

# YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE

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Human nature being what it is, all of us are inclined to put the blame on others for our own shortcomings or misfortunes. Do you ever give a thought for a moment that you yourself can be responsible for your own problems? Your sorrows and miseries are not caused by a family curse that is handed down from one generation to the next. Nor are they caused by the original sin of some ancestor who has returned from beyond the grave to haunt you. Nor are your sorrow and miseries created by a god or by a devil. Your sorrow is caused by yourself. Your sorrow is your own making. You are your own liberator.

You must learn to shoulder the responsibilities of your life and to admit your own weakness without blaming or disturbing others. Remember the old saying :-

***“The uncultured man always blames others; the semi cultured man blames himself and the fully-cultured man blames neither.”***

As a cultured being, you must learn to solve your own problems without blaming others. If each person would try to correct himself, there would not be any trouble in this world. But many people do not make any effort to realize that they themselves are responsible for many misfortunes that befall them. They prefer to find scapegoats. They look outside themselves for the source of their troubles because they are reluctant to admit their own weaknesses.

Man’s mind is given to so much self-deceit that he does not want to admit his own weakness. He will try to find some excuse to justify his action and to create an illusion that he is blameless. If a man really wants to be free, he must have the courage to admit his own weakness. The Buddha says:-

***“Easily seen are others’ faults; hard indeed it is to see one’s own fault.”***

You must develop the courage to admit when you have fallen victim to your weakness. You must admit when you are in the wrong. Do not follow the uncultured who always blames others. Do not use other people as your scapegoat – this is most despicable. Remember that you may fool some of the people some of the time, but not all the people all of the time. The Buddha says:-

***“The fool who does not admit he is a fool, is a real fool. And the fool who admits he is a fool is wise to that extent.”***

Admit your own weakness. Do not blame others. You must realize that you are responsible for the miseries and the difficulties that come to you. You must understand that your way of thinking also creates the conditions that give rise to

your difficulties. You must appreciate that at all times, you are responsible for whatever comes to you.

*“It is not that something is wrong with the world, but something is wrong with us.”*

### ***You Are responsible For Your Relationship With Others***

Remember that whatever happens to you cannot feel hurt if you know how to keep a balanced mind. You are hurt only by the mental attitude that you adopt towards yourself and towards others. If you show a loving attitude towards others, you will receive a loving attitude in return. If you show hatred, you will undoubtedly never receive love in return. An angry man breathes out poison and he hurts himself more than others. Anyone who is wise not to be angered by anger will not be hurt. Remember that no one can hurt you unless you allow others to hurt you. Of another person blames or scolds you, but you follow the Dhamma (truth), then that Dhamma will protect you from unjust attacks. The Buddha says:-

*“Whoever harms a harmless person, one pure and guiltless, upon that very fool the evil recoils like fine dust thrown against the wind.”*

If you allow others to fulfill their wishes in hurting you, you are responsible.

### **Blame Not Others-Accept Responsible**

You must learn to guard your mind by maintaining a proper perspective so that any external happenings cannot affect your equilibrium. You are in the tight corner. You must not blame circumstances when things go wrong. You must not think that you are unlucky, the victim of fate, or of somebody else's ill-will. No matter what reason you give, you must not try to evade self-responsibility for your own actions instead of laying the blame on circumstances. Try to solve your problems without showing a sour face. In times of difficulty work cheerfully under the most trying circumstances. Be courageous to accept change if change is necessary but be serene enough to accept what you cannot change. Be wise enough to understand the worldly conditions which are common to everybody. Be wise enough to face certain problems without being frustrated and unhappy. The difficulties are for you overcome. Those who try to do some service to others earn more blame than those who do not serve, but this does not mean they must be discouraged. They should have the wisdom to realize that selfless service brings its own reward.

*“Love without knowledge and knowledge without love cannot produce a good life.” B. Russel.*

## **You Are Responsible For Your Inner Peace**

You must learn how to protect whatever inner peace and calm you have managed to create within your mind. To preserve the inner peace, you must know when to surrender yourself; you must know when to throw away your pride, when to subdue your false ego, when to change your adamant attitude or false conviction and when to practise patience. You should not allow others to take away your inner peace, and you can preserve your inner peace if you know how to act wisely. Wisdom comes through recognition of ignorance.

