

# **A World in Revolution**

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## A WORLD IN REVOLUTION

We are living in what is probably the most remarkable period in the history of the human race, where man is probing the secrets of Nature at a speed that is staggering.

When those who were born at the beginning of this century look back over their lives, they find that in this short period of time man has discovered : how to double his life-span; how to make computers do much of his brain-work; how to use x-rays beneficially in health, and in commerce; how to communicate almost instantly by picture and sound with any part of the earth; how to release the stupendous energy locked in the atom and turn it into electricity for his daily needs; how to travel by air faster than sound; and how to control delicate instruments hundreds of thousands of miles out in space, and receive intelligent information from these mechanical explorers as they try to wrest from Nature some of her more distant secrets.

Yet every thoughtful man and woman is conscious of a steady de-humanization which is taking place throughout the world, as the rapid advance in technology steadily progresses at the expense of humanitarian values.

This has led to a world-wide sickness, where deep down in the heart of mankind there is a profound spiritual discontent, for both men and nations become disgruntled when their purpose in life proves unsatisfactory, or when conscious existence seems meaningless.

Man has become bewildered. No longer has he a series of established standards by which to guide his activities. It is quite misleading to think that the world can be guided by the customs and beliefs of the nineteenth century, for we live in a completely new era.

This is the age of nuclear weapons; of a population explosion rushing towards mass starvation while stupendous sums of money are spent on objects of national prestige. This is the age of a precipitous decline in customs and moral standards; and a revolution in established ideologies, the total effect of which is to leave the mind of man benumbed as he looks around him in despair and wonders which path he ought to take that will lead him towards sanity.

In such conditions he seeks solace in physical pleasure, by making the accumulation of wealth and the acquisition of power his ultimate goals. In his frantic desire to do this, he is often willing to make great sacrifices of health, labour, and sometimes of honesty; but when after

prolonged effort he eventually succeeds, he finds sooner or later that his success brings satiety and disappointment.

Symptoms of this malaise can be seen all around us today. Suicide, illegitimacy, drug addiction, and the breakdown of families, in the small sphere of the individual; while further afield we wonder with apprehension where the hatred between the United States and China, Arabia and Israel, and the antagonism between the white and coloured races, will ultimately lead.

Mankind seems completely to have lost its sense of wise discrimination, that greatest of human virtues it must cultivate if it is to solve its problems.

In such a world situation men seek desperately for guidance in many directions, while the wise, prompted by their deeper spiritual impulses, turn to the ancient teaching of Man's origins and purpose that have been nurtured through the ages by the wisest members of the race.

## MAN'S ORIGINS AND PURPOSE

There is considerable archaeological evidence of many ancient periods of culture, and in *The Secret Doctrine* H. P. Blavatsky draws attention to the traces of prehistoric civilizations scattered throughout remote parts of the world. Even in Central Asia such traces are still to be found; and where there has been civilization there must have been a literature in some form in addition to annals and chronicles.

'The gigantic and unbroken wall of the mountains that hem in the whole tableland of Tibet, from the upper course of the river Khuan-Khé down to the Karakorum Hills, witnessed a civilization during millenniums of years, and should have strange secrets to tell mankind. The Eastern and Central portions of these regions—The Nan-Shan and the Altyn-Tagh—were once upon a time covered with cities that could well vie with Babylonia. A whole geological period has swept over the land, since those cities breathed their last, as the mounds of shifting sand, and the sterile and now dead soil of the immense central plains of the basin of Tarim testify.'<sup>1</sup>

'The traces of such civilization, and these, and like traditions, give us the right to credit other legendary lore, warranted by well educated and learned inhabitants of India and Mongolia, who speak of immense libraries reclaimed from the sand . . . which have all been safely stowed away.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*The Secret Doctrine*, 1962 Adyar Edition, Vol. I. pp. 54-55.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* p.56

Such recorded wisdom was the 'universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world. Proofs of its diffusion; authentic records of its history; a complete chain of documents, showing its character and presence in every land, together with the teaching of all its great adepts, exist to this day in the secret crypts of libraries belonging to the Occult Fraternity.'<sup>2</sup>

These teachings show how, over stupendous aeons of time, the universe came into existence, starting from the unmanifested Absolute, the One Reality, the eternal Cause of all that was, is, or ever shall be.

