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Freedom from the Known

J Krishnamurti

FREEDOM
from the
KNOWN

J. Krishnamurti

With a foreword by David Skitt

Edited by Mary Lutyens



RIDER

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JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI was born on 12 May, 1895 in Madanapalle, India. In early adolescence he came to the attention of the influential theosophists Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, who educated him, believing him to be a future spiritual leader. Krishnamurti later broke away from the Theosophical Society and travelled internationally as an independent speaker and writer on fundamental human issues. George Bernard Shaw declared that he was the most beautiful human being he had ever met and Aldous Huxley became one of his close friends.

He held many dialogues with the eminent physicist David Bohm, and several with Buddhist scholars and Jesuits. Whether discussing politics with Indira Gandhi, debating philosophy with Rupert Sheldrake and Iris Murdoch, or challenging his audience to test the truth of his words, Krishnamurti engaged fully with every aspect of the human condition.

He was regarded by many as a great teacher, an extraordinary individual with revolutionary insights; Joseph Campbell, Alan Watts and Eckhart Tolle have all acknowledged their debt to his writings. In later life Krishnamurti spoke at the United Nations on the subject of peace and awareness, and was awarded the 1984 UN

Peace Medal. He died in 1986 at his home in Ojai, California.

MARY LUTYENS (1908-1999) was a British biographer and novelist, who was well versed in Krishnamurti's teachings. She first met Krishnamurti as a small child in 1911 and remained dedicated to him until his death in 1986, writing a number of books about him and, at his suggestion, editing *Freedom from the Known*.

DAVID SKITT is a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation in Britain and the editor of a number of books of Krishnamurti's talks and dialogues.

Foreword

More than seventy books by Krishnamurti have been published and new editions of his works are still appearing a quarter of a century after his death. *Freedom from the Known*, however, has always stood out as an exception to the others. Firstly, this is because Krishnamurti himself suggested it to Mary Lutyens, a professional author, even giving her the title. But when she asked what kind of a book it should be, he replied, 'I leave that to you.' So she decided to begin by listing the main topics covered in his talks in the years 1963 to 1967, and then to select the passages from those talks that she judged were most clearly or beautifully expressed. The resulting book, she felt, would then constitute a 'Krishnamurti primer'.

One of the intriguing and unusual aspects of Krishnamurti's oeuvre is that its sheer volume - material equivalent to four hundred average-sized books - makes it very hard for anyone to be an authority on it; a fact that Krishnamurti, with his radical questioning of any kind of

religious, political, psychological or philosophical authority, would no doubt have welcomed. It is therefore difficult for a single book to be described as an authoritative or definitive primer (in later years Krishnamurti would go deeply into some other issues), but Mary Lutyens's compilation is certainly the most readable 'exploratory primer' - the finest collection of nuggets, as it were, that we have.

The question the new reader of this book might put is: how much is something that was born of the turbulent, antiestablishment sixties relevant to the world of today? Wasn't there a rebellious mood of the younger generation at that time which it later abandoned? Is Krishnamurti therefore out of date? One reason to think he is not is that what Krishnamurti said clearly applies to much of human history and not just to our times. But there is also a very strong case for saying that his views are even more relevant now - in the early twenty-first century - than ever before.

What is the evidence for this? It rests basically on the fact that we live in a time of growing human interdependence, whether it be the economy, financial markets, politics, pandemics, or climate change. Any major event in one of these areas has repercussions in all of them and has an impact worldwide. All the problems in these areas are interconnected and demand, as a UK government report has said of climate change, 'unprecedented international cooperation'. It is

increasingly clear that it is impossible for one country to protect its national interests without taking into account the interests of others. Failure to do so in the twenty-first century will inevitably spawn conflict and insecurity.

The world we live in clearly calls for a new kind of planetary mentality if it is to avoid new and worse strife, and this is where Krishnamurti becomes very relevant. Because for him the mind that is capable of producing harmony between nations – groups of human beings – is inseparable from the mind that brings about harmony between two human beings. There is no division between the two activities in a mind that is fully aware. And what *Freedom from the Known* does is to explore what prevents such a mind from coming about. A major obstacle, he says, is when we misapply thought based on past experience to a completely new challenge that demands to be looked at totally anew. Avoiding action that is wrongly dictated by the past is clearly often a problem for our political leaders. But it is also one for you and me. Our personal relationships easily become blinkered by the images we make of each other that are based, for instance, on past experience that has been pleasing or displeasing – until it is impossible for us to be open to anything new.

So, to put it succinctly, what is on my plate in psychological terms is also what is on the plate of our planet as a whole. The same basic underlying psychological processes, the same flawed perceptions,

prevail and drive us all. And it is the amount of human suffering that these processes currently engender that calls, in Krishnamurti's view, for an urgent 'revolution in the psyche'. Such a revolution means ending any sense of separation of oneself from the rest of humanity or from another that is due, for example, to religious faith, political ideology, tradition or culture - 'we are human beings, not labels'. Tragically, we seem not to feel deeply the significance of all of us sharing the same consciousness, the same basic challenges, travails and joys. And our failure to be alive to that shared consciousness is what brings about a sense of isolation, fear and potential aggression.

Observing *what is*, and all that this implies, is vital for this new human mentality. What is important, Krishnamurti maintains, is not philosophy, ideology, or belief, but 'observing what is actually taking place in our daily life, inwardly and outwardly'. Crucially important too is seeing what in our lives we are really interested in - being totally honest about what we put our energy into and give total attention to.

Expressed in simple words, *Freedom from the Known* contains in a slender volume many striking statements on the human condition. But as Krishnamurti has always made clear, he has no intention of spoon-feeding or dispensing truth on a silver platter. He invites us to challenge, question, test what he says and to judge for ourselves whether what he says is true - whether, for

example, it is deeply relevant to our times or not. But he would see it as a waste of time to understand his words merely verbally, intellectually. When something serious is really understood, he maintained, it naturally translates into action – action that can be liberating and joyful.

To have such understanding, many issues raised in this book, its author says, ‘demand a great deal of meditation, of inquiry ... meditation in which the meditator is entirely absent, for the mind has emptied itself of the past’. He adds, ‘If you have read this book for a whole hour attentively, that is meditation.’ Then it is for the reader ‘to find out what happens’.

DAVID SKITT

This book has been written at Krishnamurti's suggestion and has his approval. The words have been chosen from a number of his recent talks (in English), taped and previously unpublished, to audiences in various parts of the world. Their selection and the order in which they are presented are my responsibility.

M.L.

I

Man's Search—The Tortured Mind—the Traditional Approach—The Trap of Respectability—The Human Being and the Individual—The Battle of Existence—The Basic Nature of Man—Responsibility—Truth—Self-transformation—Dissipation of Energy—Freedom from Authority

MAN HAS THROUGHOUT the ages been seeking something beyond himself, beyond material welfare - something we call truth or God or reality, a timeless state - something that cannot be disturbed by circumstances, by thought or by human corruption.

Man has always asked the question: what is it all about? Has life any meaning at all? He sees the enormous confusion of life, the brutalities, the revolts, the wars, the endless divisions of religion, ideology and nationality, and with a sense of deep abiding frustration he asks, what is one to do, what is this thing we call living, is there anything beyond it?