

## On the Hard Fate of the Gentle in Mind

### PART 1

**D**URING OUR LIVES WE ALL SUFFER various blows, difficulties, breakdowns, hardships, crises, and tragedies. Superficially, it might seem that everyone gets their share.

Here, however, we shall consider those who are subject to more crises than others.

Generally, we don't think much about it, if we meet someone who is more often hit by crises. At most we think, "That's the way it is," or it is a coincidence, or bad luck, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It really does happen that some people suffer a heap of troubles while their neighbors or friends are almost trouble-free, yet still we tend to think that "we all have our crosses to bear," and we move on.

But is it so accidental or is there something else behind it? Is there some hidden structure, a reason for this imbalance? In other words, is there an explanation for why crises apparently happen to certain people more than to others, and even in a more difficult way?

The theory that will be expressed here is quite radical: Some people are more delicate than others, and those who are more delicate are more sensitive and therefore more vulnerable.

Delicacy is a sign of high quality and fragility. A vase made of porcelain is fine and delicate, and therefore it is more breakable than a vase made of ordinary clay. What is delicate and of high quality is also vulnerable and easily broken. The most beautiful flowers, such as orchids, for example, are more subject to disease, and prone to suffer from bad weather and pests, and the damage to

them is more extreme. Therefore, the conditions for their growth are stricter.

As with flowers, so with the type of human being whose inner life is even more delicate, and who is therefore even more vulnerable, than the finest, most delicate, high-quality flowers.

A fine person, like a fine flower, collapses very quickly when a crisis arrives.

And here things are very clear: the fine is less resistant to injuries than the less fine. So, on the surface, it indeed seems that hardships affect all people similarly, but underneath it all – the gentle souls are less durable than others.

These premises are quite reasonable and not so difficult to accept, but according to the radical theory under discussion, the following question arises: do more difficulties and crises than average strike these gentle souls? This idea is difficult to digest and agree with.

A highly sensitive person is someone who seems to be born with enhanced awareness. This tendency can be an advantage in terms of creativity or understanding of subtlety, but it can also mean increased susceptibility to stress, less ability to cope.

Such people see the world differently: more deeply, less conventionally. These people will also, because of their high sensitivity, experience in a more difficult, even traumatic, way phenomena such as criticism, power struggles, dominance, aggression, rudeness, and the like. But it is more than that. It is not only that they are more vulnerable than the majority, but they will actually, as it were, draw more fire: misunderstandings, impatience, lack of cooperation, stigmas, judgments, and so on.

Could it also be said that there is something in them that attracts troubles and crises? Could it be that there is something in them that invites difficulty?

In New York, in the period before Mayor Rudy Giuliani, cases of mugging were very frequent. It was found that while not everyone on the streets of New York was mugged, there were those who were mugged several times. There were researchers who decided to in-

vestigate this phenomenon, and in the seventies, they asked prisoners serving sentences for mugging to watch a video of people walking on the street. The muggers were asked to choose a victim. All of them chose the same people, and the reason lay in the way those people walked and behaved. Muggers look for an easy target, a person lacking self-confidence, being different, displaying weakness and a general lack of self-confidence: a kind of ideal victim.

Another angle from which this phenomenon could be examined is nature. It is very clear that nature (for want of a better word) aims to get rid of the sick, the weak, and the disabled in general. This is Darwin's famous theory of the survival of the fittest: the strongest are the ones who survive, and the weak do not, since a weak part in an organism (be it a thick leaf in a plant, an injured elephant in a herd, or a lion with an infected leg) weakens the whole. In a herd of animals, the strong will attack the weak. In a hen house, if one chicken is bleeding, the others will peck her to death.

In nature the fine, delicate animals, such as the deer or the young, the ones less able to run fast than the rest of the herd, are eaten by the tougher and more aggressive animals, such as tigers or lions.

But we should know better. Those who are of fine quality should get protection from society, just as we protect endangered species: we put them in nature reserves and breed them under control and supervision. We do the same for rare, fine plants and vegetables. We grow them in a greenhouse where they will be covered by sheets of nylon to protect them.

But we hardly do the same for our highly sensitive individuals.

Human society does not protect the fine or the high-quality: a gentle, highly sensitive kid in the class, for example, is often attacked or ostracized by the strongest.

And so, it seems that the more highly sensitive and gentle children are, the more they experience humiliations, attacks, and the like. This in turn will affect their self-image and self-confidence, and the worst thing is that they will turn against themselves, will begin to doubt themselves and come to accept that something is

wrong with them, instead of seeing themselves as special, of high quality.

And so many wonderful potential poets, artists, thinkers, and spiritual searchers are exposed to very difficult “weather conditions” as they grow up and later, and most will not arrive at self-actualization and self-fulfillment.

On the outside it seems that everyone has an equal chance, but there are many subconscious, hidden messages directed at the fine and the highly sensitive. These messages filter into them and poison their delicate inner life.

It is true that accomplished artists receive affirmation and prizes, but until they get recognition, they are exposed to these subliminal messages.

Evolution and development of society at large come from those agents of change, those highly sensitive individuals. Unless they are looked after and given protection, the cultural life of society will freeze and stagnate.

But it sees the special and the fine as problematic.

And so, those who need cultivation are perceived as a burden on the system.

And those with a spark – as emotionally unstable.

Those with spiritual potential – as neurotic and in need of psychotherapy.

And thus, it happens that those with fine, special potential – are the first to break down.

One of the areas that suffers the most in the life of these special individuals is their relationships, being part of a couple or in a marriage. Especially if the relationship is with another highly sensitive individual, it will be fragile and unstable. The fabric of these relationships is thin and succumbs easily to crisis.

And the higher the quality of the relationship, the “thinner” it is, so thin that often it cannot withstand the load and pressure of the demands of daily existence.

In contrast to regular families, relationships between highly sensitive individuals absorb the loads and demands of life until the

delicate layer of family relations can no longer hold, and cracks start to appear.

And thus, the highly sensitive are ejected from the family structure.

The psychologically sensitive are also fragile in body, and the difficulties of their inner life weaken the immune system and thus they suffer from psychosomatic illnesses that may shorten their difficult life.

And it is not hard to recognize them: they walk with bent back, their gaze may be lowered, their walk lacks grace, they might sit in the corner, apologize often, be afraid to attract attention when with other people, and so on. And those behaviors are exactly the ones that will signal to the stronger in a group that these people are weak, and therefore could be subjected to intimidation or isolation.

People born and raised in our current society cannot differentiate between the weak, the disabled who might threaten the coherence of a given group, and those of fine quality.

Our society is a forceful one, materialist and competitive, and it works on power and not on fineness. Those who do not exhibit strength or power suffer discrimination, in one form or another.

In some sense this is understandable, for what appears to be weakness and a difference from the majority, could be a sign of a disease, so the normative members might catch the virus that they carry ...