



J. Krishnamurti's Philosophy of Education

VANDANA ANAND

Assistant Professor

U.P. Higher Education Services Commission

Abstract:

The field of Education has always been an interesting area for all philosophers as this provides them a means to give a concrete form to his thoughts or vision and Krishnamurti is no exception. J. Krishnamurti has a deep concern about education and considers bringing about an integrated individual who is physically fit, fearless, have true values, possess a spirit of inquiry, intelligent, creative, have good aesthetic sense, opt right vocation, and thus achieves the wholeness of personality and develops a new social order. For producing such an integrated and holistic personality, Krishnamurti advocated integrated curriculum and pedagogy, integrated teachers, small size schools, experience based learning, respect and sensitive towards nature, maintain fearless and stimulating learning environment, promoting culture of no-competition and qualitative or formative assessment. Reflections of his vision or educational thought or Philosophy of Education in the latest National Education Policy 2020 proves the relevance of his philosophy in 21st century.

Keywords: J. Krishnamurti, Philosophy of Education, Right Education

1. Introduction

Education has always been a churning topic for the entire philosophers from the time immemorial. Like all other philosophers J. Krishnamurti, an eminent philosopher and world teacher, also has a deep concern about education. Apart from this, he also talked about many other common things related everyday life. He talked about the problems of living in modern society with its violence and corruption, about the individual's search for security and happiness, and about the need for mankind to free him from inner burdens of fear, anger, hurt and sorrow, about marriage, relationships, meditation, peace etc. His primary concern is for education, which he considers is not right. Krishnamurti was completely against the prevalent rotten education system and considers if the same kind of education get promotion, it will create a fragmented man full of diseases i.e. greedy, envy, selfish, cunning minded man who may destroy the world of peace.

Present education system, for Krishnamurti, being confined to marks and degrees promoting fear in students and compelling them to adjust in set pattern. By capturing in the set patterns, it debar child to think innovatively, creatively and critically. The present education system is creating slaves; the mentally slaves people who do not think in his own way; who do not observe and inquire. By destroying the very innate quality of child i.e. observation, different thinking process, free expression of thought and imagination, present education system is creating an unhappy and fragmented individuals. This fragmentation provides space to flourish and promote wrong values among the youngsters – Money, Power, Prestige, etc. Education is not only a mean to economic gain but also enables empowerment, happiness, independence and fearlessness through cultivating understanding, scientific attitude and the ability to think critically, creatively to solve problems and make right decisions which leads to wholeness of personality. The latest National Education Policy 2020 have some reflections of Krishnamurti's philosophy as the policy also emphasized on inculcating all these skills in the children and develop them in a holistic way. This proves that his philosophy of education

is still relevant in 21st century. Therefore, in this paper, the researcher has attempted to analyze his philosophy of education.

2. Research Questions

1. What is the Philosophy of Education of J. Krishnamurti?
2. Is his philosophy of education still relevant?

3. Objectives

1. To analyze the philosophy of education of J. Krishnamurti.
2. To explore the reflections of J. Krishnamurti's philosophy of education in National Education Policy 2020.

4. Research Methodology

In this paper, researcher has used content analysis to accomplish both the above objectives. The sources of content analysis are both primary and secondary sources including books of Krishnamurti, his official websites, his official audios and videos made available by Krishnamurti foundations, journals etc.

5. Krishnamurti's Philosophy of Education

Education is one of the major medium to apply the thought or idea in practice. Therefore, almost all the philosophers, whether it is Rabindranath Tagore or Gandhi or Dewey or Ivan Illich or Maria Montessori, have adopted this way to make their philosophy alive and Krishnamurti was no exception. Krishnamurti has given a concrete form to his thought by his experiments.

As Krishnamurti considers the prevalent education system faulty or not right, his educational philosophy is popularly known as 'Right Education' or 'Right Kind of Education'. Krishnamurti discusses about the right environment, about right functions of education, right curriculum, right methods of teaching, right teachers and right school which collectively makes Krishnamurti's Right Education. He reflects his educational thought in many of his books from which 'Education and Significance of Life', 'On Education', 'Life Ahead' and Letters to the School (Vol.1 & Vol. 2) are foremost.

