

## *DULLNESS*

J. Krishnamurti, *Commentaries On Living*

The man in the lower berth was very talkative, and as we had a whole night before us, he felt he had a right to ask questions. He was a heavy-built man with large hands and feet. He began by talking about himself, his life, his troubles and his children. He was saying that India should become as prosperous as America; this over-population must be controlled, and the people must be made to feel their responsibility. He talked of the political situation and the war, and ended with an account of his own travels.

How insensitive we are, how lacking in swift and adequate response, how little free to observe! Without sensitivity, how can there be pliability and a quickening perception; how can there be receptivity, an understanding free of striving? The very striving prevents understanding. Understanding comes with high sensitivity, but sensitivity is not a thing to be cultivated. That which is cultivated is a pose, an artificial veneer; and this coating is not sensitivity, it is a mannerism, shallow or deep according to influence. Sensitivity is not a cultural effect, the result of influence; it is a state of being vulnerable, open. The open is the implicit, the unknown, the imponderable. But we take care not to be sensitive; it is too painful, too exacting, it demands constant adjustment, which is consideration. To consider is to be watchful; but we would rather be comforted, put to sleep, made dull. The newspapers, the magazines, the books, through our addiction to reading, leave their dulling imprint; for reading is a marvellous escape, like drink or a ceremony. We want to escape from the pain of life, and dullness is the most

effective way: the dullness brought about by explanations, by following a leader or an ideal, by being identified with some achievement, some label or characteristic. Most of us want to be made dull, and habit is very effective in putting the mind to sleep. The habit of discipline, of practice, of sustained effort to become-these are respectable ways of being made insensitive.

"But what could one do in life if one were sensitive? I would all shrivel up, and there would be no effective action,"

What do the dull and insensitive bring to the world? What is the outcome of their "effective" action? Wars, confusion within and without, ruthlessness and increasing misery for themselves and so for the world.

"To understand the total process of myself will take a time, and meanwhile my business will go to ruin and my family will starve."

Your family will not starve; even if you have not saved up enough money, it is always possible to arrange that they shall be fed. Your business will undoubtedly go to ruin; but disintegration at other levels of existence is already taking place. You are only concerned with the outward break-up, you do not want to see or know what is happening within yourself. You disregard the inner and hope to build up the outer; yet the inner is always overcoming the outer. The outer cannot last without the fullness of the inner; but the fullness of the inner is not the repetitious sensation of organized religion nor the accumulation of facts called knowledge. The way of all these inner pursuits must be understood for the outer to survive, to be healthy. Do not say that you have no time, for you have plenty of

time; it is not a matter of lack of time, but of disregard and disinclination. You have no inward richness, for you want the gratification of inner riches as you already have that of the outer. You are not seeking the wherewithal to feed your family, but the satisfaction of possessing. The man who possesses, whether property or knowledge, can never be sensitive, he can never be vulnerable or open. To possess is to be made dull, whether the possession is virtue or coins. To possess a person is to be unaware of that person; to seek and to possess reality is to deny it. When you try to become virtuous, you are no longer virtuous; your seeking virtue is only the attainment of gratification at a different level. Gratification is not virtue, but virtue is freedom.

How can the dull, the respectable, the unvirtuous be free? The freedom of aloneness is not the enclosing process of isolation. To be isolated in wealth or in poverty, in knowledge or in success, in idea or in virtue, is to be dull, insensitive. The dull, the respectable cannot commune; and when they do, it is with their own self-projections. To commune there must be sensitivity, vulnerability, the freedom from becoming, which is freedom from fear. Love is not a becoming, a state of "I shall be". That which is becoming cannot commune, for it is ever isolating itself. Love is the vulnerable; love is the open, the imponderable, the unknown.