



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Worldwide Educational Crisis and Insight of J. Krishnamurti: A Critical Inquiry

Prantika Sarmah

Narangi, Guwahati, Kamrup, India

Abstract:

The focus of this paper is to critically analyse the notion of 'Integrated intelligence' as expounded by Jiddu Krishnamurti. We are aware of the contradicting claims as far as measuring intelligence is concerned. This paper presents a theoretical approach in understanding, from J. Krishnamurti's perspective, the root cause of the present day educational crisis and the ways and means to find a plausible answer to it. In this context, we would also look into the works of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan etc. An integrated approach for awakening intelligence presents hope for all thinking people who are concerned with the future of the education system in India and elsewhere in the world. Can we develop a pedagogy based on Krishnamurti's ideas on awakening intelligence remains a challenging task which we would try to take up in the following pages.

1. Introduction

Fragmentation is one of the central problems faced by our present civilization which occupies almost every field including education. There is no denying the fact that education of today overemphasizes technique. It tries to make man efficient in cultivating capacity without a comprehensive perception of the ways of thought and desire. Now we are in a world where there are millions of educated people who have caps and gowns and marvellous position in society but at the same time they are carrying a heart full of conflict and misery. They are not free from social and personal turmoil. In the words of Krishnamurti - "In our present civilization we have divided life into so many departments that education has very little meaning except in learning a particular technique or profession. Instead of awakening the integrated intelligence of the individual, education is encouraging him to conform to a pattern and so is hindering his comprehension of himself as a total process."¹ If there is fragmentation in every field including education, then what should be the purpose of education and what is its significance in present society?

2. Worldwide Educational Crisis

It seems that education in the contemporary period is entrapped in its own success. It is beyond doubt that an educated citizenry is broadened through universal literacy, unmitigated schooling and exaggerated communications. Again mundane easiness and comfort has been added to our life through rapid development of science and technology. Though on the one hand present education provides us much more comfort through technological growth, on the other it is geared to industrialization and war. The industrial progress does solve certain kinds of problems at one level, but it introduces wider and deeper issues too. It has led human society into jealousies, rivalries, competition etc. Unhappiness, lack of accord and understanding, tension and miseries and various types of scarcities have grasped the whole world. We are baffled by various questions i.e. is the prevailing education system co-relate with the problems of life? Do the schools produce people who can deal with life as a whole? How much 'learning' in the real sense of the term takes place in the schools? Have schools been able to meet the increasing needs of society? What is the state of interface between industry and educational institutions? Do these universities prepare the students to face the highly competitive world? These are some of the fundamental questions that this paper will look into and would try to find answers from Krishnamurti's perspective. We would also look for answers in some of the leading educational thinkers of modern times.

Education in the real sense of it is much more than mere schooling. In present situation where lack of national solidarity, regionalism, communalism, casteism, terrorism and omnipotent corruption are prevalent, it is very urgent to have such an education system that would uplift the people from childhood onwards, physically, intellectually, economically, socially, morally as well as spiritually. Though in different times it is said by different educators to cultivate all the parts of the child's personality, i.e. physical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual, it seems that the modern pedagogy is not practicing the same. Crisis also arises due to the disagreement about the aims and objectives, methods, principles of education among the educators. Again there is no agreement on the authority of educational institutes. According to some people, it is only the government that should establish an educational institute. Some other

opponents considered that educational institutes established by private authority are more successful. Regarding good school, good teacher and good pupil also there are divergent opinions. The lack of moral value among students is regarded by most people as one important issue of contemporary educational crisis. Len Kaplan in his article 'Contemporary Crisis' (2009) stated, - "The need to develop the curriculums and teach the teachers before they can start teaching the students is a factor aggravating and prolonging this crisis."² This sentiment is echoed by J. Krishnamurti as well.

