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FROM THE EDITOR

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

According to scientists, human action has ushered in a new geological age. The Holocene period, which emerged around twelve thousand years ago, created a hospitable planet in which human life flourished. That age is ending, the earth is warming, glaciers are melting, oceans are rising, species are dying; floods and famines endanger the very future of humanity. The irony is that human action, over the past three hundred years especially, is the cause of this calamitous change. Accordingly scientists call the new age the Anthropocene—from *anthropo*, for ‘man’, and *cene*, for ‘new’.

What is human responsibility given the fact that the demonic force is let loose by human action? In the present context the meaning of the term ‘responsibility’ loses its ordinary meaning, which embeds responsibility in individual actions: I am responsible for my actions and the consequences that flow from them.

Since pollution is a global phenomenon with facets that are both spatial (toxic gases are spread across national boundaries, over the upper reaches of the atmosphere) and temporal (each generation suffers the consequences of past emissions, and inflicts emissions on generations yet to be born); cause and effect, actions and responsibility for consequences of actions are muddled; they cannot be traced to any single agent. Either individuals abnegates responsibility or they become ‘totally responsible. In Krishnamurti’s words:

[There is] A sense of tremendous human responsibility for all things connected with human beings: how you educate your children, how you behave. You follow?

When you actually realise this immensity—it is immense—then the particular entity as ‘me’ seems so insignificant And when you see this fact, in your heart, in your mind you feel this, you cover the earth—you understand? Cover the earth: nature, ecology, and all that—you follow?—you want to *protect everything you can*. Because you are responsible for all this.

This issue of the *Bulletin* is dedicated to exploring Krishnamurti’s thoughts on human responsibility in a time of catastrophic change.

– R.H.

EDUCATION IS THE CULTIVATION OF TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY

In past letters we have said that total responsibility is love. This responsibility is not for a particular nation or a particular group or community, or for a particular deity, or some form of political programme, or for your own guru, but for all mankind. To have this deeply understood and felt is the responsibility of the educator.

Almost all of us feel responsible for our families and children, but we do not have the feeling of being wholly concerned and committed to the environment around us, to nature, or of being totally responsible for our actions. That absolute care is love. Without this love, there can be no change in society. The idealists, though they may love their ideal or their concept, have not brought about a radically different society. Revolutionaries, terrorists, have not fundamentally changed the pattern of our societies. Physically violent revolutionaries have talked about freedom for all men, forming a new society, but all the jargon and slogans have only further tortured the spirit and existence. They have twisted words to suit their own limited outlooks. No form of violence has changed society in the most fundamental way. Great rulers, through the authority of a few, have brought about some kind of order in society. Even the totalitarians have established, through violence and torture, a superficial semblance of order. We are not talking about such an order in society.

We are saying very definitely and most emphatically that it is only having a sense of total responsibility for all mankind, which is love, that can basically transform the present state of society. Existing systems in various parts of the world are corrupt, degenerate and wholly immoral. You have only to look around you to see this fact. Millions upon millions are

spent on armaments throughout the world; the politicians talk about peace while preparing for war. Religions have declared over and over again the sanctity of peace, but they have encouraged wars and subtle kinds of violence and torture. There are innumerable divisions and sects with their rituals and all the nonsense that goes on in the name of God and religion. Where there is division there must be disorder, struggle and conflict, whether the division is religious, political or economic. Our modern society is based on greed, envy and power.

When you consider all this as it actually is, this overpowering commercialism indicates degeneration and basic immorality. We are destroying the earth and all the things on it for our gratification. To radically change this pattern of our life, which is the basis of all society, is the educator's responsibility.

Education is not merely the teaching of various academic subjects, it is also the cultivation of total responsibility in the student. People do not realize that an educator is bringing into being a new generation. Most schools are concerned only with imparting knowledge; they are not at all concerned with the transformation of man and his daily life. You, the educator in these schools, need to have this deep concern and the care of this total responsibility.

