

J. KRISHNAMURTI: BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATION

BY

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This year, 1995, is the birth centenary year of J. Krishnamurti, one of this century's most influential spiritual teachers. I had the great privilege to be invited to the Centenary Year Gathering and Dialogue organised by the Krishnamurti Foundation India (KFI) in Madras from 18th to 25th of January. I would like to share my experiences of these most interesting events, and will intersperse my account with excerpts from the various personal accounts of Krishnamurti's teaching and its impact published in the Krishnamurti Birth Centenary Souvenir.

J. Krishnamurti was born on 11th May 1895 in Andhra Pradesh, India, but moved in childhood to Adyar near Madras, when his father gained employment there at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society. Theosophy was a recently founded movement that combined western occult philosophy with Buddhist and Hindu teachings. Here at Adyar on an extensive area of land bordering the Adyar River and the ocean lived and worked some of the founder-members and leaders of the Theosophical Society, such as Colonel Olcott who continued to work tirelessly and devotedly to revivify the understanding and practice of Buddhism in Sri Lanka; C.W. Leadbeater who was much concerned with the exploration and cultivation of psychic powers, and was also the first Headmaster of Ananda College in Colombo (1886-9); and Annie Besant, a radical social reformer in Britain before devoting her energies to making known India's great spiritual heritage to the West, translating the Bhagavad Gita, and founding schools and colleges in India.

It was here at Adyar, playing on the beach, that J. Krishnamurti was first spotted by Leadbeater as a child of great spiritual potential. He was later adopted by Annie Besant and brought up under the wing of the Theosophical Society both here and later in the UK where he was educated. He was being groomed to become their expected Messiah, or Maitreya, the Buddha-to-come; and a whole organisation, the Order of the Star of the East, was set up around him as their leader, with thousands of followers, to further this project.

I had the good fortune to stay in the premises of the Theosophical Society at Adyar where I could enjoy the very extensive gardens and grounds. A tree-lined road winds through groves of palms and exotic gardens to the grandiose Victorian buildings of the Headquarters, then on past some massive ancient banyan trees, famous for their huge spread. Perhaps it was of such an ancient tree that Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet, wrote this beautiful appreciation:

O Profound,
Silent tree, by restraining valour
With patience you revealed creative
Power in its peaceful form. Thus we come
To your shade to learn the art of peace,

To hear the word of silence; weighed down
With anxiety we come to rest
In your beautiful blue-green shade, to take
Into our souls life rich, life ever
Juvenescent, life true to earth, life
Omni-victorious.

Was this the young Krishnamurti's experience, I wonder? Certainly descriptions of him as a child and youth speak of his spending long hours in silent observation and awareness of the natural world. He himself writes:

We never look deeply into the quality of a tree; we never really touch it, feel its solidity, its rough bark, and hear the sound that is part of the tree. Not the sound of wind through the leaves, not the breeze of the morning that flutters the leaves, but its own sound, the sound of the trunk and the silent sound of the roots.

You must be extraordinarily sensitive to hear a sound. This sound is not the noise of the world, not the noise of the chattering of the mind, not the vulgarity of human quarrels and human warfare, but sound as part of the universe.

The conference participants could walk each morning on the same Adyar beach as Krishnamurti played on and later walked, watching the sunrise over the ocean. Perhaps it was here also that Krishnamurti developed his tremendous love for and rapport with the natural world, so evident in his writings.

Another beautiful spot in the grounds is the Garden of Remembrance where in a lovely flower garden are buried the ashes of former leaders of the Theosophical Society including Mr. C. Jinarajadasa, a Sinhalese Buddhist who was its fourth President. And here also is the impressive Adyar Library, founded in 1886 by Colonel Olcott as a centre of research in Eastern civilisation, philosophy and religion, with a collection now of one and a half million printed volumes and over seventeen thousand manuscripts. The Library's manuscripts have been used in many important publications such as those of the Pali Text Society, so this Institution has had a powerful influence on the study of Buddhism and other Eastern religions.

