



TAT Profile: J. Krishnamurti

TAT Profiles are a guide to the life and thought of individuals, past and present, who have contributed to the advancement of human awareness.

J. Krishnamurti inevitably startles those who listen to tapes of his lectures and question-and-answer sessions. Even after reading some of his innumerable books and learning his approach to mental clarity and spiritual knowledge is unflinchingly iconoclastic, one is still shocked into a self-appraising in awareness upon hearing a tone of sharp derision in the voice of a universally acknowledged spiritual teacher whose words often belie a profound compassion for suffering humanity. Krishnamurti is a paradox: critical and kind, a guide who leads by disorienting people from their accustomed markings, he is an authority by the sheer force of his teaching, though he rejects all claims to authority by lineage or otherwise.

The Life of Krishnamurti

According to the Theosophical Society an incarnation of a higher deity appears on the earth when needed to bring a message of spiritual truth to mankind. Buddha and Christ are considered to be manifestations of these incarnations. Helena Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, announced in 1875 that the reason for the Society's existence was to prepare humanity for the coming of the new "World Teacher" as the time was ripe. One of the higher deities known collectively as "Masters" would take possession of a human form which had been properly prepared for the event. Thus, a "vehicle" was needed.

In 1895 in a town near Madras, India, the eighth child of a Brahmin family was born and named Krishnamurti in honor of Krishna, the Hindu deity, also an eighth child. A local astrologer

predicted the child would grow up to be a great and wonderful man. It did not seem this prophecy would come to pass as the boy was considered dim-witted and lazy by his school instructors. The only qualities that stood out about him aside from his apparent stupidity were his generous nature and a marked clairvoyant ability.

When Krishnamurti was fourteen he was "discovered" by Charles W. Leadbeater, who along with Annie Besant had taken over the Theosophical Society after the death of Blavatsky. The Theosophists had a branch of their organization at Adyar, India, and as Krishnamurti's father worked for the Society it was inevitable that the boy would come in contact with them. Leadbeater, observing the boy playing along a beach with his younger brother, Nityananda, claimed he had the most astounding aura (the energy field around the human body), he had ever seen, and that this boy was to be the vehicle for the "World Teacher." Krishnamurti, along with his brother who had a lesser aura, were literally taken from their father and their spiritual training begun.

During the following years, "Krishna" and "Nitya" were steeped in the occult and esoteric philosophies. Vegetarians from birth, they were instructed in physical conditioning, yoga, meditation, languages and their coming roles when the World Teacher arrived. Intercontinental travel was very much a part of their young lives as they were whisked back and forth between India, England, France and California.

Krishna supposedly received direct instruction from the Masters themselves on an astral plane, and the teachings he was given were presented to the Society in the form of booklets and lectures, the lectures being particularly uncomfortable for the boy as he was shy and not an effective speaker.

From early childhood on, Krishna had been extremely close to his brother Nitya, and the bond between them grew tighter as they were subjected together to strange environments and people. Nitya, who had a worldly, sharp mind, protected Krishna who was often bewildered by the happenings around him.

In 1922 Krishnamurti had the experience referred to as cosmic consciousness or samadhi, at which time he claimed that "the fountain of Truth has been revealed to me and the darkness dispersed." Simultaneously with this began a series of physical symptoms which Krishnamurti called "the process." This was looked upon by Leadbeater and Besant as the awakening of kundalini, an energy force in the spine which can yield spiritual results. Krishna suffered pain in his head and neck during this period, and was given to seeing visions, lights and other phenomena. Though some suffering was expected during the awakening of kundalini, Krishna's apparent agony was a puzzle to those around him.

Krishnamurti was considered the head of the main esoteric branch of the Theosophical Society known as the Order of the Star. His work with them continued until 1925 when his brother Nitya suddenly sickened and died. This was a tremendous shock to Krishna as Nitya was to play a part in the Master's plan, and his death left what he had been taught in the past, as well as the entire future open to question.

Shortly thereafter a change was noticed in Krishna's lectures. His speaking had now grown dynamic and electrifying and many believed the World Teacher had come at last. However, over the next few years Krishnamurti began shocking the Theosophists by declaring that the Masters were only "incidents" and questioning his own position as World Teacher until in 1929 he officially disbanded the Order of the Star claiming he had no disciples and that "truth is a pathless land."

