world. To prepare him and his close associates for his future role, they set up the Order of the Star.

After entering the Theosophical Society, the first important 'esoteric' step in Krishnamurti's life happened on January 10, 1910. the astrological

17 Mary Lutyens, Life and Death, p. 12. See also Michel Peter, p. 22.
constellations for this day were considered excellent from a theosophical point of view.\textsuperscript{18}

One might anticipate that Krishnamurti was quite happy in his 'pre-messiah' time but this only holds true for the early years. By 1914 he had already written and spoken to Emily Lutyens about his dissatisfaction with his destiny.\textsuperscript{19} During that period he was more interested in playing golf, enjoying his new motorcycle, or in other amusements.\textsuperscript{20} For the ascetic-esoteric-raised Krishnamurti, problems brought on by puberty seem not to have arisen until somewhat later and perhaps only in his dreams of which he wrote to Emily Lutyens.\textsuperscript{21}

The years between 1910 and 1920 were times of severe emotional fluctuation for Krishnamurti, both in personal matters as well as in his spiritual mission. Those days in 1920 that he spent in Paris with a close family, the Manziarlys, exemplify this. On the one hand he expressed his doubts about that Besant and Leadbeater had said. On the other hand he was confronted by his own deeply mystical experiences, which were even recognized by those around him. However, he did not reach an inner clarity.\textsuperscript{22}

It was not until 1922 that he seemed to have re-established a stronger connection to the world of the Masters. In a letter to Emily Lutyens he wrote: “I feel once again in touch with Lord Maitreya and the Masters and

\textsuperscript{18}Peter Michel, \textit{Krishnamurti – Love and Freedom Approaching a Mystery}, p. 28.


\textsuperscript{20}See Mary Lutyens, ibid., pp. 90, 100.

\textsuperscript{21}Mary Lutyens, p. 121, Peter Michel, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 118.
there is nothing else for me to do but to serve them." A change seems to have occurred, his role as the Messiah of theosophical form transformed to a World Teacher in his own right.

2.1.3 World Teacher

In the early years of his youth, Krishnamurti and his brother, Nityananda, were adopted by Dr. Annie Besant, the President of the Theosophical Society, who saw certain spiritual qualities in him that set him apart from others. This further resulted in Mrs. Besant and other theosophists proclaiming Krishnamurti as the vehicle for the World Teacher who was coming, in their words, to bring salvation to mankind. To prepare the world for the coming of this World Teacher, an organization called the Order of the Star in the East was formed in 1911 with Krishnamurti at its head. The role of World Teacher and spiritual leader was thrust upon Krishnamurti at a

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23 Mary Lutyens, p. 121, Peter Michel, p. 162.
24 Peter Michel, p. 30.
25 On January 11, 1911, the Order of the Rising Sun was founded on the initiative of George Arundale. This organization was meant to gather those people who were waiting for the coming of a new great teacher. A few months later, Annie Besant took over this organization, changed its name to the Order of the Star in the East, and asked Krishnamurti to become its head. To become a member of the Order, it was sufficient to sign a piece of paper stating six central ideas:

1. The belief in the coming of a great teacher and the wish to lead a life of preparation of this event.
2. To keep the coming of the great teacher ever in one’s consciousness and to live accordingly.
3. To dedicate a part of one’s daily activities to the coming.
4. To develop devotion, steadfastness, and kindness.
5. To begin and end each day with a plea for His blessing. See Peter Michel, p 31.
relatively young age and this daunting task must have undoubtedly influenced his own psychological development. This process did not, however, create the World Messiah and nor did it lead Krishnamurti to announce or proclaim his superiority over others. In fact, it had the contrary effect. Although Krishnamurti underwent all the training and education befitting a budding World Teacher, he developed an independent perspective both about the nature of inquiry and about his own role in the pursuit of the good society.

It is not clear whether Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater were inspired to their idea of a World Teacher by certain occult doctrines. More likely, the basis for this idea can be found in their inner experiences, an hypothesis that is supported by certain remarks made by Annie Besant. Even in September 1927 when Krishnamurti was already talking about different ideas than those of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant held true to the model that Krishnamurti was ‘overshadowed’ by the World Teacher. To explain her belief she points to a personal experience she had before the discovery of Krishnamurti by Leadbeater. “In 1909, the World Teacher himself had told me he had chosen a little boy and when this boy would grow up to be a man, he would use him when he will come into our world again soon.” This theory is supported also by the actions of both Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, who in the years of preparation of

Krishnamurti always stressed the last decision by the Masters. Therefore, it seems to make no sense to consider an outer source to account for the idea of the World Teacher. Even the identification of the Lord Maitreya with both Sri Krishna and Christ is more likely based on a vision of Besant and Leadbeater than on the inspiration of a third party. An objection that is sometimes raised, that the announcement of the coming of the World Teacher was only Leadbeater's concern and that Annie Besant was dependent on him in this regard, is not correct. Annie Besant herself proclaimed the coming of the World Teacher before she sacrificed her clairvoyant abilities for her engagement in the Indian fight for independence. Of all the members of the Theosophical Society, it seems that she was the only one who stood by Krishnamurti in absolute loyalty until her death, and she never doubted his mission, even though she did not fully appreciate all the steps he took or all the aspects of his teachings.\(^\text{28}\)