It first gave rise to Absolute Consciousness or Spirit, which then expressed itself in matter. Thereafter, as the guiding intelligence in the vast scheme of cosmic evolution, it led ultimately to self-conscious Man.

Man is thus seen to be the living expression of the Universal Oversoul with all the potentialities of the latter, but in a state of gradual evolution. It follows therefore, that if Man in his self-awareness co-operates with that life of the Great Oversoul ever pressing outwards from deep within him, he will experience inner harmony and the happiness of living purposefully; but if in his self-conscious waywardness, he does not obey his deep spiritual promptings, he will only experience discord, unhappiness and pain.

## CAUSES OF THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS

Here we have an explanation of the great world problems which confront mankind today; at the same time we also have the only solution to those problems which, unless put into practical effect by Man, will lead to his annihilation on this planet.

This means that men and nations will have to alter their basic outlooks, and revolutionize many of their incentives to everyday activity; but it is not easy to reverse one's main ideas of living and realize that the pursuit of wealth, power, and prestige are contrary to one's fundamental and cosmic origins; so that the immediate problem is to learn how to apply the deep truths of spiritual evolution to the trivial as well as the bigger activities of present civilization.

For this, Man must learn to understand himself, his motives and impulses, but above all, his mind. Such a task is very much greater than at first sight appears, for Manas, the mental principle, is the vital structure on which the whole creative edifice is pivoted.

<sup>2</sup>*The Secret Doctrine*, 1962 Adyar Edition. Vol. 1. p. 56.



It is said that pure spirit is unselfconscious, and therefore cannot incarnate and use matter consciously as its instrument without first having a bridge of intelligence between the two.<sup>3</sup> This bridge is the mental principle which makes man completely different from the animals, giving him self-consciousness and the power of intelligent choice, so that he can direct his body to act as his instrument. His body, and way of life, are intended to be controlled mentally and not by his instinctive physical needs as with the animal, but to do this satisfactorily his mind must be illumined by wisdom, and it is the development of this wise intelligence that is the necessary goal for all mankind.

It is one of the strange facts of Nature that pure spirit lacks wisdom, in that it is a single life-force which has not had the experience of self-consciousness. To become self-conscious it must experience duality in the form of the observer and the observed. Hence the Universe must develop the great manasic principle if the First Cause is to express itself through intelligent beings in all parts of the cosmos.

## NEED FOR PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE

It is for this reason the ancient doctrine teaches that, in order to become a divine, fully self-conscious being, even of the highest degree, all spiritual primeval Intelligencies must pass through the human stage. 'This does not apply merely to our terrestrial humanity, but to the mortals that inhabit any world, namely, to those Intelligences that have reached the appropriate equilibrium between matter and spirit, as *we* have now ever since the middle point of the Fourth Root Race of the Fourth Round was passed. Each entity must have won for itself the right of becoming divine, through self-experience.'<sup>4</sup>

We can now understand something of the paradox that the perfect and sinless lack wisdom, for they cannot discriminate between good and evil until they have consciously experienced both. They are unaware of these two opposites, and are only conscious of one aspect. They are like a man who can only conceive of an object having a front, but no back. Such a being is devoid of the power of logical reasoning, and hence of any sense of discrimination. He is without wisdom, and is a kind of automaton of pure spirit.

For perfection to be fully reached it must be comprehensive, and therefore born out of imperfection. The incorruptible must grow out of the corruptible, just as the appreciation of light and colour can only be experienced in contrast to the knowledge of darkness.

<sup>3</sup>*The Secret Doctrine*. Vol. I. p. 243

<sup>4</sup>*The Secret Doctrine*. Vol. I. p. 167



Thus we see that the mind of man is a highly complex mechanism, and of the utmost importance cosmically, so that until we learn to understand something of its processes of working we are likely to misunderstand ourselves and others, and go from blunder to blunder, as we blindly grope our way through life.

