

**OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS: Conference Proceedings**  
**J. Krishnamurti and the Contemporary World Crises**

**Opening Remarks and Keynote Panel**  
**Session One<sup>1</sup>**

Prachi Kaul, Julie McMullin,  
Meenakshi Thapan, Ravi Ravindra, Hillary Rodrigues

**Opening Remarks**

**Prachi Kaul**

I am extremely proud to be part of the inaugural session of the virtual conference organized by Mount Saint Vincent University and funded by Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI). I wish to acknowledge the support of the top leadership of Mount Saint Vincent University, and especially, Dr. Julie McMullin, Vice President Academic and Provost, for being instrumental in bringing her university to SICI's Canadian Members' Council.

This particular event is happening on the bi-national corridor of India and Canada, two great democracies of the world with great responsibilities. I am personally delighted to see a great collaboration among the member institution in India and Canada for this academic deliberation.

Some of you may not be very aware of the SICI. SICI's mandate is to build academic and cultural relationships between India and Canada by undertaking programs and providing services that facilitate and sustain bi-national dialogue, understanding and interaction. These relationships encompass both institutional and individual linkages.

SICI is a bi-national organization with a unique mandate which operates in two major directions. First, it serves as a financial support system for academic and research programmes in terms of offering fellowships and other awards in both India and Canada. Secondly, it is a bi-national network of leading academic institutions, which are knowledge partners in

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<sup>1</sup> Keynote Panel J. Krishnamurti and the Contemporary World Crises (Session One)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1isPbB-IXwo&list=PLfvjDB\\_dQhEpYnHf6l8WMJ\\_XrT-Oln7CL&index=1&t=3559s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1isPbB-IXwo&list=PLfvjDB_dQhEpYnHf6l8WMJ_XrT-Oln7CL&index=1&t=3559s)

generating linkages and collaborations. It is unique in having 116 premier academic Institutions as its members in India, and 40 universities of excellence across Canada of all sizes and specializations. In being a key organization interacting between governments, academia, and the business community, SICI provides enhanced opportunities to the academic and research fraternity of its member institutions. SICI focuses on its people, fostering strong talent and developing intellectual and cultural linkages resulting in increasing research outcomes and enhancing quality of life and long-term relationships.

I congratulate Dr. Ashwani Kumar of Mount Saint Vincent University and Dr. Nayha Acharya of Dalhousie University (Conference Co-Chairs), for putting together this conference which is going to serve as a great resource on renowned Indian philosopher and educator J. Krishnamurti and the ways in which we can understand the contemporary world crises through Krishnamurti's philosophical and educational perspectives.

### **Julie McMullin**

Welcome to this important virtual conference. Let me take a moment to acknowledge that our universities are situated on the unceded, unsundered, ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people. The Mi'kmaq people are among the original peoples of Turtle Island, otherwise known as Canada, and I pay our deepest respect to the elders, past, present, and future.

On behalf of Mount Saint Vincent and Dalhousie Universities, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this exciting conference, one that brings together Indian and Canadian thinkers to tackle contemporary global crises using the work of Jiddu Krishnamurti. This conference is an example of what it means to take a globalized approach to solving our collective problems and is also a demonstration of the value of opening ourselves to perspectives that we may not be privy to if we remain limited by our geographic regions. I am also incredibly impressed by the range of disciplines that are represented in this conference. This demonstrates the expansiveness of Krishnamurti's ideas, as well as the value of moving beyond our individual silos and coming together to collectively discuss our shared concerns.

It goes without saying that this conference brings us together at what is a very difficult time in our world. As the papers that will be presented at this conference show, international and inter-disciplinary exchange are critically needed to address the world's key challenges. Drawing on Krishnamurti's ideas is very fitting, as his teachings transcend geography and invoke a sense of unity among human beings rather than divisiveness.

I am grateful to the Shastri Institute for its support of this conference and to Drs. Ashwani Kumar and Nayha Acharya for organizing this exceptional event.

**Acknowledgments:** I want to thank Ms. Tracy MacKenzie, my Executive Assistant, for her extensive help in preparing these remarks.

## **Keynote Panel**

### **Krishnamurti, School Culture and Learning**

#### **Meenakshi Thapan**

Krishnamurti considered education to be the means through which teachers and children could work together in an atmosphere of freedom, without fear, authority, competition or comparison, to help understand our psychological processes and gain academic and technological skills. The focus is not merely on academic knowledge but on knowing oneself. In his talks, Krishnamurti often used the metaphor of a carriage drawn by two horses where each horse is going in a different direction. One represents academic knowledge, the other psychological development. By paying attention to and over-emphasising the academic aspect alone, education is incomplete.