In what manner then can you help the student to feel this quality of love with all its excellence? If you do not feel this yourself, profoundly, talking about responsibility is meaningless. Can you as an educator feel the truth of this? Seeing the truth of it will bring about naturally this love and total responsibility. You have to ponder over it, observe it daily in your life, in your relations with your wife, your friends, your students. And in your relationship with the students you will talk about this from your heart, not pursue mere verbal clarity.

The feeling for this reality is the greatest gift that man can have. Once it is burning in you, you will find the right word, right action and correct behaviour. When you consider the student, you will see that he comes to you totally unprepared for all this. He comes to you frightened, nervous, anxious to please or on the defensive, conditioned by his parents and the society in which he has lived his few years. You have to see his background; you have to be concerned with what he actually is and not impose your own opinions, conclusions and judgements on him. Considering what he is will reveal what you are, and so you will find that the student is you.

Now, can you, in the teaching of mathematics, physics, and so on—which he must know, for that is the way of earning a livelihood—convey to the student that he is responsible for the whole of mankind? So that, though he may be working for his own career, his own way of life, it will not make his mind narrow, and he will see the danger of specialization with all its limitations and strange brutality. You have to help him to see all this. The flowering of goodness does not lie in knowing mathematics and biology or in passing examinations and having a successful career. It exists outside these. When there is this flowering, career and other necessary activities are touched by its beauty. Now we lay emphasis on one thing and disregard the flowering entirely.

In these schools we are trying to bring these two together, not artificially, not as a principle or pattern for you to follow, but because you see the absolute truth that these two must flow together for the regeneration of man. Can you do this? Not because you all agree to do it after discussing and coming to a conclusion, but because you see with an inward eye the extraordinary gravity of this; see it for yourself. Then what you say will have significance. Then you become a centre of light

not lit by another. As *you* are all of humanity—which is an actuality, not a verbal statement—you are utterly responsible for the future of man.

Please do not consider this a burden. If you do, it is a bundle of words without any reality; it is an illusion. This responsibility has its own gaiety, its own humour, its own movement without the weight of thought.

The Whole Movement of Life is Learning: J. Krishnamurti's Letters to His Schools, Krishnamurti Foundation Trust, Brockwood Park, England, 2006 (First Indian Reprint 2011), pp. 27-30.

WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY THERE IS NO FREEDOM

Freedom is one of the most important factors in life. Man has fought politically for freedom all over the world. Religions have promised freedom, not in this world but in another. In the capitalist countries, individual freedom exists to some degree, and in the communist world it has been denied. From ancient times freedom has meant a great deal to man, and there have been its opponents, not only political but religious—through the Inquisition, by excommunication, tortures and banishments, and the total denial of man's search for freedom. There have been wars and counter-wars fought for freedom. This has been the pattern of man's endeavours for freedom throughout history.

Freedom of self-expression and freedom of speech and thought exists in some parts of the world, but in others it does not. Those who have been conditioned, revolt against their backgrounds, and react in immature ways. This reaction, which takes different forms, is called 'freedom'. The reaction

to politics is often to shun the field of politics. One economic reaction is to form small communities based on some ideology or under the leadership of some one person, in which authority is denied and an attempt is made to be self-supporting, but these generally disintegrate. The religious reaction against established organizations of belief is to revolt, either by joining other religious organizations or by following some guru or leader or by joining some cult. Or one denies the whole religious endeavour. Don't all these indicate mere outward movements toward freedom?

One thinks of freedom only as freedom of movement, either physical or the movements of thought. It appears one always seeks freedom on the surface, the right to go from here to there, to think what one likes, to do what one likes, to choose, and to seek wider experiences. Surely this is a rather limited freedom, involving a great deal of conflict, wars and violence. Inner freedom is something entirely different. When there is deep, fundamental freedom, which has its roots not in the idea of freedom but in the reality of freedom, then that freedom covers all movement, all the endeavours of man. Without this freedom, life will always be an activity within the limited circle of time and conflict.

