

Krishnamurti  
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## ON POVERTY

Poverty is a universal phenomenon; every country has its poor. Even though there are resources to feed all the people in the world, hunger, malnutrition and disease plague the world; there are close to a billion people today who live in slums.

Not much attention is devoted to Krishnamurti's response to the condition of the poor; indeed there is a general feeling that Krishnamurti addresses only the well to do. In this issue of the *Bulletin* we look at Krishnamurti's relationship to poverty. It is true that most of his writing shows acquaintance with the lives he observes in the cities and in the countryside of India; but the analysis of poverty that emerges from his perception is both complex and universal.

Our first selection finds Krishnamurti following a flute-playing servant down a side street in Mumbai to join a group of chauffeurs, night-watchmen, children and 'a dog or two'. The beautiful sound of the flute 'never wavers', he remarks, as he joins the group with delight. In passing, he observes an elegantly dressed woman pass by in a chauffer-driven car, with the lights inside the car still on. Krishnamurti observations of the weavers in the villages surrounding Varanasi, of the women carrying heavy loads of wood to sell for a pittance in the bazaars of Madanapalle, his description of the flute-playing servant in Mumbai, and the fatally undernourished beggar lying naked on the street are rendered with an

intimate sense for the feeling of destitution. He poignantly observes that the poor in India are not without a sense of beauty.

In our second selection Krishnamurti examines the causes of poverty. Though his description of poverty is local, Krishnamurti's analysis is universal: there is abject poverty because there is enormous wealth. Wealth with its privileges is not the product of karma, of past lives. 'Poverty is the fault of society – a society in which the greedy and the cunning exploit'. And society is the way it is because of people's urge to succeed and to reach the top. 'As long as there is this drive to be great, to be somebody in the world,' he concludes, 'we are going to have the rich and the poor, the exploiter and those who are exploited'.

The third selection concerns the spell that wealth and power cast on a young man with few belongings who comes to him full of questions and who, once rich, becomes self-centred and isolated.

The last few passages, also, deal with poverty.

Krishnamurti was no activist concerned to redress socio-economic injustice. However, the injunction to his schools, several of which were surrounded by poor, to start village schools, to feed children who attend these schools, to feed even the casual workers indicate the direction he set for his institutions:

If you can see all these things and have great sympathy and understanding – understanding for the rich who go in big cars blowing dust everywhere, and understanding for the poor beggar and the poor *ekka* horse which is almost a walking skeleton, knowing all that, having the feeling of it not merely in words but inwardly, the feeling that this world is ours, yours and mine, not the rich man's nor the communist's, to be made beautiful – if you feel all this, then behind it there is something much deeper. But to understand that which is much deeper and beyond the mind, the mind has to be free, quiet, and the mind cannot be quiet without understanding all this. (*Fifth Talk to Students at Rajghat School, Banaras, 1954*)

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## **THE GREATER THE OUTWARD SHOW, THE GREATER THE INWARD POVERTY**

It was hot and humid and the noise of the very large town filled the air. The breeze from the sea was warm, and there was the smell of tar and petrol. With the setting of the sun, red in the distant waters, it was still unyieldingly hot. The large group that filled the room presently left, and we went out into the street.

The parrot, like bright green flashes of light, were coming home to roost. Early in the morning they flew to the north, where there were orchards, green fields and open country, and in the evening they came back to pass the night in the trees of the city. Their flight was never smooth but always reckless, noisy and brilliant. They never flew straight like other birds, but were forever veering off to the left or the right, or suddenly dropping into a tree. They were the most restless birds in flight, but how beautiful they were with their red beaks and a golden green that was the very glory of light. The vultures, heavy and ugly, circled and settled down for the night on the palm trees.

A man came along playing the flute; he was a servant of some kind. He walked up the hill, still playing, and we followed him; he turned into one of the side streets, never ceasing to play. It was strange to hear the song of the flute in a noisy city, and its sound penetrated deep into the heart. It was very beautiful, and we followed the flute player for some distance.

We crossed several streets and came to a wider one, better lighted. Farther on, a group of people were sitting cross-legged at the side of the road, and the flute player joined them. So did we; and we all sat around while he played. They were mostly chauffeurs, servants, night watchmen, with several children and a dog or two. Cars passed by, one driven by a chauffeur; a lady was inside, beautifully dressed and alone, with the inside light on. Another car drew up; the chauffeur got out and sat down with us. They were all talking and enjoying themselves, laughing and gesticulating, but the song of the flute never wavered, and there was delight.