2.1.4 Departure from Theosophical Society

On 3 August 1929, in a historic and powerful speech, Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star. I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect [...] Truth being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path [...] My only concern is to

set man absolutely, unconditionally free. By breaking away from the Theosophical Society and its organizational trappings Krishnamurti asserted his independence, and his ‘teachings’, so to speak, unfolded over the remaining years of his life. Krishnamurti did not assert himself as a Teacher of Truth whose teachings had to be followed to attain Nirvana or self-understanding. He questioned whether such authority could actually initiate individual perception and change. The ‘journey of understanding’, therefore, has to be made by oneself, which means that one has to discard every kind of authority: ‘to be a light to ourselves we must be free of all tradition, all authority, including that of the speaker, so that our own minds can look and observe and learn’. Krishnamurti rejected the view that the ‘teaching’ is something that has to be first studied and then translated into action. On being asked what his teaching was, he said that it was a matter of partaking or sharing together rather than the giving or receiving of something. There is also an emphasis on the instantaneous nature of the transformation: it is ‘not something that is accomplished gradually through striving, seeking and bringing one’s life, one’s conduct and thought by degrees more in conformity with some ideal’. The state of ‘becoming’ or ‘being’ does not exist for Krishnamurti: it is more a state of timelessness, as it were. Krishnamurti’s quest for self-knowledge or self-discovery does not take one very far from oneself. It is in this sense that, as Krishnamurti often said, ‘the teachings are yourself’. There is also no culmination of this process of self-

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29 Krishnamurti, 1929.
30 Ibid., p. 52.
31 Holroyd, 1980, p. 35.
discovery: ‘there is only the journey. There is no total knowing of oneself but rather an unending process of knowing oneself’.  

2.1.5 The Mission of J. Krishnamurti

J. Krishnamurti is undoubtedly one of the greatest original thinkers of the modern world. His teachings are transcendental and incomprehensible to minds that are caught in the mire of conformity and conditioning.

2.1.5.1 Krishnamurti’s Main Teachings

a) The Concept of Truth

Krishnamurti’s answer to the hermeneutic question was that truth and method exclude one another. Truth can only be found through the insight for the individual and such insight cannot be gained on often-travelled paths or through particular methods. Therefore Krishnamurti also disapproved of psychologists and analysts, that it too infantile, for if I learn according to them I learn what they are, I am not learning bout myself.”  

The answer in the field of epistemology, as in the social-political field, is again individual responsibility. Neither following certain political advice nor the use of epistemological methods can help. For Krishnamurti, it was important to develop openness for access to the inner reality – which was synonymous with intelligence and love in his view. There the ‘key to cognition’ was

34 Talks and Dialogues, p. 86.
hidden. "When there is the discovery of the cause there that supreme intelligence, which in its very nature is compassionate love."\textsuperscript{35}

Krishnamurti answered the central human quest for truth in the light of his dynamic worldview: "Truth has no path, and that is the beauty of truth, it is living."\textsuperscript{36} Another time he is even more precise, bringing into play the aspect of compassion, one could call it even love for all creation: "truth has not path. There is no path. When one has compassion, with its intelligence, one will come upon that which is eternally true."\textsuperscript{37}

Truth is a central word for Krishnamurti and is coupled closely to beauty, freedom, and love. Truth had to be ever new, had to be free from the burden of the past, free from the burden of memory. Through, as the same time, was alertness, clear and unprejudiced observation of the outer and the inner life.

There is a short story that Krishnamurti often told, wound around the legend of the Buddha as was often the case, which sheds significant light on krishnamurti's idea of truth. "I meet the Buddha. I have listened to him very deeply. In me the whole truth of what he says is abiding, and he goes away. He ahs told me very carefully, 'Be a light to yourself.' The seed is flowering. I may miss him. He was a friend, somebody whom I really loved. However, what is really important is that seed of truth which he has planted – by my alertness, awareness, intense listening, that seed will flower. Otherwise, what is the point of somebody having it? If X has this

\textsuperscript{35} Saanen 1st Public Talk, July 6, 1980.
\textsuperscript{36} Freedom from the Known, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{37} The Flame of Attention, p. 26.
extraordinary illumination, a sense of immensity, compassion, and all that, if only he has it and he dies, what is the point of it all? What?"38

With this story, Krishnamurti does not tell the story of Buddha and his disciples, he tells the story of Krishnamurti and his disciples. In addition, it expresses in a poetic form his hope that he might be understood beyond the outer meaning of his words. With the last five sentences of this talk in Washington, on April 21, 1985, he summarized what he said in this story. He who watches this talk on video will pick up a feeling for the depth and the charisma passing from Krishnamurti to his listeners.

"The brain is extraordinarily capable, has infinite capacity, but we have made it so small and petty.