So when we talk of freedom we are talking of the fundamental issue. It is not freedom from something, but the quality of a mind and heart that are free, and in which direction does not exist. Freedom from something is only a modified continuity of what has been, and therefore it is not freedom. When there is direction, and therefore choice, freedom cannot exist; for direction is division and hence choice and conflict.

There is no such thing as individual freedom, but only freedom. The word *individual* in its very meaning implies indivisible, not

an entity opposed to the collective. But we have made a concept of individuality with its peculiar characteristics, tendencies, and so on, which are the response of conditioning, and we oppose it to the collective. This conditioning is part of the culture—economic, social, and so on—in which the mind is educated. Freedom lies beyond this conditioning, not within the field of consciousness with the content that makes up consciousness. The responsibility that lies beyond conditioning is different from the responsibility of so-called freedom.

The responsibility of a conditioned mind is irresponsibility, which can be perceived in the present cultures of society, whether of the East or of the West. This irresponsibility is shown in education, in social injustice, in national divisions with different ideologies leading to competition, wars, starvation, affluence and poverty. The irresponsibility of organized religions is shown in their support and maintenance of these cultures. These religions preach morality, but sustain corruption. They are at war with each other, asserting that they alone have the truth, that their gods and saviours are the real. This irresponsibility is shown when an intermediary is placed between the real and the human. This irresponsibility is shown when temples, mosques and churches become a power in the land.

Responsibility has quite a different meaning when there is freedom. Responsibility does not deny freedom: they go together. When there is the deep fundamental reality of freedom, responsibility is concerned with the whole of life and not with one fragment of life; it is concerned with the whole movement and not with some particular movement; it is concerned with the whole activity of the mind and the heart and not with one particular activity or direction. Freedom is the total harmony in which responsibility is as natural as the

flower in the field. That response is not induced or imposed; it is the natural outcome of freedom. Without responsibility, there is no freedom. To respond to every challenge out of freedom is responsibility. It is the inadequate response that is irresponsibility. The mind that is dependent in attachment becomes irresponsible to the whole.

So freedom is love, which in its very nature is responsible to the flower by the roadside, and to the neighbour whether the neighbour is next door or a thousand miles away. Compassion is the very essence of freedom.

- *Ibid*, pp. 232-235.

FREEDOM IS THE ESSENCE OF THINKING TOGETHER

I think it is important to learn the art of thinking together. Scientists and the most uneducated human beings think. They think according to their profession, specialization and according to their beliefs and experiences. We all think, objectively or according to our own particular inclinations, but we never seem to think together, to observe together. We may think about something, a particular problem or an experience, but this thinking does not go beyond its own limitation. Thinking together, not about a particular subject but having the capacity to think together, is entirely different. To think together is necessary when you are facing the great crisis that is taking place in the world, the danger, the terror and the ultimate brutality of war. To observe this, not as a capitalist, socialist, from the extreme left or extreme right, but to observe it together, demands not only that we comprehend how we have come to this rotten state, but also that together we perceive a way out. The businessman or the politician looks at

this problem from a limited point of view, but we are saying we must look at life as a whole not as British, French or Chinese.

What does it mean to look at life as a whole? It means to observe the human being, ourselves, without any division of nationality, to see life as one single movement without a beginning and without an end, without time, without death. This is a difficult thing to understand because we think of the part, not the totality. We divide, hoping to understand the whole from its part.

The art of thinking together needs to be studied carefully, examined to see whether it is at all possible. Each one clings to his own way of thinking according to his own particular reactions, experiences, prejudices. This is how we are conditioned, and it prevents having the capacity to think together. Thinking together does not mean being of one mind. Our minds can come together about an ideal, an historical conclusion or some philosophical concept, and work for that, but this is essentially based on authority. Freedom is the essence of thinking together. You must be free from your concepts, prejudices, and so on. I too must be free, and we come together in this freedom. It means dropping all our conditioning. It implies complete attention without any past. The present world crisis demands that we totally abandon our tribal instincts that have become glorified as nationalism. Thinking together implies that we totally abandon self-interest and identifying ourselves as British, Arab, Russian, and so on.

