

Chapter 7

THE SCHOOL

It is the concern of these schools (Krishnamurti-Foundation schools) to bring about a new generation of human beings who are free from self-centred action. 97 - J. Krishnamurti.

School in commonsense :

Most schools are for better information for better security. They exist to make student ambitious, competitive and establishing in life. They prepare student to conform to the society, because the schools reflect the majority mind, their demands and wishes.

Any school can be seen from two different angles e.g. the Physical and the Philosophical angle. The first one considers the material (buildings), environmental and administrative aspects. The latter considers the spiritual (not mystical) aspect, which is the essential content of a school. It is the spirit, the elan-vital of a school. However, the physical and the philosophical, both are interdependent. The physical-aspect is an essentiality to keep the spirit living

and growing, whereas the philosophy of a school helps to protect and mould the environmental (physical) content. They are related like a temple and its idol or a church and its Holy-cross. Although in our consideration the emphasize is ~~not~~ much more on the philosophical front, for it being the primary concern, but that without neglecting the other (physical) aspect in any way.

However, physical-contents of a school like buildings etc. vary according to its financial and other resources. Particularly most schools in India (as well as of other poor countries) are in appalling conditions with very minimum resources. But there are also some schools everywhere, who enjoy all sorts of facilities. They are mostly private-english-sophisticated schools. As there are differences among schools in respect of amenities (material), so there are also differences in regard to their philosophies. Different schools (especially private schools) maintain different spirits (philosophies) e. g. either a religious or political or an ethical spirit. But in the common parlance any school aims at developing a child into a sensible rational human being out of a possible brute. In this process, cultivation of intellect and authority so far received the greatest priority. This because

that there is a sense of palpability (material-growth) in regard to the results derived from intellect etc. Schools thus follow this trend (of intellectual pursuit) and consequently give birth to ~~men~~ miserable men and women buffeted by contradictions of life ; because thought (intellect etc.), as it is said earlier, essentially generates fragmentation, it only helps to develop a life of continuous calculation and measurement, a life of utilitarianism and careerism etc.

A school primarily is a collective performance of the parents, teachers, students and the situation. Situation, though belongs to a different category and seems to be inert, but it is a most dynamic living and ruthless force. It can effect the development of a school tremendously. Among the other factors, the participation of parents is one, which is minimum particularly in most Indian Schools. Their assistance is sought only at the time of scarcity or in other words to fill the school-coffer. While close relationship between the teachers and the students is either neglected or lost in the quagmire of politics or of ambitions of the most.

The normal picture of a school is, it is a structure - big or small, where teachers are found to be either frowning or caneing at the little ones ; children carry heaps of books on their tiny backs and long lessons for small heads. But the most dangerous fallout of a school in the society is the perpetration of misinformation (partial or distorted information) and indoctrination of children through curriculum, consciously or unconsciously. This is most blatant in regard to everything of the Nation - its history, politics, culture and so on. The Fascist Italy and the Nazi Germany are very good examples in this connection.

Misinformation in schools gives rise to misapprehension of facts among students and that produce hateful and jealous hearts. In India (as also in Bangladesh and Pakistan) there is a deep rooted psychological division between two communities - Hindu and the Muslim, which is nurtured carefully in schools as well as in the society.

Today, schools are mere cogs in the social wheel. They become suppliers of the yes-men of the society ; they insist children constantly to put on

the old shoes(to conform) of their fathers.Schools are thus playing effective roles of changing children's lives into disciplined and dead(not-creative) human beings.

KRISHNAMURTI ON SCHOOL :

'A school is a place of learning and so it is sacred',viewed Krishnamurti.And 'the purpose,the aim and drive' of Krishnamurti-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 important to create the right climate so that the child may develop fully as a complete human being"⁹⁸. A complete human being implies a harmonious development of body-mind and heart; it implies 'awakening of intelligence' in an individual. That intelligence the 'utilise knowledge'.Krishnamurti never belittled the importance of intellectual training in his schools(computer-learning is not unknown in Krishnamurti-schools),though his principle concern was 'to bring about the excellence of spirit'.

**There are eight Krishnamurti schools in different parts of the world,including five in India ;The numbers are rapidly rising. - A.