"So when there is that space and emptiness and therefore immense energy – energy is passion, love and compassion and intelligence – then there is that truth which is most holy, most sacred, that which man has sought from time immemorial. That truth doesn’t lie in any temple, in any mosque, in any church. And it has not path to it except through one’s own understanding of oneself, inquiring, studying, learning. Then there is that which is eternal."39

Truth, he asserts, is based on common sense experience. It is life force; to understand the life force means to understand the truth. Truth cannot be sought about it. If we think about it, it is not truth. "Truth can not be sought, it comes to you when the mind is not tortured by the known, by

38 Jayakar, p. 430.
the effects of the known, then only can truth reveal itself. Truth is in every leaf, in every tear. It is to be known from moment to moment.40

Krishnamurti is never in the habit of using lofty expressions to picturise the truth; it is not a matter of catastrophic attainment; rather it is based on common sense observation. "It is not something static it has no fixed abode; it is not an end, a goal. On the contrary it is living, dynamic, alert, alive".41 Everybody has his own truth. No two persons have the same truth. It is new every moment.

Truth, according to Krishnamurti, is simple; but tragically complex to be known through the conditioned mind. It can be perceived only with the whole of our mind. Ragmentation of consciousness is the root-cause of all our problems of life. the mind is like a warehouse, a Pandora's box which contains an assortment of ideas which deviate us form truth. 'Truth comes uninvitedly when the mind is completely empty of the known. It comes when the known is absent, when it is not functioning'.

Krishnamurti invites us for a psychological change. Truth, where he takes us, may be ancient; but the path he adopts to lead us to it, suits most to the modern minds. For the perception of truth there is no need of any preparation, as preparation is already in time, and Krishnamurti advises us to get rid of this time factor. Truth is now or never. If is not far from us, it is very near to us; we may call it by whichever name we like - perfection, liberation, reality - all these expressions have the same connotation.

41 Ibid.
Truth for him is a precept and not concept. Truth and thought do not go together. Thought is tremendously limited anchored to memory, which pervades us to look with our gaze on the past; but according to Krishnamurti, ‘The truth of the past is the ashes of the memory’. Thus silence of thought is the pre-requisite for the action of intelligence. We have to explore the ‘what is’ with unconditioned mind, unburdened mind, still mind; and this understanding of ‘what is’ reveals extra-ordinary depth in which there is ‘reality happiness and joy. When we want to understand we have to just look at it. The moment we begin to think the reality is destructed. Only a quiet mind which is not disturbed by its own thought looks at the problem very directly or very simply. Krishnamurti very emphatically suggests that the solution to the problem lies in the problem itself. He invites us for a psychological change. He says, “To look for an answer is to avoid the problem – which is just what most of us want to do. Then the answer becomes all significant, and not the problem. The solution is not separate form the problem; the answer is in the problem, not away from it.”\footnote{Commentaries on Living (1st series) Krishnamurti Foundation of India.} For him the problem is more important than the answer. In the very understanding of the problem disappears.

b) The Concept of Freedom

The idea of freedom touches the very heart of Krishnamurti’s teachings. The boy Krishna was already searching for freedom in the framework of his theosophical education; and the Krishnamurti of the twenties was shaped deeply by the effort to gain spiritual freedom and independence that culminated in the dissolving of the Order of the Star.
Krishnamurti rejected institutionalization and observes that ‘You can form other organizations and expect someone else’, he said. ‘With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages. My only concern is to set men (sic) absolutely, unconditionally free.’

In his view, the idea of freedom was the essence of the nature of humanity. “Complete freedom is the only important thing in human life.” However, freedom must not be interpreted as a banal expression of arbitrariness or lack of restraints. For Krishnamurti, freedom was not only unique value, but also a unique virtue. “Freedom requires a great deal of discipline. Freedom implies great humility, innate inward discipline and work.” This statement helps clarify which quality distinguished freedom in Krishnamurti’s sense. It is the freedom of the purified consciousness, which has freed itself from personal wishes and desires, and has risen, to the clarity of the experience of unity in which inner and outer freedom is one.

Krishnamurti affirmed the outer becoming free – for himself and other – in a unique way during his shattering talk on August 2, 1929, when he dissolved the Order of the Star in Ommen. At both the beginning and at the end of the talk, one finds the remarkable words: “I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path what so ever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally...If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organize a belief. A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organize it. If you do, it becomes dead,

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43 Mary Lutyens (1991), The Life and Death of Krishnamurti (London: Rider) p. 80
44 Talks and Dialogues in Saanen 1986, (retranslated into English).
crystallized; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others....

"No Man from outside can make you free; nor can organized worship, nor the immolation of yourselves for a cause, make you free; nor can forming yourselves into an organization, nor throwing yourselves into work, make you free. Your use a typewriter to write letters, but you do not put it on an altar and worship it." 46 For many, those words and the event itself came as a surprise; but they had not listened carefully to Krishnamurti’s words, had not paid enough attention to his writings. Otherwise, in one of his early poetic works they would have been able to detect a sketch of that which would later burst out so spectacularly. In The Search Krishnamurti writes:

The Happiness that knows

Of no loneliness,

Of immense certainty,

Of detachment,

Of love that is free of persons,

That is free from prejudices,

That is not bound by tradition,

That is not bound authority,

That is not bound by superstitions,

46 Mary Lutyens, Life and Death, p. 78, and Mary Lutyens, Awakening, p. 296.
That is of no religion.

The Happiness

That is not at the command of another,

That is of no priest,

That is of no sect,

That requires no labels,

That is bound by no law,... 47

In fact, all later calls for freedom are preconceived in these words —
his calls towards religions and sects, for example. "It is the division which
denies freedom and love, not organization. When organization divides, it
leads to war. Belief in any form, ideals, however noble or effective, breed
division. Organized religion is the cause of division, just like nationality and
power groups." 48

Also, the statement he made twenty-five years later is in essence a
footnote to that early confession: "We are all slaves to tradition and we think
we also totally different from each other. We are not. We go through the
same great miseries, unhappiness, shed tears, we are all human beings, not
Hindus, Muslims, or Russians — those are all labels without meaning. The
mind must be totally free; which means that one has to stand completely
alone; and we are so frightened to stand alone.