The educationists and the thinkers all over the world are repeating that the prevailing pattern of education has not helped man to free him from social and individual turmoil. They postulate the necessity of reorganizing the fundamental aims of education. UNESCO took initiative in bringing together the educationists of various countries for reformulating the basic objectives of education, because education alone can save man from the deterioration caused by technologically advanced civilization. Philip Coombs (1985) stated, "Crisis conditions are encroaching on educational systems everywhere and already hold many countries in their grip."³

In order to cope with the contemporary educational crisis Sweden and Spain established centers of research in educational policies for necessary investigation. The Arab states also have introduced well considered plans for reform of education. Several committees are formed by the countries like Turkey, Thailand and Japan for the reformation of education. Brazil, Ghana, Spain and Yugoslavia also have evaluated and reorganized their educational system. Albania has modified its educational system by consulting with all the stake holders. Again Rumania introduced changes in its educational system through Parliamentary Act. In India and France educational goals are co-related with socio-economic plans. Only in India during the last forty years different Commissions and Committees have made important recommendations concerning different aspects of education. Among these, University Education Commission, 1948-49 is very effective. The University Commission Report was published under the presidentship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan on November 4, 1949. It is also known as Radhakrishnan Commission. The Commission was appointed to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country. Besides this, Secondary Education Commission 1952-53, Education Commission 1964-66, National Policy on Education 1968, Ishwar Bhai Patel Review Committee 1977, Fourth All India Educational Survey 1980 etc. are remarkable. Though different countries tried to bring in the much desired effective changes in their existing models of education, the desired changes are hardly seen across the world. Therefore, it is necessary look at a different model of education spoken of by J. Krishnamurti.

3. Approaches of Different Educators to This Crisis

A question arises as to what steps do the contemporary thinkers take and what J. Krishnamurti's unique approach to this educational crisis is? Going against traditional dictatorship, established ideology or pattern Krishnamurti stated that our education should be interested not in shaping the child according to some idealistic pattern but should help the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness⁴. The Brazilian thinker Paulo Freire's assessment of education comes to our mind in this context. Krishnamurti was against the established pattern and ideology in education, Freire was also critical of the education in which students are stuffed by the teacher with the dead ideas and their only obligation consists in memorizing them. The system where pre-selected information are mechanically deposited and reproduced without communication or dialogue is considered by Freire as 'Banking concept of education'. Freire classifies the banking concept as "an environment where teachers are the narrators and the students are the recorders"⁵. J. Krishnamurti, whose educational ideas are the central theme of this analysis, also criticizes the traditional teaching method where one accepts the answers from authority unquestioningly and tries to practice it or repeat it. Because this process can only prepare what Krishnamurti called 'Second hand human being'. His consideration of 'Second hand human being' is almost similar with what Paulo Freire called 'Banking concept of Education'. Mortimer J. Adler stated in his article 'The Crisis in Contemporary Education' - "The educational philosophy of our teachers' colleges is received as the obvious truth by those who have been educated under its auspices. But unless everything is just a matter of opinion, and the might of the majority makes right, these issues are genuine, and the truth lies only on one side."⁶ Another educator John Dewey was also against teaching any predetermined course as he felt in a way that since physical and social environments are always changing, aims of education must also change. "The process of education is a continuous process of adjustment, having as its aim at every stage and added capacity to growth"⁷ Dewey said. The life of students during his time was enveloped in an artificial atmosphere dominated by book learning, examination which stunted the growth of children and the present situation seems no different.

Gandhi felt that the education that was prevalent in his time provided the child with bits and pieces of information instead of developing the child's personality. Gandhi wanted to liberate the learners from heaps of books. Through education Gandhi wanted to develop those qualities in future citizens of this country which he considered necessary for building a non-violent society. As he was a freedom fighter of British ruled India he wanted to root out exploitation and centralization in society and create a non violent social order through education. During that period most of the people in India could not afford to pay for their children's education. So they required their children's assistance in their occupation. Keeping in mind the needs of the country Gandhi planned for Basic education which may not be a burden upon the parents as it lays emphasis upon 'learning by doing'; dignity of labour, manual skill etc. and thereby gave importance to make students self reliant. One of the most important figures of the education reform movement in India Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was also agitated by the educational system of Christian missionary schools and colleges. As he was a student of such a school and a college he got acquainted with the main teachings of Christianity and also with the critical remarks of the Christian missionaries on the Hindu way of life. In his own words, - "Sensitive and informed minds believe that the fundamental need of the world, far deeper than any social, political or economic re-adjustment, is a spiritual re-awakening, a recovery of faith."⁸

