

## **First and Last Freedom, J. Krishnamurti**

This is an extract taken from the *First and Last Freedom* first published in 1954 in response to a question asked in India in 1948. Question: How can we solve our present political chaos and the crisis in the world? Is there anything an individual can do to stop the impending war?

The First and Last Freedom  
Question 10: 'On War'

Krishnamurti: War is the spectacular and bloody projection of our everyday life, is it not? War is merely an outward expression of our inward state, an enlargement of our daily action. It is more spectacular, more bloody, more destructive, but it is the collective result of our individual activities. Therefore, you and I are responsible for war and what can we do to stop it? Obviously the ever-impending war cannot be stopped by you and me, because it is already in movement; it is already taking place, though at present chiefly on the psychological level. As it is already in movement, it cannot be stopped - the issues are too many, too great, and are already committed. But you and I, seeing that the house is on fire, can understand the causes of that fire, can go away from it and build in a new place with different materials that are not combustible, that will not produce other wars. That is all that we can do. You and I can see what creates wars, and if we are interested in stopping wars, then we can begin to transform ourselves, who are the causes of war.

An American lady came to see me a couple of years ago, during the war. She said she had lost her son in Italy and that she had another son aged sixteen whom she wanted to save; so

we talked the thing over. I suggested to her that to save her son she had to cease to be an American; she had to cease to be greedy, cease piling up wealth, seeking power, domination, and be morally simple - not merely simple in clothes, in outward things, but simple in her thoughts and feelings, in her relationships. She said, "That is too much."

You are asking far too much. I cannot do it, because circumstances are too powerful for me to alter". Therefore she was responsible for the destruction of her son.

Circumstances can be controlled by us, because we have created the circumstances. Society is the product of relationship, of yours and mine together. If we change in our relationship, society changes; merely to rely on legislation, on compulsion, for the transformation of outward society, while remaining inwardly corrupt, while continuing inwardly to seek power, position, domination, is to destroy the outward, however carefully and scientifically built. That which is inward is always overcoming the outward. What causes war - religious, political or economic? Obviously belief, either in nationalism, in an ideology, or in a particular dogma. If we had no belief but goodwill, love and consideration between us, then there would be no wars. But we are fed on beliefs, ideas and dogmas and therefore we breed discontent. The present crisis is of an exceptional nature and we as human beings must either pursue the path of constant conflict and continuous wars, which are the result of our everyday action, or else see the causes of war and turn our back upon them.

Obviously what causes war is the desire for power, position, prestige, money; also the disease called nationalism, the worship of a flag; and the disease of organized religion, the worship of a dogma. All these are the causes of war; if you as an individual belong to any of the organized religions, if you are greedy for power, if you are envious, you are bound to

produce a society which will result in destruction. So again it depends upon you and not on the leaders - not on so-called statesmen and all the rest of them. It depends upon you and me but we do not seem to realize that. If once we really felt the responsibility of our own actions, how quickly we could bring to an end all these wars, this appalling misery! But you see, we are indifferent. We have three meals a day, we have our jobs, we have our bank accounts, big or little, and we say, "For God's sake, don't disturb us, leave us alone". The higher up we are, the more we want security, permanency, tranquility, the more we want to be left alone, to maintain things fixed as they are; but they cannot be maintained as they are, because there is nothing to maintain. Everything is disintegrating. We do not want to face these things, we do not want to face the fact that you and I are responsible for wars. You and I may talk about peace, have conferences, sit round a table and discuss, but inwardly, psychologically, we want power, position, we are motivated by greed. We intrigue, we are nationalistic, we are bound by beliefs, by dogmas, for which we are willing to die and destroy each other. Do you think such men, you and I, can have peace in the world? To have peace, we must be peaceful; to live peacefully means not to create antagonism. Peace is not an ideal. To me, an ideal is merely an escape, an avoidance of what is, a contradiction of what is. An ideal prevents direct action upon what is. To have peace, we will have to love, we will have to begin not to live an ideal life but to see things as they are and act upon them, transform them. As long as each one of us is seeking psychological security, the physiological security we need - food, clothing and shelter - is destroyed. We are seeking psychological security, which does not exist; and we seek it, if we can, through power, through position, through titles, names - all of which is destroying physical security. This is an obvious fact, if you look at it.

To bring about peace in the world, to stop all wars, there must be a revolution in the individual, in you and me. Economic

revolution without this inward revolution is meaningless, for hunger is the result of the maladjustment of economic conditions produced by our psychological states - greed, envy, ill will and possessiveness. To put an end to sorrow, to hunger, to war, there must be a psychological revolution and few of us are willing to face that. We will discuss peace, plan legislation, create new leagues, the United Nations and so on and on; but we will not win peace because we will not give up our position, our authority, our money, our properties, our stupid lives. To rely on others is utterly futile; others cannot bring us peace. No leader is going to give us peace, no government, no army, no country. What will bring peace is inward transformation which will lead to outward action. Inward transformation is not isolation, is not a withdrawal from outward action. On the contrary, there can be right action only when there is right thinking and there is no right thinking when there is no self-knowledge. Without knowing yourself, there is no peace.

To put an end to outward war, you must begin to put an end to war in yourself. Some of you will nod your heads and say, "I agree", and go outside and do exactly the same as you have been doing for the last ten or twenty years. Your agreement is merely verbal and has no significance, for the world's miseries and wars are not going to be stopped by your casual assent. They will be stopped only when you realize the danger, when you realize your responsibility, when you do not leave it to somebody else. If you realize the suffering, if you see the urgency of immediate action and do not postpone, then you will transform yourself; peace will come only when you yourself are peaceful, when you yourself are at peace with your neighbour.