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**J. KRISHNAMURTI**  
**(1895–1986)**  
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The impact of the philosopher J. Krishnamurti on the educational ethos of alternative Indian education has been of an unquantifiable quality, although this is often not visible in the formal components of secondary school education. Krishnamurti was not an educator in the narrow or formal sense of the term, as he had no formal qualifications to either propagate or promote educational goals or establish educational institutions. His concern for what he considered ‘right education’ was clearly not an attempt to provide temporary solutions to society’s problems or seek to correct them through merely educating people to read or write. Krishnamurti has been described as a ‘revolutionary teacher [...] who worked tirelessly to awaken people—to awaken their intelligence, to awaken their sense of responsibility, to awaken a flame of discontent’, and this commitment to awakening the consciousness of people was undoubtedly based on a ‘strong moral passion’ (Herzberger & Herzberger, 1998). It is Krishnamurti’s moral passion that formed the basis for his relentless pursuit of the ‘good society’ that was grounded in ‘right values’ and ‘right relationships’.

Krishnamurti was a philosopher whose passionate search for the ‘good society’ was not grounded in any particular religious or philosophical tradition. He did not seek to follow any specific path for bringing about ‘goodness’ in both individuals and society. In this sense, he did not rely on an external instrument or tool for existence but on an inner discovery that sought to go beyond the physical body and bring about a ‘mutation’ in the human mind.<sup>1</sup> Change was therefore not possible through external means, whether these were political revolutions or social movements, but only through a complete transformation of human consciousness. This transformation did not include the use of mechanical practices, such as any form of religious ritual or attachment to a dogma. On the contrary, Krishnamurti encourages ‘critical looking’ or ‘choiceless awareness’ (Martin, 1997, p. xi), rather than the more commonly known process of ‘critical thinking’, as a mode of self-discovery.

In India, Krishnamurti appeared a rather forbidding philosopher who advocated no crutches of either a spiritual or an emotional nature and certainly did not allow any psychological or intellectual attachment to himself as a teacher. Moreover, he seemed to be setting a rather difficult task, especially since Hindu tradition in India allows for ritual, belief and unquestioning devotion to a teacher as instruments for psychological, spiritual and social well-being. Krishnamurti's break with tradition and all forms of authority, however, characterizes his strength as a philosopher, for he was like a breath of fresh air to those who had been trying to fathom the depths of both consciousness and existence following traditional paths of understanding.

### **The 'good society'**

In his pursuit of the 'good society', Krishnamurti emphasized the individual's relationship to society as well as his or her responsibility for establishing the 'good' society: 'You are the repository of all humanity. You are the world, and the world is you. And, if there is a radical transformation in the very structure of an individual's psyche, it will affect the whole consciousness of man' (Krishnamurti, 1993, p. 133–34).

In his emphasis on change, Krishnamurti expressed a lifelong moral concern for the 'good' society :

[We] are concerned with a different way of living [...] a good society. The speaker is concerned to bring about a good society where there would be order, peace, some kind of security, some kind of happiness, and go beyond all that, enquiring into that which is immeasurable. We must have [...] a society that is essentially good [...] without violence, without the contradictions of various beliefs, dogmas, rituals, gods, without national economic divisions (Krishnamurti, *Ojai*, 1979, quoted by Herzberger and Herzberger, 1998).

This kind of society is clearly a society in which caste, class, linguistic and regional divisions would cease to exist. Krishnamurti's emphasis on 'goodness' as the foundation of this new society underlies his plea for a society devoid of any kinds of contradictions or dichotomies. A society without 'national economic divisions' undoubtedly implies a classless society, and this aspect of Krishnamurti's thought indicates his rather obvious concern for the ending of economic and social inequalities based on material power. However, the important point is that Krishnamurti emphasized that none of this could come about without an inner renewal or change.

Krishnamurti's discomfort with the present world order stemmed from his understanding of the human condition wherein no one is truly happy but ensnared within a psychological world of sorrow, jealousy, pain, anger, envy and troubled relationships. This

inner turmoil, Krishnamurti understood, could not lead to harmonious relationships or a good society. It could only create conflict and contradictions that resulted in fragmentation and chaos. These conditions in turn led to exploitation, oppression and war. This was the basis of Krishnamurti's search for a new or different kind of society that would result in harmony and well-being among individuals or groups of individuals.

The 'good society', as Krishnamurti envisaged it, certainly represented a way of 'being' and 'doing' in this world and was not some distant dream or utopian ideal that he sought to arrive at through a gradual process of change. He has often been described an utopian idealist in his search for the good society in the midst of modern social turmoil and psychological chaos. However, he was emphatic in arguing that 'On paper we can draw a blueprint for a brilliant utopia, a brave new world but [...] our problems exist in the present and it is only in the present that they can be solved' (quoted in Martin, 1997, p. 11). It is therefore an urgent task that has to be understood and acted upon immediately. The 'urgency of change' was a constant refrain in Krishnamurti's talks given to the public and to teachers and students in the schools he established in India, England and the United States.