Radhakrishnan agreed to the fact that education should train a pupil so that he can earn his livelihood, but at the same time he stated that moral and spiritual training is an essential part of education. Present day secular and technical education seems to have no place for either value based or spiritual education. Knowledge in present day world stands for mathematical knowledge that has certainty. Most of the educators of present century as mentioned in the above paragraph are agitated by the contemporary educational system where the so-called authority of knowledge destroys the intelligence and creativity of students. However, all these thinkers offered their own model of solution after their long experimentation. Paulo Freire evolved his educational methods while teaching illiterates of Latin America. Freire challenges educators to not only recognize the flawed structures in the educational system, but also calls them to initiate the change that in turn will liberate the oppressed in the society. He talks about 'problem posing' technique by employing which the teacher should free their students where teachers not only present concepts for students to analyze, but actually become students themselves. In this problem posing concept the teacher and the students work together through communication. He also talks about 'Praxiological Method'. It is such a method where the unity of theory and practice is established. He successfully applied his method when he taught 300 workers to read and write in just 45 days in 1962. John Dewey also conducted research in his university laboratory school in Chicago, in order to find a synthesis between interest and hard work, child and curriculum, school and society etc. Indian educational thinker M. K. Gandhi formulated some important aims of education for the achievement of which he presented his plan of basic education and named it as 'Nai Talim' (new education). It is his experiments at Tolstoy Farm, Sabarmati Ashrama and Sevagram Ashrama that helped Gandhi to give the final shape to Basic education i.e. 'Nai Talim'. It is called Nai Talim or new education because it sought to build up a new society in the country. Seeing the endemic poverty of the nation he felt that education ought to be a kind of insurance against unemployment for the Indian people. He suggested such a type of education based on industrial training and the development of manual skill and handicrafts. Recommending Gandhi's basic scheme of education in the report on national education the Kothari Commission declared- "We recommended that work experience should be introduced as an integral part of all education- general or vocational. We define work experience as participation in productive work in school, in the home, in a workshop, on a farm, in a factory or in any other productive situation."⁹

4. Educational Crisis As Perceived By J. Krishnamurti

J. Krishnamurti refuses to give any place to any ideology or so called mental qualities like ambition, comparison, and competition etc. in the field of education. These are considered by him as dividing factors in education. Moreover, he prefers natural curiosity, interest, attention, leisure etc., as helping factors. It is relevant here to analyse some of the major deteriorating factors of present day education considered by Krishnamurti.

One of the major deteriorating factors of present education is ambition. Ambition is a hindrance of true vocation of student's life. Students are made ambitious by family and others to score more marks in examination, to come first in class, to fulfill parent's hope and get a good job etc. which mislead them from their true vocation. The students do as they are told, and in that there is no love; there is only contradiction. One's vocation means something which he loves to do, or which is natural to him. The fundamental function of education should be to help the student to grow independently so that he can be free of the danger of ambition and can find his true vocation. Stating the role of an educational institute and a teacher to find the true vocation of life Krishnamurti stated in one place- "It is the responsibility of the teachers, of the principal, to help you to be intelligent, unafraid, so that you can find out your true vocation, your own way of life, the way you really want to live and earn your livelihood. This implies a revolution in thinking; because in our present society, the man who can talk, the man who can write, the man who can rule, the man who has a big car, is thought to be in a marvelous position; and the man who digs in the garden, who cooks, who builds a house, is despised."¹⁰ Krishnamurti felt in true sense that if an ambitious man looks into his heart, when he is ambitious or when he struggles to become somebody, he will find the worm of fear in his heart. The ambitious man is the most frightened man, because he always afraid to be what he is. If a boy is interested in being an engineer because he wants to build beautiful structures, marvelous irrigation systems, splendid roads, it means he loves engineering; and that is not ambition. Krishnamurti was never tired to repeat it that in love there is no fear. Someone may have the potentiality to be a poet or to be a painter. If someone really loves to do this he is not ambitious.

