

Jiddu Krishnamurti's Philosophy of Education

Subrata Biswas
Ph.D , WBSET

ABSTRACT

Education is the backbone of a civil society. It gives a direction for holistic living. Education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge, technical, or otherwise, but understanding with sensitivity and intelligence, of the whole problem of living - in which is included death, love, sex, meditation, relationship, conflict, anger brutality and all the rest of it- that is the whole structure of human existence. In the writings and speeches of Jiddu. Krishnamurti, we find a great deal of reflections for enhancing and modifying the standards of education to build up a healthy society. For JK, the right kind of education is concerned with human freedom, which alone can bring about true co-operation with the whole. He is emphatic about the fact that freedom is not achieved through the pursuit of one's own aggrandizement and success. Freedom comes with self-knowledge, when the mind goes above and beyond the hindrances it has created for itself through craving its own security. The present study focus on the various philosophical stand point of Jiddu. Krishnamurti

KEYWORDS : Regimentation , Nationalism , Knowledge and Learning, Choice less Observation, Comparison and Competition

Introduction

Almost all contemporary Indian philosophers have shown a deep concern for the reconstruction of the system of education—as a whole and with particular reference to India. They have held that education is not merely learning a technique to earn a livelihood or acquiring literacy and knowledge to settle down in a profession. Education has a higher aim of awakening wisdom or supreme intelligence that transcends knowledge and intellect. The sole purpose of education is to create a new generation of human beings who can lay a firm foundation for a sustainable world devoid of crises like hunger, poverty, conflict, violence, and war. Education has to resolve human problems besides making scientific and technological discoveries and innovations for our material well-being.

Jiddu. Krishnamurti has been very emphatic about the idea that when we begin to understand the deep significance of human life, there is the possibility of true education. As a well-known radical thinker known internationally, JK has made significant contributions to the rational thinking and contributions to philosophy of education. Though not an academically trained scholar, he was a freelance thinker and left behind very deep impressions by critiquing the traditional way of thinking in many fields including that of education. His critique of the tradition and the logic, which includes prevalent practices and predilections, have made him very popular among the scholars and lay public alike. He said “I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. Again, I maintain that no organization can lead me to spirituality”

THE OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research work intends to bring out the implications of Philosophy of Education by analyzing the literature available on J. Krishnamurti. It also intends to study the contribution of JK especially that of his critique of the modern system of education and the way out envisaged by him. JK has outlined certain solutions especially that of the Philosophy of Life and the Social Implication of Education and one of the objectives of this thesis is to deal critically with this phenomenon. The other related areas are of education especially pertaining to student, parent, teacher, school curriculum, learning and teaching and environment issues. The overall objective of this paper is to evaluate the Philosophy of Education of JK in the backdrop of modern educational system in India and abroad.

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology adopted in this study is descriptive. The concepts have been systematically analysed with the help of documentary evidence drawn from the writings of Jiddu. Krishnamurti. The topic that has been taken up for exploration is based on JK's view on Education and hence his views serve as the basis for examining the ideals on education he expounds; and thus his writings for the primary sources of research for this thesis. Secondly, the books

and articles written on this form the secondary source material and the literature written on education which borrows his ideals and also deals with the peripheral topics from the tertiary data.

Education as Philosophy

To Krishnamurti (K. henceforth), there is no difference between philosophy and education since the aim of both is the same: to bring about a fundamental and instantaneous change in the individual and society by setting the mind absolutely and unconditionally free. What the philosopher teaches the elderly, the educator teaches the young. A true teacher is a philosopher who is not only knowledgeable but also wise. A philosopher loves truth, not ideas and theories. Philosophy is the understanding of life, holistically, directly, and immediately. It is living life not as conceived by thought but as it truly is. A true teacher is one who 'directs' the students to live life truly from the very beginning. She teaches them the art of living life unconditionally by keeping the mind ever free, fresh, and uncluttered by thought. To Krishnamurti, life is what is happening at this instant and not what thought has conceived it to be. It is inseparable from that which is taking place now. Education is exactly what the word 'philosophy' means—the love of truth and life. It is learning about the art of living in our daily life.