In his quest for the good society, Krishnamurti did not seek some kind of power, authority or legitimacy through the establishment of schools as organizations for the transformation of human beings. In fact, he abandoned formal organizations in 1929 and shunned any attempt to canonize or formalize the pursuit of the good society, which he considered possible only through an inner renewal. How, then, did Krishnamurti see education as holding the key to real change, both from an inner revolution and in society? More curiously, why did Krishnamurti seek to establish schools, as communities of people working together, as a step towards bringing about the 'enlightenment' of human beings? The answer is not as contradictory as it appears, for Krishnamurti's approach to a holistic education is essential for an inner renewal that can effect social transformation and indeed lead to societal change.

## **About Krishnamurti**

J. Krishnamurti was born on 11 May 1895 in Madanapalle in the state of Andhra Pradesh, southern India, close to the Rishi Valley Education Centre, an institution he established in 1928. 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.<sup>2</sup> They eventually moved to Adyar, Chennai, in 1909 (Lutyens, 1975, p. 8). 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 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. 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 (Krishnamurti, 1929).

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, 1972, p. 52).

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' (Holroyd, 1980, p. 35). 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-discovery: 'there is only the journey. There is no total knowing of oneself but rather an unending process of knowing oneself' (Jayakar, 1982, p. 82).

## **Right education**

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' (Krishnamurti, 1970, p. 22), 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 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, 1981, p. 93–94).

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' (ibid.).<sup>3</sup> 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' (ibid., p. 7). 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' (ibid., p. 14–15).

At his talks given to teachers and students at the two KFI schools in India where he made annual visits—Rishi Valley 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' (Krishnamurti, 1993, p. 33). With such an education, the student meets life, which is 'like a little river meeting the vast sea' (ibid., p. 34). 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 if you yourself are not competitive' (ibid.). 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' (ibid.).

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’ (quoted by Shirali, 1998). 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.<sup>4</sup>

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’ (ibid., p. 70). 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 human being, one is not a specialist, but a total entity’ (ibid., p. 75). An ‘educated mind’ is one that ‘thinks, that is active, alive; it is a mind that looks, watches, listens and feels’ (ibid., p. 76).

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.

## **The 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 (Chari, 1999, p. 3). 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 (ibid.). 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.

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 (Thapan, 1991, p. 30) 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 a 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.<sup>5</sup>

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' (Herzberger, n.d.). 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*' (Herzberger, 1999, p. 10). This in turn would lead to a new curriculum in Indian schools focusing on 'sustaining the earth' (ibid., p. 11). 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 outlook' (Iyer, 1999, p. 76). 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 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 multi-grade 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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’ (SIDH, 2000, p. 50). 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’ (NCERT, 2000, p. 12). ‘Values’ such as ‘regularity and punctuality, cleanliness, industriousness/diligence, sense of duty and service, equality, cooperation, sense of responsibility, truthfulness and national identity’ are recommended (ibid., p. 14). 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.

## Notes

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1. Krishnamurti, in fact, suggested that through an inner renewal, and the insights thereof, a change would actually occur in the brain cells and there would be a renewal of those cells (Krishnamurti, 1978). His biographer, Mary Lutyens, adds that it has been argued that Krishnamurti suggested that ‘through insight it is possible for the brain to change physically and act in an orderly way which leads to a healing of the damage caused by all the years of wrong-functioning’ (Lutyens, 1988, p. 19). David Bohm, the well-known physicist, has extensively examined Krishnamurti’s perspective on a mutation in the brain cells and has concluded that ‘modern research into the brain and nervous system actually gives considerable support to Krishnamurti’s statement that insight may change the brain cells [...] There are important substances in the body, the hormones and the neurotransmitters, that fundamentally affect the entire functioning of the brain and the nervous system. These substances respond [...] to what a person knows and what he thinks, and to what all this means to him’ (quoted in Lutyens, 1988, p. 19); see Bohm (1986). For his celebrated work in which he propounds a revolutionary theory of physics similar to Krishnamurti’s perspective on the wholeness of life, see Bohm (1980). For a more recent work, see Krishnamurti and Bohm (1999).
2. The Theosophical Society was founded in the United States of America in 1875 by Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, who was interested in ‘spiritualism and mesmerism’, and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who was considered a fraud but worshipped by her admirers as being a ‘seer and miracle-worker whose occult powers derived from the highest spiritual source’ (Lutyens, 1975, p. 10). The Society had three primary objectives, ‘1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race,

- creed, sex, caste or colour; 2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science; 3. To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the power latent in man' (ibid.).
3. As I am most familiar with the work of the Krishnamurti Foundation India, I focus on the work of this Foundation, although there are similar Foundations in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
  4. See Shirali (1998) for a discussion of some of these issues.
  5. The *Journal of the Krishnamurti schools* (published by the KFI in Chennai) documents some of the innovative methods being used by teachers at the KFI schools. In my study of the Rishi Valley School, I attempted an analysis of the nature of interaction between ideas and institutions, and among people in these institutions, as well as of educational practice at the school (Thapan, 1991).
  6. At another level Mathur (1999) discusses the possibilities of evolving a global outlook through the teaching of Geography at a very local, regional level in the middle school curriculum.
  7. 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.
  8. The expansion of the REC and the involvement with larger bodies engaged in similar work are discussed at length in Kumaraswamy (1997) and Rishi Valley Education Centre (1999).
  9. 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.

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