

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

Scholars' Panel Two
Session Four¹

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My Personal and Academic Journey with J. Krishnamurti
Ashwani Kumar

In this presentation, I describe my journey with Krishnamurti's existential inquiry at a personal level and in the context of my academic life. I was introduced to Krishnamurti's work during my Bachelor of Education program in India in 2004. While Krishnamurti was quite peripheral to the curriculum, he became a central focus of study for me during the Bachelor of Education, Masters of Education, and during my PhD. His insights have had a deep impact on how I view personal, educational, and social problems and how I approach teaching and research. His work is central to the four pedagogical and practical concepts that I have developed in my academic career thus far which include: curriculum as meditative inquiry, teaching as meditative inquiry, music as meditative inquiry, and dialogical meditative inquiry. My engagement with Krishnamurti's work serves as an example of the inquiry and transformation one goes through when one begins to study oneself and one's relationship to the world. Observation and listening, which are central to Krishnamurti's meditative processes, remove the barriers within yourself—fears, conditioning influences, anxieties, and conflicts—which allow creative intelligence to function. This creative intelligence is core to my work on meditative inquiry as a transformative approach to teaching, learning, and living.

Krishnamurti's perceptions, looking into the crises of human consciousness and its problems—individual and collective—are more important than ever in a world ridden with conflict and suffering. Krishnamurti argues that the real crisis is not external but internal. The outward problems that we see in the world like racism, economic inequalities, ecological degradation, wars as well as more recently COVID-19, are a result of our wrong relationships with one another and nature. The roots of the global disorder are in our own internal disorder

¹ Scholars' Panel II, Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Dr. Nayha Acharya, and Dr. Vikas Baniwal (Session Four)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNF6TaWFxbQ&list=PLfVjDB_dQhEpYnHf618WMJ_XrT-Oln7CL&index=4&t=8s

characterized by self-centeredness, greed, and fear. Unless we change deep down, in our very minds and hearts, the outward change is only a form of band-aid that cannot bring about true and abiding transformation. Real transformation demands each one of us to take responsibility and live wakefully in our daily life and in our interactions with one another and nature. Awareness—of our thoughts, feelings, and actions as well as of our relationships to people and nature—is the true foundation of a radical change both internally and externally.

Krishnamurti, Law, and Conflict Resolution

Nayha Acharya

In this talk, I discuss how I was introduced to J. Krishnamurti's philosophy and how it has influenced my teaching and research in law and conflict resolution. Part of what legal scholars do is to consider the problems and crises facing the world and to determine how laws, policies, and legal procedures can best respond to these crises. I was engaged in this enterprise at the level of legal procedures—I was primarily concerned with ensuring good legal process for resolving disputes, in the hope that a good legal process would bring about a more harmonious society. As I became more aware of J. Krishnamurti's assertion that the root of conflict is in the consciousness of the individual, I began to see that true lasting transformation cannot be achieved through external regulation (i.e., through laws) but by internal transformation of the individual. I am incorporating this into my research by trying to develop ideas of processes that centralize the experience of the individual.

I also discuss how my experimentation with J. Krishnamurti's ideas has influenced my approach to teaching. I share how and why I introduced some new elements into my teaching on the basis of Ashwani Kumar's concept of curriculum and teaching as meditative inquiry (rooted in Krishnamurti's commitment to holistic teaching). To give students a chance to connect with the subject matter being taught in their own unique ways, I have: (1) incorporated a more dialogical approach in my classrooms; (2) introduced reflection journals where students can discuss any topic that relates to the course and can offer some entries as creative pieces; (3) invited students to give open ended presentations on anything that relates to the course that they are passionate about. I discussed the benefits of allowing this type of freedom in a higher education and professional degree context.

Reflections on Krishnamurti's Ideas for Philosophical Counselling

Vikas Baniwal

In the wake of the global crisis of COVID-19, we are deconstructing our beliefs to uncover the assumptions of our life. This presentation focuses on insights for philosophical counselling rooted in the thought of Jiddu Krishnamurti who believes that self is an illusion and true healing can take place only when we get rid of the mental images that mediate our engagement with people and the world. By overcoming these images, one can enter a non-judgmental state of mind which Krishnamurti calls "choiceless awareness". This presentation argues that Krishnamurti's perspective can inform philosophical counselling to deconstruct our images and give direction to one's life.

This exploration of Krishnamurti as a philosophical counsellor is located in a search for holism, a theory to live by, and a way to transgress limited academic boundaries. The

presentation ponders the challenges that might be raised to think of Krishnamurti as a philosopher or in building a perspective on philosophical counselling through Krishnamurti's ideas.

The presentation deliberates upon the many objections to such a proposal, such as: If Krishnamurti did not believe in systems, then why should one try to develop an approach to counselling based on his ideas? Since counselling is largely verbal, then would we not be stuck in thought itself? Is it even possible to be aware without interpretation? And, therefore, can one ever be free of images?

Finally, I argue that in Krishnamurti's perspective, philosophical counselling, like his idea of education, is rooted in a way to be with someone compassionately. It is in refinement of this "way of being" that I find Krishnamurti to be a philosophical counsellor. In this quest, the aim would be to be in a state of "choiceless awareness", a state in which all thought, all reason, and the counsellor themselves become redundant.

Authors' Details (in order of appearance):

Ashwani Kumar is an Associate Professor of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. His teaching and research are rooted in the work of J. Krishnamurti, focusing upon a philosophical and pedagogical concept called meditative inquiry—a self-reflective and aesthetic approach to teaching, learning, researching, creating, and living. He has conceptualized key new educational concepts, namely, curriculum as meditative inquiry, teaching as meditative inquiry, music as meditative inquiry, and dialogical meditative inquiry. He is the author of two scholarly books: *Curriculum as Meditative Inquiry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and *Curriculum in International Contexts: Understanding Colonial, Ideological, and Neoliberal Influences* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Email address: ashwani.kumar@msvu.ca

Nayha Acharya is an Assistant Professor of law at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University. She teaches and writes in the areas of civil procedure, legal ethics, and alternative dispute resolution. Recently, Nayha has been finding ways to incorporate a pedagogical style rooted in J. Krishnamurti's educational philosophy in her classrooms, and she has been working on developing a framework for conflict resolution also grounded in J. Krishnamurti's philosophical ideas about conflict. Email address: nayha.acharya@dal.ca

Vikas Baniwal is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Education, University of Delhi. He has been a General Fellow for his post-doctoral work at the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (I.C.P.R.). He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Delhi in Education in 2015. He has 12 years of experience in school teaching, higher education, research, and administration. He has many publications to his credit and his key research interests include inter-subjectivity, dialogue, inclusion, mental health, self and identity. He may be contacted at vikas.cie@gmail.com

