

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Legacy

Born into a Brahmin family in 1895, Jiddu Krishnamurti was an important man. His words capture many readers and listeners like that of a modern day God-man or Messiah. Numerous parallels to Hinduism and Buddhism are evident in his life even though he does not follow the religious values they have set in place. An example of these parallels can be seen in his renunciation of all statuses given to him by different people over his 91 years of life. The term *samnyasin* refers to the final stage in one's life where a renunciation of all things occurs (Rodrigues 2006:357). This notion of *samnyasin* is akin to what Krishnamurti embodied. Furthermore, even though he would eventually renounce all religions (and even systems of learning) his Hindu background laid the seed of the life he was to lead. When Krishnamurti (or K as he and many others called him) was just one day old, a local astrologer, Kumara Shrowthulu, told K's father that his new son would be a great man - encountering many obstacles on his way to becoming a great Teacher (Jayakar 16). His importance was, prophetically speaking, imminent.

Most of the books he has written are taken from oral lectures he gave throughout the world. The body of work he left behind is enormous with tremendous amounts of audio and visual materials available on the internet. A quick internet search reveals much of his body of work. Many different books can be obtained from any major retailer and many of the audio/visual resources available come from institutions bearing his name [an international website that offers audio recordings from 1966 to 1985 and a catalogue of video resources dating as far back as 1968 can be found at www.jkrishnamurti.org]. Along with the plethora of web-resources, many Krishnamurti foundations are still in existence. Foundations representing K

are located in Spain, England, the United States, and Britain. In addition, Krishnamurti schools are also open in India, the United States, and Britain. Separately there are 42 countries worldwide that have autonomous committees in place sharing resources, transcribing books, and lecturing on audio/visual presentations they prepare with materials from Krishnamurti [see www.jkrishnamurti.org]. But to reaffirm, the background he was born into is seemingly causal towards the path he chose to lead his life.

Biography

Born in Madanapelle, South India, Jiddu Krishnamurti was the eighth child born to Jiddu Narianiah (father) and Sanjeevamma (mother). At 12:30 am on May 12, 1895 Krishnamurti was born in the *puja* room of his parent's home. This room is an unusual place to birth a child as the room was to be pure and unpolluted in order to worship the household gods (*gryha devatas*) (Jayakar 16). The room was made auspicious by implementing Puspa (fresh flowers) and Dhupa (incense) and it could only be entered after a ritual bath and changing into clean clothes (Jayakar 16). Pupul Jayakar (1986) also states that birth, death, and the menstrual cycle are all ways of obtaining ritual pollution, thus, it is worthy to note that having a child born in the *puja* room is a strange occurrence. It is believed his mother, who was thought of as psychic, knew of K's impending future through visions she had, otherwise she would not "have challenged the gods" by having her baby in this room (Jayakar 16).

As a child K was constantly sick, suffering frequent episodes of malaria which at one point kept him away from school for one year and when at school his "vagueness, few words, lack of interest in worldly affairs, and eyes that glazed out at the world, seeing beyond horizons" were thought of as some form of mental retardation by his teacher (Jayakar 18). Additionally, Mary Lutyens (2003) wrote in the original foreword of *Krishnamurti's Notebook* about a

“spiritual experience” K went through in 1922 that was followed by years of constant spine and head pain. Krishnamurti’s teacher felt he had some sort of a handicap. However, Charles Webster Leadbeater didn’t quite see the same thing. When he saw K playing with the other children he saw the boy who was to become a great spiritual teacher (Jayakar 24). Leadbeater met K four years after the death of his mother Sanjeevamma and what struck him about Krishnamurti was his kindness, or the unselfishness he exhumed when playing with the other children (Rodrigues 1990:9). Charles Webster Leadbeater was a European man in the Theosophical Society who would bring K to meet Annie Besant (the newly appointed president of the Society) by the end of 1909 (Jayakar 29).