In educational philosophy of J. Krishnamurti, the researcher has discussed about his perspective regarding meaning of education, aims of education, curriculum of education, methods of teaching, discipline, teacher student or child and School.

6. Krishnamurti's Concept of Education

Krishnamurti has showed a strict discontent against the contemporary education system and its wrong functions flourishing day-by-day. He rigorously opposed the education system in beneath of which children have been judged only by their marks and degrees; they have been honoured by their post or profession only i.e. doctor or engineer; they have been trained in techniques of earning the livelihood only, which is not true education.

According to Krishnamurti, education is not only "acquiring mere techniques, a skill, but educating a human being to live with great art. That means not only technological knowledge ... but also the immense limitless field of the psyche, going beyond it, that is holistic education ..." (Krishnamurti, 1984) he further says, "education means a holistic approach to life, cultivating the brain technologically ... and also cultivating the brain to be free of its own petty little self" (Krishnamurti, 1984). Here 'petty little self' indicates mind full of hatred, jealousy, anger, fear, ignorance, narrow thought-feeling and such a petty mind cannot understand the whole. Therefore, it is necessary to free oneself from all dogmas, psychological hindrances, compulsion, fear, conflicts, and set patterns in

order to get a clear, critical, innovative and integrated outlook. And the education that promotes such a right outlook is right kind of education. By advocating right kind of education, he explained that “The right kind of education means the awakening of intelligence, the fostering of an integrated life, and only such education can create a new culture and a peaceful world” (Krishnamurti.2014.p.52). And “to bring about right education, we must obviously understand the meaning of life as a whole, and for that we have to be able to think, not consistently, but directly and truly” (Krishnamurti, 2014.p.14) as education, in the true sense, is the understanding of oneself, for it is within each one of us that the whole of existence is gathered (Krishnamurti, 2014).

7. Aims of Education

Much of Krishnamurti's educational writings are concerned with a fundamental question: what are the aims of education? From these writings we can gain an understanding of Krishnamurti's overall intention. Krishnamurti's statements were not only general statements of educational aims but also a clarification of the purpose of the Krishnamurti schools in particular. Here the researcher has discussed his educational aims or aims of Right Education in detail.

1. Physical Development

Like other educationists, Krishnamurti is duly conscious of the importance of sound physical development. He said, “If the body is not healthy, vital, it will inevitably distort thought and make for insensitivity.”(Krishnamurti.2007.p.12). means if our body is not sound we cannot imagine mental and emotional wellness as these are interconnected. Here Krishnamurti resemble like Socrates who said “a healthy mind lives in a healthy body”. In Krishnamurti Schools nutritious and balanced diet has been provided to the children, schools are surrounded by natural environment where children feel fresh and many physical activities have been conducted for children and to ensure their physical development.

2. Development of Fearless Individual

Present education system seizes the child and induces fear in them. Prevalent system use fear as a medium to get good mark or a job. Fear intent the child towards rote learning and gradually his inborn quality of thinking seizes. His mind becomes so conditioned that he fears to think, he fears about others that what they think, he fears to go against the sayings of others. As a result, the child mind is continuously under debate and conflict having no freedom- Freedom to think differently, freedom to express himself, freedom from fear, freedom from ideologies of others, and freedom from being conditioned etc. Therefore, Krishnamurti emphasized to develop fearless individual.

3. Development of New Values

According to Krishnamurti, “to create new values” (Krishnamurti, 2014. P.25) should also be one of the functions of education but our present education system is not performing it. Rather it merely imparts the old and vanished existing values, in the mind of the child, without realizing its authenticity in the present century. Wrong values are prevalent today and education is imparting the same and these are- money, position, authority etc. It is just making the child conform to ideals i.e. it is only conditioning him without awakening his intelligence. While discussing about education he mentioned that “Education should ... help him (individual) to discover the true values” (Krishnamurti, 2014. P.15).

