

“It is the Educator who needs Educating”

—J. Krishnamurti

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

We are apt to feel, in the cut & press of daily life and in the fulfilment of our responsibilities to the school and to its students, that our lives are caught up in minutiae: ongoing lesson preparation, correction of papers, assessment, examinations. But it behoves us at this juncture in the history of the schools—and twenty years after the death of their founder—to critically examine what we are doing and to ask that most fundamental of questions: Is the educator being educated?

When, back in the 1980s, the editor of the *Newsletter of the Krishnamurti Schools*—the modest precursor to the current Journal—asked Krishnamurti for a title, he suggested, “Schools—leisure.” Not only does this correspond to the etymology of the word (Greek *scholē* = leisure, spare time, ease), it also connotes a definition of learning not as something one does with an end in view, but as something that occurs within the space of leisure, the activity of free minds. The school might be a place, as he himself suggested, with some writing, others studying and discussing, for when this happens a different atmosphere is generated. From the outset, then, Krishnamurti’s definition—and probably deliberately he left it loose—was that of a community, adult & student, living & learning together not just academically, but as mirrors to one another, examining the psyche. Clearly such a definition, however loose, sheds fresh light on the role of the educator—defining it, in fact, anew. And, perhaps because this redefinition is so radical, we have failed to grasp its implications.

Perhaps, for instance, we subscribe too easily to the notion that the psyche will take care of itself, that the undisclosed & unresolved sources of conflict will somehow dissipate if we “get on with the job.” But, what *is* the job exactly? Is it to perpetuate the norms of society and, by our own complicity, strengthen them? Is it not rather, through self-inquiry, to examine & challenge the basis of those norms and to free ourselves from their enslavement? Do we realise in our heart-of-hearts what is at stake? Or, perhaps we feel we have too much to do, which unfortunately is the case with so many teachers. Then the moment of silence or self-inquiry is passed over, and the inexorable treadmill, with its weight of centuries, pushes us round on its predetermined course. We do not seem to notice, when this happens, what goes a-begging—the tragedy of it.

What, then, *can* we do? The voice of the treadmill says, “No time, no time.” We have to find a different solution—not more of the same, but a different point of entry. The school, therefore, as a place of leisure, a living/ learning community.

The first principal of one of our schools once said, “You teach with what you know, you educate with what you are.” This puts in place and highlights the redefinition. We take it for granted that knowledge increases with experience and that, the older we get, the more we accumulate. All well & good so far as teaching is concerned, but what about our role as educators? Is there an equivalent inward deepening, a mature comprehension of the subtle heart of things? Or do we remain stubbornly stuck in thought-feeling as the only, because tangible, field of endeavour? Do we even ask ourselves such questions, or are we already committed, because of our non-questioning, to what one modern author calls a “thought-tormented world”? Now is the time to open up that box.

Then again, perhaps we are reluctant to countenance the revolution that the teachings imply. We would rather draw a hazy continuum through Rousseau, Froebel, Montessori, A. S. Neill, even Indian independence, than face the radical departure the teachings announce from all

tradition and previous notions of freedom. This is not to denigrate the work of other educational pioneers—far from it—simply to state in plain & simple terms the specificity & originality of Krishnamurti’s work both as a pedagogue and as a religious teacher. For, surely, the combination is unique. No other religious teacher of world stature has interested himself so consistently & minutely with the painstaking task of educating the young; at the same time, no educator of note has been—or even claimed to be—an original religious teacher. It is the nexus that scares us, more than anything. Nevertheless, the nexus is there, and the demands of the religious teacher as well as the pedagogue need to be met—or, at least, faced.

It is the religious dimension which is key. When another of our principals asked Krishnamurti what was the purpose of these schools, he replied: To generate a global outlook, to care for the environment & human beings in relationship, and to cultivate the religious mind. If, to an extent, we have succeeded in the first two, it is to the third of these purposes that we must turn. For, the education of the educator is essentially a religious matter. In these schools, as perhaps in no others, this is the defining quality; their atmosphere of affection, relaxedness and rigour conveys the essence of the religious spirit. But, with this as a base, much more can be done.

Which brings us back to the educator. How does the educator see him/ herself? Is he still, to all intents & purposes, the teacher of old, the “one who knows”?—which was certainly the case a hundred years ago. But, living as we do in the “global village,” surely our situation has changed: the teacher is no longer “out in front,” dispensing information to ignorant charges; he is “in among” them in the ambit of their learning, in many ways—given the riches of cyberspace—no more knowledgeable than they are. We have been slow to learn from this dramatic turnabout; nonetheless, the call is upon us. It involves a radical reassessment of who the educator is and what he/ she is about. It is a shift from the *what* to the *how* of learning.