As previously mentioned Krishnamurti grew up and was educated under the wing of the Theosophical Society and its leaders, living amongst their followers and friends both in Europe and America. He regularly addressed gatherings and wrote articles for his followers in the Order of the Star. But as he matured and developed in his own spiritual life he increasingly came to question the role of Teacher and Messiah he was being asked to assume. So it was that in 1929, at the age of 34, Krishnamurti disowned the whole project and organisation bent on making a World Teacher of him, and to a gathering of thousands of devotees declared: "Truth is a pathless land. No organisation, no belief can lead to truth... Truth is within yourself." He dissolved the entire organisation set up around him declaring: "My only concern is to set man absolutely, unconditionally free."

He now regarded himself as an independent thinker with a complete allegiance to Truth; and a few years later severed all links with the Theosophical Society. He spent the rest of his life until his death on 17th of February 1986, aged 90, travelling the world meeting with truth seekers, giving talks, and holding dialogues with philosophers, eminent scientists, psychiatrists, religious and political leaders, students and children. The Foundations he

established during these years served to organise his talks, publish his writings, run schools and offer facilities for study and meditation. He left no spiritual heirs, remaining true to his sense that the individual was both the teacher and the taught.

Dr. P. Krishna in his article in the Centenary Souvenir describes Krishnamurti's approach thus:

Krishnamurti was one of the most original thinkers of our time who investigated fundamental questions about the purposes of life, the true meaning of love, religion, time and death without seeking answers in any books or scriptures, and without accepting any belief, organised religion or system of thought. Like the Buddha, he sought the answers to these questions through observation, enquiry, and self-knowledge and arrived at a direct perception of truth which lies beyond intellectual concepts, theories and descriptions. He was not a scholar or an intellectual; he did not deal with theories and concepts, he spoke only from his own investigations and observations. What he has said may have been said earlier by others, but he came upon the truth of it for himself. In an age dominated by science and the intellect, he has pointed out the fundamental limitations of thought and knowledge as a means of real change.

This challenging approach to the problems of life gained Krishnamurti a worldwide following, which continues to grow even after his death through the large output of his books, audio- and videotapes.

Thus the Centenary Gathering attracted about 300 participants from around the world. Meetings were held in the Krishnamurti Foundation India's headquarters, Vasanta Vihar, which was the house Krishnamurti lived in when in Madras, across the river from the Theosophical Society. The six-acre plot of land filled with trees and flowers was the venue of his annual talks. Now it houses both the Krishnamurti headquarters and The Study, a library and centre of learning where people can go to study Krishnamurti's teaching in a self-guided manner.

The Gatherings programme was designed to reflect Krishnamurti's method of teaching through enquiry and questioning. Fritjof Capra, the eminent scientist and truth-seeker, describes this method:

Krishnamurti would suggest a well known existential problem - fear, desire, death, time - as the topic of a particular lecture, and he would begin his talk with something like the following words: "Let us go into this together, I am not going to tell you anything; I have no authority; we are going to explore this question together..." He would not merely confront you with the results of his analysis but urge and persuade you to get involved in the analysing process yourself. At the end you would come away with the strong and clear feeling that the only way to solve any of your existential problems was to go beyond thought, beyond language, beyond time - to achieve, as he put it in the title of one of his best books, "Freedom from the Known".

As Krishnamurti himself said: "There are no answers to life's questions. The state of mind that questions is more important than the question itself."

So at the Centenary Gathering each morning there was a video of one of Krishnamurti's public talks, followed by a Panel Discussion to probe into the main issues raised by the

teachings. And in the afternoon there were Group Discussions where in smaller numbers the Gathering's participants could grapple with questions such as: Psychological Suffering: can we be free from the pain of desire, attachment, conditioning? The Problem of Time; Are we slaves of time? Do we live in the known, the past? Karma, Destiny and Rebirth: are our lives completely programmed? Education: how have our upbringing and education limited us? Isn't there a need to create a different kind of atmosphere in our homes and schools? And Meditation: is it awareness or concentration? Is it a practice or a way of life?