4. Spirit of Inquiry

Krishnamurti targeted the prevalent education system as it emphasizing on imitation only. Children were not encouraged to study, to explore, to question, to inquire rather they are told dos and don'ts which develops the child into a slave. Krishnamurti said, “Education must not only be efficient in academic disciplines but must also explore the conditioning of human conduct” (Krishnamurti Official Website). While studying Krishnamurti, Hunter (1988) explored ‘Spirit of Inquiry’ as one of the major aims of Krishnamurti Education and for this “Krishnamurti directly confronted students with examples of their conditioning-for example, inherited religious beliefs-

and asked them to question their validity.” Therefore, to inculcate the spirit of inquiry, at his schools the culture of questioning, discussing, debating and not to accept is flourishing.

Krishnamurti was concerned with developing a critical outlook, an independent thinking and not to be conditioned by others. Hunter (1988) discussed two points which differ Krishnamurti from other educationists in this respect- “First, he felt that inquiry should extend to such elusive areas as feelings about the nature of the self and thought; and secondly, he not only insisted on inquiry into conditioning but also maintained that a person could thus end his conditioning and be free.”

5. Awakening of Intelligence

Education system of today is just providing readymade bits of knowledge and expects the child just to memorize it without questioning. No questioning and no brain storming results in narrow mindedness i.e. the horizon of child shrinks. Now the result is that the children of today do not think as their ability to think has seized. What they do is they just Google the topic –either social or political or education or emotional. Similarly as their intelligence seizes, they do not react on any wrong norm or wrong act due to which now the humanity is in crisis. Therefore, Krishnamurti firmly held that the awakening of intelligence was the only solution to humanity’s crisis and therefore the fundamental aim of education. If our horizons are very limited, then we shall certainly only discover what is very limited. So efforts should be done towards the awakening of child’s intelligence so that he not only imitate the things but deal intelligently with the problems of life. “The function of education is to create human beings who are integrated and therefore intelligent” (Krishnamurti, 2014. P.14).

6. Development of Creative Individuals

Krishnamurti rigorously target the conventional education system which encourages repetitive attitude and only interested in producing obedient, unquestioning but effective individuals. Creativity is stifled in the interests of mediocrity and material success. Therefore, in Krishnamurti’s perspective education system should provide opportunities to the children to think beyond the boundaries and should develop them with divergent thinking. This enables the children to develop a sharp outlook and able to think all the dimensions of the same thing and come up with their new and right ideas.

7. Development of Aesthetic Sense

Krishnamurti prefers to nourish the quality of love and sensitivity from the very beginning, which present education system negates. Therefore, for Krishnamurti it is the function of education to develop aesthetic sense in the children so that they can see the beauty of nature- trees, mountains, rivers, cloud, birds, etc. and feel him as an integral part of that whole. In Krishnamurti’s own words, “The right kind of education ... gives your mind and heart a depth, an understanding of beauty” (Krishnamurti.2012.p.36). He further says, “Education is ... to listen to the birds, to see the sky, to see the extraordinary beauty of a tree, and the shape of the hills, and to feel with them, to be really, directly in touch with them” (Krishnamurti. 2012.p.8). This leads to develop positive emotions in the children and they become emotionally stable.

8. Right Vocational development

Though Krishnamurti criticizes technical education but not totally denied it, as he was quite aware of the hardships, complexities and necessity of livelihood in life. But he criticized that system of education in which the children without having related capability, ability and interest, are told or compelled to do any particular profession. Such kind of thing destroys the life of children. Many of the children end their lives just because they lost peace of mind and do not feel happy with the profession in which they have been pushed. Therefore, for Krishnamurti education should try to find out the talents and interests of the child and then guide the child towards that profession in which he is interested and feel happy. He said, “The right kind of education should also help the student to discover what he is most interested in” (Krishnamurti.2014.p.96). “If he does not find his true vocation, all his life will seem wasted; he will feel frustrated doing something which he does not want to do” (Krishnamurti.2014.p.96). Therefore, aim of education should be to help the

student or child to judge his highest interest and develop his capacities in order to find the true vocation.