Presently we left and took a road that led to the sea past the well-lit houses of the rich. The rich have a peculiar atmosphere of their own. However cultured, unobtrusive, ancient and polished, the rich have an impenetrable and assured aloofness, that inviolable certainty and hardness that is difficult to break down. They are not the possessors of wealth, but are possessed by wealth, which is worse than death. Their conceit is philanthropy; they think they are trustees of their wealth; they have charities, create endowments; they are the makers, the builders, the givers. They build churches, temples, but their god is the god of their gold. With so much poverty and degradation, one must have a very thick skin to be rich. Some of them come to question, to argue, to find reality. For the rich as for the poor, it is extremely difficult to find reality. The poor crave to be rich and powerful, and the rich are already caught

in the net of their own action; and yet they believe and venture near. They speculate, not only upon the market, but upon the ultimate. They play with both, but are successful only with what is in their hearts. Their beliefs and ceremonies, their hopes and fears have nothing to do with reality, for their hearts are empty. The greater the outward show, the greater the inward poverty.

To renounce the world of wealth, comfort and position is a comparatively simple matter; but to put aside the craving to be, to become, demands great intelligence and understanding. The power that wealth gives is a hindrance to the understanding of reality, as is also the power of gift and capacity. This particular form of confidence is obviously an activity of the self; and though it is difficult to do so, this kind of assurance and power can be put aside. But what is much more subtle and more hidden is the power and the drive that lie in the craving to become. Self-expansion in any form, whether through wealth or through virtue, is a process of conflict, causing antagonism and confusion. A mind burdened with becoming can never be tranquil, for tranquility is not a result either of practice or of time. Tranquility is a state of understanding, and becoming denies this understanding. Becoming creates the sense of time, which is really the postponement of understanding. The I-shall-be is an illusion born of self-importance.

The sea was as restless as the town, but its restlessness had depth and substance, The evening

star was on the horizon. We walked back through a street crowded with buses, cars and people. A man lay naked and asleep on the sidewalk; he was a beggar, exhausted, fatally undernourished, and it was difficult to awaken him. Beyond lay the green lawns and bright flowers of a public garden.

*Commentaries On Living; Series I, Chapter 7,  
'The Rich and The Poor'*

**THE FAULT LIES IN OUR DESIRE AND NOT IN KARMA  
AND**

**THE DESIRE FOR SUCCESS HAS TO BE UNDERSTOOD,  
AND NOT WHY THERE ARE THE RICH AND THE POOR**

**QUESTIONER:** Why are some people born in poor circumstances, while others are rich and well-to-do?

**J KRISHNAMURTI:** What do you think? Instead of asking me and waiting for my answer, why do you not find out what you feel about it? Do you think it is some mysterious process which you call *karma*? In a former life you lived nobly and therefore you are now being rewarded with wealth and position! Is that it? Or, having acted very badly in a former life, you are paying for it in this life! You see, this is really a very complex problem. Poverty is the fault of society – a society in which the greedy and the cunning exploit and rise to the top. We want the same thing, we also want to climb the ladder and get to the top. And when all of us want to get to the top, what

happens? We tread on somebody; and the man who is trodden on, who is destroyed, asks, 'Why is life so unfair? You have everything and I have no capacity, I have nothing'. As long as we go on climbing the ladder of success, there will always be the sick and the unfed. It is the desire for success that has to be understood, and not why there are the rich and the poor, or why some have talent and others have none. What has to be changed is our own desire to climb, our desire to be great, to be a success. We all aspire to succeed, do we not? There lies the fault, and not in *karma* or any other explanation. The actual fact is that we all want to be at the top – perhaps not right at the top, but at least as high up the ladder as we can climb. As long as there is this drive to be great, to be somebody in the world, we are going to have the rich and the poor, the exploiter and those who are exploited.

*Life Ahead: Part One, Chapter 4*

**BOTH POVERTY AND RICHES ARE A BONDAGE  
BOTH ARE CORRUPTIBLE,  
FOR BOTH SEEK THAT WHICH IS CORRUPTING: POWER**

He was a very poor man, but capable and clever; he was content, or at least appeared so, with what little he possessed, and he had no family burdens. He often came to talk things over, and he had great dreams for the future; he was eager and enthusiastic, simple in his pleasures, and delighted in doing little things for

others. He was not, he said, greatly attracted to money or to physical comfort; but he liked to describe what he would do if he had money, how he would support this or that, how he would start the perfect school, and so on. He was rather dreamy and easily carried away by his own enthusiasm and by that of another.

Several years passed, and then one day he came again. There was a strange transformation in him. The dreamy look had gone; he was matter-of-fact, definite, almost brutal in his opinions, and rather harsh in his judgements. He had travelled, and his manner was highly polished and sophisticated; he turned his charm on and off. He had been left a lot of money and was successful in increasing it many times, and he had become an altogether changed man. He hardly ever comes now; and when on rare occasions we do meet, he is distant and self-enclosed.