Then what is a human being to do facing this danger of the separatism of self-interest? There is the expansionist movement of one power over another economically or politically, or of one or two bigoted, neurotic leaders. What is a human being confronted with this to do? Either you turn

away from it and withdraw into indifference, or you join some political activity, or take refuge in some religious group. You cannot escape from this. It is there.

What do I do? I reject the present pattern of social structures, the nonsensical irreligious ways. I reject all that. So I am totally isolated. This isolation is not an escape to some form of ivory tower or into some romantic illusion. Because I see the futility, the divisiveness in the pursuit of self-interest and nationalism, in expansionism, in the irreligious life, I reject the total destructiveness of this society. So I stand alone. As I am not then contributing psychologically to the destructive consciousness of man, I am in the stream of that which is goodness, compassion and intelligence. That intelligence is acting, confronting the madness of the present world. That intelligence will act wherever the ugly is.

- *Ibid*, pp. 143-145.

LIVING RESPONSIBLY IN TODAY'S WORLD
KFI Public Gathering, 20-23 November, 2016

Synopses of presentations made on 20, 21 and 22
November 2016

I

In his opening remarks, Mr Kandaswamy quoted K as saying that because we have not understood the root cause of the world's problems, our responses remain feeble and futile. Generally, we assume that we are not responsible for the world's problems, so we 'outsource' the response to the problems – to the government, to the politicians and the intellectuals. We assume without thinking deeply about the matter that our contribution will necessarily be inadequate, and so we are stuck between karma (acceptance of the problem and simultaneously a refusal to do anything about it) and grace (hoping for divine intervention).

K pointed out an important difference between responsibility for something and the state of being responsible. In a conversation with Prof Anderson, he remarks: *There is a very definite distinction between responsible for and being responsible. Being responsible for implies direction, a directed will. But the feeling of responsibility implies responsibility for everything, not in any one particular direction: responsible for education, for politics, for the way I live, for my behaviour. It's a total feeling of complete responsibility which is the ground in which action takes place.*

Mr Kandaswamy added the following comments concerning our relationship with K's teachings: (a) there is a strong

tendency in all of us to approximate the teachings to our comfort level. The teachings are like a hurricane, but we convert it into a gentle breeze and go to sleep. (b) We are deeply attached to words, to theories and concepts; and we are stuck in intellectual and verbal comprehension. (c) We get stuck in the partial: partial understanding, partial insight and so on. This was something that K refused to accept.

Chidanandaji's remarks immediately followed those made by Mr Kandaswamy. Here are some of the points he made: (a) There must be no gap, no interval between seeing and action; else it results in fragmentary action. Right seeing results in right action. (b) As the old adage goes, "Charity must begin at home". Responsibility to the world must begin with responsibility to the people with whom you live, with the people to whom you are closest. (c) Though a great deal of progress has happened in the world of technology, there is an absence of progress when it comes to the world of conflict. Academic studies of conflict have not been accompanied by corresponding change in lifestyle. (d) We need to look within. In essence, in our innermost self, is we may not be different from the head of a terrorist organisation. Violence is present in small ways, in all of us. Who is free from intolerant urges? (e) Lastly, change cannot happen from a list of dos and don'ts.

On the second day, Ms Aparna Rajagopalan gave an impassioned talk about caring for degraded lands, about regenerating soil that has lost its nutrients, and about the inspiration she got from the book *One Straw Revolution*. She pointed out how working with land and with animals and plants has enormous significance for our inner being. She used a curious phrase: 'equanimity in times of drought', noting that there could be drought in our own minds. In the evening, she presented a slide show of her work.

In his talk, which came on the third day, Samdong Rinpoche pointed out that an essential aspect of life is relationship. This gives rise to rich possibilities when it comes to our central question, namely: what does it mean to live with responsibility? He noted that collective inquiry is dialogue, and that an individual cannot accomplish anything in isolation; hence the significance of a public gathering such as this. There is also the related notion of *sat sang*.