Krishnamurti in his life time was committed 'to create the right climate' in his schools. This 'right climate' consists both the physical and philosophical aspects. In him the physical aspect like structures, trees and birds, the total environment bears a great meaning in the philosophy behind a school. For it is the environment that gives meaning and content to the philosophy. Once Krishnamurti was asked, -

"What he would do to create a school that would reflect his teachings ?"

He answered, "First of all there has to be an atmosphere of immensity. The feeling that I am entering a temple. There must be beauty, space, quietness, dignity. There must be sense of altogetherness in the student and teacher ; a state of floration, a sense of flowering; a feeling of extra ordinary sacredness. There must be truthfulness, fearlessness. The child must put his hands to the earth, there must be in him a quality of otherness." etc. 99

But how to create this atmosphere concretely ?

Krishnamurti responded, -

"I would go into the way of teaching, the quality of attention; "

'I would enquire how to teach the child to learn without memory being predominant. I would

talk about attention and not concentration, I would go into the way the child sleeps, his food, the games he plays, the furniture in his room; I would see that the child is attentive to the trees, the birds, the spaces which are around him. I would see that he grows in an atmosphere of attention." 100

Therefore, right climate in a school involves an atmosphere of total-development, physical as well as psychological, of a child. Physical development in regard to sensitivity and soundness of health ; psychological-development in regard to a mind which can perfectly reason and a heart which feels. So, Krishnamurti always favours small & residential schools for that can effectively carry on the work of total-development & of a child.

'School comes from the Greek word for leisure, leisure in which to learn, a place where students and teachers can flower, a place where a future generation can be prepared, because schools are meant for that', 101 Krishnamurti talks about this idea. School as a place 'for leisure' always has a sense of freedom and happiness in it. It has also a sense of creation ('creative leisure'), discovery and enrichment of the quality of life. Krishnamurti had deep affection for these meanings

of 'school'. He once said to the children, "...You are at school with this responsibility to study, to learn, to act".¹⁰² 'To study' is to have knowledge of the facts; it implies accumulation and certain intellectual attainments. But 'to learn' is more than gathering of information; it is the 'central fact' of Krishnamurti-schools. Learning implies total response (attention) of an individual, inwardly and outwardly. Here "We are not talking of learning about something, but the quality of the mind that is willing to learn",¹⁰³ maintains Krishnamurti. Learning is a continuous process without any division (limitation); it matters little who teaches and who is taught when learning is concerned. It is by nature timeless and beyond any measurement, because the sense of time etc. obstruct the quality of mind that learns. Right action will necessarily follow, thinks Krishnamurti, where there is study and perfect learning (looking and listening included). Krishnamurti-schools are supposed to be the centres of learning, for it seems that they (Krishnamurti-schools) give more value to the process of learning than to other superficials.

Krishnamurti also hoped that these centres of education (schools) must also 'help the student and

the educator to flower naturally'¹⁰⁴ and also 'to flower in goodness'.¹⁰⁵ These require freedom in movement and creativity ; to come directly in touch with the Nature(trees,birds,hillocks) and with oneself.It requires a distinct environment,and Krishna-murti made it clear in the following words : "...in our schools any form of coercion,threat,anger must be totally and completely avoided for all these harden the heart and mind,and affection cannot co-exist with cruelty".¹⁰⁶ These schools therefore have no prejudices but only has a vision of humanity beyond superficiality.This however refers to bringing about "A profound transformation in human beings" ; "A new generation with a new outlook,with a new sense of being citizens of the world,concerned with all the living things of this world."It refers to "Building a school with no walls",not creating a closed-community among themselves.These schools have a humane and global perspective ; "That is why he(Krishnamurti)... told us to feed the poor,to build schools for them , to plant trees in the valley,to convert lands into orchards,to teach our students that land was not property",writes Radhika Herzberger of Rishi valley school.

However a huge school with innumerable problems may be difficult to run, so Krishnamurti's preference for small schools - with limited number of boys and girls, with right educators and plenty of leisure for self-discovery is obvious. Children need to be totally developed, and so each of them demands particular care and attention. Big schools cannot help this process; it obstructs close relationship between students and educators. "Our schools", says Krishnamurti, "become the children's home and the educators become the parents with all the responsibility."¹⁰⁷ Hence he (Krishnamurti) always proposed residential schools. In actuality Krishnamurti schools are big in size and with number, where students have pressure of the course, of examinations, of career building and so on.