Both poverty and riches are a bondage. The consciously poor and the consciously rich are the playthings of circumstances. Both are corruptible, for both seek that which is corrupting: power. Power is greater than possessions; power is greater than wealth and ideas. These do give power; but they can be put away, and yet the sense of power remains. One may beget power through simplicity of life, through virtue, through the party, through renunciation; but such means are a mere substitution and they should not deceive one. The desire for position, prestige and power – the power that is gained through aggression

and humility, through asceticism and knowledge, through exploitation and self-denial – is subtly persuasive and almost instinctive. Such in any form is power, and failure is merely the denial of success. To be powerful, to be successful is to be slavish, which is the denial of virtue. Virtue gives freedom, but it is not a thing to be gained. Any achievement, whether of the individual or of the collective, becomes a means to power. Success in this world, and the power that self-control and self-denial bring, are to be avoided; for both distort understanding. It is the desire for success that prevents humility; and without humility how can there be understanding? The man of success is hardened, self-enclosed; he is burdened with his own importance, with his responsibilities, achievements and memories. There must be freedom from self-assumed responsibilities and from the burden of achievement; for that which is weighed down cannot be swift, and to understand requires a swift and pliable mind. Mercy is denied to the successful, for they are incapable of knowing the very beauty of life which is love.

The desire for success is the desire for domination. To dominate is to possess, and possession is the way of isolation. This self-isolation is what most of us seek, through name, through relationship, through work, through ideation. In isolation there is power, but power breeds antagonism and pain; for isolation is the outcome of fear, and fear puts an end to all communion. Communion is relationship; and however pleasurable or painful relationship may be, in it there

is the possibility of self-forgetfulness. Isolation is the way of the self, and all activity of the self brings conflict and sorrow.

*Commentaries On Living; Series I, Chapter 33,  
'Power'*

**TO BE ALL ...NOT AS A TRICK OF IDENTITY,  
NEEDS LOVE**

There was hardly anyone on the long, curving beach. A few fishermen were going back to their village among the tall palms. As they walked they made thread, rolling the cotton on their naked thighs and winding it on the bobbin; it was a very fine thread, and strong. Some of them walked with ease and grace, and others with dragging feet. They were ill-fed, thin, and burnt dark by the sun. A boy passed by singing, with long cheerful strides; and the sea came rolling in. There was no strong breeze, but it was a heavy sea, with thunderous waves. The moon, almost full, and just rising out of the blue-green water, and the breakers were white against the yellow sands.

How essentially simple life is, and how we complicated it! Life is complex, but we do not know how to be simple with it. Complexity must be approached simply, otherwise we shall never understand it. We know too much and that is why life eludes us; and the too much which is so little we

meet the immense; and how can we measure the immeasurable? Our vanity dulls us, experience and knowledge bind us, and the waters of life pass us by. To sing with that boy, to drag wearily with those fishermen, to spin thread on one's thigh, to be those villagers and the couple in the car – to be all that, not as a trick of identity, needs love. Love is not complex, but the mind makes it so. We are too much with the mind, and the ways of love we do not know.

*Commentaries On Living*, p. 210

### **TO BE AWARE OF THE LIVING, WE MUST BURY THE DEAD IN OURSELVES**

How kind we naturally are, especially away from the towns in the fields and the small villages! Life is more intimate among the less educated, where the fever of ambition has not yet spread. The boy smiles at you, the old woman wonders, the man hesitates and passes by. A group stops its loud talk and turns to look with surprised interest, and a woman waits for you to pass her. We know so little of ourselves; we know, but we do not understand; we know, but we have no communion with another. We do not know ourselves. And how can we know another? We can know the dead, but never the living; what we know is the dead past, not the living. To be aware of the living, we must bury the dead in ourselves.

*Commentaries On Living*, p. 242

## HIS WERE THE HANDS THAT HELD THE BUNDLES

Two women came down the path carrying firewood on their heads. One was old and the other quite young, and the burdens they carried looked rather heavy. Each had balanced on her head, protected by a roll of cloth, a long bundle of dried branches tied together with a green vine, and she held it in place with one hand. Their bodies swung freely as they came down the hill with a light, running gait. They had nothing on their feet, though the path was rough. The feet seemed to find their own way, for the women never looked down; they held their heads very straight, their eyes bloodshot and distant. They were very thin, their ribs showing, and the older woman's hair was matted and unwashed. The girl's hair must have been combed and oiled at one time, for there were still some clean, sparkling strands; but she too was exhausted and there was a weariness about her. Not long ago she must have sung and played with other children, but that was all over. Now, collecting wood among these hills was her life, and would be till she died, with a respite now and then with the coming of a child. Down the path we all went. The small country town was several miles away, and there they would sell their burden for a pittance, only to begin again tomorrow. They were chatting, with long intervals of silence. Suddenly the younger one told her mother she was hungry, and the mother replied that they were born with hunger, lived with hunger, and died with hunger; that was their lot.