47 Collected Works, Vol. I, p.34.
48 The Second Penguin Krishnamurti Reader, p. 236.
"The mind must be free, utterly still, not controlled. When the mind is completely religious it is not only free but also capable of inquiring into the nature of truth to which there is not guide, no path. It is only the silent mind, the mind that is free, that can come upon that which is beyond time."49 His words have the greater precision and earth of a mature personality but they still emerge from that clarity of earlier years.

I consider authority is my last example: "No system, outwardly, is going to help man. On the contrary, systems are going to divide people, that is what has always been happening in the world. And inwardly, to accept another as your authority, to accept the authority of system, is to live in isolation, in separateness, therefore there not freedom."50 Freedom from tradition, authority, religion, sects and personality cult, all central topics for Krishnamurti in the sixty years after 1926 – and all of them already entirely present and ripe in the young man of the twenties. In my view, this continuity is not regarded highly enough. The Krishnamurti of the seventies was not more critical of religion and authority than the Krishnamurti of the year 1926. The young Krishnamurti had already detached himself from outer limitations and religious groups; then when – for him – the perversion of the Holy occurred (Huizen 1925), he put religion in the denominational sense, no matter which one, in the category of a lack of freedom. Only the religion of the heart, which develops in freedom and love, in true humility and compassion, complied with his idea of religion. Freedom could not be the end, the promise of a certain religious salvation, but had to determine the beginning, the middle and the end of the path. "If the end is freedom, the

49 The Flame of Attention, p. 29.
beginning must be free, for the end and the beginning are one. There can be self-knowledge and intelligence only when there is freedom at the very outset; and freedom is denied by the acceptance of authority."\textsuperscript{51} It will surprise nobody that orthodox communities, from the Roman Catholic clergy to the high-cast Brahman hierarchy, saw in him a dangerous demagogue. His endeavour to set human beings \textit{absolutely and unconditionally} free robbed those people of any form of influence and power. The free human no longer had any need or a priestly mediator, to 'reconcile' with the absolute spirit. One who had found inner freedom finds outer freedom without much difficulty as well. Krishnamurti found a deep meaning even in the opposite idea: "Independence without freedom is meaningless. If you have freedom you don't need independence."\textsuperscript{52}

During his dialog with the sannyasins in Srinagar, Krishnamurti pointed out these connections in particularly strong terms: "Putting on a saffron robe does not mean renouncing. You can never renounce the world, because the world is part of you. You renounce a few cows, a houses, but to renounce your heredity, your tradition, the burden of your condition, that demands enormous inquiry."\textsuperscript{53} Repeatedly Krishnamurti talked about the dangers associated with walking well-trodden paths and clinging to old patterns without seeing their limitations. Only through alert observation of these old patterns could one prevent the paralysis and decrepitude of the mind, though he did not differentiate between old patterns, whether they are three thousand or only thirty years old. "If however you would be free of

\textsuperscript{51} Education and the Significance of Life, p. 59; see also Mary Lutyens, Life and Death, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{52} Mary Lutyens, Life and Death, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{53} Jayakar, p. 218.
violence, which is buried so deep, you must first learn about yourself. You can only learn if you observe yourself – not according to Jung or Freud or some other specialist – then you are merely learning what they have already told you, so that is not learning at all. If you really want to learn about yourself, then you must put away all the comforting authority of others, and observes.\textsuperscript{54} Again, a greater affinity with Buddhist rather than with Christian ideas is apparent in his criticism of authority and religion. It is not belief that leads to bliss, but doubts that lead you towards your goal. “Because it is only through doubt that you come to the Brahman, not through acceptance of authority.”\textsuperscript{55} This is not a preconception by Krishnamurti, but a certain preference; and of course, in the same light, he too much be questioned, whether his exclusion of belief and his approval of doubt is a limitation in and of itself.