There is a clear picture of what Krishnamurti-schools stand for in one of the KFI-Booklets. It says, "Some of the important features of the educational philosophy of the Foundation's schools are :

- (1) to educate the total human being ;
- (2) to inculcate a love for nature and respect for all forms of life ;
- (3) to create an atmosphere of love, order and freedom without either fear or license ;
- (4) not to condition the child strongly in any particular belief, either religious, political or social, so that his mind may be free to ask fundamental questions, inquire and learn ;
- (5) to teach without the motive of reward, punishment or comparison."¹⁰⁸

In brief, Krishnamurti-schools represent an art of living, which is holistic. It is the "greatest art"; Krishnamurti says, it is 'greater than all things that human beings have created, ... It is only through this art of living that a new culture can come into being.'"¹⁰⁹ The culture of living totally and living with everything.

Observation :

Krishnamurti is true but esoteric. When he spoke about the prejudices and limitations of various schools he seems to be true. He is quite logical and convincing when the importance of goodness and flowering etc., are mentioned, but after taking stock of the actual (present) situation of his schools those words (like goodness, ~~new~~ new generation etc.) seem to be unreal and meaningless. Presumably, today there is no more creative leisure in Krishnamurti-schools, because the heavy burden of syllabus - on the teachers to cover and on the students to prepare, betrays the very purpose of leisure: It leaves very little room for one's self-discovery and creative-living. Krishnamurti himself expressed

words of frustration in many occasions on the outcome of his schools. While showing anxiety over the actual situation of these two schools (Rishi valley school & the Rajghat school), Krishnamurti once said, "I feel that the flowering, after all these years, is still not taking place".¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, "A proper understanding of Krishnamurti schools can only be possible when both - ideals like mutation, goodness, flowering etc. and the actualities like conditions and limitations of mind as well as of practical situation etc. are seen together and thereby perfectly blended", commented a philosopher^{**}, who has long been in touch with Krishnamurti teachings.

The Rishi valley school, and the Rajghat school, both have most beautiful natural environment.

A 'right climate' for education. Rishi valley is full of trees with land ups and downs, surrounded by small rocky hills; Far from the madding crowd it has a special beauty and calmness. At the backdrop of the old flowing Ganges and the daily activities of the fishermen on their small dingies (boats), the Rajghat school has altogether a different appeal. The school itself has a sprawling 300 acres of land full of

^{**}Philosopher : reference is made to Dr. Hans Herzberger.

big trees and gardens. There is a weather of freedom and affection in everything of these schools. The schools also care for the mental, emotional and the physical developments of the child. Children can satisfy their thirst for knowledge with the help of their teachers and with the library. Advanced students are also encouraged to do various socio-economic projects themselves, they are also inspired to join in various discussions on existential issues (concerning life). Children, young and old, are encouraged to become sensitive to their natural surroundings - the sunrise, the ~~sun~~ sunset and so on. They can also plant trees, make gardens themselves. To cultivate esthetic-sense as well as the sense of music, there are Art & craft-classes and also classes for music. Students in these schools congregate in daily Assemblies, occasionally play dramas and perform musical programmes themselves. There are also arrangements for different games & sports in the campus, and students can make themselves physically fit.

Yet Krishnamurti-schools are not problem-free. They have their own sets of problems. There are always scarcities-of funds for the school, of right and ~~at~~

dedicated teachers(also of understandable parents). Children,there as well as anywhere,are essentially the same,they have their own world of mischief-making; that too sometimes create problem.Further that,today when the weather of the next door is sufficiently vitiated by corruption,that obviously effects Krishnamurti-schools too.

Also there are signs of gathering storm,with some dissatisfied teachers on pay injustices,job-insecurity and above all with the pouring in of new teachers who are not accustomed with or have little love for Krishnamurti's teachings.All these forces, singularly or in collection,sometimes generate bitterness in the whole atmosphere of the schools.They are indeed the shades of darkness on the "centres of light".

Yet amidst it all students in Krishnamurti-schools daily gather in the morning-assemblies,chant Rg-Vedic hymns,sit under trees,even dare to preserve snakes in the campus(at Rishi valley) ;They look at the setting sun,the evening sky,sing chorus on the rocky valley.Unlike many other schools,students there learn to live in communion with the nature.