It was the statement of a fact; in her voice there was no reproach, no anger, no hope. We continued down that stony path. There was no observer listening, pitying, and walking behind them. He was not part of them out of love and pity; he was them; he had ceased and they were. They were not the strangers he had met up the hill, they were of him; his were the hands that held the bundles; and the sweat, the exhaustion, the smell, the hunger, were not theirs, to be shared and sorrowed over. Time and space had ceased. There were no thoughts in our heads, too tired to think; and if we did think, it was to sell the wood, eat, rest, and begin again. The feet on the stony path never hurt, nor the sun overhead. There were only two of us going down that accustomed hill, past that well where we drank as usual, and on across the dry bed of a remembered stream.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, pp 183-184*

### **HE WAS SLOWLY DYING, DAY BY DAY, AND THE PEOPLE PASSED BY**

As I walked along this avenue there were various types of beggars lying on the pavement; they were not noisy; and did not even stretch out their hands to passers-by. A girl about ten years old was lying with her head on a tin can, resting with wide-open eyes; she was dirty, with matted hair, but she smiled as I smiled at her. Further along, a little girl, hardly three,

came forward with outstretched hand and an enchanting smile. The mother was watching from behind a nearby tree. I took the outstretched hand and we walked together for a few paces, returning to her mother. As I had no coin, I returned with one the next day, but the little girl would not take it, she wanted to play, so we played, and the coin was given to her mother. Whenever I walked along that avenue the little girl was always there, with a shy smile and bright eyes. Opposite the entrance to the fashionable club a beggar was seated on the ground; he was covered with a filthy gunny-sack, and his matted hair was full of dust. Some days, as I went by, he would be lying down, his head in the dust, his naked body covered with he gunny-sack; on other days he would be sitting up, perfectly still, looking without seeing, with the massive rain-trees over him. One evening there was gaiety at the club; it was all lit up, and sparkling cars full of laughing people were driving in, tooting their horns. From the club-house came light music, loud and air-filling. Many policemen were at the entrance, where a large crowd had gathered to watch the smartly-dressed and well-fed people pass by in their cars. The beggar had turned his back on all this. One man was offering him something to eat, and another a cigarette, but he silently refused both without making a movement. He was slowly dying, day by day, and the people passed by.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p 122*

## THE LONG JOURNEY OF LIFE

The sun was beating down on the rough, pebbly road, and it was pleasant in the shade of the big mango tree. People from the village come along that road carrying on their heads large baskets laden with vegetables, fruits, and other things for the town. They were mostly women, walking with bare-footed ease, chatting and laughing, their dark faces bare to the sun. They would put their burdens down along the edge of the road and rest in the cool shade of the mango-tree, sitting on the ground and not talking so much. The baskets were rather heavy, and presently each woman would help another to place her basket on her head, the last one somehow managing by almost kneeling on the ground. Then they would be off, with steady pace and an extraordinary grace of movement that had come with years of toil. It wasn't a thing that had been learnt through choice; it had come about through sheer necessity. There was a little girl among them, not more than ten or so, and she too had a basket on her head, though much smaller than the others. She was full of smiles and play, and wouldn't look straight ahead, as the older women did, but would turn round to see if I were following, and we would smile at each other. She too was bare footed, and she too was on the long journey of life.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, p 101*

## A CHEERFUL SCENE

The road passed the gates, and a few yards along that road was the village, on the outskirts of a large town. The village was foul, with open gutters along its main, narrow lane. The houses were thatched, the front steps decorated, and children were playing in the lane. Some weavers had stretched out long strands of gay-coloured threads to make cloth, and a group of children were watching them at work. It was a cheerful scene, bright, noisy and smelly. The villagers were freshly washed, and they had very little on for the climate was warm. Towards evening some of them got drunk and became loud and rough.

*Commentaries On Living*, p. 48

## WE SAT DOWN

### THEY WERE CHEERFUL AND STRONGLY CONTENTED

The village was dirty, but there was tidiness around each hut. The front steps were washed and decorated daily, and inside the hut was clean though somewhat smoky from the cooking. The whole family was there, father, mother and children, and the old lady must have been the grandmother. They all seemed so cheerful and

strongly contented. Verbal communication was impossible, as we did not know their language. We sat down, and there was no embarrassment. They went on with their work, but the children came near, a boy and a girl, and sat down, smiling. The evening meal was nearly ready, and there was not too much of it. As we left, they all came out and watched; the sun was over the river, behind a vast, solitary cloud. The cloud was on fire and made the waters glow like remembered forest fires.

