



## J. Krishnamurti's Concept of Freedom: A Philosophical Study

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### Original Article

#### Abstract

Jiddu Krishnamurti was a philosopher, author and spiritual teacher of the period from 1895 to 1986, and he discussed the concept of freedom in a different way. This research provides a systematic analysis of Krishnamurti's freedom philosophy. We argue that the only routes to true freedom according to Krishnamurti, were self-examination and the analysis of one's own presumptions and concepts. Krishnamurti placed a strong focus on self-awareness and self-inquiry, as seen in his lectures and personal life. He believed that true freedom requires a complete transformation of the spirit, a process that involves questioning all one's presumptions, beliefs and habits, and examining them critically in the light of direct experience. His challenge is addressed not only to the structure of education, but to the nature and quality of Man's mind and life. It cannot be denied that philosophers of different ages have grappled with the problem of freedom from various perspectives, and like any philosophical problem, the problem of freedom has continued to perplex us to the present day.

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## **1. Introduction:**

Freedom is a multidimensional notion; it is defined differently by thinkers across different times. The Western philosophers' concern for moral freedom is undoubtedly essential. However, man is a multidimensional phenomenon; apart from his social and moral aspects, he has another very important aspect: spirituality. The Indian philosophers are concerned with the moral, social, and ontological aspects of human freedom. Contemporary philosophers are concerned with diverse types of freedom. They place equal importance on social freedom, economic freedom, political freedom, etc. These philosophers believed that freedom does not belong to the soul. Krishnamurti, the Indian philosopher and spiritual teacher, offered a radical and holistic vision of education that focused on the inner transformation of the individual rather than on accumulating information or preparing for a career.

## **2. Krishnamurti's view on Freedom:**

The concept of freedom plays a significant part in Krishnamurti's teachings. He makes his famous statement that "Truth is a pathless land and shows that truth and freedom also coexist". (Krishnamurti, *Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti*, 1996, p. 17). By "pathless", he emphasises that there is no defined way to achieve freedom or happiness, no structure, procedure, etc. Krishnamurti emphasises the value of self-awareness and self-inquiry as essential instruments for personal development in his teachings on the concept of freedom. He does not imply that it can be caused by a variety of activities, such as focusing or meditating. He defined self-awareness as the ability to observe oneself without bias, criticism, or limitation. In his view, freedom is a mentality that is so strong, active and energetic that it rejects all forms of dependency, enslavement, conformity and acceptance. It is not a state of being free from anything but rather a sense of freedom to doubt and examine everything. According to him, "you are never alone because you are full of all the memories, all the conditioning, all the muttering of yesterday; your mind is never clear of all the rubbish it has accumulated. To be alone you must die to the past. When you are alone, totally alone, not belonging to any family, any culture, any particular continent, there is that sense of being an outsider. The man who is completely alone in this way is innocent and it is this innocence that frees he mind from sorrow". (Krishnamurti, 2010, p. 69). He asserts that we must first comprehend the essence and principles of freedom if we are to be really free. Thus, when we declare ourselves free from anything it is only the beginning of a reaction that will lead to

further dominance or obedience. We embrace each reaction as freedom in this sense allowing for a sequence of reactions. However, Krishnamurti did not define freedom as a communal or individual reaction or revolt. It is a state of mind and goodness can thrive in this state of mind.

According to Krishnamurti, “Freedom can only come about naturally, not through wishing, wanting, longing. Nor will you find it by creating an image of what you think it is. To come upon it the mind has to learn to look at life which is a vast movement without the bondage of time for freedom lies beyond the field of consciousness”. (Ibid., p. 71). Krishnamurti thinks that action and observation are the only paths to freedom which is possible through the Right education.

According to him,

“To bring about right education, we must obviously understand the meaning of life as a whole and for that we have able to think, not consistently, but directly and truly. A consistent thinker is a thoughtless person, because he conforms to a pattern; he repeats phrases and thinks in a groove. We cannot understand existence abstractly or theoretically. To understand life is to understand ourselves and that is both the beginning and the end of education”.

(Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, 1992, p. 10)

He further said that, “the purpose of education is not produce mere scholars, technicians, and job hunters, but integrated men and women who are free from fear; for only between such human beings can there be enduring peace”. (Ibid., p.11). Right education opposes the conventional system of education. According to him, “Conventional education makes independent thinking extremely difficult. Conformity leads to mediocrity”. (Ibid., p. 1). Conventional education helps us to create conflict in our mind and hence we can never be free from anything through such education that is why Krishnamurti talks about Right education through which we can be free from all the conflict and sorrow. According to Krishnamurti, “Present-day education is a complete failure because it has over- emphasized technique. In over- emphasizing technique we destroy man. To cultivate capacity and efficiency without understanding life”. (Ibid., p. 14). Right education is not concerned with any ideology and not based on any method according to

Krishnamurti. Right education brings about we should understand the meaning of life as a whole.

The idea that there are multiple routes that lead to reality is rejected by Krishnamurti. Depending on one's temperament, one can follow the pathways of *Bhakti*, *Karma*, or *Jñāna marga*, as all of these lead to ultimate freedom, according to the various schools of Indian thought. However, reality is a living force that is constantly changing and vibrating, according to Krishnamurti and as such, there is no way to get there. Freedom, according to Krishnamurti is "never an addition or accumulation. Rather, it is the disintegration of incorrect accumulations in the mind. It is something to be realized by the individual. Freedom does not exist in the future but in the dissolution of the past, with a releasing of the known ... Freedom can happen for anyone at any time. It happens when there is complete inward detachment from goals of any kind. Only then is it possible to be integrated, to be whole and free." (Smith, 2000, p. 92)

### **3. Freedom and Truth:**

Krishnamurti asserts that freedom and truth are inextricably linked. He maintained that only a completely free mind is capable of realizing truth, and that a mind that perceives truth clearly is the natural source of freedom. Truth and freedom develop in tandem when the mind is liberated from fear, conditioning, and all psychological constraints; their relationship is not gradual. According to him, "to come upon truth the mind must be completely free, without a spot of distortion". (Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known*, 2010, p. 67). He believed that, "is it freedom, you are free of something free from pain, from pain, free from some kind of anxiety? Or is freedom itself something entirely different?" (Ibid., p. 67). Krishnamurti said that, mind can be free from conditioning, but this freedom doesn't come from looking for greater conditioning or trying to replace old patterns with new ones. According to him, "freedom is a state of mind not freedom from something but a sense of freedom, a freedom to doubt and question everything and therefore so intense, active and vigorous that it throws away every form of dependence, slavery, conformity and acceptance. Such freedom implies being completely alone. But can the mind brought up in a culture so dependent on environment and its own tendencies ever find that freedom which is complete solitude and in which there is no leadership, no tradition and no authority". (Ibid., p. 69)

### **4. Freedom and Fear:**

According to Krishnamurti, one of the biggest barriers to freedom is fear.

For him, “learning only comes into being when there is no fear and when there is no authority”. (Krishnamurti, *On education*, 1974, p. 41). He asserts that a fear-ridden mind is incapable of seeing reality, loving, or acting rationally. Fear prevents inner freedom by causing confusion, conflict, dependence, aggression, and psychological distortion. He asserts that a scared mind stays in confusion and conflict it must be an aggressive violent mind. However, running away from it only makes it worse. So, Krishnamurti advises us to “face the fact, look at it, do not run away from it.” (Mishra, 2021, p. 2984). Fear is a movement from certainty to uncertainty. As per Krishnamurti, fear arises from the desire to be in a certain way. For him, “Fear is the cause of loneliness, of deprivation, both physical and psychological”. (Krishnamurti, *Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti*, 1996, p. 283). The mind seeks security when it feels unsafe. Ideologies, symbols, and nationalities are all related to security. People are only made more divided and conflicted by this. There is always fear when someone identifies with a nation, a society, or even a concept. Thought is temporally bound and can never be free. Thus, to have no fear is to have no time. The reaction of memory, knowledge, and experience is called thought. Krishnamurti said that, “fear is one of the greatest problems in life. A mind that is caught in fear lives in confusion, in conflict, and therefore must be violent, distorted and aggressive”. (Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known*, 2010, p. 38). Fear prevents real freedom. For Krishnamurti, freedom is the essence of right living. But fear creates dependence, on religion, ideology, relationships, or authority. Krishnamurti believed that, our thinking narrows and becomes defensive when we are afraid of failure, loss, criticism, or the future. We are no longer free to inquire, investigate, or comprehend. Rather, our sense of security is derived on social training, entrenched beliefs, and recollections of the past. This reliance reduces the mind’s inherent clarity, inventiveness, and intellect by trapping it in repetitive cycles. Where there is dependence, there is no freedom.