\textbf{2.1.4.2 Educationist Par Excellence}

Right education forms a central core of Krishnamurti’s world view. In fact, Krishnamurti spent his entire life talking about education as being the agent not only of inner renewal but also of social change. Education is therefore the foundation on which the good society will build itself. Krishnamurti always asserted the individual’s responsibility to the social order: ‘You are the world’. One individual’s action therefore affects another, since ‘to be is to be related’\textsuperscript{56} and in this sense there is no individual consciousness but only a collective human consciousness, which implies that the world is not separate from the individual. Krishnamurti points to the

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Talks with American Students}, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{55} Jayakar, p. 399.
\textsuperscript{56} Krishnamurti, 1970, p. 22,
harmonious development of the inner and outer worlds of an individual: ‘what one is inwardly will eventually bring about a good society or the gradual deterioration of human relationship’. This harmony, however, ‘cannot possibly come about if our eyes are fixed only on the outer’. The inner world is the ‘source and continuation of the disorder’, and for Krishnamurti education should be concerned with changing the source which is the individual, since it is ‘human beings who create society, not some gods in heaven’. Krishnamurti asserted that the schools functioning under the auspices of the Krishnamurti Foundation India (KFI), some of which were established in his lifetime, did not exist as organizations for the indoctrination of children, but rather as places ‘where students and teachers can flower, and where a future generation can be prepared because schools are meant for that’. The notion of ‘flowering’ here implies an unfolding of the consciousness of individuals in relationship to one another in educational praxis. The psychological development of individuals is therefore as important as acquiring academic knowledge and skills. The intention of the KFI schools is that they ‘are not only to be excellent academically but [...] are to be concerned with the cultivation of the total human being’. These schools ‘fundamentally exist to help both the student and the teacher to flower in goodness. This demands excellence in behaviour, in action and in relationship. This is our intent and why these schools have come into being; not to turn out mere careerists but to bring about the excellence of spirit’. At his talks given to teachers and students at the two KFI schools in India where he made annual visits—Rishi Valley

58 ibid., p. 3
59 ibid., p. 7.
School in Andhra Pradesh and Rajghat Education Centre at Varanasi—Krishnamurti often asked the students questions about the meaning of education, the quality of education they received, the teachers' roles and attitudes, and their own contribution to the learning process. He discussed with them the purpose of education—not merely to pass examinations after learning a few facts and acquiring some skills, but to understand the complexity of life. He urged the students to appreciate their role in the creation of a 'new' world without fear, conflict or contradiction. This could only be done if there was 'right education' in an atmosphere of freedom, without fear or authority, where intelligence and goodness could be nurtured. Talking to students, Krishnamurti reiterated that what education normally does is prepare students to fit into a 'particular frame or pattern, that is, the movement in a predetermined groove' and this is what society calls 'entering life'.

With such an education, the student meets life, which is 'like a little river meeting the vast sea' However, such an education does not necessarily prepare the student to meet the psychological challenges and physical vicissitudes of life. It is important that education should in fact 'awaken intelligence' and not simply reproduce a programmed machine or trained monkey, as Krishnamurti put it. Education therefore cannot be only about reading and learning from books but about the whole of life, and should prepare students to meet the challenges of living in a complex social world. Krishnamurti's views on how to do this, however, are rather extraordinary in their very simplicity. For example, in response to a student's question about how to live happily in a competitive world, Krishnamurti observes, 'You can live happily in this competitive world only

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62 ibid., p. 34.
if you yourself are not competitive. It is possible that such a response may be contentious to the extent that it may be perceived as being unrealistic in terms of the complex nature of society, where a non-competitive member could at best only survive, not really exist. But Krishnamurti's argument is that 'competition is the very essence of violence [...] our whole social structure is based on competition and we accept it as inevitable'.

As an alternative to competition in everyday life, Krishnamurti emphasizes confidence—not self-confidence, but 'an entirely different kind of confidence which is without the sense of self-importance [...] confidence without the self'. Comparison between children becomes important when their performance is judged and evaluated continuously, and this comparison is the cause of conflict, fear and a feeling of helplessness among them. Teachers in the KFI schools are therefore concerned with whether such comparison can cease in the school and in the classroom, and talent can be nurtured and allowed to grow without being captured by the self. Krishnamurti also examines the nature of human feelings and asserts that we do not really know how to 'feel' anything. It is important to experience feelings, which are in fact the 'substance of life'. The role of 'right education', then, is to make the individual 'highly sensitive to everything—not just to mathematics and geography [...] because the highest form of sensitivity is the highest form of intelligence'. For Krishnamurti, therefore, the right kind of education does not simply produce engineers, doctors or scientists, but a 'human being who is alive, fresh, eager [...] If one is a

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64 Ibid.
66 See Shirali, 1998 for a discussion of some of these issues.
67 Ibid., p. 70.
human being, one is not a specialist, but a total entity’. An ‘educated mind’ is one that ‘thinks, that is active, alive; it is a mind that looks, watches, listens and feels’. Krishnamurti’s talks at the educational institutions run by the KFI included the teachers, whom he considered crucial to educational praxis. In these talks, Krishnamurti was really addressing the larger question of the human predicament in terms of the transformation of psychological consciousness that is not, however, an isolated, individualistic act. Also, this change does not rest on some kind of psychological or spiritual ‘mumbo-jumbo’, as Krishnamurti used often to point out, but on the important element of ‘relatedness’ between human beings, whereby we are engaged with the community as well as the environment around us. This has ensured that the KFI schools focus significantly on issues relating to ecology and the community of people around them.

It has been estimated that Krishnamurti talked to more people than any other person in recorded history. For six decades, the audiences for his talks, often held in the open, ran to thousands, especially in large cities like Madras, Bombay, and New Delhi in India; in Ojai Valley in California; Saanen in Switzerland; and Brockwood Park in southern England.