To carry the traditional belief in the form of knowledge, which conditioned our mind is another factor of educational fragmentation. We accumulate a great deal of knowledge to communicate, to fly an airplane, to build a bridge or building etc. Utilization of knowledge for the benefit of mankind is very essential. But when knowledge becomes a belief which guides the mind, the psyche, the inward being it divides people. Tradition in all its various forms from the religious to the academic must deny intelligence. In present educational institutes the mind of a student is conditioned by tradition in the form of knowledge. Their mind is conditioned by what Buddha said, what our forefathers said etc. Such a conditioned mind can never discover the truth of life. Krishnamurti warns that unless the students constantly free themselves from the accumulation of tradition, they will not be able to investigate, to find out or to discover the supreme, which is eternal. A mind that is clouded by knowledge, burdened with information is incapable of discovery. The so-called educational institutes teach us only to think something that we know. We think in a way that we shall understand if we have more information, more books, more facts, and more printed matter. But thereby we become 'dead' and 'second hand human beings'.

Krishnamurti asserts that the highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole. The ability to see life as a whole involves intelligence. According to Krishnamurti, intelligence is the capacity to perceive the essential 'what is' and to awaken this capacity in oneself and in others is education. Krishnamurti stated that education should not just reinforce conformity and competition that exist in society but should help in the transformation where freedom,

creativity and peace are more deeply respected and experienced in daily life. Almost all educational reform movements have ignored this fundamental point.

5. General Notion of Intelligence

It is the function of right kind of education to help a child to awaken his intelligence. In the field of education and psychology, a variety of definitions of intelligence have been suggested by educators and psychologists. William James (1907) stated that- "Intelligence is the ability to adjust oneself successfully to a relatively new situation."¹¹ To quote Prof. R. R. Kumria- "Call it practical wisdom; call it commonsense; call it genius, it is just the same in different names and grades."¹² P. B. Ballard (1913) has observed- "While the teacher tried to cultivate intelligence and psychologists tried to measure intelligence nobody seems to know what intelligence was."¹³ Krishnamurti's approach to define intelligence is different from the psychologists and the educationists as they considered intelligence in terms of practical wisdom or some ability to adjust with new situations. Alfred binet, who was known as the father of modern psychological testing, Simon, R.R. Brown etc. are concerned with different intelligence tests to measure intelligence. According to them intelligence can be measured by testing reasoning, comprehension, adaptability, sensory activity etc.,¹⁴ Such a testing involves a comparison and establishment of relationship between chronological age and mental age. These thinkers felt in a way that intelligence tests are of a great use in schools. They are in favour of possessing instruments by the teacher with which the teacher can measure the intelligence of a pupil. NCERT also developed different types of tests.¹⁵ Krishnamurti were radically different from them. Unlike these thinkers Krishnamurti maintained that intelligence is neither accumulating knowledge nor can it be measured. He uncompromisingly stood against the process of measurement and comparison. For him, we set certain standards which are based on measurement and those who do not come up to these standards are considered deficient. When the educator puts aside comparison and measurement then he is concerned with the student as he is, and his relationship with the student is direct and totally different. We see Krishnamurti's unique approach of denying examination system in these schools which is the result of his dislike for the measurement of intelligence of a student. He stated- "The ultimate tests of measurement are examinations accompanied by fear and anxieties, which deeply affect the future life of the student."¹⁶ This is very important to understand in schools that the very nature of intelligence is sensitivity and love which has no measurement.

6. Awakening Intelligence

Contemporary education becomes more chaotic as it is more acquisition of knowledge than awakening of intelligence. In present times we accumulate knowledge from books, scriptures and from teachers which deny our own intelligence. So, the primary duty of a teacher should not be to supply a lot of data or information to students but to show the whole expanse of life, the beauty or ugliness of it which implies intelligence. Krishnamurti puts intelligence above wisdom. One can be wise by gathering information from various sources. One can read all the books in the world, but it will not give him intelligence, because intelligence is not knowledge. Stephen Smith, a consultant at the Centre for Teacher Training, Bangalore stated in his article 'What Makes a Teacher' published in KFI school journal - "With all the information currently available, why make the brain the storehouse of knowledge and judge it by that criterion, rather than allow it to flower goodness, a field we have already touched upon? Such flowering is not the product of measurement, nor can it be measured at all; but it does require intelligence, in the sense Krishnamurti gives to that term."¹⁷