K. says that the human mind as we know it is deeply conditioned and contaminated by content put together by thought. Thought has divided and disintegrated the mind and made it narrow and old. Thought is by nature conditioned either by an object or by an idea. It is a 'materialistic' process which is the movement of the past; the response of memory which is never independent or free. It is finite, self-centered and self-isolating; self-contradictory, divisive, conflicting, measurable, and mechanical. So, the mind is necessarily of the nature of selfishness, division, contradiction and conflict. Thought may have brought about a civilization of scientific and technological advancement but it is also at the source of a society plagued by division, conflict, poverty, violence, and war. It renders life sorrowful, for sorrow is the urge for the repetition of the past, which is the process of thought. Thought cannot create a culture of true living with integration, peace and happiness which is possible only when the mind goes beyond thought and comprehends truth. Truth is the 'emptiness' of the mind, which 'is' only when thought 'is not'. Thought is 'something', which is conditioned, whereas truth is 'nothing', which is freedom. Right education therefore should not confine the student to the realm of thought and give it undue importance. Education is teaching students the nature and limitations of thought and helping them go beyond. It is enabling them to 'perceive' truth by emptying the mind of its fictitious content of ideas, beliefs, opinions, hopes, regrets, fears, conflict, and confusion, which are the manifestations of thought at the psychological level. Cultivating thought beyond the physical realm and allowing it to dominate the whole of the mind and life creates imbalance in life. Thought may condition the mind with information and knowledge to the extent necessary, but it neglects the vast field of one's being and the cosmos. Right education cultivates our whole being by giving the totality of our mind and heart a depth of understanding and beauty.

Present System of Education

K. contends that the existing system of education the world over is not aimed at creating a free and holistic human being and a sane society. On the contrary, it is geared up to deeply condition the student to the psychological structure of greed, ambition, and success. It is concerned with conforming the student to the social structure of the utterly materialistic values of wealth, power, and prestige, which are the products of thought. Parents, teachers, and educationists are shaping students according to their own idiosyncrasies, imposing their ideas and ideals on them. They are dehumanizing the young and reducing them to inauthentic human beings. Conditioning to a pattern, whether religious, economic, or political, thwarts inward flowering and the inborn aptitude to discover the right vocation and the 'way' of life the student truly loves. Conditioning is a barrier to the fundamental change of realizing goodness, the urgency of which the educators seem totally oblivious of. The society, culture, and environment in which the young have been brought up, are used to condition them to a particular pattern. Conditioning, conformity, and identification divide the student 'within' and the world 'without'; they divide the humanity and the world into various kinds of groups and build walls of resistance between them. Living in groups with labels such as rich and poor, Indians and Americans, Hindus and Muslims, results in conflict, violence, and bloody wars. Nationalism, for instance, justifies homicide, the greatest evil of killing each other with impunity. Nationalism coupled with patriotism is, in fact, glorified tribalism. Organized religion too conditions the mind to beliefs and symbols in the name of God, leading to division and strife. Through the process of education, we have advanced very far technologically but psychologically we are still very primitive, fighting and destroying one another. We are still at the state of tribal conflict despite our beliefs, ideals, idols, and nationalities. Right education has to create individuals who are neither Hindus nor Muslims, neither Indians nor Americans, neither poor nor rich but integrated beings who are not fragmented 'within' and 'without'.

The present system of education is geared solely to the acquisition of knowledge—technological, social, and religious. It is primarily interested in turning out knowledgeable people and specialists in various fields. It focuses on sharpening the intellect and neglects the understanding of mind and life in all their aspects. Right education, according to K., is a process of self-knowing, self-understanding, and self-discovery. It teaches the student to learn about the workings of the mind, its conditioning, prejudices, fears, likes, and dislikes. It does not limit students to mastering a technique and be confined to a particular corner of life but enables them to comprehend with sensitivity the whole problem of living, which includes relationships, love, sex, anger, fear, death, and so on. The system of education as we know it, is a process of programming the student's mind like a computer to acquire knowledge and apply it mechanically. It emphasizes learning from books by rote. True education implies inculcation of an attitude of discovery by enquiry and observation. It is the 'negative' process of questioning and finding out the truth of 'what is' and understanding truth as truth, false as false, and truth in falsity. It is a critical study of books without rejecting or accepting them dogmatically. It is not merely memorizing facts from books, but also understanding what the books say and assessing the truth or falsity of that.

Knowledge and Learning

Distinguishing between learning and knowledge, K. says that accumulation of knowledge is a process of time and thought. It burdens the mind and makes it mediocre and dull. Apart from factual knowledge, which is absolutely necessary for our physical existence, psychological knowledge is responsible for the 'me', the pride, the prejudice, the confusion, the conflict, violence, and war. Learning is the observation of 'what is' without knowledge and thought. It is seeing 'what is' directly and as it exactly is. It is the understanding of facts with a mind that is empty and fresh. Learning is possible only when there is no accumulation. An acquisitive mind is incomplete and limited and is unable to approach life adequately and fully. Learning without accumulation is of great significance, for it reveals the truth of 'what is', and renders life as a whole open and infinite. K. asserts that when knowledge becomes all important, learning ceases to be. The more I add knowledge the more assured and dull the mind becomes and ceases to learn. Accumulated knowledge dictates the conduct of life and therefore limits experience, unlike learning which is limitless.

