



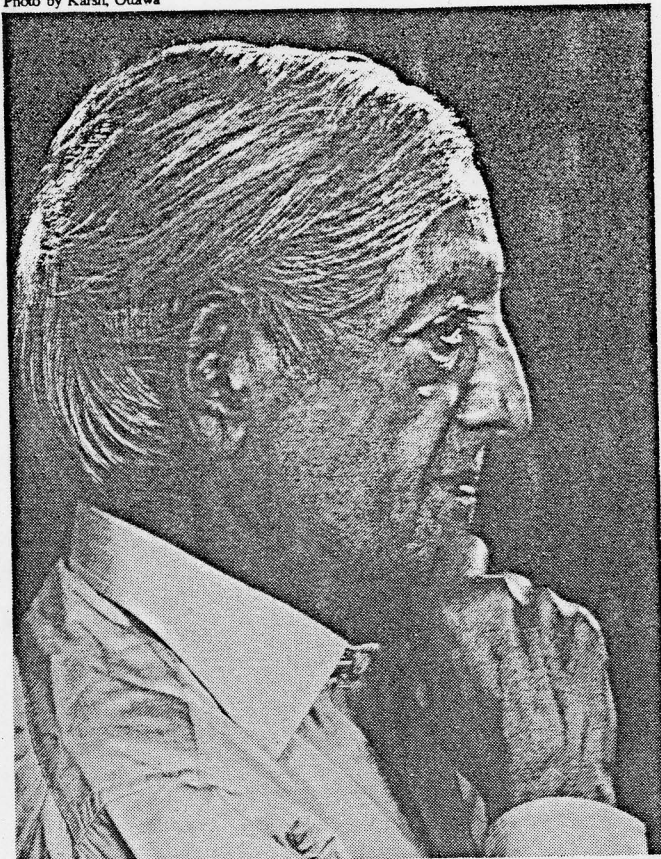
# KRISHNAMURTI: The Spiritual Force Behind Bruce Lee

In the teachings of Krishnamurti,  
Bruce Lee discovered the true foundation of jeet kune do.

By Robert Colet

*"You cannot look through an ideology, through a screen of words, through hopes and fears," so says Krishnamurti. Applying this to the martial arts, Bruce Lee finds, "You cannot express and be alive through static put-together form, through stylized movement." So began Lee's profound revolution of the martial arts. Empty-hand combat would never again be the same.*

**B**ruce Lee found in the teachings of Krishnamurti the foundation of jeet kune do. Remember: We are talking about Lee's philosophy and its relationship to the martial arts. We are not taking into consideration the combat aspects of JKD. There has already been plenty written on that aspect of the art from such distinguished experts as Dan Inosanto and Paul Vunak. Rather, we are concerned with the "mental" or "spiritual" side of JKD, which is how the style differs so dramatically from its counterparts. The foundation of traditional martial arts are *kata* (forms), where the practitioner uses singular movement to simulate a fighting technique. He imitates the *kata* until they



Krishnamurti (above) was raised by a southern India sect which saw him as a future messiah. Disillusioned, he resigned from the sect when he was 34, claiming religions, sects and organizations stand in the way of truth.

become second nature. JKD differs from styles because of the "absence of stereotyped techniques," as Lee succinctly put it.

Lee wanted "more." Traditional philosophy as an aid to martial arts development and as an avenue for spiritual growth were not enough. And this is where Krishnamurti came in.

Philosophy as a complement to the martial arts dates to the 16th century, when the need lessened for fighting skills. Philosophy (Zen) transformed the martial arts from combat-to-the-death tactics to spiritual growth. A practitioner of the martial arts thus gained not only fighting techniques but also character and enrichment.

Krishnamurti was born in 1895 to an impoverished Brahmin family in southern India. At the age of 10 he was adopted by the Theosophical Society (a mystical sect) which saw him as a future messiah. He was educated in England and France and groomed for his role as leader. But in 1929 at the age of 34 he resigned from the Theosophical Society and renounced his role as a messiah, saying religions, sects and organizations stand in the way of truth.

Today, he annually travels different parts of the world. He is the author of several books taken from his lectures. Krishnamurti expounds no doctrine, offers no methods, no techniques and no systems; only his thought on the workings of the human mind. Thus, he does not call himself a guru or a teacher; but rather a lover of truth to all who are willing to listen.