*“Man is not a fallen angel, but a arising animal.”*

## **The Correct Attitude Towards Criticism**

You must learn how to guard yourself from unjust criticism and how to make use of constructive criticism. You must look objectively at criticism that others give to you. If the criticism that comes to you is just, well-founded and given with good intention, then accept that criticism and put it to use. However, if the criticism that comes to you is unjust and ill-founded and given with bad intention, you are under no obligation to accept this kind of criticism. If you know that your attitude is correct and appreciated by wise and cultured people, then do not worry about ill-founded criticism. Your understanding of both constructive and destructive criticism is important. The Buddha says:-

*“There is no one who is not blamed in this world.”*

## **Expect Nothing And Nothing Will Disappoint You**

You can protect yourself from disappointments by not having any undue expectations. If you expect nothing, then nothing can disappoint you. Do not expect reward for the good that you have done. Do good for the sake of doing good with kindness. If you can help others without expecting any kind of a reward, then you can have no disappointment. You can be a great man! The happiness that appears in your mind for the good that you have done, is in itself a big reward. That happiness creates satisfaction in our life.

Perhaps you are person who is good by nature and you do not do any harm to others. But you get blamed by others despite doing good. You have to face difficulties and disappointment even though you have always helped others and have done good for others. Then you might ask , “If good begets good and bad begets bad, why should I have to suffer when I am completely innocent? Why should I have to undergo so many difficulties? Why should I get so many disappointments? Why should I get blamed by others despite my good work? The simple answer is when you do some good deeds you have to face certain evil forces. If not, you are facing a bad karma that is ripening in the present.

Continue with your good work and you will eventually be free from such troubles. Remember that you have created your own disappointments and you alone can overcome these disappointments, by realizing the nature of Karma (action and reaction) and the worldly conditions as explained by the Buddha.

*“If you can protect yourself, you can protect others.”*

### **Gratitude Is A Rare Virtue**

The Buddha considered gratitude as a great virtue, yet it is very rare: Yes, it is true that this virtue is rare in any society. You cannot always expect other people to be grateful for what you have done for them. People are inclined to be forgetful especially when it comes to remembering favours. If you expect gratitude from others, you will perhaps have to meet disappointment. If people fail to show gratitude, learn to accept them as such – then you can avoid disappointment. You can be happy regardless of whether people are grateful or ungrateful for your kindness or help; you need only think that you have done your duty as a human being to your fellow beings. That should be the only reward you should seek.

*“He who knows that enough, will always have enough.” (Lao Tse)*

### **Compare Not With Others**

You can rid yourself of unnecessary worry and troubles simply by not comparing yourself with others. “So long as you regard others as your ‘equal’ or as your ‘superior’ or as your ‘inferior’, you will continue to have problems to worry about. But if you do not adopt such an attitude there is nothing for you to worry. If you think you are better than others, you may become proud. If you think you are equal to others, you may stagnate. If you think you are inferior to others, you may become useless to yourself and to others. You may lose your self-confidence.

It is very difficult for most people to surrender their pride or sense of superiority. But you must learn to reduce or to suppress your pride. If you are able to sacrifice your pride, then you can find your inner peace and you can help mankind to find peace and happiness. Which is greater to maintain and to support – your pride or your peace of mind?

Comparing yourself with others can be a source of unnecessary worry. Try to realize that equality and inferiority and superiority are all changing, relative states: at one time you may be poor; at another time you may be a rich man. In the endless rounds within the ocean of life and death (samsara), we are all equal, inferior and superior to each other at different times. So why worry?

*“ If you are good to yourself, you are good to others. If you are good to others, you are good to yourself.”*

## **How To Handle Troubles-Makers**

It is one thing to realize that you are at all times responsible for all the troubles and problems that befall you. It is another thing to know what you must do to overcome the disturbances that come to you through other people and circumstances.

You must learn how to handle trouble-makers and evil-doers. They are also human beings; they must also be accommodated into the religious fold. Every effort must be made to correct them instead of isolating and neglecting them. If you are strong enough to resist their evil influence, there is no reason for you to avoid associating with them. Through your associations with evil-doers, you can influence them for the better. Remember that it is your understanding that protects you from evil-doers and allows you to influence them to become good. Here is the understanding that will protect you and help others.

You must understand that if a man does something wrong to you due to his ignorance and misunderstanding, then is the time for you to reveal your wisdom, your education, your sympathy, your culture and your religious attitude. What is the use of all your education and religious knowledge if you have not learned how to behave as a cultured man in a time of need? When others do wrong to you, you must regard their action as an opportunity for you to develop your patience and understanding.