K. decries disciplining the student in the sense of regimentation. Discipline compels the student to do what she does not love to do and forces the student to adapt to the so-called ideals and ideas of her parents and educators. Discipline is the conditioning and controlling of the student who inwardly disintegrates. It involves suppression, resistance, and opposition. It is a barrier to the understanding of inner disorder. Imposition of an outward order cannot bring about integration 'within'. The outward order of discipline is superficial and incomplete since it is put together by thought, which can never grasp true order. Allowed to work beyond the biological realm, thought goes astray. All its ideals and ideas, including religion and God, are the source of confusion and chaos. That is why the student is disorderly despite conforming to the patterns of discipline. Right education has to enable the student to observe, understand, and end inner disorder. Disorder 'within' ceases to be only when it is observed without choice. Ending of inner disorder is the beginning of true order, that is, love. The student in whom love is created, will never do anything wrong. She loves what she does and does what she loves. She does what is right irrespective of the authority of external discipline. She does not become wayward even in the absence of external control. It is love that leads to right action and brings order in the world. K. admits of discipline in its true sense of constant learning about oneself without accumulation of opinions and conclusions. True discipline is not subjugation but the diligence of actively observing oneself without sinking into an imitative existence. A truly disciplined mind is never negligent but ever vigilant and diligent. It feels responsibility towards all its actions and its environment. K. observes that the word 'discipline' comes from the word 'disciple' which means not to conform or rebel, but to learn about one's own background and limitations and go beyond them.

Comparison and Competition

K. is against comparison and competition in education, for they destroy the student's receptivity to truth and creativity. They are a hindrance to inward flowering and harmonious relationships. The comparative and competitive approach involves hostility, struggle, and conflict. Comparing and asking a 'dull' student to compete with the so-called clever one is cruelty. Examinations, rewards, and punishments are the ultimate expressions of comparison. Comparison causes fear in the student and acts as a barrier to clear understanding. Fear experienced during one's student days persists through life and stunts the natural growth of one's intelligence. The so-called dull student has to be allowed to overcome one's limitations by understanding it instead of by comparing oneself with others. K. observes that grading and comparing students and getting them to compete against one another breeds fear that plagues them through the rest of their lives. The present system of education encourages the student in the petty pursuit of ambition. An ambitious mind is brutal in its effort to achieve the ends it is motivated towards, ridden with

constant conflict and resistance. It is a slave to self-aggrandizement and its activities are self-enclosing, greedy, envious, and insensitive. To be ambitious implies to be successful and the pleasure of success carries within itself the pain of failure. The sense of success, like ambition, makes the student self-centered and wicked. The mind aiming at success may go to any extent to achieve its goals. It may adopt any means and mould the 'what is' to its likes and dislikes. Success in any form, political or religious, art or business, is brutal. To be successful implies being ruthless. Right education should enable the student to overcome the urge to blindly pursue ambition and success by revealing their true nature. It should make the student put an end to self-centered activity and inculcate the intelligence of acting without the centre, the 'me'. Action with the centre is motivated, end-oriented, and mechanical, whereas action sans the centre is devoid of ambition and success and therefore is creative. It is harmonious, for it is not dictated by psychological pressure and environmental demands.

Intelligence and Awareness

K. contends that the existing system of education is destroying the natural intelligence of the body, the physical organism. The intelligence of the body enables the senses to function in harmony but it is distorted when thought dominates the body. Thought with its hopes, desires, and pleasures, constricts energy and pits the senses against one another. It manipulates energy and directs it into the groove of the 'self'. The student in whom thought is dominant over the body may find delight in listening to great music and yet be insensitive to other sensations. He may have sensitivity to taste but be wholly insensitive to delicate colours, subtle smells, or touch. Right education awakens in the student the intelligence of the body, enabling it to respond with all the senses, simultaneously and with the same intensity. The teacher has to point out how thought interferes in the harmonious functioning of the senses and the organism as a whole. In fact, there is no division of the senses, sensations, and the body. They form a single organism and a movement that is holistic. The total and choice less awareness of the fragmentation brought about by thought releases the energy, which is the intelligence of the body. The intelligence of the body is part of the intelligent mind, which is aware of the finitude of thought. Only the intelligent mind has an intelligent body.

K. lays the utmost emphasis on exposing the student to nature and art.

Appreciating nature and art in all its forms creates in the student a sense of beauty, which forms the basis for the right relationship devoid of attachment, detachment, and expectation. The right relationship is without sense of possession, likes, and dislikes and is not self-centered or self-assertive. To be rightly related is to respond accurately, which means to have great care. Beauty, like love, is without the centre, the 'me'. To live is to be related and there can be no (right) relationship to anything if there is no (right) feeling for beauty, a response to nature, to music and art; a highly developed aesthetic sense is the sinequanon for the art of living, living without division and conflict.