In 1931, while in the state of samadhi again, Krishnamurti's memory of the past left him and a permanent state of ecstatic consciousness seemed to set in. It was after this that Krishnamurti struck out on his own to "set men absolutely, unconditionally free."

The following years of his life were spent lecturing and teaching at various places around the world. The "process" that began in 1922 has always been with him and he still suffers physically though he gives no explanation for this. He has acquired a world-wide following over the years, though he himself claims to have no disciples. At eighty-three years old his life has been one of considerable accomplishment. As one of his prime concerns is education of the young, several educational centers have been established by him at different points on the globe. He still continues to give talks every year in California, England, India and Switzerland. He has appeared in interviews on television, and many books, records and tapes have been published bearing his teachings.

As Krishnamurti's life story is very complex and involved, only the basic fabric has been presented here. An excellent biography of his life, from which this account has been taken, is found in *Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening*, by Mary Lutyens.

Krishnamurti's Philosophy

Perhaps the most striking thing about Krishnamurti's life is that he was trained to be the World Teacher, disavowed the position, then became a world teacher. His teaching itself is paradoxical since he maintains he is not an authority yet his style of speech demonstrates clearly that he feels he knows something.

Questions about enlightenment or the state of absoluteness or oneness with God sometimes crop up in his public talks. Krishnamurti has developed a neat ability to maneuver out of discussing the subject if it pertains to him. That he is enlightened seems to be taken for granted by most people, his enlightenment having occurred after the death of his brother Nitya. However, if the whole thrust of his message is to get man to that state of unconditioned, psychological freedom that is synonymous with enlightenment, he gives no more concrete steps toward this other than to find truth within yourself. Any more instruction than this is sketchy at best. For someone who has had as thorough a training in esoteric and occult knowledge as Krishnamurti, one would expect something more definite in working toward self-realization. He himself says it takes a tremendous amount of energy to find the Truth, and he talks about the arduousness of it, yet he offers no method of energy building or short-cuts to the arduousness, if there are any. He avoids the esoteric or occult almost entirely in his lectures, when in fact his early training probably had much to do with his enlightenment. He illustrates his opinion of the occult in Truth and

Actuality: "There are now all over America, and in Europe, various groups trying to awaken their little energy called Kundalini. You have heard about all this, haven't you? And there are groups practicing it. I saw one group on television where a man was teaching them how to awaken Kundalini, that energy, doing all kinds of tricks with all kinds of words and gestures - which all becomes so utterly meaningless and absurd. And there is apparently such an awakening, which I won't go into, because it is much too complex and probably it is not necessary or relevant."

His lectures before he dissolved the Order of the Star were more esoteric and colorful than they have been since (see *The Years of Awakening*). His present approach is more psychological or sociological. Perhaps a reason for this is the concept of the esoteric school itself. It is said that Nature has a way of tracking down those blatant dabblers in Her mysteries and destroying them. Having made the trip to the Absolute, Krishnamurti surely knows what is most effective in getting there, considering his background. Yet to try and actively teach this on a large scale would undoubtedly meet with criticism and opposition if the approach were more esoteric than psychological. The approach he has used, while low-key in the esoteric sense, has permitted so much of his teaching to be disseminated that it is safe to say that Krishnamurti has his place in history. Those who study his works might find a stepping-stone to something more substantial if they are shrewd enough. And, with the publishing of his biography at his request, which contains more esotericism than you'll ever find in his other books, one might well wonder if Krishnamurti isn't giving more hints at a spiritual direction under the guise of public demand for his biography (which would help his school fund) or, using himself to exemplify his teachings about conditioning and its consequences. Either way, the esoteric elements in his biography stand out clearly.

As he is getting on in years, and his position is more or less secure, Krishnamurti does offer occasional bits of the occult in *Truth and Actuality*: "And in this process of meditation there are all kinds of powers that come into being: one becomes clairvoyant, the body becomes extraordinarily sensitive. Now clairvoyance, healing, thought transference and so on, become totally unimportant; all the occult powers become so totally irrelevant, and when you pursue those you are pursuing something that will ultimately lead to illusion."