I myself took part in the workshop on the 'Demand for System and Authority', with the questions raised, don't we need methods and techniques to bring about change in ourselves, and people to guide us? As it was discovered I try to teach meditation, I was asked how this can be done without the necessity for my being an authority figure. I explained that in Buddhism the whole emphasis is on self-effort, being 'a light unto oneself' and in relation to others being a spiritual friend, so that the need to present oneself as a person of authority does not arise.

This four-day Gathering concluded on 21st of January with an address by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to inaugurate the Centenary Year. The retired former President of India, R. Venkataraman, who had personally known Krishnamurti, chaired this session. The Dalai Lama spoke on a number of themes, but centrally on the need for peace in the world and the role of non-violence. He said he had met Krishnamurti and had been impressed by his sharp mind and clarity of thought. I was struck not only by what the Dalai Lama had to say, but also by the nature of the man - so simple, natural and humble, speaking from the heart.

The Centre for Continuing Dialogue hosted the second part of the Centenary celebration at the KFI. As previously mentioned, Krishnamurti held a series of dialogues with philosophers, scientists and others during his lifetime as a way of coming upon new insights and deeper understanding on topics ranging from the abstract, such as Reality, Perception, and Thought, to vital issues in daily life, such as Fear, Loneliness, Sorrow and Violence. Since his death the Centre for Continuing Dialogue has held similar dialogue sessions on the themes: The Nature of Dialogue, Learning about Consciousness, and Approaches to Death. The theme this year was One Hundred Years of Krishnamurti, to enquire into the impact of sixty years of Krishnamurti's talks, writings and dialogues. I was one of about thirty persons invited to participate. In this smaller, two-day gathering we were able to probe more deeply into the thoughts and concerns of Krishnamurti with those who are now trying to live and apply his insights and methods in their professional lives and personal search for Truth.

In describing the various Dialogue sessions I will seek to explore and elucidate the themes covered by presenting material from the Krishnamurti Birth Centenary Souvenir publication, and other sources, so that a fuller appreciation of Krishnamurti's teaching and its impact can be attempted.

The first session was on The Nature of Krishnamurti Dialogue, with an exploration of this mode of questioning and probing together a topic or problem which was so central to Krishnamurti's approach to enquirers both in public and private.

As Radha Burnier, The International President of the Theosophical Society, has written in the Centenary Souvenir:

There was not the slightest attempt on his part to persuade or to put pressure on people into viewing things as he did. In public lectures and discussions he would

say: "Do not be influenced by the speaker". In private he did not tell people what they should do. As the "Commentaries on Living" make clear, he patiently helped each person to unfold a problem or subject and see for himself the truth in it ... Krishnamurti repeatedly emphasised that it had very little significance if we either accepted or rejected what he said. It is only when we consider it, question it, examine it and find out for ourselves if it is true that it has value.

In the course of this session the questions were raised, how did Krishnamurti's dialogues fall in line with Socratic dialogues, or the Buddha's dialogues? Is it possible to have a Krishnamurti dialogue without him? And I myself raised the question of the apparent impatience Krishnamurti often showed in the course of these dialogues - was it possible for anyone who took part to throw light on this?

There is a fascinating account in the Centenary Souvenir by Ingram Smith of a dialogue which occurred between Krishnamurti and Dr. N.M. Perera, the well known Marxist leader and Member of the Opposition in the Sri Lanka Parliament, during the course of one of Krishnamurti's public talks in Colombo in the 1940's.

One Thursday evening discussion Dr. N.M. Perera stood up. He said he would like to discuss the structure of society and social cohesion ... He talked for some minutes on the logic of state control as the supreme authority, and spoke about the basic tenets of Communism ... When he had finished and sat down I wondered how Krishnamurti would deal with the proposition that the State was all, and the individual subservient to the all-powerful central authority.

Krishnamurti did not oppose what had been said - there was no sense of confrontation whatsoever, only a mutual probing into the reality behind the rhetoric ... There was mutual investigation into the ways in which the Communist philosophy actually operated and the means by which conflicts were handled ... Dr. Perera was still claiming the necessity for totalitarian rule, asserting that everyone must go along with the decided policy and be made to conform.