Patience and education are prime qualities which everyone must cultivate. The more you practise these virtues the more you maintain your dignity. You must know how to make good use of these qualities and they will help to relieve you from many of the enormous miseries and sufferings and burdens of life. Sometimes you may come across certain people who try to take advantage of your tolerance and patience. Then is the time to act wisely. You must practise wisdom. Remember that your spirit of tolerance, patience and understanding has some powerful influence over your enemies so as to make them realize that they are in the wrong.

*“Patience is bitter but its fruit is sweet.”*

*“Virtues must be practiced wisely.”*

## **Forgive And Forget**

You must also understand that to take revenge on trouble-makers is only to create more problems and difficulties. You must realize that negative feelings and negative actions only bring harm and suffering to both you and the trouble-maker. In order to take revenge, you have to create a sense of hatred in your

own heart. This hatred is like a poison which you inject into a trouble-maker. But since the poison is initially created in you, surely it will harm you before it can harm anyone else. Before you can throw any cow-dung at another, you must first dirty yourself with cow-dung. Then your behavior is the same as the action of the foolish person. There is no basic difference between you and the evil-doer. By hating others, you only give them power over you. You do not solve your problem. If you become angry with another and he simply smiles back at you without any show of anger, then you are the defeated person. Since he did not co-operate with you to fulfill your wish, he is victorious; you are defeated. The Buddha says:-

*“Ah happily do we live without hate amongst the hateful. Amidst the hateful men, we live without hate.”*

Perhaps you may not be strong enough to love your enemies; but for the sake of your own health and happiness, you must learn at least to forgive and forget.

By not hating or crushing your trouble-maker, you are acting like a wise and cultured man. To act in this manner, you must understand that the other person is intoxicated with greed, anger, jealousy or ignorance. He is no different from all other human beings who are also at one time or another intoxicated with the same negative states of heart and mind. The Buddha once said:-

*“Evil-doers are not wicked by nature. They do evil because they are ignorant.”*

We should not curse them. It is not justifiable to condemn them to eternal suffering. Instead, we should try to correct them. We should try to explain to them that they are wrong. With this understanding, you can treat the evil-doer as a patient who is suffering from a sickness. If you can help to remove the cause of the sickness, then the patient can be cured and everyone can be well and happy.

*“Good life is inspired by love and guided by knowledge.”*

If a man does something wrong to you due to his ignorance or misunderstanding, then is the time to radiate your compassion and understanding to the evil-doer. For one day he will realize his folly and give up his evil habits. So it is better to give him a chance to be good. If you can radiate loving-kindness to the trouble-maker, then one day he will change into a better person. The Buddha said:-

*“Hatreds do not cease by hatred; by love alone do they cease. This is an eternal law.”*

If you can adopt this method of radiating loving-kindness, then no harm will come to you when you try to correct the evil-doer. This method will help you to achieve both physical and mental relief. Life means giving and taking; like breathing in

and out. Those who do not understand this get into trouble and face difficulties in their living.

If a man does something wrong to you again and again, you must be wise and try to correct him each time he makes the mistake. Try to follow the good example set by the Buddha who always returned good for evil. He said:-

*“The more evil that comes to me, the more good will radiate from me.”*

Some people think that it is not practical to return good for evil. Try and see for yourself. If you find it is too difficult to return good for evil, then you can still do a great service to yourself and to others by not returning evil for evil.

*“Sympathetic consideration is needed for less understanding people.”*

## **We Are All Human**

All human beings have weaknesses and are prone to making mistakes. All human beings have the basic weaknesses of desire, hatred, and ignorance. These weaknesses are within human beings in varying degrees. Unless you are a perfect man or a Arahant, you are no exception.

*Man is not satisfied with his life and never finds the purpose of life even after gaining the whole world.*

Let us take a closer look at the weakness of delusion or ignorance: man is enveloped in ignorance. His mind is clouded by disturbances, difficulties and darkness. Out of ignorance, man creates suffering and he shares this suffering with his fellow man. The miseries and the worries that come to man are due to worldly condition, man's unbalanced, uncultured mind and the reaction to the evil practices perpetrated by man.

Nobody is perfect in this world; everybody is liable to commit certain evil actions either intentionally or unintentionally. How can you think that you are free from evil?