*Commentaries On Living*, p. 190

**THE BOY, ILL-CLAD ... DIRTY, SMILED AT ALL  
THOSE HE PASSED**

A boy was walking with long strides, singing as he walked. He smiled at all those he passed and seemed to have many friends. He was ill-clad, with a dirty cloth around his head, but he had a shining face and bright eyes. With his rapid strides he passed a fat man wearing a cap. The fat man waddled, head down, worried and anxious. He did not hear the song the boy was singing, nor even glance at the singer. The boy strode on through the big gates; passing the beautiful gardens and crossing the bridge over the river, he

rounded a bend towards the sea, where he was joined by some companions; as darkness gathered they all began to sing together. The lights of a car lit up their faces, and their eyes were deep with unknown pleasures. It was raining heavily now, and everything was dripping wet.P.218-219

*Commentaries On Living*, pp 218-219

### **HOW EASILY WE LOSE THE WARM FLAME OF LOVE**

A mother was beating her child, and there were painful screams. The mother was very angry, and while she was beating she was talking to it violently. When presently we came back she was caressing the child, hugging as though she would squeeze the life out of it. She had tears in her eyes. The child was rather bewildered, but was smiling up at the mother. Love is a strange thing, and how easily we lose the warm flame of it! The flame is lost, and the smoke remains. The smoke fills our hearts and minds, and our days are spent in tears and bitterness.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series*, pp. 37-38

## CONTENTMENT THAT DEPENDS ON RELATIONSHIP IS ONLY GRATIFICATION

The cattle were coming back from pasture, and a little boy was driving them home. He couldn't have been more than ten or twelve, and though he had spent the whole day by himself, he was singing away and occasionally flicking the cattle that wandered off or were too slow. He smiled, and his dark face lit up. Stopping out of curiosity, and distantly eager, he began to ask questions. He was a village boy and would have no education; he would never be able to read and write, but he already knew what it was to be alone with himself. He did not know that he depressed by it. He was just alone and contented. To be contented with something is to be discontented. To seek contentment through relationship is to be in fear. Contentment that depends on relationship is only gratification.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 45*

## ENCHANTMENT IS RARELY FELT

A boy was playing the flute, with the rice-field before him. He had a clean, healthy body, well-proportioned and delicate, and he wore only a clean white cloth around his loins; the setting sun had just caught his face, and his eyes were smiling. He was practicing the scale, and when he got tired of that, he would

play a song. He was really enjoying it, and his enjoyment was contagious. Though I sat down only a little distance away from him, he never stopped playing. The evening light, the green-golden sea of the field, the sun among the palms, and this boy playing his flute, seemed to give to the evening an enchantment that is rarely felt. Presently he stopped playing and came over and sat beside me; neither of us said a word, but he smiled and it seemed to fill the heavens. His mother called from some house hidden among the palms; he did not respond immediately, but at the third call he got up, smiled, and went away.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 52*

### **ABSORBED IN ANGER, [THEY] PAID NOT THE SLIGHTEST ATTENTION**

The daily pattern of life was repeating itself around the only water tap in the village; the water was running slowly, and a group of women were awaiting their turn. Three of them were noisily and bitterly quarrelling; they were completely absorbed in their anger and paid not the slightest attention to anyone else, nor was anyone paying attention to them. It must have been a daily ritual. Like all rituals, it was stimulating, and these women were enjoying the stimulation. An old woman helped a young one to lift a big, brightly-polished brass pot onto her head. She had a little pad of cloth to bear the weight of the pot,

which she held lightly with one hand. Her walk was superb, and she had great dignity. A little girl came quietly, slipped her pot under the tap, and carried it away without saying a word. Other women came and went, but the quarrel went on, and it seemed as though it would never end. Suddenly the three stopped, filled their vessels with water, and went away as though nothing had happened. By now the sun was getting strong, and smoke was rising above the thatched roofs of the village. The day's first meal was being cooked. How suddenly peaceful it was!

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 96*

**STARVATION IS NOT THE PROBLEM OF ONE  
COMMUNITY OR OF ONE COUNTRY, BUT OF THE  
WHOLE WORLD**

On the hot rock in the burning sun the village women were spreading the paddy that had been kept in the storehouse. They had carried large bundles of it to the flat, sloping rock, and the oxen that were tied to the tree would presently tread on the paddy to release the grain. The valley was far from any town, and the huge tamarind trees gave deep shadows. Through the valley a dusty road made its way to the village and beyond. It was a pleasant land, and yet poverty hung over it like a plague. Voluntary poverty is one thing, but compulsory poverty is quite another. The villagers were poor and diseased, and although there

was now a medical dispensary and food was distributed, the damage wrought by centuries of privation could not be wiped away in a few years. Starvation is not the problem of one community or of one country, but of the whole world.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 126*