A word that generally goes with responsibility is *duty*. Rinpocheji said that he prefers the use of this word as it is rooted in oneself. Responsibility contains within it the implied word 'to respond' and thereby involves others. But the word 'duty' does not involve obligation to anyone. The question of living with responsibility can therefore be understood as: *What is my essential obligation to myself, my essential duty to life?*

I must learn how to take care of my mind, not just of my body. I must learn how to take care of the Earth, for which there is no substitute. These surely are part of my central obligations. In today's world, rights are asserted, but not duty. But it is easy to see that violation of rights results from non-observance of duty. If duties are observed, then so will be rights, and this can be verified experimentally. Pointing out this distinction between duties and rights is itself part of my obligation to life.

In the world as it is today, the assumption that society cannot function without competition has become very widespread. Challenging this assumption is part of my work, my duty. In response to a question posed by a member of the audience, Rinpocheji emphasised that religious identity is a contradiction in terms, if one keeps in mind the essential meaning of religion; and therefore, it is part of my duty to challenge myself in matters of identity.

He also pointed out (again, in response to a question) that purely at the verbal level there may be inconsistencies in the words of the Buddha and the words of Krishnamurti. It is vitally important that one does not depend on the words of a master; that one works out matters for oneself. This too is part of my duty.

II

The question 'what does it mean to live responsibly in today's world?' can be approached from several different directions. There are so many different crises in the world today, concerning poverty, degradation of the environment, destruction of various habitats (both natural and otherwise), the freshwater crisis, the energy crisis, education and its numerous challenges, religious intolerance and fundamentalism; nationalism; and so on. Clearly, this list is very long. Choosing to devote one's life to even one of these crises – to see if we can leave a legacy of value for those who will follow us – would be something significant to do in one's life.

And yet, significant as all such actions may seem, Krishnamurti did not consider them to be 'good enough'. He asked whether we can also change inwardly. It is clear why he said this: as long as our inner complexities remain, they will continue to shape the environment, and by and by, the change that has been brought about in the outer world will get negated. A look around the world reveals the truth of this statement; numerous examples can be listed from world history, and from our own individual lives.

This being the case, we are forced to take a fresh look at the question we asked: what does it mean to live responsibly in today's world? I have to ask not only what I can do with the

world I see around me, but also: what can I do with myself, inwardly, at depth?

And also: are there fundamental questions which can I ask myself, questions which are not merely related to my individual, personal life but are in a sense beyond place and time? The remarks made below explore this theme.

What can I do with myself?

I can and must become aware of my inner complexities, of my craving for power, of my worship of success, of my jealousies. It is my responsibility to become aware of the demons that reside within me – the contradictory desires, the secret aspiration for power, and the demand for success.

I can and must find out whether I identify with organisations, subtly or otherwise, and whether I use wrong means to achieve a 'right end'. Identification with organisations, with nations and with religions, is the cause of endless violence; and it is my responsibility to see where I stand in relation to such identification. Likewise, it is my responsibility to see where wrong means lead, how they can never lead to a right end, and whether I have persuaded myself to believe otherwise.

I can learn to be self-critical, to use my intelligence. I can learn to question my assumptions. I can learn the vital importance of doubt, the role it plays in inquiry, and I can explore what it means to doubt wisely.

I can learn to stop hiding behind rationalisations. I can stop mesmerising myself with nice sounding words. It is my responsibility to do so, living as we are in a time when influences act upon us in an ever more insidious manner, through propaganda and advertisements. I can become aware of how influenced I am, in a variety of matters.

I can become aware of the moment when need becomes greed. Living as we are in a consumerist society, where the principle of consumption is as central as religious beliefs were in earlier centuries, it is my responsibility to find out where I stand with regard to need, and to learn to be intelligent in my needs. I can be happy in simplicity. I can enjoy the simple and delight in the insignificant.