Taking the sayings of Krishnamurti — just as Lee must have done — one can apply them to the martial arts through Lee's words. Of course, this is not to say the teachings of Krishnamurti were the only source of Lee's philosophy. Lee also consulted the teachings of Zen and Taoism, among others. However, it is evident Krishnamurti played a significant role in the formation of JKD.

The quotes on the left are taken from Krishnamurti's *Freedom from the Known*, unless otherwise stated. The right side shows how Lee applied Krishnamurti's words to the martial arts in the *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*.

### Krishnamurti

You cannot look through an ideology, through a screen of words, through hopes and fears.

We are those books, we are those ideas, so heavily conditioned are we by them.

As long as I am looking at life from a particular point of view or from a particular experience I have cherished, or from some particular knowledge I have gathered, which is my background, which is the "me," I cannot see totally. . . . I can see the totality of something only when thought does not interfere.

Truth is not something dictated by your pleasure or pain, or by your conditioning as a Hindu or whatever religion you belong to.

We accept a standard of behavior as part of our tradition as Hindus or Christians or whatever we happen to be. We look to someone to tell us what is right or wrong behavior, what is right or wrong thought, and in following this pattern our conduct and our thinking become mechanical, our responses automatic.

The man who is really serious, with the urge to find out what truth is, what love is, has no concept at all. He lives only in *what is*.

If any system teaches you how to be attentive, then you are attentive to the system and that is not attention.

. . . the only way to look at yourself is totally, immediately, without time; and you can see the totality of yourself only when the mind is not fragmented.

. . . if you follow what the psychologist says or what I say, you are understanding our theories, our dogmas, our knowledge, you are not understanding yourself.

. . . if you say, "There is nothing much to learn about

### Bruce Lee

You cannot express and be alive through static put-together form, through stylized movement.

We are those kata, we are those classical blocks and thrusts, so heavily conditioned are we by them.

You cannot see a street fight in its totality, observing it from the viewpoint of a boxer, a kung-fu man, a karateka, a wrestler, a judo man and so forth. You can see clearly only when style does not interfere.

Fighting is not something dictated by your conditioning as a kung-fu man, a karate man, a judo man or what not.

The secondhand artist blindly following his sensei or sifu accepts his pattern. As a result, his action and, more importantly, his thinking become mechanical. His responses become automatic, according to set patterns, making him narrow and limited.

The man who is really serious, with the urge to find out what truth is, has no style at all. He lives only in what is.

If any style teaches you a method of fighting, then you might be able to fight according to the limit of that method, but that is not actually fighting.

Self-expression is total, immediate, without conception of time, and you can only express that if you are free, physically and mentally, from fragmentation.

If you follow the classical pattern, you are understanding the routine, the tradition, the shadow — you are not understanding yourself.

The classical man is just a bundle of routine, ideas and



## Krishnamurti

myself because I am just a bundle of memories, ideas, experiences and traditions," then you have stopped learning about yourself . . . the moment you have a conclusion or start examining from knowledge, you are finished, for then you are translating every living moment in terms of the old.

. . . rituals are vain repetition which offer a marvelous and respectable escape from self-knowledge (from *Commentaries on Living — first series*).

So to go into the question of what love is we must first free it from the encrustation of centuries, put away all ideals and ideologies of what it should or should not be.

Or is it because you have been told by thousands of years of propaganda that you must have an ideal . . . ?

You have a concept of what you should be and how you should act, and all the time you are in fact acting quite differently; so you see that principles, beliefs and ideals must inevitably lead to hypocrisy and a dishonest life.

When there is no center then there is love.

You have now started by denying something absolutely false — the traditional approach — but if you deny it as a reaction you will have created another pattern in which you will be trapped . . .

. . . in the greater the lesser is, but in the lesser the greater is not.

These examples are not a definitive comparative analysis of the two men, but what can be easily observed is the enormous impact Krishnamurti had on Lee. He became riveted by Krishnamurti's teachings and their application to the martial arts. He discovered that style was limited; it was merely a routine, a mindless repetition of set patterns, a form of conditions which offered no self-knowledge or freedom. For Lee, style was merely propaganda.

Through the teachings of Krishnamurti, Lee sought a fuller self-expression through the martial arts. From the time he took up wing chun at age 14, Lee grew, improved, and flourished in what was to become his first love. But still he wanted more. He

## Bruce Lee

tradition. When he acts, he is translating every living moment in terms of the old.

Forms are vain repetitions which offer an orderly and beautiful escape from self-knowledge with an alive opponent.