It is a grievous error to imagine that Krishnamurti’s philosophy is meant only for the old or the intellectually sophisticated. On the contrary, it is something that appeals easily to the young as is evident from the many conversations he had with the children of the schools he founded in India and abroad. He sought to create in these schools an atmosphere where children can grow up without fear and competition and with a deep

68 See Shirali, 1998 for a discussion of some of these issues. p. 75.
69 Ibid., p. 76.
understanding of their own selves. The great teacher that he was, he was able to reach out to the young, awakening their sensitivity both to the beauty of the earth and the suffering of man, and engaging them in lively discussions even on the most complicated workings of the human mind.

Krishnamurti spoke privately and publicly with a number of noted world figures, and many of these interviews are available in books or on video and audiotape. Among those who sought out interviews with him were three Prime Ministers of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi; the famous physicist, Dr David Bohm; novelists Aldous Huxley, Iris Murdoch, and Christopher Isherwood; the psychologist, Ira Progoff; the educator, Ivan Illich; a professor of religious studies, Dr Allan W Anderson; the biologist, Rupert Sheldrake; the famed inventor of the polio vaccine, Dr Jonas Salk; and the noted Buddhist, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

2.1.4.3 The (Krishnamurti Foundation India ) KFI Schools

The KFI was established originally in order to set up an educational institution—the Rishi Valley Education Centre in Andhra Pradesh. The origins of the KFI also lie in Krishnamurti's links with the Theosophical Society. Dr. Annie Besant (President of the Theosophical Society at the time) was one of the seven founder members of the KFI, which was originally a charitable institution under the name of the Rishi Valley Trust, set up by Krishnamurti in 1928. Later, this Trust became the Foundation for New Education (in 1953) and eventually the Krishnamurti Foundation India in 1970. The work of the Foundation includes education, research and environmental programmes that are conducted in an overall perspective deriving from Krishnamurti's thought. Another major KFI activity is the
preservation, acquisition and publication of Krishnamurti’s works and materials relating to his life. Study centres and retreats have also been set up at most of the school locations to enable people to be in places of great quietude and natural beauty for study and reflection. As part of its initiative in the field of education, the KFI has also been bringing out an annual publication, Journal of the Krishnamurti schools, since 1997. The volumes are unique in their attempt to document and create innovative and critical pedagogies as part of a process of educational transformation. The KFI has focused on education to a large extent, and this resulted in the establishment of two more schools in India, in addition to the existing five, after Krishnamurti’s death in 1986. A significant aspect of the schools is their location in places of great natural beauty and splendour. This is a result of Krishnamurti’s emphasis on learning in natural surroundings, as well as the importance of physical space, to ensure harmony in relationships and in developing a questioning, creative mind. It appears that in the 1920s Krishnamurti was inspired by the University of Berkeley in California, which influenced his decision to set up educational institutions in his own right.70 Two hundred and twenty-five acres of land were acquired at Varanasi (originally Kashi, a holy city in Uttar Pradesh, northern India) and between 1928 and 1948, a co-educational boarding school at Rajghat—the Rajghat Besant School—was built.71 Later, the Vasanta College for Women was also located at Rajghat. In its early years, this college developed an excellent reputation for being among the premier educational institutions for women in northern India that not only provided undergraduate education for women but also had a teacher-training programme for secondary school education.

70 Chari, 1999, p. 3.
71 Ibid., p. 3.
At about the same time, in Chennai, the idea of developing an educational centre around Madanapalle, Krishnamurti’s birthplace, in Andhra Pradesh was gathering momentum. It is believed that Krishnamurti started surveying the land in about Madanapalle in 1925 and selected what is now known as the Rishi Valley Education Centre after viewing from a rock the vast panorama of a valley stretching to the west with Rishi Konda (literally, the hill of the Rishi) at its apex. The presence of a large banyan tree in the valley, believed to be about 300 years old, is said to have influenced Krishnamurti’s decision. Between 1926 and 1929, 280 acres of land were acquired for the proposed centre and the Rishi Valley School (another boarding school) came into being in the early 1930s.

Two other day schools were set up in the early 1970s in Bangalore and Chennai under the auspices of the KFI, as well as an after-school care centre for underprivileged children in Mumbai (Bombay). The schools at Bangalore and Chennai are also located on large campuses of 110 acres and 14 acres respectively. Among other school subjects, Environmental Studies is an important focus of study in both, as in other KFI schools. There is a strong emphasis on environmental renewal through bringing together education and conservation. This element has no doubt been helped by the physical location and environment of these schools, which serve to enhance sensitivity to nature and the environment. At the KFI schools, there is certainly a formal curriculum affiliated to a centrally administered, or state-level, education board, with public examinations at the end of Class 10 and Class 12. In this sense, the schools are perhaps not very different from other private schools in India. There is, however, a significant difference in the

