

An Overview of Krishnamurti's Life and Work

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born on 11 May 1895 in Madanapalle, a small town in south India. He and his brother were adopted in their youth by Dr Annie Besant, then president of the Theosophical Society. Dr Besant and others proclaimed that Krishnamurti was to be a world teacher whose coming the Theosophists had predicted. To prepare the world for this coming, a world-wide organization called the Order of the Star in the East was formed and the young Krishnamurti was made its head.

In 1929, however, Krishnamurti renounced the role that he was expected to play, dissolved the Order with its huge following, and returned all the money and property that had been donated for this work.

From then, for nearly sixty years until his death on 17 February 1986, he travelled throughout the world talking to large audiences and to individuals about the need for a radical change in mankind.

Krishnamurti is regarded globally as one of the greatest thinkers and religious teachers of all time. He did not expound any philosophy or religion, but rather talked of the things that concern all of us in our everyday lives, of the problems of living in modern society with its violence and corruption, of the individual's search for security and happiness, and the need for mankind to free itself from inner burdens of fear, anger, hurt, and sorrow. He explained with great precision the subtle workings of the human mind, and pointed to the need for bringing to our daily life a deeply meditative and spiritual quality.

Krishnamurti belonged to no religious organization, sect or country, nor did he subscribe to any school of political or ideological thought. On the contrary, he maintained that these are the very factors that divide human beings and bring about conflict and war. He reminded his listeners again and again that we are all human beings first and not Hindus, Muslims or Christians, that we are like the rest of humanity and are not different from one another. He asked that we tread lightly on this earth without destroying ourselves or the environment. He communicated to his listeners a deep sense of respect for nature. His teachings transcend man-made belief systems, nationalistic sentiment and sectarianism. At the same time, they give new meaning and direction to mankind's search for truth. His teaching, besides being relevant to the modern age, is timeless and universal.

Krishnamurti spoke not as a guru but as a friend, and his talks and discussions are based not on tradition-based knowledge but on his own insights into the human mind and his vision of the sacred, so he always communicates a sense of freshness and directness although the essence of his message remained unchanged over the years. When he addressed large audiences, people felt that Krishnamurti was talking to each of them personally, addressing his or her particular problem. In his private interviews, he was a compassionate teacher, listening attentively to the man or woman who came to him in sorrow, and encouraging them to heal themselves through their own understanding. Religious scholars found that his words threw new light on traditional concepts.

Krishnamurti took on the challenge of modern scientists and psychologists and went with them step by step, discussed their theories and sometimes enabled them to discern the limitations of those theories. Krishnamurti left a large body of literature in the form of public talks, writings, discussions with teachers and students, with scientists and religious figures, conversations with

individuals, television and radio interviews, and letters. Many of these have been published as books, and audio and video recordings.

More information about Krishnamurti's life can be found in the biographies written by Mary Lutyens and Pupul Jayakar

Truth is a pathless land

The Order of the Star in the East was founded in 1911 to proclaim the coming of the World Teacher. Krishnamurti was made Head of the Order. On August 3, 1929, the opening day of the annual Star Camp at Ommen, Holland, Krishnamurti dissolved the Order before 3000 members. Below is the full text of the talk he gave on that occasion.

"We are going to discuss this morning the dissolution of the Order of the Star. Many people will be delighted, and others will be rather sad. It is a question neither for rejoicing nor for sadness, because it is inevitable, as I am going to explain. *"You may remember the story of how the devil and a friend of his were walking down the street, when they saw ahead of them a man stoop down and pick up something from the ground, look at it, and put it away in his pocket. The friend said to the devil, "What did that man pick up?" "He picked up a piece of Truth," said the devil. "That is a very bad business for you, then," said his friend. "Oh, not at all," the devil replied, "I am going to let him organize it."*

I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path. 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, crystallized; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others. This is what everyone throughout the world is attempting to do. Truth is narrowed down and made a plaything for those who are weak, for those who are only momentarily discontented. Truth cannot be brought down, rather the individual must make the effort to ascend to it. You cannot bring the mountain-top to the valley. If you would attain to the mountain-top you must pass through the valley, climb the steeps, unafraid of the dangerous precipices.