**PRIDE, WHETHER IN LITTLE THINGS OR IN GREAT  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME**

A young ox with bells around its neck was drawing a light cart which delicately made, its two large wheels connected by a thin steel bar on which a wooden platform was mounted. On this platform a man was sitting, proud of the fast-trotting ox and the turnout. The ox, sturdy and yet slender, gave him importance; everyone would look at him now, as the passing villagers did. They stopped, looked with admiring eyes, made comments, and passed on. How proud and erect the man sat, looking straight ahead! Pride, whether in little things or in great achievements, is essentially the same. What one does and what one has given one importance and prestige; but man in himself, as a total being, seems to have hardly any significance at all.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 160*

**THEY WERE TREATED DECENTLY, FOR IT WOULD BE  
DISASTROUS TO HAVE A STRIKE**

In the morning one would see brightly-dressed women, their bodies bent, their skin turned dark by the blazing sun, picking the delicate leaves of the bushes. It all had to be picked before a certain time in the morning and carried to the nearest factory before the sun became too hot. at that altitude the sun was strong and painfully penetrating, and though they were used to it, some of women had their heads covered with the part of the cloth they wore. They were gay, a fast and skilful in their work, and soon that particular task would be over for the day; but most of them were wives and mothers, and they would still have to cook and look after the children. They had a union, and the planters treated them decently, for it would be disastrous to have a strike and allow the tender leaves to grow to their normal size.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 164*

**THE EARTH IS BEAUTIFUL AND ITS SOIL,  
AROUND THE TEMPLE AND IN THE ARID DESERT,  
IS SACRED**

There were villages, filthy and diseased, where it has not rained enough for many seasons; the wells

are all but dry and the cattle are skin and bones; the fields are cracked, and the ground-nut is withering away; the sugar-cane is no longer planted, and the river has not flowed for several years. They beg, they steal, and go hungry; they die waiting for the rains. Then there are the opulent cities with their clean streets and shiny new cars, their washed and well-dressed people, their endless shops filled with things, their libraries, universities and slums. The earth is beautiful and its soil, around the temple and in the arid desert, is sacred.

*Commentaries On Living: Second Series, p. 209*

### **THERE WAS A BLESSING IN THE AIR**

A boy came along carrying on his head an old kerosene tin, half-filled with some liquid. He must have been working around that new building which was under construction. He had bright eyes and an extraordinarily cheerful face; he was thin but strongly built, and his skin was very dark, burnt by sun. He the wide distance that thought breeds, had totally disappeared. There was only that woman, not I looking at her. And it was along way to the town, where she would sell the contents of her basket. Towards evening she would come back along that road and cross the little bamboo bridge on her way to

her village, only to appear again the next morning with her basket full.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, p. 32*

### **THE GREAT TREE WAS SACRED, AS ALL TREES ARE**

On holy days the villagers came down to the water's edge, singing, joyous, lilting songs. Bringing their food, with much chattering and laughter, they would bathe in the river; then they would put a garland at the foot of the great tree, and red and yellow ashes around its trunk, for it too was sacred, as all trees are. When at last chatter and shouting had ceased, and everyone had gone home, a lamp or two would remain burning, left by some pious villager; these lamps consisted of a home-made wick in a little terra-cotta saucer of oil which the villager could ill afford. Then the tree was supreme; all things were of it; the earth, the river, the people and the stars. Presently it would withdraw into itself, to slumber till touched by the first rays of the morning sun.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, p. 61*

## THE HEAVENS ABOVE HIM LOOKED DOWN WITH LOVE AND WONDER

All afternoon thin, dark men with long poles had been laboriously poling their way upstream against the current, in single file close to the bank; starting at the fishing village below the town, each man in his boat, sometimes with a child or two, had pushed slowly up the river past the long, heavy bridge, and now they were coming down by the hundreds, carried by the strong current. They would be fishing all night, catching big, heavy fish, ten to fifteen inches long, which would afterwards be dumped, some of them still writhing, into larger boats tied up along the bank, to be sold the next day. One of the lanes led to the wide steps which descended to the very edge of the river, and on these steps everything was going on. Some people were sitting close to the water, with eyes shut, in silent meditation; next to them a man was chanting in front of an enthusiastic crowd, which extended far up the steps; further on, a leprous beggar held out his withered hand, while a man with ashes on his forehead and matted hair was instructing the people. A man with cupped hand was silently begging the heavens to fill it; and a mother, her left breast bare, was suckling her baby, oblivious of everything. Further down the river, dead bodies brought from the neighboring villages and from the sprawling, dirty town, were being burnt in great roaring fires. Here everything was going on, for this was the most holy and sacred of towns. But the beauty of the still-

flowing river seemed to wipe away all the chaos of man, while the heavens above him looked down with love and wonder.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, pp 64-65*