manner in which learning takes place—through exploration and discovery—and in the nature and quality of interaction between teachers and students. Also, there are a variety of co-curricular activities and programmes that, in addition to their focus on the arts, engage students creatively in their immediate environment. Furthermore, there is a definite attempt to help students understand their psychological world and share their inner discoveries and problems. The focus at these schools is therefore not only on academic excellence but also on trying to develop and nurture a different quality of mind that will be in harmony with the external world. Two more schools were established by the KFI after Krishnamurti's death in February 1986. The more recent Sahyadri School near Pune, Maharashtra, is a boarding school, started in 1995. Like other KFI schools, this school caters to children from fairly upper-class backgrounds, as all these schools are fee-paying, private schools. Two other schools, however, Bal-Anand in Mumbai and the Bhagirathi Valley School in Uttar Pradesh, enrol children from underprivileged and lower middle-class backgrounds. Critics have often said that Krishnamurti was unconcerned with poverty and issues relating to economic and social inequality in Indian society. While he was not directly concerned with the practical, or indeed activist, dimension of removing socio-economic disparities or inequalities, he was deeply concerned about the problem of human relatedness that encompasses the rich and the poor alike. In his talks given to children at the KFI schools, Krishnamurti would often ask students to experience the world around them more meaningfully and realistically. If their minds were locked in narrow grooves of bookish learning and in the trappings of a privileged upbringing, Krishnamurti sought to take them out of their narrow perspectives into the larger world around them. Clearly, there are certain limitations in implementing
Krishnamurti’s perspective on education in State-funded schools in India, where certain basic necessities and infrastructure such as safe drinking water, toilets and large spaces simply do not exist. A minimum structure is thus necessary before teachers and students can work together for ‘right education’. The obvious implication is that KFI schools are therefore the only places where Krishnamurti’s perspective can be shared and developed. It is possible, however, that there are certain universal features of the KFI schools that can easily be shared with, and developed by, other schools. These include an abiding interest in and commitment to the environment and the community in which the KFI schools are located. Krishnamurti’s legacy to education in contemporary India From 1929, when Krishnamurti declared that his only concern was to set man totally free, ‘freedom’ as a state of being was central to his view of life. Evidently, he developed his ‘celebrated doctrine of freedom against the background of an abiding love of nature and a firm commitment to individual responsibility in working towards a better society and protecting our natural heritage’ This is reflected in the strong commitment to the habitat and the environment within the KFI schools’ curricular frameworks. It has been suggested that this commitment points to ‘new policy goals for education in India—goals that give priority to the Indian earth rather than to the Indian nation’. This in turn would lead to a new curriculum in Indian schools focusing on ‘sustaining the earth’. To this end, the schools recently organized a workshop on biodiversity and conservation issues with the goal of exploring ‘the possibility of modifying the existing school curriculum to reflect the concerns of an Earth-centred

73 Herzberger, 1999, p. 10.
74 Ibid., p. 11.
The workshop identified certain key principles for developing an earth-centred curriculum in secondary schools and an attempt was made to actually redefine the current curriculum without compromising the conceptual frameworks of disciplines such as biology, chemistry and physics. By enhancing children's understanding of the earth’s vulnerability and its relationship to different subject disciplines in very concrete terms and in students' engagement with teachers in, for example, reforestation projects, the KFI schools pose a challenge to conventional pedagogy in schools across India.

Learning, therefore, in the KFI schools is not just about ideas or facts in books, but is also about feeling the earth, watching the sunset, listening to the birds, seeing the colours of the leaves change in the different seasons and observing nature in its many colours, forms and shapes, not as a romantic naturalist but in harmony with what is being observed. From this harmony, a sense of responsibility towards the earth and a commitment towards life on earth will evolve. The KFI School in Chennai has in fact developed a formal curriculum for Environmental Studies as an optional subject at the senior secondary school level, which has been accepted and granted recognition by the Indian Council for Secondary Education (ICSE) for use in all schools affiliated with the ICSE. This has undoubtedly been a major contribution by the KFI schools to the senior secondary school curriculum in India and has wider ramifications in terms of developing the potential for developing a perspective and lifestyle that support ecological balance and emphasize the