I can explore for myself the miracle of listening; in particular, experiment with it and explore why Krishnamurti called it a 'miracle'.

All this is part of my responsibility.

And it is also my responsibility to ask difficult questions in a non-speculative manner. I list a few such questions below. The list is obviously partial and can be extended hugely.

Five questions to ponder:

1. K has suggested that it is not possible to consciously engage with an irresponsible mindset; we cannot 'attack' irresponsibility. It will give rise to resistance and a feeling of aggression. If one has to engage with such a mindset, it has to happen unconsciously. But what does this mean? What does it mean to address the unconscious?
2. In what way can I raise national consciousness with regard to promoting civil discourse amongst ourselves and with regard to fundamental questions? In what way can I help to bring about a national conversation – on matters of identity, religion, environment, development, civic consciousness, and

so on? For example, there are the three questions which the French painter Paul Gauguin posed in his famous 1897 mural from Tahiti: *Where did we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* There is a burning need to raise national consciousness about such matters; to engage people in serious inquiry – all the more so because the world today seems to be heading in an opposite direction.

3. The lack of civility in public discourse today is appalling. Why are there such deep barriers between us, at every possible level? Why is it that communication so often fails between human beings, prompted by the most trivial of causes? What can I do to break down these barriers?

4. In what way can I help change the language and idiom and metaphor of Krishnamurti? I feel we have to find our own expression of what we see, what we find, what we discover; we must find our own expression for communicating our insights, not the expression that we have grown accustomed to, Krishnamurti's expression. I feel that a factor which seriously limits us is that we have not moved beyond Krishnamurti's idiom. In studying the work of Krishnamurti, one sees that he himself did just this in the early 1930s, when he struggled to find words to express the inexpressible, words which were not from the Theosophical lexicon. It is part of our responsibility to do this for ourselves.

5. At some point during our past, perhaps 50,000 years back, we mastered the art of creating an imagined world, and

imagined reality. Very quickly, this world came to be more real than the actual world. Ideas and concepts and symbols began to be ever greater in their impact and effect on us than the real world, and as they did so, our mastery over the outer world steadily grew – our ability to manipulate our environment, our ability to find technological solutions to problems. Are we aware of the extent to which we live in the world of ideas and concepts – the depth and strength of this phenomenon? Are we aware of the insidious manner in which words create needs which then outstrip our necessities? This state of affairs has been around for a very long time. It probably goes back into our early history as a human species.

Here is a quote from Aldous Huxley: “*Words form the thread on which we string our experiences*”. But they also form the thread on which we string our concepts and ideas and our images of ourselves. Words can be staggering in their reach and power.

Here is a quote from Albert Einstein: “*Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world.*” To what extent do we agree with this? Viewed within the realm of science or perhaps even art, it has truth and significance. But when placed against the reality of the world, against its effect in the world of the psyche, we begin to see that it has a deadly flip side which is far greater in impact than what it was originally meant for.

Quotes from Krishnamurti

I conclude with two quotes from Krishnamurti, dealing with the nature of responsibility.

- 1. As an individual, it is your responsibility to bring about a tremendous change in the world. It is your responsibility, because you are part of this society, because you are part of this tremendous sorrow of man, this constant effort, struggle, pain, and anxiety. You are responsible. Unless you realize that immense responsibility and come directly in contact with that responsibility and listen to the whole structure, the machinery of that responsibility, do what you will, go to every temple, to every guru, to every Master, to every religious book in the world, your action has no meaning whatsoever.*
- 2. We seem to forget that the world problem is the individual problem, that the problems of the world are created by you and me as individuals. The problems of war, starvation, exploitation, and all the other innumerable problems that confront each one of us are created by you and me, and as long as we do not understand ourselves at every level, we will maintain the rottenness of the present society.*

Shailesh A. Shirali

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I, Dr V. Aravindan, hereby declare that the particulars given are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Sd/-V. Aravindan
Signature of Publisher

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