UNIT: 13 JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI: FREEDOM FROM THE KNOWN

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Freedom

13.4 Self and self-knowledge

13.5 Education

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain concept of freedom in Krishnamurti's philosophy
- explain why Krishnamurti considered freedom as essential for living
- explain importance of 'awareness' in Krishnamurti's philosophy
- discuss the concept of self in Krishnamurti's philosophy
- explain concept of self-knowledge in Krishnamurti's philosophy
- explain how freedom and self-knowledge are related
- discuss Krishnamurti's philosophy of education
- explain why Krishnamurti considered education as important for living life
- describe the inter-relation of freedom, self-knowledge and education in Krishnamurti's philosophy

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Jiddu Krishnamurti is not a philosopher who has given a systematic exposition of his philosophy. His main concern is not

philosophy but the man himself. It is because of his concern for man and his life that his philosophy is at times compared to existentialism. But he himself does not brand his philosophy by any name. Krishnamurti is basically concerned with the question of living life. But he says that one truly lives when one is free- free from suffering. Thus his philosophical concern is with ending human suffering to make man free to live. Krishnamurti does not provide any answers to the question of how to end suffering. He rather tries to stimulate the individual to find out answers for himself. However, he says that self-knowledge is pre-requisite for freedom. And right education can help one to be free.

13.3 FREEDOM

The freedom Krishnamurti talks of is not political, or economic freedom but is freedom in the field of one's mind. It is not a freedom from something, but is a state of being. Krishnamurti regarded freedom as necessary for living life. In fact, for Krishnamurti one is not living in the true sense of the term without freedom. But he says that very few men know in fact that he is not free. Normally, every man thinks that he is acting freely. But in reality, generally, whenever a man acts he acts as dictated by his own beliefs or the dogmas or rules and regulations of the society. For example, I perform certain rituals because I believe that such action will lead me to heaven; and I have this concept of heaven because it was taught to me by somebody or by some book and not because I myself found it out with my free thinking. Again, someone tells us what truth is and shows us ways to find that truth; we accept what is told to us and start following that path. Our action again is determined by our belief that the person concerned knows what truth is. According to Krishnamurti, most of our actions are results of such beliefs or dogmas. Krishnamurti says that to become free one first has to know that one is in actuality not free. Then only one can break away from the shackles that bind one. Krishnamurti says that as one realizes one is not-free or bound one becomes free. The example Krishnamurti himself uses is that

of a poisonous snake- as one sees a snake one does not keep on holding it. Similarly, as one sees one is bound, the binding is dropped. But first one has to realize that one is bound. Thus, essential feature for freedom is the realization that one is not free as one generally thinks but is bound- bound by his own beliefs or by the authority he believes in. This realization that one is bound is the first step towards becoming free. According to Krishnamurti to realize that one is not-free automatically brings in certain changes in the person concerned and makes him free. In other words, for Krishnamurti when one realizes one is bound, one becomes free. In fact regarding freedom he says, “the first step is the last step”. Freedom cannot be given to anybody by anybody because that one is not-free or bound has to be realized by the person concerned; another person can help by telling, but it is the person concerned who has to realize it himself.

As the freedom Krishnamurti talks about is not a freedom outside oneself, we need to realize that Krsihnamurti is not talking about breaking rules and regulations outside onself. Krishnamurti is not saying that one should break social laws and is to go against legal system to be free. For him, man has to break free of thoughts and ideas that prevent one to think freely; in fact, according to him, thought itself is binding. He says that man has to become free from thought itself to be free. This will give human beings a mind that is open, without limit as there are no thoughts to put a limit to the mind. Krishnamurti’s freedom is thus the freedom one requires for any enquiry whatsoever. And this freedom is needed to begin one’s enquiry itself; freedom is not something or state that is to be attained at the end of a process, but it is the pre-requisite for starting any enquiry. And this is the freedom, he says, without which, man cannot live in the true sense of the term. His reason for saying this is that- life is a movement where things are to be met with, looked at with a new mind. Let us compare what Krishnamurti says about life with a river: River is ever flowing. Whatever it comes across on its path, the river is meeting that thing for the first time. It might have crossed over many things which

are like what it is meeting now. But it is not the same thing. Similarly, life being a movement everything life comes across is new and therefore is to be looked at or met with freshly. And one cannot do it if one looks at the things with old ideas one is carrying in the mind. This is the reason why Krishnamurti says, the mind has to be free from all limits to see things newly as life moves on. If one does not meet things newly as life moves on but sees things through old ideas, it is preventing the flow or movement of life and thus is not living. This freedom from thought is what Krishnamurti calls 'freedom from the known'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Fill up the blanks

a. The freedom Krishnamurti talks of is not political, or economic freedom but is freedom in the field of one's _____

b. Krishnamurti says that as one realizes one is_____ or _____one becomes free.

c. This freedom from_____ is what Krishnamurti calls 'freedom from the known'.