9. New Social Order/ World Peace

Krishnamurti was against the prevalent idea of fixing the child in set patterns of society as he considers the society as corrupt. Fixing child in such a corrupted society in which envy, jealousy, competition, narrow thinking, anger, revenge attitude, etc flourishes and money, power and prestige has given more value than the individual, can never bring peace. It can only bring anxiety, stress and conflicts. Therefore, Krishnamurti deny this wrong function of education. He emphasized to create a new society and a new culture based on new values, as one of the aims of education. For creating such a new social order, the child should be free from wrong values and wrong emotion. Krishnamurti considers that education is the only mean to bring about this total revolution. He said, "Only by intelligently freeing ourselves from the spirit of nationalism, from envy and the thirst for power, can a new social order be established."(Krishnamurti.2014.p.84).

10.Integrated Personality Development

Krishnamurti considers one of the function of education should be to produce integrated individuals i.e. develop all the aspects of children. A simple example can make it clear- While having tea; one uses the right proportion of milk, water, sugar and tea leaves. If anything from it misses or not in right proportion, it cannot make a tea. In fact, these things are not separate. These things only being together can make tea. Likewise education should aim at helping the children to be physically fit, mentally alert, emotionally stable, socially acceptable, and morally upright, i.e. a balanced and integrated personality. Personality is inclusive of everything about the physique, socio-emotional and personal characteristics. Physical, mental, emotional, moral and social are the different aspects of personality development. The different aspects of development are not really separate entities. Each aspect is dependent on others and in turn influences one another. All the aspects are interrelated. The child is an integrated, unified and whole personality. Therefore, Krishnamurti considers, the aim of education should be to help the child to develop a proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of the body, mind and spirit for an all round development, in other words, development of a holistic and integrated individuals. Krishnamurti advocated, "The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole." (Krishnamurti.2014.p.25)

The educational aims present the Krishnamurti's clear vision that education awakens the mind of the child by incorporating the culture of questioning, inquiring, and not to accept. By inquiring, the child develops many high quality skills viz. critical thinking, creativity, team-work, communication skill, problem solving skill, and scientific attitude which develop the child into a complete or holistic being.

8. Curriculum

Krishnamurti has presented an integrated curriculum to ensure the complete or holistic development of the child. He has very much concern about environment therefore he advocated the study of environment with other subjects. In his educational institute 'environmental studies' has its existence as a separate subject. He also recommended various other activities along with other subjects – art & craft, dance & music, dramatic & debates, swimming, sports, athletics, gardening, yoga etc.

9. Methods of Teaching

Krishnamurti has not suggested any specific method rather he entrusted this responsibility to the teachers to make their own method according to the need as he believes that teaching is not a technique; it is the way of life. He said, "There is no need to follow any method" (Krishnamurti.2014.p.115). On the basis of his thought, few principles (with reflection of the Krishnamurti's thought) have been enlisted by the researcher which should be kept in mind while teaching-

- Principle of fearlessness

- Principle of freedom
- Principle of self-knowledge
- Principle of integration/wholeness
- Principle of co-operation
- Principle of critical thinking

9. Discipline

Krishnamurti avoids using the word discipline as it laden with all kinds of meanings conformity, imitation, obedience etc. He often used order instead of discipline. According to him, “discipline means to learn, not to conform, not to suppress, not to imitate the pattern ... in it are involved several things: to learn, to be austere, to be free, to be sensitive, and to see the beauty of love ... discipline is freedom” (Krishnamurti, 1970). Freedom does not means that an individual does whatever he wants to do. But it is an order and for bringing that order one have to be “extraordinarily receptive, sensitive to everything.”Krishnamurti continues to say, “If you are considerate, if you are watching, if you are listening, then, because you are free, you will be punctual, you will come to the class regularly, you will study, you will be so alive that you will want to do things rightly” (Krishnamurti, 2012. p.31). Therefore, Krishnamurti advocates self-discipline.