At this point Krishnamurti drew back:

K: What happens when I as an individual feel I cannot go along with the supreme command's decision? What if I won't conform?

P: We would try to convince you that individual dissent, perhaps valid before a decision is taken, cannot be tolerated after. All have to participate.

K: You mean obey?

P: Yes.

K: And if I still couldn't or wouldn't agree?

P: We would have to show you the error of your ways.

K: And if someone still maintains that some law or regulation is false? What then?

P: We would probably incarcerate him so that he was no longer a disruptive influence.

With utter simplicity and directness Krishnamurti said:

"I am that man."

Consternation! Suddenly - total confrontation. An electric charge had entered the room - the very atmosphere was charged ... Neither Dr. Perera nor his colleagues wanted to pursue this dangerously explicit dialogue.

K: I am that man. I refuse to be silenced. I'll talk to anyone who will listen; what do you do with me? Liquidate me?

F: Probably. You would not be allowed to contaminate others.

K: Probably?

F: You would be eliminated.

After a long pause, Krishnamurti said: "And then, Sir, you would have made a martyr of me!" There was no way of dodging the implications ... "And what then?"

Krishnamurti waited - and then quietly went back through the course of the dialogue. He talked of interrelationship, of the destruction of life for a belief, for some blueprint for the future; the destructiveness of ideals and the imposition of formulae on living human beings. The need not for environmental change but for inward transformation. When he finished, the meeting was over. There was really nothing more to be said.

Ingram Smith finally describes how Dr. Perera then went up to Krishnamurti on the stage and embraced him, without a word.

Another session was on Science, Aesthetics and Spirituality. One of the interesting issues raised here was in what ways the insight of the scientist and the creativity of the artist was different from or similar to the spiritual vision of life. One point of difference raised was that the life of a scientist or an artist may be disorderly or even chaotic, but the life of a spiritual person will have a different quality, showing a certain inner harmony.

In the context of the relationship of science to the spiritual life Fritjof Capra records a private conversation with Krishnamurti which he says was crucial in his development as a scientist. He writes:

I remember I was fascinated as well as deeply disturbed by Krishnamurti's lectures. I was faced with the serious problem ... I had just embarked on a promising scientific career, and now Krishnamurti told me, with all his charisma and persuasion, to stop thinking, to liberate myself from all knowledge, to leave reasoning behind, What did this mean for me? Should I give up my scientific career at this early stage, or should I remain a scientist and abandon all hope of attaining spiritual self-realisation? ...

"How can I be a scientist," I asked him, and still follow your advice of stopping thought and attaining freedom from the known? ... He answered: "First you are an

human being, then you are a scientist. First you have to become free, and this freedom cannot be achieved through thought. It is achieved through meditation - the understanding of the totality of life, in which every form of fragmentation has ceased. Once I had reached the understanding of life as a whole, he told me, I would be able to specialize and work as a scientist without any problems."

Another scientist who was deeply impressed by J. Krishnamurti, and engaged in a series of dialogues with him, was David Bohm, the physicist. He writes of the qualities of mind he experienced in his meetings with Krishnamurti: an ease of communication, the intense energy with which Krishnamurti listened, his freedom from self-protective reservations and barriers. David Bohm likens this to other eminent scientists with whom he had discussions especially Einstein. He highlights what he feels to be the major discovery of Krishnamurti: that all the disorder and confusion that pervades the consciousness of mankind, which is the root cause of such widespread sorrow and misery, is because we are ignorant of the nature of our own processes of thought - we do not see what is actually happening when we are engaged in the activity of thinking. David Bohm further comments that Krishnamurti's work is permeated by the essence of the scientific approach. He begins from a fact, observes it assiduously, and arrives at an insight. This insight is then tested to see whether it holds together in a rational order, and then to see whether it leads to order and coherence in life as a whole. He commends to us such a scientific, non-authoritarian approach which invites us to make our own discoveries for ourselves.