It is essential that education should help individual to understand his own psychological process. Awareness of one's total psychological process or 'self knowledge' is one of the most important aims of education for Krishnamurti. Intelligence comes into being by understanding the total process of mind. This understanding of mind is not according to the explanations of some philosopher or a teacher. An intelligent mind is never satisfied with explanation or conclusion. Most of the older people have come to conclusions and thereby they ceased to be intelligent. So an intelligent mind according to Krishnamurti is always enquiring, watching, learning, and studying but not conforming. Question may arise here that how a young student can be able to awaken his intelligence without conforming to his teacher or anyone?

Krishnamurti invites us to awaken the intelligence by enquiring, watching, observing and thereby learning in true sense. Intelligence comes out of observation. By observing everything that is good, bad, right or wrong as it is, is quite an art which Krishnamurti considered as choiceless awareness. True learning is only facing the life as it is and it is intelligence. Intelligence is the action of understanding, which takes place in the choiceless awareness of the way of the self. As Krishnamurti puts it- "If you understand the functioning of your own thought and your own emotion, and thereby in that action become aware, then there is intelligence, which dispels insufficiency and which does not try to replace it by sufficiency, completeness, because intelligence itself is completeness."¹⁸

7. Intellect and Intelligence

Intelligence comes in to being only by understanding the total process of mind which Krishnamurti called 'self knowledge'. The understanding out of which intelligence comes is possible only in relation to the world of individuals and things. Krishnamurti perceives the unity of thought and feeling, of emotion and reason in intelligence. In this respect we can see the differences drawn by Krishnamurti between intellect and intelligence. He maintains that intellect is the capacity to reason, to imagine, to create illusion and it is thought functioning independently of emotion. So having great intellect one cannot be intelligent because in intelligence there is the inherent capacity to feel as well as to reason. We remember Krishnamurti's great comment- "...until we approach life with intelligence instead of intellect alone, or with emotion alone, no politician or educational system in the world can save us from the toils of chaos and destruction."¹⁹

Intelligence is the capacity to perceive the whole and is incapable of dividing the sensitivity, the emotions and the intellect from each other. Krishnamurti made an interesting example to state this point. He mentioned that practically all religions have said 'not to kill' but they have never prevented killing. In the name of ideologies, commerce, and nationalism killing is accepted. As we are killing the living things we are becoming isolated. Intellect may perceive this but it is incapable of complete action. But the very nature of intelligence is sensitivity and it is love. Intelligence which is inseparable from love will never kill, because intelligence is not a concept or ideal. When it is active in our daily life it will tell us when to co-operate and when not to. To love a child means seeing that he or she is not made into a machine which merely repeats ideas learnt from a book, but is helped to be intelligent.

8. Possibility of Awakening Intelligence among Students

The primary function of education is to help a child to awaken his intelligence. The so called modern education lays stress on memorizing, repeating and producing the same in the examination. In developing the intellect modern education offers more and more theories and facts, which deprive intelligence and so creativity. It is beyond doubt that Krishnamurti stands differently from other educators by defining intelligence in a unique way. However, doubt may arise about the applicability of the method such as choiceless awareness among the students in a school and thereby help them to awaken intelligence. It is the inevitable question 'how this intelligence is to be awakened?' what is the method, what is the practice? In the book named 'The Whole Movement of life is learning' which comprises Krishnamurti's different letters to his schools, he stated that the question 'what is the method to be intelligent' implies that one is still functioning in the field of knowledge. Practice, method, system in our daily lives make us routine, repetitive action and so a mechanical mind.²⁰ The acquisition of knowledge however specialized, puts the mind in to a groove, in to a narrow way of life. To learn, to observe and understand this whole structure of knowledge is to begin to awakening intelligence. Krishnamurti's answer to this quarry can be stated in his words in the following manner- "If from your earliest childhood whatever difficulty you may have had has been talked over with you so that your understanding of it is not just verbal, but enables you to see the whole of life, then such education can awaken intelligence and thereby free the mind of fear."²¹