The important starting point is that of self-inquiry into one's consciousness, into that which shapes our conduct. It is significant that Krishnamurti described the "stream of consciousness" as thought-feeling. This guiding principle creates possibilities for enriching and nurturing emotional learning in school education. Paying attention to emotions, recognising them, being aware of them, and dealing with them become an important component of pedagogy. Paying attention to what he called "thought-feeling" is important and Krishnamurti suggested, "as a means to self-knowledge and right thinking...one should write down every thought-feeling, the pleasant as well as the unpleasant. Thus one becomes aware of the whole content of consciousness, the private thoughts and secret motives, intentions and bondages. Thus through constant self-awareness there comes self-knowledge which brings about right thinking..." (Krishnamurti Ojai 2<sup>nd</sup> talk, 1945, as cited in Zwart, 2012). This learning about oneself, one's thoughts and emotions, the stream of consciousness, is transformative and aids in developing relationships with one another in school.

An important aspect of teacher-student relationships in a Krishnamurti school is the open quality of interaction without fear or prejudice. Such a relationship is based on an egalitarian rapport that rests on conversations and dialogue rather than on authoritarian assertions by the teacher over the student. School culture is based on the relationships within school and those that teachers, children, parents, and the community bring to the school. In the flurry of activities that mark a regular school day, school culture in a Krishnamurti school is also marked by stillness. The morning assembly and evening *astachal* (watching the sunset) are two acts that seek to instil stillness as integral aspects of the everyday. By making them part of the routine, they are interwoven into the fabric of school life and become a part of the process of learning that constitutes schooling.

**Listening to Krishnaji  
Ravi Ravindra**

Krishnamurti always drew attention to an intelligence beyond thought. To allow the mysterious and subtle Reality permeated by Truth, Love and Beauty to touch us requires an impartial self-inquiry and freedom from the analytical and argumentative thought. Speaking from the Source like all the great sages, he brought timeless insights, frequently reminding us that Truth can descend to us but we cannot ascend to the Truth. Ordinary human beings may respect these insights but we don't generally practise them, except occasionally in dire situations. The present global situation with the pandemic, enormous climate change and political chaos should invite us to take K's teaching seriously, as Krishnamurti himself reminded us on one occasion, "Sir, you don't see that the house is on fire."

Krishnaji reminded us that a rose does not decide to smell like a rose. It is not a matter of us deciding to do good in the world. If our usual ego-driven self is somewhat transformed and is able to receive the vibrations of Truth, Love and Beauty emanating from the indescribable Mysterious Reality pervading the cosmos, the right self-less action will naturally emerge out of our being.

**The Crisis is in Our Consciousness  
Hillary Rodrigues**

This paper explores the religious philosopher J. Krishnamurti's distinctive teachings in a life spent almost entirely focused on the problems that face humanity. Krishnamurti lived through the twentieth century's most destructive conflicts and was poignantly aware of the urgent need to deal with such crises as war and environmental destruction. Moreover, Krishnamurti also addressed the challenges that people face in their lives and relationships, which find expression in anger, violence, greed, fear, isolation, and loneliness. However, he is often contrasted with founders of major religions with large followings, or social and political activists, whose lives and teachings have made a visible impact on the world. This talk addresses why Krishnamurti's teachings are often misunderstood as promoting a form of abstract introspection that does not translate into viable action in response to the world's problems. Judiciously citing from Krishnamurti's own words, it presents what I understand to be Krishnamurti's actual message.

We first note that it is extremely challenging to appraise Krishnamurti's impact on the crises facing the world. For one, Krishnamurti did not create a religious organization centered on him as a spiritual leader or authority. To him, belonging to any religious, political, or ideological organization undercuts independence and freedom, thereby inhibiting one's capacity to respond to the complex realities of life with creativity and sensitivity. Krishnamurti grounds the crises of the world in our consciousnesses, which are conditioned by the circumstances of our lives. This cultural conditioning, rooted in our ideas about ourselves,

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others, and the world, generates inner conflict and contributes to the world's problems. To Krishnamurti, only a holistic and sensitive awareness of "what-is," in the present moment, awakens the intelligence and love capable of responding instantaneously and appropriately to the crises we face personally and collectively.

### **References**

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