W. J. WEATHERBY, in New York, finds Krishnamurti, at 89, still inspiring his followers

With the faithful in the pathless land

THE legendary Indian mystic spiritual teacher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, made one of his rare public appearances in New York this weekend. On Saturday and yesterday he gave what he called a "talk," which to his admirers is like calling the Sermon on the Mount a chat.

The scene was Madison Square Garden, usually the home of rock stars, professional basketball games and similar mass market entertainments. Krishnamurti's first gathering followed hard on the heels of a professional boxing program and had the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus as a nearby neighbour. But Krishnamurti stressed from the start he was not offering a competing "entertainment" but a serious get-together for shared thinking.

His message has not changed much in more than 50 years. At 89 he talked like the young man who in 1929 caused an international sensation by refusing to act as Guru for the Theosophical Society's followers. "Truth is a pathless land," he said, then repeating the same exact words for effect. "If his message had not changed, the Theosophists would never have had him as their world leader and even a new Messiah — another role he rejected — the timing of his latest "talks" seemed carefully calculated. It seemed no coincidence that he chose to "speak of the "pathless land of truth" in the middle of the American Presidential election. 

The American Presidential election is still recovering from being wooed along the lines of the "media political candidates," Reagans, Mondale, Hart, and Jackson in the primary election earlier this year. But Krishnamurti's message suddenly seemed refreshingly topical.

He rejected the Democratic and Republican "Paths" and every other way through any organisation, committee or ritualistic political or psychological technique. Nationalism and patriotism were mere tribalistic glorifications merely of the American, English or Russians. We had to see the world we had created first as being a land of infinite possibilities but they want to think together. Our world was increasing divided and dangerous and warned, "Stagnation know nothing about America in the age of change, the American people have a certain social security, but go to the East and that is a different kind. A great many leaders and his other many were afraid of the thousands, yet we remain unchallenged."

There have been a thousand Gurus which is the silliest form of leadership. People know hit-and-miss watching television and being coerced by the beastly thing. We are becoming slaves of specialists for in this country there are more "specialists" for every headache, sex problems — and so we are losing the real quality of freedom.

It was a familiar catalogue of complaints heard from many religious leaders, but Krishnamurti's remarks, as usual, were cited by the "non-Guru" who was won over while he was actually talking. "I could not after hear him give any coherent idea of it to someone who had never heard him." So it was with many in the large audience at the Garden this weekend. He departed as quietly as the music, unannounced, appearing to appear on the scene.

"I could think together if you will, I could think together if we will," he said.

Krisnamurti: if we could think together it would be marvellous