Many things are implied in it. One is the diminution of authority. Since knowledge is now universal & ubiquitous, the investment of authority in the “one who knows”—the priest, the mullah, the guru, the teacher—collapses, at the level of knowledge. In other words, the teacher must reinvent himself, become a democrat rather than an autocrat, and acknowledge that in the realm of the psyche he/ she is a learner with other learners, the students. This does not mean he pleads ignorance, which is another way of shirking responsibility, but that he seeks & finds ways of deepening awareness—initially, perhaps, within the immediate subject area—with a view to nourishing that inwardness which is the seed of flowering and the ground of freedom. Indeed, his love for, and immersion in, the subject already gives a taste of that inchoate state.

Seemingly small, the shift is monumental because the adult is no longer the “one who knows”: he has become the “one who learns,” along with others; it is the shift from instruction to participation. This is the second implication. Instruction may pass from A to B, but participation/ investigation is a work in common: it is the work of common consciousness. It is the most democratic of endeavours and it lies at the heart of Krishnamurti’s teachings. We do not inquire for ourselves alone, but in our inquiry/ investigation widen the borders and plumb the depths not just of thought-feeling, but of its generative matrix. It becomes the inquiry of consciousness in & for itself and thus is no longer strictly personal. This is the beginning of inwardness.

It is a change of attitude that is most called for, a challenging of well-established grooves. That it can be done, there is no doubt; whether it will be done is a different matter. Hence, the Teacher Learning Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation India. The centre exists to galvanise change, to support the teacher in the classroom situation and to provide, by means of subject studies, a process of creative learning & reflection facilitating access to largely unexplored terrain. It is a raising of the level of the whole endeavour. It seeks to bring about a quickening of understanding of the role of the educator for him/ herself, the relationship between the educator & the student, and the interface between the teacher & the subject. More than these, it seeks to establish the school as a place of *adult learning*, where the learning of educators for themselves

and with each other takes an equal place with the learning of/ with students. Obviously, in the general run of things, there cannot be an equal allocation of time, but in the context of a residential Teacher Education Program this is eminently feasible and highly desirable. It sets the tone for the future engagement of young teachers and militates against the “treadmill syndrome.” Even in the more workaday context, however, time can and must be set aside for this: for educators to explore on their own and with each other. It need not be a vast amount of time—in any event, an unrealistic proposition—but it must be in the forefront of the educator’s mind if this indispensable transition is to be effected. For it is here, of course, that priorities are set, and if the educator is not himself on fire, no amount of flame-fanning will do the trick.

The KFI Teacher Learning Centre is the resource created to maximise these possibilities. Its thinking & its direction are clear, and many of its “building blocks” are in place. Extensive documentation is at hand, including original work in subject areas supplied by teachers with the vital weft of inquiry-based learning and subject expertise. A substantial library has been generated, with many approaches and educators represented, including critics of “education as a system” like Ivan Illich & Noam Chomsky. A wide-ranging program of workshops & seminars has been carried through and is projected for the future. In addition, to help teachers with the necessary task of wedding the teachings to a practicable pedagogy, TLC faculty will shortly bring out a *Teacher Education Manual*.* The intention of the manual is to strengthen & intensify the educator’s understanding of his/ her role within the school, as well as—via its short, targeted extracts—opening the door to that inner world which, for most of us, remains sealed & guarded.

The rich, life-nourishing pastures await, but we constantly ignore their invitation. We say we are too busy. Too busy for what? Our life is over in the blinking of an eye. But, even this doesn’t matter too much. Whether we start with the external witnessing of all the violence & mayhem in the world or from the sense of our own inner turbulence & turmoil, it is the very witnessing, the *seeing*, that counts. At a time when schools throughout the world—like the world itself—are in crisis, we must for our own benefit, and the benefit of the world, move into the next phase of our endeavour. The crisis—both threat & challenge—is there. Nor are we merely talking to ourselves. In India, in particular, many avenues of contact are opening up, which means that the scope & impact of the teachings could be immensely greater than it is today. Naturally, however, we must begin with ourselves for it is we who enjoy the immense good fortune of living & working in a privileged environment.

This whole “shift of gears” involves a new ethos—new for most of the schools, at least—away from the “leadership of the one or the few” towards the full participation of all. This increases, not diminishes, responsibility. At the same time it is a dramatic turnaround, and the implications of it are huge. Initially, however, we must all move forward to occupy the “empty space” of modern consciousness. This is the Waste Land we have inherited and, if anything, it is emptier than a hundred years ago. But we do have a remedy, we have good medicine in plenty; we can build on the strengths that we already have. We may even, perhaps, look forward to the day when the inner work will be so well established that the outer will begin to take care of itself—“without effort,” as Krishnaji said—and what now seems sometimes impossible will be the natural order of daily life.

* Now made available, courtesy of KFI.