13.4 SELF AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The question of how to become free and how to realize one is bound are not two separate questions for Krishnamurti. And this question of freedom is closely associated with self and self-knowledge. According to Krishnamurti, self-knowledge makes man free. But before we come to what is self-knowledge for Krishnamurti, it is necessary to understand what is self for Krishnamurti.

Self as understood by Krishnamurti is not a spiritual substance. Self for him is the totality of thoughts- conscious, sub-conscious, and unconscious. Actually, Krishnamurti does not distinguish among levels of consciousness. He calls all of them together consciousness. Further, he does not make a distinction between consciousness and content of

consciousness. He identifies them- consciousness is content of consciousness. And content of consciousness or consciousness is nothing but thought. Whatever makes up human consciousness is thought and this is self for Krishnamurti. To quote him, “The idea, the memory, the experience, the various intentions, the conscious endeavour to be or not to be, the accumulated memory of the unconscious, the racial, the group, the individual, the clan, and the whole of it all, whether it is projected outwardly in action or projected spiritually as virtue; the striving after all this is self.” Generally it is thought that the self or the ‘I’ owns thought. Krishnamurti holds that there is no self apart from thought. When Krishnamurti talks of thought as identical with self, one is supposed to understand the totality of thought. This thought thus includes thoughts of so called different levels of consciousness. Krishnamurti does not make a distinction between the owner of thought and the thought itself. For him totality of thought is the self- there being no self beyond and besides thoughts. According to him, to think that there is someone who has or owns thought is a mistake.

It is in the light of Krishnamurti’s understanding of the self, that his idea of self-knowledge is to be understood. As self is nothing apart from the totality of thought, to know the self one has to know thought itself which is constituted, as already said, by the content of one’s consciousness. To know thought thus one has to look at the content of one’s consciousness or the totality of one’s thought. Krishnamurti does not ask us to go for introspection or analysis of our thoughts. He does not ask us to go into all the thoughts and learn about their nature. He asks us rather to look at ourselves in our feelings, actions, and behaviours. He tells us to see ourselves in our behaviours towards somebody or something and in our emotions and feelings towards things and beings. It is in these feelings and behaviours that we can find ourselves. As it is only in our feelings and behaviours towards others that we can see ourselves, Kishnamurti says that it is only in our ‘relationship’

that we can find ourselves. Regarding the nature of this looking, Krishnamurti says that the looking is not to be selective. That is, one is not supposed to select what is to be looked at. One is to look at oneself as one occurs- whether what one sees is to one's liking or not. Again, we have to keep in mind that for Krishnamurti there is no self apart from thought itself. So the one who is looking and the thought that is being looked at are not two different things but one and the same thing. In common parlance looking involves the 'onlooker' and the 'looked at'. But as there is no division between the one who is looking and that which is being looked at here, Krishnamurti uses the term 'awareness' for such looking. Krishnamurti further says that while one is looking at oneself, one should not be influenced by how these qualities or attributes are viewed commonly. This is so because, if I, for example, start looking at myself by already thinking that jealousy is bad, or honesty is good, there is every chance that I will avoid looking at jealousy when the feeling comes and try to catch myself when I am honest. It is for this reason that Krishnamurti says that to be aware one has to be free from prejudices and idea. Such awareness as thus is not selective or based on one's choice, it is called 'choiceless awareness'. So, it is in choiceless awareness that one becomes aware of what one is- whether one is a compassionate, honest, jealous, angry etc. It is in such awareness alone that one can truly know as one is. This is self-knowledge.

It is only in self-knowledge that one can be free. When one sees one's feelings and behaviours one understands the reason, the thought behind and realizes that what one is doing or feeling is a reaction of idea or thought one already possesses. Krishnamurti says, as one comes to see now how thoughts are influencing one's feelings and behaviour and preventing one to meet life and live, one will automatically become free from these thoughts.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2. State whether the following statements are true or false

a. Self as understood by Krishnamurti is a spiritual substance.

b. Krishnamurti holds that there is no self apart from thought.

c. It is in choiceless awareness that one becomes aware of what one is or have self-knowledge.