As a teacher of meditation myself, I was asked to chair the session on The Meditative Mind. The introductory talk was given by a Tibetan monk, Professor S. Rinpoche, from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies at Sarnath. In introducing him I explained that Rinpoche means the Precious One - indeed, this was a precious moment because we were discussing a very vital theme, the meditative mind. Professor Rinpoche's talk was very interesting for me because though the speaker had known Krishnamurti very well and was familiar with his teachings still he presented the theme in a traditional Buddhist way. He spoke mainly about Samatha and Vipassana, calm and insight. His talk generated many questions, mainly on the differences between his presentation and what Krishnamurti himself taught. I had to conclude the session early due to the unexpected departure of the speaker for another engagement. In doing so I suggested that as some of the questions raised had not been answered what might be attempted is to stay with the questions until the questioner disappears, as Krishnamurti would say!

As I have indicated, Krishnamurti's approach to meditation shows some differences from the traditional Buddhist practice in its emphasis on choiceless awareness to the exclusion of other practices. As Krishnamurti explained to Rom Landau:

It seems to me that deliberate concentration on one particular thought, eliminating all others, must create an inner conflict. I consider it wiser to meditate on whatever enters your mind ... It is not the subject of your thought that matters so much as the quality of your thinking. Try to complete a thought instead of banishing it, and your mind will become a wonderful creative instrument instead of being a battlefield of competing thoughts. Your meditation will then develop into a constant alertness of mind. This is what I understand by meditation.

And in an explanation of the core of his teaching for his friend and biographer Mary Luytens he writes:

When man becomes aware of the movement of his own consciousness he will see the division between the thinker and the thought, the observer and the observed, the experiencer and the experience. He will discover that this division is an illusion. Then only is there observation which is insight without any shadow of the past. This timeless insight brings about a deep radical change in the mind.

Finally, to Rom Landau's question as to what he meant by awareness, Krishnamurti answered in a way which throws much light on what was for him the Meditative Mind:

What matters is that we should live completely at every moment of our lives. That is the only real liberation. Truth is nothing abstract, it is neither philosophy, occultism or mysticism. It is everyday life, it is perceiving the meaning and wisdom of life around us.

At this point, reflecting that two such eminent Buddhists as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Prof. S. Rinpoche had been invited to take leading roles in the proceedings, and there were other Buddhists amongst the participants, this brings up the connection between Krishnamurti and Buddhism. His close friend and biographer, Pupul Jayakar, has written that the very sound of the name of the Buddha seemed to make Krishnamurti tremble with a feeling of utmost worship. And he is quoted as saying, "If I knew that the Buddha would be speaking here tomorrow nothing in the world would stop me from going to listen to him. And I would follow him to the very end."

Returning to the course of the Dialogue sessions, there were sessions on Perception, Awareness and Insight, and Relationship and Sorrow, but I will conclude this summary with the session on the theme of Education as a Process of Transformation. Krishnamurti laid great emphasis on the need for a radical change, a once-and-for-all transformation in the human beings mind and processes of thinking, and whole approach to the world. Education should be a means of fostering this change. He writes:

To understand life is to understand ourselves, and that is both the beginning and end of education. Education is not merely acquiring knowledge, gathering and correlating facts, it is to see significance of life as a whole.

It was in an attempt to discover and propagate a new form of education that Krishnamurti and some of his closest friends and followers set up schools based on his teachings of enquiry, self-knowledge and understanding. Krishnamurti writes:

The purpose, the aim and drive of these schools is to equip the child with the most excellent technological proficiency so that he may function with clarity and efficiency in the modern world; and far more importantly, to create the right climate so that the child may develop fully as a complete human being. This means giving him the opportunity to flower in goodness, so that he is rightly related to people, things and ideas, to the whole of life.

It is clear from Pupul Jayakar's biography of Krishnamurti that the founding of the schools was itself seen as a revolutionary, transformative act. She describes how some leading Indian intellectuals were influenced by Krishnamurti, around the time of India's Independence, and abandoned Socialist and Marxist politics or Gandhian idealism, and their professions, to join him in establishing these schools where a new generation might be educated free from old and limiting beliefs, traditions and superstitions.