*“Fear and worry disappear when ignorance is dispelled by knowledge.”*

If you can understand the nature of the weaknesses that are within man's mind, then there is no reason for you to grumble over your sufferings and miseries. You will have the courage to face and to tolerate all miseries and worries and sufferings that come to you.

*“Nothing happens to man that is not contained within man.”(C. Jung)*

## Parental Love

You are responsible for the well-being and upbringing of your own children. If the child grows up to be a strong, healthy and useful citizen, it is the result of your effort. If the child grows up to be a delinquent, you must bear the responsibility. Do not blame others. As parents, it is your duty to guide the child on to a proper path.

A child, at its most impressionable age, needs the tender love, care and attention of the parents. Without parental love and guidance, the child will be handicapped and will find the world a bewildering place to live in. However, showering parental love, care and attention does not mean pandering to all the demands of the child, reasonable or otherwise. Too much pampering will spoil the child. The mother in bestowing her love and care, should also be strict and firm in handling the tantrums of a child. Being strict and firm does not necessarily mean being harsh to a child. Show your love coupled with a disciplined hand – the child will understand.

Unfortunately, amongst present day parents, parental love is sadly lacking. The mad rush for material advancement, the liberation movements and the aspiration for equality, have resulted in many mothers joining their husbands, spending their working hours in offices and shops, rather than remaining at home tending to their off-spring. The children, left to the care of relations or paid servants, are bewildered on being denied tender motherly love and care. The mother, feeling guilty about her lack of attention, would try to placate the child by giving in to all sorts of demands from the child. Such an action spoils the child. Providing the child with all sorts of modern toys such as tanks, machine guns, pistols, swords and such like equipment as an appeasement is not psychologically good. The child is being taught to condone destruction instead of being taught to be kind, compassionate and helpful. Loading the child with such toys is no substitute for a mother's tender love and affections. Devoid of parental affection and guidance, it will not be surprising if the child subsequently grows up to be a delinquent. Who then is to be blamed for bringing up a wayward child? The parents of course! The mother, especially after a hard day's work in an office, to be followed by family chores, could hardly find time for the child that is yearning for her care and attention.

In the battle between the sexes for equality, many women seem to think that the solution is to compete with men outside the home. Such women would be best advised to bear no children. It is selfishness of the worst kind to bring a life into this world and then abandon it. You are responsible for what you create – you are responsible to see that a child is not only satisfied materially, but more importantly spiritually and psychologically. The provision for material comfort is secondary to the provision of love and attention. We know of many people from poor homes who have brought up their children well with plenty of love. Conversely many rich people have provided every material comfort for their



children, but deprived of love these children have grown up devoid of psychological and moral development.

Some women may feel that advising them to concentrate on the upbringing of the family is degrading and conservative. It is true that in the past women have been treated very badly, but this was more due to ignorance on the part of men than an inherent weakness in the concept of depending upon women to bring up children. The Sanskrit word for a woman is *Gruhini* which literally means “leader of the house”. Certainly it does not imply that a woman is inferior. Rather it means a division of responsibility for the male and the female. In Japan some husbands surrender every cent of their pay packet to their wives who have complete control over domestic affairs. This leaves the man free to concentrate on what he can do best. Since each partner knows clearly what his or her responsibilities are, there is no conflict and the atmosphere at home is happy and peaceful, where children can grow up well.

Of course the husband must see to it that his partner is well cared for, that she is consulted on every family decision, that there is enough freedom for her to develop her personality, to have free time to pursue her interests and so on. In this sense husband and wife are equally responsible for the welfare of their family and are not in competition with each other.

A mother should weigh carefully as to whether she should continue to be a working mother or a housewife giving all the affection and care for the well-being of her growing child. Strangely, some modern mothers are also being trained to handle guns and other deadly equipments when they should be cuddling their children and training them to be good and law-abiding citizens.

The modern trend and attitude of working mothers towards their children also tends to erode the time-honoured filial piety which children are expected to shower on their parents. The replacement of breast-feeding by bottle-feeding, is also another cause for the erosion of the affection between mother and child. Hitherto when mothers used to breast-feed and cuddle babies in their arms, the tender affection between mother and child is much greater and the influence the mother had on the child, for its well-being, is much more pronounced. Under such circumstances, filial piety, family cohesion and obedience were invariably present. These traditional traits are for the good and well-being of the child. It is up to the parents, especially the mother to provide them. The mother is responsible for the child being good or wayward. The mother can reduce delinquency! At the highest level of thinking, you can see things as they are, not as you are. Then you know that you are responsible for everything.