9. A Critical Estimate

Can we develop pedagogy from the insights provided by Krishnamurti into our understanding of awakening intelligence? This needs further research and examination. However, J. Krishnamurti's insight into the contemporary educational crisis and its solution is very profound and unique. Unlike M.K. Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan, the three other contemporary Indian educational thinkers, Krishnamurti was against tradition, authority or a guru and fashioned his own language to communicate his thought through dialectical method. Most of the other Indian thinkers base their teachings on ancient Hindu tradition and philosophers like Iqbal carry the Islamic tradition. But Krishnamurti on the other hand did not endorse the traditional methods and doctrines. Considering education as the 'exploration into the world within' he emphasized that the whole movement of life is learning. We also see some similar approaches in some other educators. Like Krishnamurti the idealist thinkers such as Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo etc., considered self realization and self-knowledge through observation as one of the most important aims of education. Like most of the educators Krishnamurti discarded physical punishment from the field of education, but he did not stop discarding the theory of physical punishment but he was against cold and insulting punishment such as using harsh words. In the field of education there is no place for any ideology according to Krishnamurti. He was uncompromisingly critical of any system of education which is mechanical. He was not interested in any method of education as he considered that not the method but the teacher full of love, compassion and enthusiasm is more effective. He stands in the same row with Gandhi, Tagore, Dewey, Rousseau as he was a believer of learning by doing. Krishnamurti never accepted the idea that the function of education is to conform the student to the existing society because he considered the contemporary society as the corrupted one. Contrary to this he wanted to create a new society which is based on new culture and new value. While the educators like Dewey stated about project method and some other talked about reward, punishment, comparison, competition etc. as motivating factors of learning; we see Krishnamurti's different stand from them as he did not offer any educational pedagogy and stated clearly that if someone asks for a method of education it means he is still functioning in the field of knowledge.

It is clear from the above discussion that Krishnamurti's answer to the world-wide educational crisis does not address only the structure of education like John Dewey, Whitehead, Radhakrishnan etc. but also addresses the nature and quality of man's mind and life. He postulates the necessity of a psychological mutation of human mind and thereby to awaken intelligence. J.Krishnamurti invites us to awaken the intelligence which is born out of observation and self knowledge.

10. References

1. Krishnamurti, Jiddu. (1985) Education and the Significance of Life, New York: Harper Collins.pp. 11,12.
2. Len, Kaplan. (2009,August) Contemporary Crisis. Farmington: MI, USA.
3. Coombs H.P. (1985) The World crisis in Education: The View from we Eighties. New York: Oxford University press.
4. Krishnamurti, Jiddu. (1985) Education and the Significance of Life, New York: Harper Collins.pp. 15.
5. Freire, Paulo (1993) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Continuum Book: New York. p.53.
6. Adler. J. Mortimer (1939)The Social Frontier V , 140-145
7. Dewey, John (2007). Democracy and Education, the Macmillan Company: New York p.61.
8. Radhakrishnan, S. (1994) Recovery of Faith. India: Harper Collins Publishers.
9. Gandhi, M.K. (1937), Harijan, 31 July .

10. Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1968) Life Ahead, London: The Theosophical Publishing House. P.68-69.
11. James, William, (1912), Essays in Radical Empiricism, London.p.23
12. Aggarwal, G.C., (2005), Essentials of Educational Psychology, N.Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd. p.304.
13. Ibid., p.304
14. Ibid., p.320
15. Ibid., p.p.330, 331
16. Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1953) The Whole Movement of Life is Learning, Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India. p.102
17. Smith, Stephen, (2003), What Makes a Teacher, in Ahalya Chari (ed.), Journal of the Krishnamurti School, Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India. p.52
18. Shringy, R.K., (1977) Philosophy of J. Krihsnamurti: A Systematic Study, N.Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers. P.270
19. Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1953) Education and the Significance of Life, Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India. P.p. 63-64.
20. Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1953) The Whole Movement of Life is Learning, Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India. p.15
21. Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1968) Life Ahead, London: The Theosophical Publishing House. p.p. 190-191