**PEOPLE LIKE TO BE FLATTERED, TO BE CALLED  
PLEASANT NAMES,  
OR TO BE BLESSED AND WISHED PROSPERITY**

A beggar with a nice voice was singing in the street, and the song had nostalgic quality which is so familiar. His voice had not become raucous, and amidst the rattling of buses and the shouts of people calling across the street, it had a pleasant and welcoming sound. You would hear him every morning if you lived around there. Many beggars do tricks, or have monkeys that do the tricks; they are knowing and sophisticated, with a cunning look and the easy smile. But this beggar was altogether of a different kind. He was simple beggar, with a long staff and torn, dirty clothes. He had no pretensions, no wheedling ways. The others received more alms than he did, for people like to be flattered, to be called pleasant names, or to be blessed and wished prosperity. But this beggar did none of those things. He begged, and if you gave, he bowed his head and went on; there was no pose, no gesticulation. He would walk the whole length of the long, shady street, always giving way to people; at the end of the street

he would turn right into a narrower and quieter street, and begin his singing again, finally wandering off into one of the little lanes. He was quite young, and there was a pleasant feeling about him.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, pp 88-89*

### **WEARY AFTER A DAY'S WORK**

The villagers were returning to their homes, weary after a day's work in the fields. Soon you would see smoke rising from their huts as they prepared the evening meal. It wouldn't be much; and the children, waiting for their meal, would smile as you went by. They were large-eyed and shy of strangers, but they were friendly. Two little girls held small babies on their hips while their mothers were cooking; the babies would slip down, and get jerked up onto the hips again. Though only ten or twelve years old, these little girls were already used to holding babies; and they both smiled. The evening breeze was among the trees, and the cattle were being brought in for the night.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, pp 149-150*

## THE CLEAR NOTES CALLED ONE OUT OF DOORS

In the narrow, shady lane between the two gardens, a young boy was playing a flute; it was a cheap wooden thing, and he was playing a popular cinema tune, but the purity of the notes filled the space in that lane. The white walls of the houses had been washed by the recent rains, and on those walls the shadows were dancing to the music of the flute. Beyond the houses and the gardens was the village, with huge trees towering over the thatched huts. Under those trees, women were selling fish, a few vegetables and some fried things. Little children were playing in the narrow road, and still smaller children were using the ditch as their toilet, unmindful of the grown-ups and the passing cars. But the flute player was there among the green foliage, and the clear notes called one out of doors. The boy was dirty, his clothes torn and unwashed, his face aggressively sharp and complaining. No one had taught him to play the flute, and no one ever would; he had picked it up by himself, and as the cinema tune rolled out, the purity of the notes was extraordinary. It was strange for the mind to float on that purity. Moving a few paces away, it continued through the trees, over the houses and towards the sea. Its movement was not in time and space but in purity.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, pp 184*

## HE WOULDN'T RECEIVE MUCH MONEY FOR HIS FIREWOOD

As we walked beside the cart, the old man caught your eye, smiled, and stopped beating the oxen. They were his oxen, and he had been driving them for years; they knew he was fond of them, and the beating was a passing thing. He was stroking them now, and they continued to move at their ease. The old man's eyes told of infinite patience, and his mouth expressed weariness and endless toil. He wouldn't receive much money for his firewood, but it was enough to get by. They would rest along the roadside for the night, and make a start for home in the early morning. The cart would be empty, and the return journey would be easier. We went down the road together, and the oxen didn't seem to mind being touched by the stranger who was walking beside them. It was beginning to get dark, and presently the driver stopped, lit a lamp, hung it under his cart, and went on towards the noisy town.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, pp 241*

**THEY WERE THE CHILDREN OF  
THE CHAUFFEURS AND OTHER SERVANTS  
BUT THEY WERE PART OF THE EARTH**

They were the children of the chauffeurs and other servants. They would never go to school, they would always be the poor people of the earth; but among the fallen petals beside the tarred road, those children were part of the earth. They were startled to see a stranger sitting there with them, and they became suddenly silent; they stopped playing with the petals, and for a few seconds they were as still as statues. But their eyes were alive with curiosity, friendliness and apprehension.

*Commentaries On Living: Third Series, p. 300*

**THE JOY OF TOTAL INSIGHT**

The villager stopped in front of you, looked at those startling colours and at you. You looked at each other and without a word he trudged on. In that communication there was affection, tenderness and respect, not the silly respect but that of religious men. At that moment all time and thought had come to an end. You and he were utterly religious, uncorrupted by belief, image, by word or poverty. You often passed each other on that road among the stony hills and each time, as you looked at one another, there was the joy of total insight.

*Krishnamurti's Journal, p. 46*

## REPORT ON THE KFI GATHERING, NOVEMBER 2015

The Annual KFI Gathering, 2015 was organized by the Rajghat Education Centre, KFI in Varanasi from the 18th to the 21st November with the intention to create an ambiance that enables participants to enter into the spirit of serious and profound enquiry. There were about 225 participants, not just from the different States of India but, also, from abroad (Italy, Germany, Greece, the UK and the USA). The central theme of the Gathering was 'The Transformation of Consciousness'.