If you want to understand the truth in martial arts, to see any opponent clearly, you must throw away the notion of styles or schools, prejudices, likes and dislikes, and so forth.

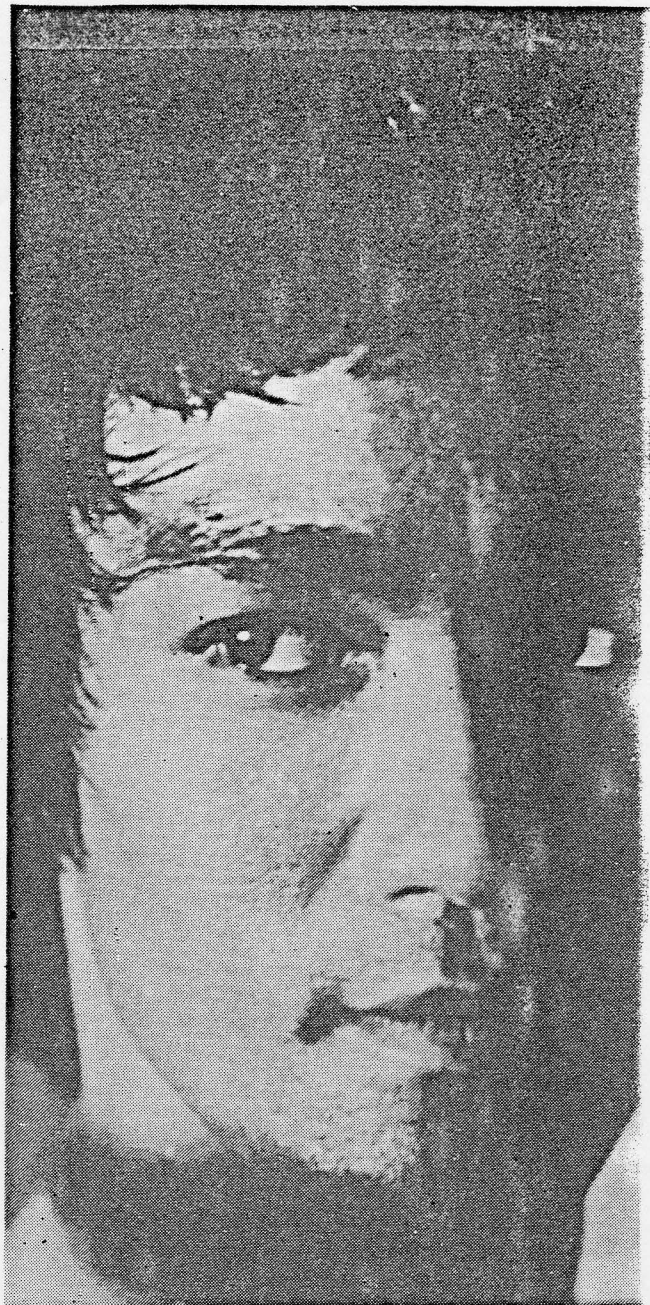
A so-called martial artist is the result of three thousand years of propaganda and conditioning.

Why do individuals depend on thousands of years of propaganda? They may preach "softness" as the ideal to "firmness," but when "what is" hits, what happens? Ideals, principles, the "what should be" leads to hypocrisy.

When there is no center, no circumference, then there is truth. When you freely express, you are the total style.

Do not deny the classical approach simply as a reaction, for you will have created another pattern and trapped yourself there.

The greater (expression) is not found in the lesser (expression) but the lesser is found within the greater.



**Lee realized the limitations in every martial art. Through Krishnamurti, Lee shattered those limitations, challenged tradition and broke uncharted ground.**

was constantly "creatively discontented" with the state of martial art. He realized the limitations in every martial art, including wing chun. He shattered these limitations, challenged tradition and broke uncharted ground.

He had to tell the world of his discovery. So he went to Hong Kong and made several movies. Then came his enduring masterpiece, *Enter the Dragon*.

His mission was complete. He revolutionized "consciousness" of the martial arts. Through motion pictures he made the world and martial arts community witness his discovery. He brought upon himself and the world a new vision.

And then he left as quickly as he appeared. But by then he had completed his process and yearned for peace. It came suddenly — too suddenly — but nevertheless, he fulfilled his mission.

Just like life itself, the martial arts go on, forever searching for fuller expression.

*About the Author: Robert Colet is a freelance writer in Hartsdale, New York.*