K. holds that right education should create in the student an intelligent mind with love and compassion, including both its movements—the scientific and the religious. The scientific movement is factual and based on thought and knowledge. It explores the world of matter through instrumental and experimental reason. Betterment of our biological survival is its concern; whereas, the religious movement is of truth which is beyond thought and knowledge. It is of the mind, which is empty, holistic, does not belong to any organized religion, and has nothing to do with belief and dogma. To be truly religious is to live by truth in actuality. Religious life is the operation of truth in the world of reality. It is the manifestation of the emptiness of the mind in daily living. On its own the scientific movement creates havoc in life. So the scientific movement should be rooted in religious movement. The religious spirit of the intelligent mind reveals the limitations of thought and knowledge that prevent the mind from entering the realm beyond their purview. The religious spirit confines thought and knowledge strictly to the physical realm and prevents them from cluttering the mind with prejudices, opinions, and conclusions in the name of religion. True spirituality implies the sacredness of keeping the mind empty of all content, except the factual knowledge essential for our biological well-being. To be spiritual is to have a mind which is absolutely and unconditionally free. When there is true freedom, truth and love guide thought and knowledge and not vice versa. Truth and love as invented by thought and knowledge are false and problematic.

Choice less Observation

According to K. life has wider significance than merely acquiring knowledge and wealth through thought. It has a purpose higher than the mere securing of a degree, a job, and 'settling down' in life. To be efficient at a certain profession is necessary but not sufficient. Fulfillment of life is living in freedom and peace 'within' and 'without'. Through education, K. aims at creating the individual who is not only knowledgeable and efficient but also free from division, conflict, fear, anxiety, jealousy, violence, and so on. He aims at bringing about a world devoid of man-made problems like division, war, poverty, injustice, exploitation, and misery. He hopes that right education can bring about a new world order in which the resources of the earth are shared by all humanity and not monopolized by a few. The new world order presupposes a human being with a new mind. The crisis in the world is

a spectacular manifestation of the crisis in consciousness. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a fundamental transformation of the consciousness of the individual. K. does not prescribe any method as a means of transformation, for method implies the continuation of the same old mind. Methods can only modify the mind but cannot change it radically. It is not a system or any practice but the clarity of perception that brings about a radical transformation. Choice less observation and understanding of oneself and the world is the only 'way' towards change. Realization of truth is timeless and pathless.

The student should be taught to observe and understand the mind as a whole without conforming to any method, system, religion, or sect. An unconditional and absolute approach alone can lead one to the truth, which is also unconditional and absolute. The means is not different from the end as each determines the other. A radical change of the mind comes about when one realizes the truth that the means and the end, the observer and the observed, are one and the same. It is not thought or intellect but insight that transforms the mind. Insight occurs when the mind is completely 'still' without any movement of thought. It happens when fragmentary thought is silent. Understanding of this truth without any choice is sufficient to realize the absolute and unconditional freedom of the mind. To K. insight is not the analytical and deductive process of thought, comprising time and memory, but instantaneous perception without the perceiver. It is from this insight that the action of supreme intelligence takes place. Insight is intelligence with its beauty and love. They are inseparable, one and the same. The intelligent mind is the whole and the most sacred and it uses thought and knowledge merely as tools for survival.

Conclusion

To conclude, K. holds that teachers as well as parents have a great role and responsibility in educating children the right way and bringing about a new generation of human beings. Parents have to truly love their children and not seek to fulfil their desires and ambitions vicariously through their offspring. Children are not psychological extensions of their parents but are independent unique beings. They should be allowed to grow and flower in real freedom, happiness, and goodness. K. is one with Khalil Gibran in observing that our children are not our children but the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself; they come through us and not from us. Parents have to give them their love but not their thoughts. Teachers have to transform themselves before attempting to transform the students. It is not enough if teachers impart knowledge to their students. They should understand the holistic truth and help students comprehend it. They should live as human beings without images and labels and be 'alone' without any identification. To be alone means to be undivided; to be one with all. It means that the free or an intelligent mind does not conform to any idea or an ideology, for it is an integrated or holistic and a harmonious mind. Unless the teachers are philosophers in the sense of being wise and holistic, education cannot accomplish the task of changing society fundamentally by changing the individual radically. Educating the educators—teachers and parents—is the primary and urgent need of the hour. An entirely new kind of approach to education is indispensable for the establishment of a world order of peaceful coexistence of all species, by achieving the goals of sustainable development.

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