The Gathering officially began on Wednesday, the 18th of November, 2015 in the morning with some chanting and music performed by the teachers of the Rajghat Besant School. Then there was the 'Welcome Address' given S.N.Dubey, the Director, of the REC. The first Speaker was S.P.Kandaswamy, the Secretary of the Krishnamurti Foundation, India. His talk was entitled, 'What is meant by the Transformation of Consciousness?' He pointed out that one set of ideas substituting another set is not transformation, but that it is freedom from conditioning that is transformation. He said that in the present culture, the head rules while the heart sleeps. He said that there was an urgent need to

create a 'new' culture which alone could face the acute crisis the world was in. To receive the Teachings, he said, 'one must have a heart that is full and mind that is empty', and ended by saying that the challenge to awaken consciousness is enormous.

Participants were divided into 16 groups with about 15 members in each, and the groups had a dialogue based on the central theme.

In the evening, videos entitled 'Freedom from Fear' and 'Meditation' (which are the 3rd and 4th programmes in the series *The Real Revolution*) were screened.

The Rajghat area, which is known for its serenity and natural beauty, was also explored by the participants when evening walks were organized to include the K-trail, the forest-area and the Rural Center.

Thursday, the 19th of November, 2015 was the second day of the Gathering. It, too, began with music, chanting and silence. Chaitanya Nagar, an author and free lance journalist, delivered a talk which was really a question. 'Does Time Help Us Transform?' he asked. He spoke about the perpetual movement of time in the form of thought, which expresses itself through the activities of the mind. He stated that we have 'a

crowd of people inside us' all of whom are at loggerheads, and that constitutes the 'me' which itself is suffering. He concluded his talk by talking about the two dimensions of time: physical and psychological time. And he requested the participants to try and stay with the question: 'Is there a possibility of stopping – not functionally but psychologically – time-thought?' As on the previous day, after the talk, participants, in small groups, went into various questions that arose.

In the evening the videos of the 5th and 6th programmes of *The Real Revolution* entitled 'What is Love?' and 'Questioning' were screened. After the video-session, four new videos of Krishnamurti's public talks with Hindi subtitles were released.

Friday, the 20th of November, 2015 was the third day of the Gathering. It began with a talk, 'Education for the Transformation of Consciousness', by G. Gautama, the Director and Secretary of the Palar Center for Learning, the Patsala School, Chennai. While talking about the role of educator, he pointed out that the first need is for the educator to get off the pedestal because the adult and the child are not different as both are going through the same process of learning. There has to be communication between the two which

is not based on 'ritual status', he said. He, also, spoke of the unfortunate practice of the corporate sector which, through glossy advertisements, create a desire in children for many products (and a life-style) It was an engaging talk, and was followed by many questions raised by the participants, which he addressed. After this session, participants went to their allotted groups, and had dialogues on the deep issues of life.

There was an afternoon session devoted to highlighting the activities of the different Krishnamurti Foundation Centers. S.P.Kandaswamy gave an overview of the working of the Krishnamurti Foundations in India and the USA, the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust in England, and the Committee in Spain. Then some participants who run Krishnamurti Libraries and Centres in various places spoke about these 'private'(or non-KFI) centers.

In the evening there was a half-an-hour video screening of the 7th programme of the series *The Real Revolution*. This was followed by a cultural programme arranged in the College premises facing the Ganga. A vocal and instrumental performance was given by the Music Department of the Vasanta College for Women.

After dinner, as per the requests of the participants, there was a dialogue session for those who were interested to continue, informally, discussions about various questions they felt were pertinent. This additional session was attended by 80 participants who were divided into four groups.

Saturday, the 21st of November, 2015 was the last day of the Gathering. It commenced with a symposium where the focus was to deliberate on the questions that came up from the 16 different group-dialogues during the previous three days of the Gathering. The questions were mainly on the central theme and were addressed by a panel of five members: P. Krishna, G. Gautama, P. Ramesh, Vijay Chhabra and Mukesh Gupta. Some of the questions were:

What is consciousness?; In the process of transformation 'what' is transformed?; Why is there a gap between understanding and action?; and How can we unite world- wisdom with individual-wisdom?

The Gathering concluded with a video talk of Krishnamurti entitled 'The End of Conflict' which is the 8th and the last programme in the series *The Real Revolution*.

It was felt by many that the Gathering was of immense relevance, particularly in the context of the escalating violence in the present day world scenario. It underlined the need to ponder over questions pertinent to life because the world outside, the world we see is a reflection of what we are ourselves.

Upma Sinha, Shivani Mishra, & Shreya Pathak

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