10. Teacher

Krishnamurti has the view that we need integrated educator as only this kind of educator can develop integrated individuals. Defining the role of a teacher he says, “A teacher is not merely a giver of information; he is one who points the way to wisdom, to truth” (Krishnamurti.2014.p.98). He further says, “He must give all his thoughts, all his care and affection to the creation of right environment and to development of understanding, so that when the child grows into maturity he will be capable of dealing intelligently with the human problems that confront him. But in order to do this, the educator must understand himself instead of relying on ideologies, systems and beliefs” (Krishnamurti.2014.p.25). For providing such environment, he should concern with the freedom of the child, he should be inwardly rich, should not be ambitious and seeks no power in any form, should not use teaching as a means of acquiring position or authority, should be free from compulsion of society and the control of governments and should not depend on any one method of teaching. He says, “People who are experiencing, and therefore teaching, are only real teachers, and they too will create their own technique” (Krishnamurti.2014.p.48).

Therefore, for Krishnamurti, the right educator is one who creates fearless, stress less, competition less and free environment so that the child grow into totality. He works as a facilitator and friend for the students.

11. Student/Child

According to Krishnamurti student and teacher both learn together. Therefore, the student should be treated as equal partner. Opportunities should be given to develop their own unique being. Things should not be imposed on him rather they should be free to discover themselves and refine their potentials. This cannot be done alone by student or alone by a teacher rather both should do it together.

12. School

“A school is a place where one learns about the totality, the wholeness of life. Academic excellence is absolutely necessary, but a school includes much more than that. It is a place where both the teacher and the student explore, not only the outer world, the world of knowledge, but also their own thinking, their own behavior” (Krishnamurti, 2007. Foreword). Krishnamurti was against the large educational institutes which don't bother the teacher-student ratio and enrolled as many students as they can just to run their business. Krishnamurti was in favour of small size schools i.e. limited number of students and right kind of educators. He asserts, “A large and flourishing

institution in which hundreds of children are educated together ... can turn out bank clerks and super-salesmen, industrialists or commissars, superficial people who are technically efficient; but there is hope only in the integrated individual, which only small schools can help to bring about”(Krishnamurti.2014.p.86).

There are eight schools of Krishnamurti established across the world and are still blossoming. Oak Grove School and Brockwood Park School are in abroad where as Rishi Valley School, Rajghat Besant School, The Valley School, The School KFI, Sahyadri School, and Pathashaala are in India. The purpose and drive of these schools is “to equip the child with the most excellent technological proficiency so that he may function with clarity and efficiency in the modern world, and far more important to create the right climate so that the child may develop fully as a complete human being. This means giving him the opportunity to flower in goodness so that he is rightly related to people, things and ideas, to the whole of life”(Krishnamurti, 2012. p.73).

13. Reflections of Krishnamurti’s Philosophy of Education in National Education Policy 2020

The researcher has attempted to draw the reflections of J. Krishnamurti’s Philosophy of Education in the latest National Education Policy 2020 which is as under:

