Chapter 1

Krishnamurti, Macdonald, and Myself

Introduction

This book has emerged as a result of my engagement with the profound works of Jiddu Krishnamurti and James Macdonald. There are three aspects of their ideas that provided a strong foundation to understanding curriculum as meditative inquiry. First, both men consider the individual—not systems, theories, methods, plans, or tests—to be the core of education. In their view the highest function of education is to provide grounds for self-understanding and self-transformation. Second, both of them recognize the deleterious effects of conditioning influences, fear, discipline, authority, and fragmentation on the growth and development of children, on the one hand, and the positive role of listening, dialogue, and understanding for transformative teaching and learning, on the other hand. Both Krishnamurti and Macdonald consider individual and social change as inseparable processes. While they recognize the urgent need for social transformation, they think that the most significant role education can play is to provide opportunities to teachers and their students so that they may understand their consciousness and transform it, which, in turn, will transform society. Given their tremendous contribution to my research as well as due to a general lack of knowledge about their lives and works in education literature, I provide brief biographical introductions about them in this chapter. I also provide a brief autobiographical statement.
to recognize significant people and ideas, including Krishnamurti and Macdonald, who, in many ways have inspired my thinking and practice as a human being and an educator.

**Jiddu Krishnamurti: Truth Is a Pathless Land**

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986)—a widely regarded philosopher, educator, and institution builder—was born to a Hindu Brahmin family in Madanapalle, India on May 12, 1895. At the age of 14 he was “discovered” to have a “unique aura that contained no selfishness” by a theosophist and psychic, Charles Leadbeater (Jayakar 1986, 24). Subsequently, Krishnamurti was adopted by Annie Beasent, the then president of the Theosophical Society, who was also an ardent social reformer and participant in India’s struggle for independence from the British Raj. In 1911, at the age of 16, Krishnamurti was taken to England where he was to be educated and prepared to be a “vehicle” for the arrival of the Lord Maiterya, the “World Teacher.” For his entire adolescence and youth, theosophists prepared Krishnamurti as the “vehicle” for the arrival of the “World Teacher,” which certainly involved a strictly disciplined life. However, Krishnamurti reported later that although he was being conditioned heavily by the theosophists, in his innermost self he was going through a silent revolution (Jayakar 1986; Lutyens 1990). He was constantly questioning all kinds of beliefs and rituals, orthodoxies and superstitions, authority and hierarchy.

At the age of 27 in 1922, Krishnamurti went through a “life changing” experience at Ojai Valley, California involving severe pain in his back and brain for several days. His biographer and close friend, Pupul Jayakar (1986, 47), describes the process as the awakening of *Kundalini* energy. His experience completely disillusioned Krishnamurti of the place of any authority in psychological and religious matters. In 1929, at the age of 33, Krishnamurti dissolved the “Order of the Star in the East,” which he was a president of and declared:

I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path. (Krishnamurti 1929)