So that is the first reason, from my point of view, why the Order of the Star should be dissolved. In spite of this, you will probably form other Orders, you will continue to belong to other organizations searching for Truth. I do not want to belong to any organization of a spiritual kind, please understand this. I would make use of an organization which would take me to London, for

example; this is quite a different kind of organization, merely mechanical, like the post or the telegraph. I would use a motor car or a steamship to travel, these are only physical mechanisms which have nothing whatever to do with spirituality. Again, I maintain that no organization can lead man to spirituality.

If an organization be created for this purpose, it becomes a crutch, a weakness, a bondage, and must cripple the individual, and prevent him from growing, from establishing his uniqueness, which lies in the discovery for himself of that absolute, unconditioned Truth. So that is another reason why I have decided, as I happen to be the Head of the Order, to dissolve it. No one has persuaded me to this decision. "This is no magnificent deed, because I do not want followers, and I mean this. The moment you follow someone you cease to follow Truth. I am not concerned whether you pay attention to what I say or not. I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages, from all fears, and not to found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies. Then you will naturally ask me why I go the world over, continually speaking. I will tell you for what reason I do this: not because I desire a following, not because I desire a special group of special disciples. (How men love to be different from their fellow-men, however ridiculous, absurd and trivial their distinctions may be! I do not want to encourage that absurdity.) I have no disciples, no apostles, either on earth or in the realm of spirituality. "Nor is it the lure of money, nor the desire to live a comfortable life, which attracts me. If I wanted to lead a comfortable life I would not come to a Camp or live in a damp country! I am speaking frankly because I want this settled once and for all. I do not want these childish discussions year after year.

One newspaper reporter, who interviewed me, considered it a magnificent act to dissolve an organization in which there were thousands and thousands of members. To him it was a great act because, he said: "What will you do afterwards, how will you live? You will have no following, people will no longer listen to you." If there are only five people who will listen, who will live, who have their faces turned towards eternity, it will be sufficient. Of what use is it to have thousands who do not understand, who are fully embalmed in prejudice, who do not want the new, but would rather translate the new to suit their own sterile, stagnant selves? If I speak strongly, please do not misunderstand me, it is not through lack of compassion. If you go to a surgeon for an operation, is it not kindness on his part to operate even if he cause you pain? So, in like manner, if I speak straightly, it is not through lack of real affection—on the contrary.

As I have said, I have only one purpose: to make man free, to urge him towards freedom, to help him to break away from all limitations, for that alone will give him eternal happiness, will give him the unconditioned realization of the self.

Because I am free, unconditioned, whole—not the part, not the relative, but the whole Truth that is eternal—I desire those, who seek to understand me to be free; not to follow me, not to make out of me a cage which will become a religion, a sect. Rather should they be free from all fears—from the fear of religion, from the fear of salvation, from the fear of spirituality, from the fear of love, from the fear of death, from the fear of life itself. As an artist paints a picture because he takes delight in that painting, because it is his self-expression, his glory, his well-being, so I do this and not because I want anything from anyone. "You are accustomed to authority, or to the atmosphere of authority, which you think will lead you to spirituality. You think and hope that another can, by his

extraordinary powers--a miracle--transport you to this realm of eternal freedom which is Happiness. Your whole outlook on life is based on that authority.

You have listened to me for three years now, without any change taking place except in the few. Now analyze what I am saying, be critical, so that you may understand thoroughly, fundamentally. When you look for an authority to lead you to spirituality, you are bound automatically to build an organization around that authority. By the very creation of that organization, which, you think, will help this authority to lead you to spirituality, you are held in a cage.

If I talk frankly, please remember that I do so, not out of harshness, not out of cruelty, not out of the enthusiasm of my purpose, but because I want you to understand what I am saying. That is the reason why you are here, and it would be a waste of time if I did not explain clearly, decisively, my point of view. "For eighteen years you have been preparing for this event, for the Coming of the World Teacher. For eighteen years you have organized, you have looked for someone who would give a new delight to your hearts and minds, who would transform your whole life, who would give you a new understanding; for someone who would raise you to a new plane of life, who would give you a new encouragement, who would set you free--and now look what is happening! Consider, reason with yourselves, and discover in what way that belief has made you different--not with the superficial difference of the wearing of a badge, which is trivial, absurd. In what manner has such a belief swept away all the unessential things of life? That is the only way to judge: in what way are you freer, greater, more dangerous to every Society which is based on the false and the unessential? In what way have the members of this organization of the Star become different? "As I said, you have been preparing for eighteen years for me. I do not care if you believe that I am the World-Teacher or not. That is of very little importance. Since you belong to the organization of the Order of the Star, you have given your sympathy, your energy, acknowledging that Krishnamurti is the World-Teacher-- partially or wholly: wholly for those who are really seeking, only partially for those who are satisfied with their own half-truths.