- Krishnamurti emphasized on experience based learning as hand-on sessions provides space to the children to think critically, creatively, motivates them to inquire, discover, discuss, interact and analyze the problem. National Education Policy 2020 reflects the vision of Krishnamurti in this regard – “teaching and learning will be conducted in a more interactive manner; questions will be encouraged, and classroom sessions will regularly contain more fun, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities for students for deeper and more experiential learning” (National Education Policy 2020).
- Krishnamurti emphasized on making curriculum integrated and now the latest education policy also talked about integrated or cross-curricular pedagogical approach.
- Krishnamurti gives much importance to the nature, the surrounding of which we all are the parts. He advocated preserving nature, the birds, animals, reptiles, insects etc. and spending time with nature in order to be sensitive and respectful towards nature. Now the policy makers also realize the importance of same and recommended to introduce “Organic Living” (National Education Policy 2020) and “Environmental Education” (National Education Policy 2020) in the curriculum and also suggested to develop “respect for environment” (National Education Policy 2020) in all students.
- Krishnamurti was a profound advocator of fearless and stimulating learning environment. Such a environment provide proper pace to the students to develops various life skills and social skills viz. critical thinking, Communication, collaboration, creativity, self-initiative, self-discipline, teamwork, responsibility, citizenship, etc and hence allow them to flower holistically. The National Education Policy 2020 also considers “a safe and stimulating learning environment” as essential for learning in educational institutions.
- Krishnamurti was a profound advocator of maintaining non-competitive environment in the schools as every child is unique and his uniqueness should be identified and fostered. Competition will destroy his uniqueness. National Education Policy 2020 seems moving toward developing a culture of non competition when it recommended – “recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each students, ... to promote each student’s holistic development ...”
- Last but not the least, Krishnamurti was against the quantitative assessment system which only judge children on the basis of rote memorization. He favoured the qualitative assessment system as it is done on daily basis and includes both quantifiable and non-quantifiable parameters. It is good to see that National Education Policy 2020 recommended to “shift from ... summative ... to one that is more regular and formative ... and tests higher order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity.”

14. Conclusion

It is evident from his philosophy of education and its reflections in National Education Policy 2020 discussed above that his vision is still alive and providing direction to the policy makers. Like Krishnamurti, the National Education Policy 2020 also aimed at developing holistic and integrated individuals capable of thinking critically and creatively, possessing sensitivity, kindness, empathy, courage and resilience, having a scientific attitude, with true values and other higher order skills. For bringing up such a holistic individual National Education Policy 2020, like Krishnamurti, considers an integrated Curriculum and Pedagogy, teachers having holistic outlook, Parents involvement and fearless school environment as essential. The reflections of Krishnamurti's thought in National Policy 2020 are indicators of the beginning of transformation. Such an education system seems very progressive and provides much space to the children to flower into goodness and happiness and wholeness of life.

References

1. Hunter, A. (1988). Seeds of Truth: J. Krishnamurti as Religious Teacher and Educator (Doctoral dissertation). University of Leeds, United Kingdom. Retrieved from http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/409/1/uk_bl_ethos_234816.pdf
2. Krishnamurti (2004). What does Freedom mean?. Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India.
3. Krishnamurti Official Website. Chapter 43- The Movement of the Skies, the Earth, Human Existence, is Indivisible. The Whole Movement of Life is Learning. Retrieved on 30/06/2020 from <https://jkrishnamurti.org/content/chapter-43-movement-skies-earth-human-existence-indivisible/education%20must%20not%20only%20be%20efficient%20in%20academic%20disciplines%20but%20must%20also%20explore%20the%20conditioning%20of%20human%20conduct> at 6:00 pm.
4. Krishnamurti, J. (1984). 2nd Question and Answer Meeting. Public Question & Answer 2 Saanen, Switzerland-24 July 1984. Retrieved on 19/05/2019 from <https://jkrishnamurti.org/content/2nd-question-answer-meeting-41> at 2:41 pm.
5. Krishnamurti, J. (2007). Foreword. Relationships: To Oneself, To Others, To the World. California: Krishnamurti Foundation of America.
6. Krishnamurti, J. (2007). Life Ahead. Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India.
7. _____.(2012). On Education. Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India.
8. _____.(2014). Education and the Significance of Life. Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India.
9. National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. Retrieved on 13/08/2020 from https://www.mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf at 4:00 pm.
10. Krishnamurti Official Website. Retrieved on 30/05/2019 from <https://jkrishnamurti.org/timeline-page> at 6:00 am.
11. Krishnamurti Official Website. Retrieved on 30/05/2019 from <https://www.kfionline.org/online-store/commentaries-on-living-1/> at 4:00 am.
12. Krishnamurti (1970). The Urgency of Change. Retrieved on 10/03/2018 from <http://www.jiddu-krishnamurti.net/en/the-urgency-of-change/1970-00-00-jiddu-krishnamurti-the-urgency-of-change-discipline> at 4:30 pm.