Krishnamurti explains that most people attempt to remove fear through willpower, discipline, beliefs, or various forms of escape, but these efforts only cover up fear rather than end it. True freedom comes when we observe fear directly, without resisting it or judging it. By watching fear with complete awareness, seeing how it starts, how thought keeps it alive, and how we try to avoid it, we fully understand its movement. In this deep understanding, fear naturally fades away. Therefore, freedom is not the result of battling fear; it is the natural state of the mind

when fear is completely understood. According to Krishnamurti, fear makes our minds stiff and defensive, regardless of whether it is a dread of failure, loss, loneliness, or the opinions of others. It is impossible to be clear and act intelligently in such a state. In an attempt to feel secure, fear forces us to cling to rigid ideas, rely on authority, and repeat well-known behaviors. The mind is imprisoned psychologically by this dependence. A scared mind is unable to learn, love, or comprehend deeply since it is always avoiding, resisting, or repressing its inner conflicts. Therefore, the inner space where true freedom might emerge is closed off by fear.

## **5. Freedom and Love:**

Krishnamurti believed that freedom and love were complementary and indivisible in their true meaning. Many philosophical and spiritual perspectives, particularly those of Krishnamurti, hold that love can only exist in a state of freedom, and that freedom blossoms organically in the presence of love. According to him, “And when there is freedom, there is energy; and when there is freedom it can never do anything wrong. Freedom is entirely different from revolt. There is no such thing as doing right or wrong when there is freedom. You are free and from that Centre you act. And hence there is no fear, and a mind that has no fear is capable of great love.” (Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known*, 1969, p. 19). The majority of people consider freedom as an ideal rather than a reality. When someone talks about freedom, they want to be able to act as they choose, think as they please, and express themselves freely. A free and established mind acts and love is the result of that activity. Krishnamurti dedicates his life to achieving complete human freedom. Krishnamurti requested a specific type of audience interaction during the title portion of his speeches. He wasn’t advocating any theories or viewpoints that would persuade the target audience to think a certain way. His teachings fully materialize when a person dissolves their sense of self and starts living in the now, unburdened by expectations of the future or reliance on the past.

Krishnamurti’s is that view, “freedom from all influence is really the essence of an enlightened mind because the enlightened mind is a light unto itself and does not depend upon another.” (Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti at Rajghat*, 1993, p. 28). Love is a state where the mind is free from jealousy, insecurity, and ego-centered demands. Therefore, love can exist only in a mind that is free. According to him, “only love can bring about the understanding of one another. Where there is love there is instantaneous communion with the other, on the same level and at the same time. It is because we ourselves are so dry, empty and without love that we have

allowed governments and systems to take over the education of our children and the direction of our lives; but governments want efficient technicians, not human beings, because human beings became dangerous to governments and to organized religions as well". (Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, 1992, p. 20)

## **6. Freedom and Intelligence:**

Krishnamurti believed that intelligence leads to freedom. The beginning of intelligence is when one breaks free from all the foolishness of worrying about oneself or following others. Intelligence acts without effort, decision, or motivation; it acts without regard to reward or punishment fears. Thus, "simplicity is the way of intelligence, not the mere show of simplicity in outward things and behaviour, but the simplicity of inward non-being." (Krishnamurti, *Commentaries on living: third series*, 1960, p. 215). The negative is where

Krishnamurti's freedom is found. It appears to hold throughout Krishnamurti's entire theory. He does not see freedom as a reaction or an outcome. Enlightenment, in his view, is a negative. The most constructive course of action is to reject everything that man has created and all of his ideals. "Negation is the state of enlightenment which functions in all the activities of a man who is free of the past. It is the past with its tradition and its authority that has to be negated.