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75 Iyer, 1999, p. 76.
76 The ICSE is one of the two central educational boards governing the public examinations which mark the end of the secondary (Class 10) and senior secondary (Class 12) examinations in India.
sustenance of the biosphere. It is true that very few schools in India have included environmental and social concerns directly in the curriculum. There is a component of 'Socially Useful Productive Work' in secondary schools that enables students to engage in a variety of activities, from gardening to community service, on a fixed and somewhat formal basis. It is here that KFI schools have made another contribution to educational processes in terms of the school's relationship with the community. Taking the cue from Krishnamurti's emphasis on an individual's relatedness to society, the KFI schools undertake projects with the local community and try to establish a wider network of relating to the community that goes beyond mere 'community service' as an aspect of the formal curriculum. The Rural Education Centre (REC) at the Rishi Valley Education Centre in Andhra Pradesh has grown and expanded from providing quality elementary education to the children of workers and of neighbouring villages to being part of a larger network of schools spread over the surrounding villages. The REC infrastructure now includes two demonstration multigrade schools, sixteen multi-grade satellite schools within a radius of fifteen kilometres, a teacher training centre, a curriculum development cell and a vocational training centre. In response to the dismal learning conditions in rural classrooms, where there is high absenteeism, low motivation levels, high drop-out rates, bored and demotivated teachers and an acute shortage of funds, an alternative approach to elementary education has been planned. This approach focuses on the preparation of high-quality, individualized self-learning materials, community involvement and teacher development (Rishi Valley Education Centre, 1999). Rather than relying on formal textbooks that are often unrelated to children's lives, the focus has been on designing material and methodology that are most useful, meaningful and
successful as a pedagogical tool. This has resulted in the now well-known 'School-in-a-Box' material, which is being used in elementary schools all over Andhra Pradesh. This REC project has now greatly expanded, and the REC also provides its expertise in rural elementary education to other agencies—State-funded, non-formal or international—engaged in similar work in other states in India. Krishnamurti's perspective on education seeks to bring about a more just and humane society in a world that is rapidly degenerating. Krishnamurti saw the possibilities for radical change through human transformation. He had a holistic approach that did not seek to fragment human existence into the 'personal' and the 'public', but pointed to the relationship between the personal and the public, the individual and society. In this sense, his vision encompasses both our little individual spaces and the wide world of our relatedness to the community, the natural environment and human society. In postcolonial India, there has been a major emphasis by the State on evolving an approach to education for the economic growth and social development of society; and in this process, the intrinsic worth of education—in terms of its greater transformational potential—for individuals who are privileged to have access to it has been lost. The emphasis on the socio-economic development of society has so far included the rhetoric of a holistic approach to education, taking into consideration all sectors, public and private, primary, secondary and tertiary, and encompassing teachers as well as students, the girl child and the ubiquitous backward castes. In practice, however, the scenario for elementary and secondary education in India is rather bleak. This is borne out not only by the numerous policy documents and reports available from time to time but also by field studies undertaken by non-governmental
organizations and individuals. A recent study conducted by the research and advocacy wing of the Society for Integrated Development of the Himalayas (SIDH), a voluntary organization, concludes that the 'present education system has failed in all respects'. This includes the economic dimension (failure to procure jobs), that of social returns (the literate person contributes very little to society) and the personal level (where the educated person is unable to provide financial or emotional support to his or her parents or family) (ibid.). This failure is a result of wrongly identified priorities set by the State to encourage not only social and cultural reproduction of a particular kind, thus ensuring widening socio-economic disparities, but also denial of the intrinsic worth of education in itself. The only area where the State concedes space for individual growth and development is in the inculcation of 'values' through some kind of moral education. These values are defined in terms of certain prevailing social problems and do not seek to address fundamental issues that inhere in all social relationships. For example, a current discussion document, released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in New Delhi for evolving a National Curriculum Framework for School Education, notes 'the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society' and advocates value education that will 'help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism'. ‘Values’ such as ‘regularity and punctuality, cleanliness, industriousness/diligence, sense of duty and service, equality, cooperation, sense of responsibility, truthfulness and

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77 The recent PROBE report (1999) is an attempt to document the education situation in five selected states of India. In addition, the radical Economic and political weekly of India (published from Mumbai) regularly carries articles and reports on educational practice in India.

78 SIDH, 2000, p. 50.

79 NCERT, 2000, p. 12.
national identity’ are recommended. Quite apart from its being patronizing and prescriptive, this focus will clearly not effect a major change in individual consciousness unless there is clarity about the nature of inner renewal which we seek through education. It is in this context that Krishnamurti’s engagement with education is of paramount significance, namely his emphasis on the relationship between education and society in terms of the transformational potential of education. This aspect of Krishnamurti’s teachings is the cornerstone of his educational thought and can make a significant contribution to evolving a sensible policy that concerns itself with change through ‘right’ education.

2.2 The Basic Doctrine of J. Krishnamurti

“The core of 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 philosophic 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, and 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. This content is common to all humanity. The

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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 mankind. So he is not an individual.

"Freedom is not a reaction; freedom is not a 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 choice less 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.

Although Krishnamurti spoke and wrote only in English, his works have been translated into nearly fifty languages. For many decades, his texts were circulated surreptitiously in totalitarian countries, but since 1990, when the Berlin Wall fell, arrangements for publication of his works have been made in Russia, Poland, and Romania. More than 3,000,000 copies of his books have been sold worldwide. The Krishnamurti corpus consists of 100,000 pages of written material, 2,500 audiotapes and 600 videotapes.

These are his material legacy. His living legacy lies in the minds and hearts of countless people whose lives he touched and transformed with his immense understanding of life and boundless compassion for all beings.

Towards the end of his life, when he was asked to sum up his philosophy, Krishnamurti said pithily: ‘Where you are, the other is not’—the ‘other’ being his usual word for referring to that sense of the sacred which informed both his life and teachings.

The legacy of Krishnamurti lies in the schools and the Foundation established in different parts of the world, notably India, Britain and California. At a staff meeting in Brock wood Park School on 21 September 1985 he said that of the hundred of students who had passed through his oldest school, Rishi Valley in India, not one had been changed. After the meeting he was asked, ‘What was the point of having students if none of them in all these years had been changed?’
If, with all his influence, no student had been transformed, how could the rest of us, who had apparently not changed either, bring about change in the students? "If you haven’t done it, is there any likelihood we can?" His reply was ‘I don’t know’, but this was said in a joking, and perhaps evasive, fashion.  

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