The basic teachings as they stand are more accessible to people without any occult knowledge. Trying to break Krishnamurti's teaching into categories is inadequate because there is no clear-cut definition to most of them, and they all interrelate. He has a knack for saying the same thing in one hundred different ways; therefore his books are all essentially the same, the only change being in style and form. If one book does not strike home, another may.

The Role of the Teacher - In keeping with his life, Krishnamurti claims the teacher can only point out the way and nothing more. He thoroughly denounces all gurus, saints and saviours.

Thought, Fear and Conditioning - These three constitute the core subjects of Krishnamurti's talks which he consistently hammers his audience with. He asks, "Can the mind be perfectly still without any movement of thought whatsoever?" It is thought, he claims, which creates the thinker, the "I." Thought is both mechanical and conditioned, and as a result we as humans are mechanical and conditioned. It is our conditioning especially which keeps us wrapped up in fears and illusions. The task he presents us with is seeing through our conditionings, and trying to find

out if thought can come about only when it is needed. It is our concepts, value judgments, conditionings, in a word, our thoughts, which keep us from seeing that which is truth and Truth.

Inner Revolution - In dealing with his audience in a sociological way, Krishnamurti points out the futility of all external revolutions, political upheavals or movements. The only revolution is an inner revolution which is instantaneous and transforms the entire being of the person who undergoes it. This simplifies down to trying to change yourself instead of the world.

Intelligence, Order and Energy - These might be considered the second "big three." Intelligence is not thought. Intelligence is that moment of understanding that comes between thoughts. It can be likened to intuitive perception. A person may have a high native ability to do mathematics, write well, or memorize book knowledge, but these are mechanical functions. Intelligence is not mechanical. It is a flash of insight, the seeing of what is. With intelligence comes choiceless awareness. Only a chaotic mind has to struggle with choice. When there is no choice there is order. When there is order there is abundant energy as energy-wasting conflict over choice has ceased.

Time and Space - Time does not exist apart from space nor space from time. It is the gulf between the observer and that which is observed. When there is seeing without the observer or the center, time and space cease to exist as there is no reference or "I." Thought functions in the realm of time and space. When there is no thought, there is no observer, therefore no time or space.

Beauty - Beauty is the seeing of what is. Out of this comes order, discipline and virtue, which are beauty.

Silence - There can be no silence as long as there is a seeker. Silence is the difference between an active mind and a preoccupied mind. The preoccupied mind is always mulling over things, concerned with comparison, choice and its attendant wastage of energy. An active mind is silent, aware, choiceless.

God, the Sacred, Religion and Meditation - God and the Sacred are synonymous, being that state which is beyond time and measure. For that state to come into being the mind must be perfectly still. Religion is that seeking to find out what Truth and reality are, and if there is a state of mind that is timeless. Meditation, according to Krishnamurti, is not the popular tranquilizer that most people call to mind, but trying to see if there is an end to knowledge, therefore freedom from the known.

Truth and Reality - Reality and truth are two separate things. Thought operates in the domain of reality. Our reality can be a projection of thought. Reality can be conditioned. Thought processes are the limitation of reality; therefore you cannot go through reality to come to truth. Reality is contained within truth. Truth is not conditioned or dependent on things. Truth is not [sic]

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contained within truth. Truth is not conditioned or dependent on things. Truth is a living thing. A whole, sane man, says Krishnamurti, is truth, that which is.

A synthesis of Krishnamurti's views comes down to: can we see through our conditionings and in so doing quiet the mind to the point that there is a seeing of what is, directly, without interpretation? This is the same as the Zen view of stopping the mind to reach Satori. As Robert Powell has said, "...it is Krishnamurti's great merit to have more strongly emphasized than anyone the essential requirement of passivity: the awareness must be completely without any form of evaluation to be of value; otherwise it becomes merely another technique of introspection or self-analysis."

Bibliography

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- Other recommended reading by J. Krishnamurti: *Commentaries on Living I, II, III; The Impossible Question; Think on These Things; The Only Revolution; The Flight of the Eagle; You Are the World.*

For more information, visit the Krishnamurti Foundation of America at www.kfa.org.