13.5 EDUCATION

Krishnamurti's concern is man and that one lives life fully. He says that what is actually essential for man is to live life fully and integrally. He says that man is made up of different elements but these elements are to be integrated if life is to be lived fully and integrally. If a man is separated within himself into different elements, there is conflict within himself which is painful. Thus, there is sorrow if one is not integrated. It is only when one is living an integrated life that one lives fully. Now, for integration, says Krishnamurti, there has to be intelligence. And education is about awakening this intelligence. Thus educations by awakening intelligence helps man in becoming integrated and consequently to live life fully. For Krishnamurti 'intelligence' means 'the capacity to see things clearly'. To see things clearly, however, one needs a vision that is not affected by one's ideas, thoughts or beliefs. In other words, freedom is essential for clear seeing. Krishnamurti insistence on clear seeing can be said to be because without it there is no learning.

Education, according to Krishnamurti, is not so much about knowledge as it is about learning. Of the two terms 'knowledge' has reference to the past while 'learning' refers to the present. Knowledge, for Krishnamurti is always of the past because the term itself means that it is of things which have already been known. But learning is always learning now. To understand what Krishnamurti is saying we can say for example that the subject Philosophy is a storehouse of knowledge given

to us by generations of philosophers; but my learning from this storehouse of knowledge is taking place now. Unless and until one is doing the learning one will not actually understand anything. It is for this reason that Krishnamurti says that education is not about acquainting student with the available knowledge but it is about making students learn.

Learning is not something that another individual can do for us. Others can acquaint us various fields of knowledge, but cannot learn for us. Each of us has to do the learning by ourselves. That is, the teacher cannot do the learning for the student, the student has to do the learning for himself or herself. Again, learning, says Krishnamurti is always of the 'new'. The term' learn' is used always with reference to things that is new for the learner. One does not learn about things one already knows. We do not say 'I am learning what I already know'. As what one is learning is new, one is not to try to understand it with the help of one's knowledge. But in life one tries to learn with the help of what one already knows. Krishnamurti tries to make us see that one cannot learn with the help of what is already known. When we try to do this, we are not learning. Therefore, Krishnamurti says that for learning, there has to be freedom.

And we have already seen in our discussion on 'freedom' that freedom is not something that can be given to somebody. The student cannot be made free. The student is to become free by himself or herself. The teacher's role is to see that the student is free, free to enquire, free to learn. In other words, the teacher cannot make the student free for learning to take place, but he or she can help in creating an environment where the student stays free. As the teacher is acquainting the student with the various fields of knowledge, he or she is to see that the student is doing the learning. Moreover, it is not that learning is taking place only for the student. Learning is supposed to be taking place even for the teacher. Life, forever being a movement, always throws up new things about which each of us is to learn. It is for this reason that Krishnamurti uses the words 'sharing' in place of teaching. The teacher shares with the students as he/she is learning now.

Very closely associated with Krishnamurti's concept of education are the concepts of 'fear' and 'discipline'. He says that, learning is possible only in absence of fear. If there is fear one cannot learn as fear prevents one in seeing with clarity. Therefore, a teacher is to see that student is not afraid. Again, learning requires discipline. However, Krishnamurti opposes discipline in its common understanding, the discipline that is imposed from outside. He says that discipline comes automatically when one is interested in learning. It is here that self-knowledge becomes important. True interest cannot be created but comes when one is doing what one likes to do. Therefore, one has to find out what one really likes to do. This requires self-knowledge- one has to know what one truly is and thus what is one's true calling.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3. Give short answers to following Questions:

a. How does education help in living life fully?

b. How is knowledge different from learning?

c. What is discipline for Krishnamurti?



13.6 LET US SUM UP

- Jiddu Krishnamurti is not a philosopher who has given a systematic exposition of his philosophy. His main concern is not philosophy but the man himself. It is because of his concern for man and his life that his philosophy is at times compared to existentialism.
- The freedom Krishnamurti talks of is not political, or economic freedom but is freedom in the field of one's mind. It is not a freedom from something, but is a state of being. Krishnamurti regarded freedom as necessary for living life. In fact, for Krishnamurti one is not living in the true sense of the term without freedom.