*“Those who lead their lives by going against nature, must face the consequences either physically or mentally.”*

## How To Reduce Your mental Pain

Whenever certain difficulties and problems arise, there are various ways and means for you to make up your mind to reduce your mental agony and unhappiness. First and foremost, you must try to understand the nature of the world in which you live. You must realize that you can never expect everything in this world to be perfect and to run smoothly. The world is not always in your favour. You must be prepared to face difficulties and problems in the day-to-day life. There is no world and no life without problems.

If you have strong craving for existence and an insane craze to enjoy the sensual pleasures of the world you have to pay the price in terms of physical pain and mental agony. This can be equated to the payment of rental for the “house” occupied by you – “rental” being the “physical pain and mental agony” and the “house” being your physical body, occupied by you on a temporary basis. Through your “body” you enjoy your sensual pleasures and you must pay for it. There is nothing free in this world.

However, if you are desirous of eradicating or eliminating the “physical pain” and “mental agony”, you should try to give up or subdue that strong craving force and the desire for sensual pleasures. So long as you are subjected to this “craving force”, you are subjected to the consequences of pain and agony. To do away with the “physical pain and agony” and to achieve spiritual happiness, you must make your choice. There are no two ways. You should not therefore accuse others, when you come across some problems while you are enjoying sensual pleasures.

One way to find solace for your occasional mental agony and unhappiness is to understand the degree of your own sufferings and difficulties with that experienced by others. When you are unhappy, you feel that the world is against you. You think that everything around you is about to collapse. You feel that the end of the road is near. However, if you try to take a mental stock of things and try to count your blessings, you will find, surprisingly that you are better off than many other people. You have probably heard the saying, “I complained I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.” In short, you have been unduly exaggerating your own difficulties and problems. Many others are worse off than you, and yet they do not worry unduly. Problems are there, and you should try to resolve them instead of worrying and creating mental anguish and pain. The Chinese have a practical saying about resolving problems:-

*“If you have a big problem, try to reduce it to a small problem. If you have a small problem try to reduce it to no problem.”*

Another method to be adapted to contain your difficulties and problems and reduce it to its proper perspective, is to recapitulate what you have gone through

before, under similar or worst circumstances, and how you have, through your patience and efforts, been able to surmount your then seemingly insurmountable difficulties. By doing so, you will not permit your existing difficulties or problems to “drown you”. On the contrary you will determine to resolve whatever issues or problems that may be facing you. You should realize that you have gone through worse situations and that you are prepared to face the issue – come what may. With this frame of mind, you will soon regain your self confidence and will be able to face and resolve whatever problems that are in store for you.

### **All Are Not Equally Good**

Occasionally there are complaints from certain people, we have never caused or given any trouble to others, that they are the innocent victims of the wiles and intrigues of others. They thus feel frustrated that despite the good lives they live, they are being harmed through no fault of their own. Under such circumstances the innocent victim must realize and appreciate that the world is made up of all sorts of people – the good and the not so good, the bad and the not so bad, and with all sorts of idiosyncrasies. The innocent victim may console himself that he belongs to the good category whereas the disturber of peace belongs to the bad category, and that on certain occasions, he will still have to bear with the misdeeds of those belonging to the “bad category”.

Similarly, we take the case of the “good and the careful driver” and the “bad and reckless driver”. The good and careful driver took every precaution to drive carefully in order to avoid accidents. Nevertheless the good and careful driver met with an accident, through no fault of his, but through the fault of the bad and reckless driver. Thus on occasions, the good have to suffer, despite their goodness, because there are bad and reckless people just like the bad and reckless driver. The world as such is neither good nor bad. It produces criminals as well as saints, fools and enlightened ones. Out of the same clay, beautiful and ugly, useful and useless things can be made. The quality depends on the potter, not on the clay. In this case, the potter is yourself solely responsible for moulding your own happiness or unhappiness.

### **You Gain What You Seek For**

If you try your level best to overcome your difficulties by practising the advice given in this booklet, then you will definitely find the peace and happiness and harmony for which you are seeking. “ If you follow the master the dog will not bite you.”

*“Victory breeds hatred.  
The defeated live in pain.  
Happily the peaceful live,  
Giving up victory and defeat.”*

*(The Buddha)*