In this dialogue session teachers from different Krishnamurti schools both in India and abroad presented their experiences, ideas and insights on this theme. But for me, the most moving account of a Krishnamurti school is given in the Centenary Souvenir where a former student, now teacher, at the Brockwood Park School in England writes of his youthful experiences there in the late 1970's:

It was an experiment in learning concerned with a fundamental question, namely whether it is possible for a small community of staff and students to be free of all forms of destructive conditioning ... Sensitivity was the main thing. It became acute in that atmosphere of total physical and psychological security. Relationship was permeated by an unusual degree of understanding, cooperation and respect. In academics I was able to recover the natural desire to learn which had been nearly stifled by the fear-ridden practices of traditional schooling. This was different ... It awakened an inner and sensory perceptiveness and cultivated questioning to bring about the greatest art of living with its creative happiness.

In fact, on one evening of the Centenary Gathering the children of the Krishnamurti School in Madras presented a cultural programme for us. This was conceived and performed to the most impressive standards, presenting various ideas and themes of Krishnamurti's teaching in the form of dance and song. It was moving to see and appreciate these talented youngsters.

Considering these Dialogue sessions on a more general level, one tendency I noticed throughout the course of the meetings and which I raised as a point in one of the Dialogue sessions, was for followers of Krishnamurti to use his statements in direct quotation when talking about his teachings, rather than reformulating them in their own words in the light of their own personal experience and understanding. It struck me that there was a danger of one becoming conditioned by Krishnamurti's teachings, rather than realising the truth of them for oneself, so that the instrument one is using to free oneself in fact becomes the conditioning factor. This was something I felt amongst some of the participants in the discussions. And Rajesh Dalal, writing on the institution of Vasanta Vihar, the Krishnamurti Study Centre, raises similar questions in the Centenary Souvenir:

Are we closely checking whether we are not making Krishnamurti into a psychological authority and using his words in a manner detrimental to their spirit? Do we bank on Krishnamurti's recorded words rather than trusting in our own enquiry and testing its limits? Do we meet the new afresh, or through his words? Do we hold in our consciousness an awareness of the danger of freezing and fossilizing the teachings?

So with the ending of the Centenary Gathering and Dialogue and my return to Sri Lanka I ask myself what I gained from this experience and fresh encounter with Krishnamurti's thoughts and teachings? One interesting area of insight for me was consideration of Krishnamurti's approach to the many questions and problems posed to him. Rather than immediately seeking to respond with an answer or a solution Krishnamurti would instead invite the questioner to explore the question or problem itself, believing that once this was fully understood and its various aspects probed, the answer would be found there already in the question.

Another area for reflection raised for me was the importance of personal exploration, insight and verification - not accepting a teaching on authority. This I feel would be valid in the practice of any spiritual path.

The theme of the Dialogue was the attempt to evaluate Krishnamurti one hundred years after his birth and with the impact of sixty years of his teaching. Various biographies of Krishnamurti have appeared over these years attempting such evaluation by a number of people who greatly admired Krishnamurti's teaching and have been deeply influenced by him on a personal level - notable amongst them that by Pupul Jayakar, his close friend and follower, published in 1986.

However, in 1991 there appeared a biography of quite a different nature. Entitled "Lives in the Shadow with J.Krishnamurti", Radha Rajagopal Sloss, the daughter of two of Krishnamurti's closest and most intimate friends, sets out to detail the shadow side of Krishnamurti's life and person, claiming that Krishnamurti had a long-term love affair and sexual relationship with her mother, Rosalind, and thus was not the austere ascetic that people believed him to be; that he deceived her father about this, telling lies when faced with difficult situations, though publicly claiming a deep adherence to Truth; that in this he was driven by fear and insecurity, though in his talks and writings he laid great stress on going beyond fear; that despite his apparent great reverence for all life, he countenanced Rosalind seeking abortions on three occasions when she became pregnant by him; that he was later to some degree unfaithful to Rosalind herself, and was less than truthful with her about this; that in later life he ruthlessly turned against her father who had devoted his life and great capacities to furthering Krishnamurti's work; that though he renounced the early fame and title of World Teacher that he was groomed for, yet he relished the religious devotionism and adulation shown towards him in India; that for a spiritually advanced person he was unduly concerned with his appearance and projected self-image, always wearing the most expensively tailored clothes and grooming himself carefully before appearing before any gathering; that throughout his life he manipulated and used the people around him for his own ends.