The Theosophical Society was: “Based on the tenets of a universal brotherhood of humanity which sought to study ancient wisdom and to explore the hidden mysteries of nature and the latent powers of man. It established an occult hierarchy drawing from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, in particular the Tibetan tantric texts and teachings” (Jayakar 21).

Coincidentally the co-founder of the Theosophical Society (TS), Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, wrote before her death in 1891 that the real purpose of the TS was to prepare for the coming of the World Teacher (Jayakar 21). Charles Leadbeater arranged a meeting between Krishnamurti and Besant which took place in late 1909 and by the end of 1909 Krishnamurti had entered the Esoteric section of the TS.

The transition that took place at this time is looked at as the time when K was “stripped of all his Indianness” (Jayakar 27). K and his brother, Nitya, were adopted by Annie Besant. They were told only to speak English, were only allowed to wear Western clothes, and they were “taught to bathe the British way” (Jayakar 27). Essentially, they were encouraged to grow up as young British gentlemen. The boys were also kept distant from their father to limit his influence.

However, Narianiah (the boys' father), felt that Annie Besant had misled him and he filed suit to regain custody. Annie Besant lost the case in both the local and High Court of Madras but she did win her appeal to the Privy Council. With the victory, the boys continued their schooling and would not see India from 1912 to 1922 (Jayakar 37). At this time, while in England, Krishnamurti developed a close relationship with Lady Emily Lutyens and her daughter Mary; feeling as though Emily Lutyens was like his foster mother (Rodrigues 1990:11). It was Lutyens who introduced K to all things a British aristocrat would encounter. Her daughter Mary was regarded as a friend and biographer who penned books about his life [see *The Role of a Flower*].

In 1911, the Order of the Rising Sun (to be renamed the Order of the Star in the East) was created with the purpose of preparation for the arrival of the World Teacher (Rodrigues 1990:10). This period would mark the first acknowledgments of his status as the "vehicle for the World Teacher." His father Narianiah's concern for his son's well-being had come true (which led to the eventual lawsuit). In 1929, as leader of the Order of the Star, K gave a shocking speech in Ommen, Holland where he rejected organized religion and dissolved the Order of the Star. In the film, *The Role of a Flower*, Mary Lutyens talks of how the Theosophical Society was a very rich organization and Krishnamurti, in his renunciation, gave everything back to the owner and divested himself of all property. In this, the example of *sannyasin* rings true. He did not want to be followed; in fact, he never expected people to follow him in the first place (Rodrigues 1990:42). He didn't want his talks held for enjoyment. His lectures were not for entertainment, though he did want people to pay attention. His attitudes also reflect the notion of *moksa*, which is "freedom from the bondage of ignorance into the liberation that comes with knowledge of the Self or Absolute Reality" (Rodrigues 2006:52). At this point in his life, K was being regarded as a secular philosopher that was hostile towards religion with representatives of

the TS saying that the coming of the World Teacher had become corrupt and incorrect (Jayakar 80).

The rest of his life, up to his death from cancer on February 17, 1986 was a tremendous journey that led him all over the world. He spent his time talking with great world figures, scholars, and mass assembly audiences. He spoke an estimated 175 times per year, whether it was to 50 people or 8,000 audience members [see Rodrigues 1990:22 and www.kfa.org] and many of these dialogues are transcriptions that became the books available today. Although sometimes difficult to read [see *Insight and Religious Mind: An Analysis of Krishnamurti's Thought*], his lectures have topics that are important to vast amounts of people. Fear, love, insight, truth, intelligence, freedom, religion, conditioning, desire, death and sorrow are all themes recurrent in Krishnamurti's talks with important messages obtained from each topic. He also helped open schools across the globe that represented his ideals towards education and knowledge. Over his 91 years, Jiddu Krishnamurti showed incredible will in wanting to help set man free (Rodrigues 1990:19). With the ideas he has left behind, to say he strove to set humanity free seems more appropriate.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS

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