Negation is freedom, and it is the free man who lives, loves, and knows what it means to die." (Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti for beginners: an anthology*, 1995, p. 36). Krishnamurti, therefore, believed that the positive emerges via negation. Since truth is completely distinct from falsehood and cannot be thought of in terms of the opposite, truth is the negation of falsehood rather than the opposite of falsehood.

## **7. Freedom and Self-knowledge:**

According to Krishnamurti, Freedom and self-knowledge are closely related. Self-knowledge is the first step towards true freedom. Even though we think we are free, we are nevertheless subject to the motivations, anxieties, desires, and training that influence our behaviour if we are unaware of them. When we closely examine our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, fears, and

habits, we start to recognise the underlying psychological patterns that influence our behaviour. This is known as self-knowledge reveals inner conditioning. Self-knowledge brings clarity, which means that when we truly understand ourselves, our thoughts, motives, emotions, and reactions, we see life, situations, and decisions more clearly, without confusion or distortion. Self-knowledge shows us what's going on inside of us. our true motivations, the cause of our issues, how the past influences the present, and how fears and desires warp our perceptions. Mental clarity results from this comprehension. Especially in Krishnamurti's philosophy, self-knowledge is not a technique, formula, or step-by-step method. It is a living, moment-to-moment awareness of oneself. He said, "there is no method for self-knowledge. Seeking a method invariable implies the desire to attain some result and that is what we all want. We follow authority-if not that of a person, then of a system, of an ideology- because we want a result which will be satisfactory, which will give us security". (Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 1954, p. 34)

Krishnamurti observes, "The beauty of freedom is that you do not leave a mark, the eagle in its flight does not leave a mark; the scientist does. Inquiring into this question of freedom there must be, not only the scientific observation, but also the flight of the eagle that does not leave a mark at all; both are required; there must be both the verbal explanation and the nonverbal perception for the description is never the actuality that is described; the explanation is obviously never the thing that is explained, the word is never the thing". (Krishnamurti, *The Flight of the Eagle*, 1982, p. 11). Man must therefore be fully free. One must be free of all bonds and problems. Denying this task is denying love. In whatever community or culture, love is inevitable for those who are free. Man, withers away without freedom, regardless of how great his contributions to politics, religion, science, or the arts may be. Action and freedom are interdependent. Action is what it means to be free. Therefore, it is impossible to separate freedom, love, and action into separate categories such as political or social activity. According to Krishnamurti, "everybody wants to be free, and yet they want to express themselves, their anger, their brutality, their ambition, their competitiveness and so on. So, there is always conflict. I want to do something, and you want to do something, and so we fight. Freedom is not doing what one wants, because man cannot live by himself". (Krishnamurti, *On Education*, 1974, p. 30).

## **8. Conclusion:**

From the conversation above, it is clear that people are trapped in a cage of values, beliefs, and customs, making it impossible for humanity to live in complete freedom. Freedom is not something that can be taken from someone else; rather, it transcends all of the aforementioned and is not a memory image, a decision, an authoritative pattern, or spoken words. Therefore, in order for man to free himself, he must acknowledge that his acts and behavior which are forced upon him are entirely his own responsibility. Krishnamurti describes the freedom as that of the individual who has found the true note of his own existence and is unwilling to copy or follow those who are similarly creative. Freedom is unbounded, fluid, and living. Krishnamurti rejects the idea that an individual is a collection of needs that must be met in order for one's ideology to make them happy. Happiness can only be found in the here and now, not in an ideal. For him, "Happy is the man who is nothing." (Jayakar, 1986, p. 267). Life is richer when man is not burdened by the accumulation of experience. According to Krishnamurti, "authority prevents the understanding of oneself, does it not? Under the shelter of an authority, a guide, you may have temporarily a sense of security, a sense of well-being, but that is not the understanding of the total process of oneself". (Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 1954, p. 35). He further said that, "authority in its very nature prevents the full awareness of oneself and therefore ultimately destroys freedom; in freedom alone can there be creativeness. There can be creativity only through self-knowledge". (Ibid., p.35). Krishnamurti demonstrates that freedom is an attribute of a mind that is fearless, self-aware, loving, and receptive to the truth rather than a goal. According to Krishnamurti, freedom is the fundamental component of human existence, and fear, truth, self-awareness, and love are all intricately linked facets of this freedom. Each one influences and changes the others; they are not independent entities.

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