You have been preparing for eighteen years, and look how many difficulties there are in the way of your understanding, how many complications, how many trivial things. Your prejudices, your fears, your authorities, your churches new and old--all these, I maintain, are a barrier to understanding. I cannot make myself clearer than this. I do not want you to agree with me, I do not want you to follow me, I want you to understand what I am saying. "This understanding is necessary because your belief has not transformed you but only complicated you, and because you are not willing to face things as they are. You want to have your own gods--new gods instead of the old, new religions instead of the old, new forms instead of the old--all equally valueless, all barriers, all limitations, all crutches. Instead of old spiritual distinctions you have new spiritual distinctions, instead of old worships you have new worships. You are all depending for your spirituality on someone else, for your happiness on someone else, for your enlightenment on someone else; and although you have been preparing for me for eighteen years, when I say all these things are unnecessary, when I say that you must put them all away and look within yourselves for the enlightenment, for the glory, for the purification, and for the incorruptibility of the self, not one of you is willing to do it. There may be a few, but very, very few. So why have an organization?

Why have false, hypocritical people following me, the embodiment of Truth? Please remember that I am not saying something harsh or unkind, but we have reached a situation when you must face things as they are. I said last year that I would not compromise. Very few listened to me then.

This year I have made it absolutely clear. I do not know how many thousands throughout the world—members of the Order—have been preparing for me for eighteen years, and yet now they are not willing to listen unconditionally, wholly, to what I say.

As I said before, my purpose is to make men unconditionally free, for I maintain that the only spirituality is the incorruptibility of the self which is eternal, is the harmony between reason and love. This is the absolute, unconditioned Truth which is Life itself. I want therefore to set man free, rejoicing as the bird in the clear sky, unburdened, independent, ecstatic in that freedom. And I, for whom you have been preparing for eighteen years, now say that you must be free of all these things, free from your complications, your entanglements. For this you need not have an organization based on spiritual belief. Why have an organization for five or ten people in the world who understand, who are struggling, who have put aside all trivial things? And for the weak people, there can be no organization to help them to find the Truth, because Truth is in everyone; it is not far, it is not near; it is eternally there.

Organizations cannot make you free. 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 works, make you free. You use a typewriter to write letters, but you do not put it on an altar and worship it. But that is what you are doing when organizations become your chief concern.

How many members are there in it?" That is the first question I am asked by all newspaper reporters. "How many followers have you? By their number we shall judge whether what you say is true or false." I do not know how many there are. I am not concerned with that. As I said, if there were even one man who had been set free, that were enough.

Again, you have the idea that only certain people hold the key to the Kingdom of Happiness. No one holds it. No one has the authority to hold that key. That key is your own self, and in the development and the purification and in the incorruptibility of that self alone is the Kingdom of Eternity.

So you will see how absurd is the whole structure that you have built, looking for external help, depending on others for your comfort, for your happiness, for your strength. These can only be found within yourselves.

You are accustomed to being told how far you have advanced, what is your spiritual status. How childish! Who but yourself can tell you if you are beautiful or ugly within? Who but yourself can tell you if you are incorruptible? You are not serious in these things.

But those who really desire to understand, who are looking to find that which is eternal, without beginning and without an end, will walk together with a greater intensity, will be a danger to everything that is unessential, to unrealities, to shadows. And they will concentrate, they will become the flame, because they understand. Such a body we must create, and that is my purpose. Because of that real understanding there will be true

friendship. Because of that true friendship—which you do not seem to know—there will be real cooperation on the part of each one. And this not because of authority, not because of salvation, not because of immolation for a cause, but because you really understand, and hence are capable of living in the eternal. This is a greater thing than all pleasure, than all sacrifice.

So these are some of the reasons why, after careful consideration for two years, I have made this decision. It is not from a momentary impulse. I have not been persuaded to it by anyone. I am not persuaded in such things. For two years I have been thinking about this, slowly, carefully, patiently, and I have now decided to disband the Order, as I happen to be its Head. You can form other organizations and expect someone else. With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages, new decorations for those cages. My only concern is to set men absolutely, unconditionally free."

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