## THE FINDINGS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGISTS

Up to the end of last century little was known in the West about the workings of consciousness until Freud, Jung and Adler propounded their theories, and demonstrated experimentally something of the truths underlying them. They were able to give rational explanations why one person always has a chip on his shoulder; another is pleasant to his superiors and cruel to his subordinates; another is always optimistic in the most unpleasant situations, while another always seems to bring out the worst in those who contact him.

These, and many other mysteries of the working of the human mind have always puzzled philosophers and psychologists in the past, and various methods have been devised for solving them, but without much success. The great difficulty has been the rather surprising fact that introspection as ordinarily practised does not as a rule lead to self-understanding, and frequently ends in aimless brooding.

One of the great discoveries made by modern psychologists was the existence of a vast sea of consciousness linked to every human being, but of which he is *unaware directly*. This unconscious part of a man's mind is much greater than his waking consciousness, and is very much like the hidden side of an iceberg which, though unseen, has a great and continuous influence on that part which can be seen above the surface of the ocean. Man's unconscious mind can be roughly divided into two departments—the subconscious, which contains his instincts; the things he has forgotten; and those matters of an unpleasant nature which through fear, shame, or dislike he has repressed into the deeper layers of his unconscious, and which are completely obliterated from memory. The other department, often referred to as the superconscious, containing all the idealistic part of his mind, together with the abstract and intuitive section which constitutes the theosophical Ego.

Both these departments of the unconscious continually affect the things we do consciously, though as a rule we are unaware of their hidden influence. From this it can easily be seen how conflicts frequently arise between the forces of the higher and lower unconscious, until one or other predominates and influences our waking thoughts and activities. At the same time it is understandable how a conflict of this

kind, if it be intense, will use up a great deal of nervous energy, causing exhaustion for no apparent reason, since the struggle is taking place beyond the realms of our waking consciousness. But although we may be unaware of what is happening in this way in the deeper layers of our mind, it always has an effect on what we do consciously, often causing us to behave in unexpected ways, sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse. The paralyzing effect of excessive shyness, or the sudden manifestation of great bravery and self-sacrifice, for instance, may often surprise the subject as much as his friends. Such behaviour is the result of forces welling up from his unconscious, though what those forces are, or how they originated, can only be discovered by an expert psychologist, as the person himself cannot directly delve into his unconscious and examine them.

## THE CAUSES OF FOIBLES

When a person realizes that his own mind works in this complex manner, he will begin to understand something of the reason for his own peculiar behaviour at times. His irrational likes and dislikes, his fixed ideas and prejudices, and his outbursts of enthusiasm or other emotion which are out of all proportion to the happening that triggers them off.

Another result of this self-knowledge will be his greater understanding of his fellows, and his ability to make allowances for them when they behave irrationally or unwisely. The power of the unconscious over one's general behaviour can at times be very considerable, causing us to do and feel things which our waking consciousness tells us are definitely wrong, or at any rate foolish. This conflict will puzzle, and perhaps frighten us at times, leading to periods of depression and unhappiness, until we realize what is happening, accept the paradoxical situation, and set about calmly trying to be rational in spite of our irrational feelings. This very calm recognition and acceptance of our foibles is itself a means of helping the unconscious to settle its own conflicts, while still keeping them below the threshold of wakefulness.

The man who has learnt to know himself to this extent, is bound to be tolerant towards others, understanding something of their inner problems, and able to be ready to help or cooperate with them when the opportunity arises, without giving way to adverse criticism.

This is one of the first essentials for everyone who sincerely wants to bring about the practical establishment of universal brotherhood, and shows why the old command, 'Man, know thyself' is of such profound importance.

Such knowledge will influence all his thoughts and activities—how he contacts his fellows and the organizations which surround him. It is not enough to give a theoretical acceptance to these truths as he discovers them; they must become part of himself so that he automatically lives what he recognizes as truth. Then he will radiate understanding, sympathy, and kindliness, even when disagreeing with his fellows over matters of politics, social theories, or religion. The reason the teachings of the great religious leaders of the world have endured is because their founders lived what they taught, and did not simply produce academic expositions. To study truth is important—to live it is paramount.