As was to be expected, it was the "revelations" concerning Krishnamurti's sexual activities that aroused the interest of the media and were widely publicised at the time. At the Centenary Gathering and Dialogue I asked a number of the participants what was their reaction to these allegations. Their replies were interesting. One response was that people were "shocked" by the story. Some stated that the book was unfair and heavily slanted against Krishnamurti. Others said that they had not read or completed reading the book so did not want to form an opinion.

Another approach was that we have to distinguish the teacher and his personal life from the teachings - his personal life is irrelevant. And that we can use his teachings without reference to him as such.

A fifth response was that we have no criteria with which to judge an enlightened man, so we cannot judge a person of the calibre of J. Krishnamurti. Finally an old friend of Krishnamurti said that Krishnamurti had a lot of playfulness and ecstasy in him, and the conduct referred to in Ms. Sloss' book may have been a manifestation of that ecstasy and playfulness.

It may be useful here to consider Krishnamurti's own stated views on sex. A reviewer of the earlier Pupul Jayakar biography, Usha John, writing in "India Perspectives" in 1994 (therefore after Ms. Sloss book was highlighted in the media) states:

A master of reality, Krishnamurti had candid views on sex too. He did not approve of abstinence and chastity. According to him, sex is like a tender flower, an intense flame, delicate and rare. It has to be nurtured and cherished. You have to be especially watchful when it is not operating as nature intended. To let sex function freely is to dissipate energy, to suppress it brutally is to destroy something delicate and intensely beautiful - so watch it with warmth, nurture it let it discover itself and unfold - neither denying it nor succumbing to it.

In "Krishnamurti for Beginners - An Anthology" brought out by KFI to mark the Centenary Year, there is an account of Krishnamurti's response to a questioner who has asked why sex has become such an important problem in life. He describes the sexual act as a way of self-forgetfulness, an ending of self-consciousness in an act of fusion with another, thus a self-abnegation - perhaps the only area in modern life where this is possible. He further says:

When there is love the problem of sex ceases, and without love to pursue the ideal of brahmacharaya (religious chastity) is an absurdity because the ideal is unreal. The real is that which you are, and if you don't understand your mind, the workings of your own mind you will not understand sex because sex is a thing of the mind.

And similarly in the "Penguin Second Krishnamurti Reader" edited by Mary Luytens he speaks on Passion:

When sexual feeling is born out of pleasure it is lust. If it is born out of love it is not lust even though great delight may then be present ... The beauty in sex is the absence of the "me", the ego, but the thought of sex is the affirmation of the ego, and that is pleasure.

And in another exchange on Love and Sex he says:

Thought engenders pleasure. Thinking about the sexual act becomes lust, which is entirely different from the act of sex. What most people are concerned with is the passion of lust. The craving is thought. Thought is not love.

Thus it would appear from his statements that Krishnamurti did not repudiate sex and the sexual act as such. But he was deeply aware of the problems around sex and marriage as they manifested in people's lives and often addressed these issues in public and private with questioners and friends. An interesting account of such a private conversation is given by Asit Chandmal in his book "One Thousand Moons". Asit Chandmal, when he was aged about eighteen, was visiting Krishnamurti in India:

Suddenly the desire to understand sex became very strong. The next day I went to talk to Krishnamurti about it. He said: "Thought is the sexual problem. Listen to desire as you would to a song, or to the breeze amongst the trees. Don't let sex precipitate you into marriage. If you marry a girl who is not beautiful you won't be happy. You will play around with others."