- Krishnamurti says that to become free one first has to know that one is in actuality not free. Then only one can break away from the shackles that bind one. Krishnamurti says that as one realizes one is not-free or bound one becomes free.
- According to Krishnamurti to realize that one is not-free automatically brings in certain changes in the person concerned and makes him free. In other words, for Krishnamurti when one realizes one is bound, one becomes free. In fact regarding freedom he says, “the first step is the last step”.
- As the freedom Krishnamurti talks about is not a freedom outside oneself, we need to realize that Krsihnamurti is not talking about breaking rules and regulations outside onself. Krishnamurti is not saying that one should break social laws and is to go against legal system to be free. For him, man has to break free of thoughts and ideas that prevent one to think freely; in fact, according to him, thought itself is binding.
- The mind has to be free from all limits to see things newly as life moves on. If one does not meet things newly as life moves on but sees things through old ideas, it is preventing the flow or movement of life and thus is not living. This freedom from thought is what Krishnamurti calls ‘freedom from the known’.
- Self as understood by Krishnamurti is not a spiritual substance. Self for him is the totality of thoughts. For him totality of thought is the self- there being no self beyond and besides thoughts. According to him, to think that there is someone who has or owns thought is a mistake.
- It is in choiceless awareness that one becomes aware of what one is- whether one is a compassionate, honest, jealous, angry etc. It is in such awareness alone that one can truly know as one is. This is self-knowledge.
- It is only in self-knowledge that one can be free. Krishnamurti says, as one comes to see now how thoughts are influencing

one's feelings and behaviour and preventing one to meet life and live, one will automatically become free from these thoughts.

- Krishnamurti's concern is man and that one lives life fully. He says that what is actually essential for man is to live life fully and integrally. It is only when one is living an integrated life that one lives fully. Now, for integration, says Krishnamurti, there has to be intelligence. And education is about awakening this intelligence. Thus educations by awakening intelligence helps man in becoming integrated and consequently to live life fully.
- For Krishnamurti 'intelligence' means 'the capacity to see things clearly'. To see things clearly, however, one needs a vision that is not affected by one's ideas, thoughts or beliefs. In other words, freedom is essential for clear seeing.
- Education, according to Krishnamurti, is not so much about knowledge as it is about learning. Of the two terms 'knowledge' has reference to the past while 'learning' refers to the present. Knowledge, for Krishnamurti is always of the past because the term itself means that it is of things which have already been known. But learning is always learning now.
- Very closely associated with Krishnamurti's concept of education are the concepts of 'fear' and 'discipline'. He says that, learning is possible only in absence of fear. If there is fear one cannot learn as fear prevents one in seeing with clarity.
- According to Krishnamurti, learning requires discipline. However, he opposes discipline in its common understanding, the discipline that is imposed from outside. He says that discipline comes automatically when one is interested in learning. True interest cannot be created but comes when one is doing what one likes to do. Therefore, one has to find out what one really likes to do. This requires self-knowledge- one has to know what one truly is and thus what is one's true calling.



13.7 FURTHER READING

1. Krishnamurti, J., 2010, *Freedom from the Known*, Krishnamurti Foundation India
2. Krishnamurti, J., 2004, *On Freedom*, Krishnamurti Foundation India
3. Krishnamurti, J., 2002, *On Self-Knolwedge*, Krishnamurti Foundation India
4. Krishnamurti, J., 2009, *Education and Significance of Life*, Krishnamurti Foundation India
5. Shakuntala, 2010, *Essays on Philosophy of Jiddu Krishnamurti*, Aalibbat Publication, Print 2015



13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Question No.1: a) mind b) not-free, bound c) thought

Answers to Question No.2: a) false b)True c)True

Answers to Question No.3: a) Educations by awakening intelligence helps man in becoming integrated and consequently to live life fully.

b) Knowledge, for Krishnamurti is always of the past because the term itself means that it is of things which have already been known. But learning is always learning now.

c) Krishnamurti opposes discipline in its common understanding, the discipline that is imposed from outside. He says that discipline comes automatically when one is interested in learning.



13.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions

Q 1: State to what kind of freedom the term 'freedom' refers to in Krishnamurti's philosophy?

Q 2: What is to be understood by 'known' in 'freedom from the known'?

Q 3: What do you understand by 'consciousness' in Krishnamurti's philosophy?

Q 4: What does self mean in Krishnamurti's philosophy?

Q 5: What the relation of thought and self is as understood in Krishnamurti's philosophy?

Q 6: What do you understand by 'choiceless awareness'?

Q 7: What, according to Krishnamurti, is the purpose of education?

Q 8: What does Krishnamurti understand by 'intelligence'?

Q 9: How would you distinguish 'knowledge' and 'learning' following Krishnamurti?

Q 10: Why is self-knowledge necessary for discipline?

B. Short Questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q 1: Write short notes on:

a) Freedom from the known

b) Self

c) Self-knowledge

d) Choiceless awareness

e) Knowledge and learning

f) Necessity of education

C. Long Questions ((Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Write a not on Krishnamurti's concept of freedom.

Q 2: What do you understand by self in Krishnamurti's philosophy? Explain self-knowledge in the light of Krishnamurti's concept of 'self'.

Q 3: Give a short account of Krishnamurti's philosophy of education.

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