## MAIN CAUSES OF WORLD DISCONTENT

The causes of the world's discontent can be placed under four main headings: fear of want; fear of the hereafter (causing intolerance between different religious communities); fear of unhappiness (and hence its pursuit through material aggrandizement); and finally, an overall lack of purpose.

Members of The Theosophical Society with their priceless heritage are particularly suited to deal with these fundamental difficulties which are based on ignorance, and if we are to succeed in our purpose, we must bring all our reason and intuitive faculties to bear on these problems.

Not one of these basic difficulties is simple, and all are deeply rooted, so that a frontal attack is useless. The utmost insight and understanding are needed to enable us to dispel the ignorance underlying them, and the reciting of theosophical textbook phrases will not get us very far. We need to enter into the heart of each problem and feel for ourselves how the majority of people regard them. But this is only the first step. It is then necessary to stand apart from the problem and view it with wise detachment, seeing the whole structure with its psychological as well as physical components, its ramifications, and its secondary reactions. Only in this way shall we be able to discover how to banish the ignorance and false ideas that perpetuate the particular problem we are considering.

If we take as an example the first of the four world difficulties enumerated—the fear of want—we see that this is a natural and obvious emotion, for unless certain basic needs are satisfied, man must perish. Of these needs if we take one only, that of nourishment, it would seem that all that is necessary is for the rich countries with surplus food to send it to the undernourished countries. But on further

consideration it will be seen that such action, while staving off disaster, does not solve that particular problem, because the cause has remained untouched.

It is essential to find out why that particular community is undernourished, and then with the utmost patience and tact take steps to show them how a change in their customs will remove the causes of their suffering. This must be done as between equals, and without patronage, so that by means of demonstrations while living among them, they will be able to see that the methods offered by the more experienced actually produce better results than the old traditional practices. Primitive ways of tilling the soil will need to be replaced by more modern methods. The burning of manure as domestic fuel will need to be shown as fatally wasteful, and other means of heat production devised. The principles of food hygiene and food conservation will have to be inculcated, and may take long periods of patient effort if harmful old-fashioned habits are to be eradicated. But when eventually these things have been done successfully, the problem of hunger can be eliminated from that district permanently.

## **NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING**

Each of the other great problems must be dealt with in a similarly comprehensive manner if it is to be solved. The great canker of religious intolerance, for example, will never be removed by hatred, or wars between different sects, nor by adopting an attitude of superior knowledge and trying to convert others to one's own religious beliefs. It is first necessary to appreciate how different religions arose so that their separative tendencies can be viewed with sympathetic understanding, and not veiled intolerance. Man, because of his origins, has always been regularly aware of a hidden reality behind Nature's activities, with which something deep down in himself is closely linked. This has enabled those who enjoy wielding power over others to develop a priesthood in every age, built upon the universal fear of the unknown and the hidden life of the hereafter. It is then an easy matter to incorporate into their priestly organization the sayings of any great teacher, claim them as their own, and modify them to suit their own purpose or ignorance. It can then be seen how each of these power groups will regard the others as rivals, and be willing to fight its antagonists in order to retain its own ability to dominate.

In trying to bring brotherliness and wisdom into these man-made groups, it is essential therefore to approach them with respect and sympathy, supporting those beliefs and activities which one recognizes

as having a basis in truth, while with the utmost tact and gentleness trying to introduce wise modifications of those aspects that seem to be based on superstition or desire for power.

Coming now to the pursuit of happiness, most philosophers and psychologists agree that this is based on a complete misconception. Happiness is a concomitant of harmonious living, and is not dependent on any single factor such as possessions, power, health, or social status. It is a natural side-effect of applied wisdom and creative living, and cannot be sought out and captured as a special experience in its own right. If pursued as such, it can never be caught, but it will come uninvited to those who organize their lives with kindness and insight.

Finally, unless a man feels there is purpose in his existence he is as useless and derelict as a rudderless boat at sea. Buffeted by every storm of life, and at the mercy of each change of emotional climate, he becomes disconsolate, cynical, and of little use, as he allows changes of circumstance to toss him about on a voyage of progressive disintegration.