"And if I married someone very beautiful?"

"Oh no, that won't make you happy - she will play around."

Many years later he said to me: "I am not against sex, it's natural when people are young. But now, Asit, see if you can look at sex differently."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

He said, "Don't suppress it. But don't give into it. And don't run away from it."

"Then what do I do if I don't suppress it, nor turn away from it, nor give into it?"

"Try it; you will see."

I did. I felt the most astonishing energy, a feeling of being totally alive. Krishnamurti said he could see the change in me ... The feeling lasted a week, and I have never been able to recapture it.

I find the earlier section of this reported conversation both curious and revealing. Did Krishnamurti really mean those sweeping generalisations that all beautiful women would "play around"; and that if Asit married someone less than beautiful he would inevitably "play around" also? These seem very superficial and unwarranted generalisations. Also does it imply that Krishnamurti placed great importance on faithfulness within marriage? His own life if we are to believe Ms. Sloss' account, would not appear to bear this out. And from his other talks and writings the impression is generally, gained that he did not have a high regard for marriage, seeing it as just another social institution or convention, held in being by religious and moral dogmatism.

So perhaps the most vital and fundamentally iconoclastic claim of Ms. Sloss is that Krishnamurti departed from the Truth, both in his conduct and self-presentation. In this context it is worth quoting Vimala Thakar, a spiritual teacher much influenced by Krishnamurti:

On 7th of February 1986, during a very intimate conversation with his workers Krishnamurti has said, if you do not get rooted in the truth you understand, you will get destroyed by that truth." A very devastating statement. If you do not get rooted in the truth you understand intellectually, you don't get anchored there, you don't live the truth you have understood, this same truth could destroy you.

Does this telling statement made by Krishnamurti at the end of his life indicate that he believed he had indeed been "rooted in the truth that he had understood? Or does it show that Krishnamurti makes these elevated statements, but they do not bear relation to his own life?

It is most regrettable that Ms. Sloss did not publish her allegations while Krishnamurti was still alive to answer them, so that a fuller understanding of the truth of Ms. Sloss claims against him be attempted. And if these various allegations were indeed true, would it show that Krishnamurti could not live up to what he was teaching? One reviewer of Ms. Sloss book seems to have taken up the position that it does show this. Sue Gainsford, writing in the British newspaper "The Independent" says:

The "Shadow" of Ms. Sloss' title comes from T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men". It is what stops us from living up to our own ideals, the Shadow that falls between idea and reality, essence and descent, conception and creation ... What makes the whole story shocking is that it negates so much of what Krishnamurti preached to adoring crowds all over the world ... He spoke of universal brotherhood, his own unassailable chastity, and the supreme importance of each individual, yet his fundamental lack of integrity eventually developed into an outburst of vindictive

hatred against those to whom he owed everything ... The facts of his life betray him eventually as an unprincipled charlatan.

However, in his review of Ms. Sloss' book, Stanley Jayaweera does not take such a negative view. He suggests that in Buddhist terms Krishnamurti could be seen to have attained the first stage of enlightenment, but was not completely enlightened, as was the Buddha.

So this debate concerning Krishnamurti's life in relation to his teachings could be an important factor in evaluating Krishnamurti now.

I would like to draw to an end this account and exploration of J. Krishnamurti, occasioned by his birth centenary celebrations, by quoting a warm personal homage to Krishnamurti by R. Venkataraman:

At all times he was a comrade, a friend, a fellow-thinker ... In an age of "godmen" offering instant formulae for spiritual nourishment, he offered not soft solutions, nor hard ones. Krishnamurti, in fact, made only one offer: the offer of participation of joint exploration and of shared discoveries. All he asked for was that we should walk with him, awake.

In conclusion, as the main intent of the Centenary Gathering and Dialogue was to evaluate the impact of Krishnamurti over the last sixty years I thought that writing this article would generate a similar discussion amongst its readers, appraising Krishnamurti critically in the light of the spiritual traditions in Sri Lanka.