## **NECESSITY FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

Here is a magnificent opportunity for every Theosophist to start dealing, on a practical basis, with these world problems *now*. We only have to look around us to realize how very urgently our help is needed. It may be too late if we wait till 1975 in the vain hope that someone greater than ourselves will take the matter in hand. We already have enough theosophical knowledge to guide us for the rest of our lives, but if we are to carry out the wishes of the Society's founders, we must put into practice at once something of the great truths we have learnt. There are cycles of contemplation and learning, and cycles when intense action is called for. Such a time for action is upon us now.

Fortunately, the moment we start putting into practice the beneficent forces of wisdom, we get a response, however little, in every man's heart. For every individual has evolved from the great Universal Spirit, and when the spirit in one man sincerely calls to another in its separated loneliness, there is always a response.

There are certain aspects of our world sickness which are particularly difficult to rectify. When we are faced with the fanatical antagonism between large masses of people due to deep misconceptions, such as between the black and white races, or the Chinese and Americans, or Russia and the West, the task of bringing friendliness

and understanding between the rivals seems completely insurmountable, and we wonder how we can take even the first step.

Now it is a well established fact that if anyone is suffering from a psychological difficulty or deep prejudice, he will not be helped by simply being told the correct answer to his problem. This method of approach, while seeming a very obvious one, almost invariably results in complete failure. If deep psychological tensions, fixed ideas, or ingrained misconceptions, are to be resolved and replaced by the harmonizing effects of truth, steps have to be taken by devious routes to enable the sufferer to *see for himself* the falsity of his beliefs, and hence the need for correcting them. This is the fundamental principle of all psychotherapy, and until the sufferer clearly and sincerely comes to this conclusion from his own reasoning and insight, a solution offered by someone else will not succeed, and even one imposed by force, or hypnosis, will ultimately fail.

If nations or political parties are labouring under a similar burden of deeply held fallacies, they can only be helped from outside by the same method as used when helping an individual, since they are only individuals in the mass. This is why nations constantly fail to bring about international understanding when they try to impose their own ideas on other groups. The fact that their particular way of life may be a healthier and more enlightened one compared with others is not an adequate reason for trying to impose it on their neighbours, even when their motives are entirely altruistic. For, as with the single individual suffering from his prejudices and fixed ideas, an imposed solution, however perfect, will always fail in the end. If one nation is to be helped by another into a more satisfying and wiser social system, this can only be brought about by processes of international education, where the nation with greater experience offers the other the help it can give, on a basis of *absolute equality and friendship*. Only in this way can the dignity of mankind be maintained, and the principles of human brotherhood extended.

## A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

To take the case of China for a moment, the western hemisphere must find some method of convincing the Chinese rulers that it wants to build up a genuine friendship between the two great masses of people, without imposing any of its ideas or controls on them. Since traditional diplomatic methods have completely failed so far, just as surely as threats of violence, some distinctly new method of approach must be found that will be quite unorthodox compared with past pro-

cedures. One such method that could be tried straight away, would be for the U.S. to stop spending thousands of millions of pounds on all prestige rocket projects, and use the money as a token of sincere friendship towards China. The Chinese could be approached through the usual diplomatic channels, and asked what they consider their greatest needs. The U.S. could then supply those needs whatever they were, whether food, machinery, houses, or technical literature, and make it quite clear they would expect nothing but friendship in return. The Americans would not be out of pocket one cent, and the genuine magnanimity of their gift would create such an enormous emotional shock in the Chinese, that it would lift them out of their deep rut of fixed ideas of anti-Americanism.

It is by methods such as these, where we use wisdom instead of tradition, that we could start building a practical basis for world brotherhood. And since the world is prepared for rapid changes in its present state, once the sincerity of such an effort becomes apparent, it would progress in a geometrical ratio; but we must be quite sure that any project undertaken to bring about international friendship is so constructed that it carries with it an inspiration to *every* human being, not simply to a select band of intellectuals.

Of the various causes of world discontent, this removal of hatred between nations and other groups of people is the most urgent because the most dangerous. Moreover, it is basically essential, since man is created a social being, and can only reach his fullest development through interaction with his fellows. Until that situation is brought about, man's evolution is bound to be impeded.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

One such impediment to human brotherhood is largely overlooked, and often forgotten, though it concerns half the human race. The unequal status of women throughout the world will need to change profoundly if it is not to become a stumbling block to human progress.

Since every man owes his existence to a woman who made herself *entirely* responsible for his life in all aspects during the first nine months of his existence, and almost entirely responsible for his welfare during the next year or so, it is quite ludicrous that men should treat such people with injustice. Yet in many countries women are relegated to an inferior position in the family; expected to do many menial tasks as well as look after the children and prepare meals for all; and often in addition to do heavy muscular work. Where polygamy is permitted, they suffer the additional humility of being little more



than slaves, being at the mercy of their husband's whims, sometimes treated with importance and at others having to step aside and watch one of the other wives being given the privileges they recently enjoyed themselves. These established customs have a very serious effect on the minds of such women. They develop a deep sense of inferiority, and submit unhappily to continual injustices and indignities. Moreover, if the husband in certain countries gets tired of a wife's companionship, he can divorce her, and make her destitute, by simply declaring publicly that she is no longer his wife.

Western civilization has gone a long way in rectifying these barbaric customs, and in Britain we pride ourselves on our social consciousness. But it may come as a surprise to find that in this country there are still many ways in which women are treated as inferior to men. In the catering and distributive trades, for instance, women are paid less than men merely because they are women, and not because their work is inferior. Then there is the somewhat arbitrary division into 'men's work' and 'women's work' in which women are paid lower wages than men; while in certain trades such as printing, glass manufacture, and woodwork women are completely excluded. Finally, what is still more difficult to understand, no woman is permitted to be a priest in the established national church of this country, the Roman Catholic Church, or any other episcopal church.

All these injustices must be removed if the world is to solve its social problems, for Mankind needs the help of women in all departments of life in addition to that of maternity. Women bring a different viewpoint to a problem in contrast to that of men, and a woman who has had a good education and broad experience of life will be a much better mother to her children than one who is simply engulfed in the emotions of motherhood.

It is just as important for women to educate their minds as for men, for they are mainly responsible for the way in which their children approach life in the first few years of existence. This period of childhood has been shown to be of the utmost importance in influencing the whole subsequent life of a child. It is at this time that the seeds of its general knowledge are planted; it also learns how to develop a broad or narrow outlook, how to face problems and pains; and its relationship with the rest of the community is established.

A woman with a starved mind, or who has few interests beyond the kitchen hearth, unwittingly creates many difficulties for her children's future, whereas the child who has a mother with a cultured mind, broad general knowledge, and a wise way of facing life's vicissitudes is indeed fortunate, and goes out into the world with wide interests, and well equipped for all the varied changes he may have to face.

When in our moments of quiet contemplation we look at the world and all its turmoil, its numerous problems and its suffering, we may tend to recoil from the enormity of the difficulties we visualize. At such a time we can regain our balance of outlook and inner spiritual strength if we recall that we are parts of the Great Cosmic Intelligence expressing itself through us. When life is seen from the temporary viewpoint of the personality, it is like looking at a small brown spot in a magnificent painting and thinking 'how drab and ugly', until, on seeing the whole picture, we realize the brown spot is a small shadow in the fold of a beautiful garment, and is essential to the total effect. Our real strength is far greater than that of our temporary personality, and in quiet contemplation we can sense something of the magnitude and power of that Cosmic Mind of which the universe is a thought form.

### **'THE ETERNAL NOW'**

Most of us are familiar with the statement of the great peace that 'abides in the hearts of those who live in the eternal'. Such people look on the world with a clear and serene vision, uninfluenced by parochial changes which may occur around them, but see in the evolutionary trends of the present the final splendour towards which all things are slowly, but inevitably moving. This certainty of the basic harmony at the heart of all creation makes clear the direction in which we can help to guide the present course of events, while at the same time it brings assurance of the temporary nature of the great discords we find in the world around us. So if we look at the world's problems from the viewpoint of the eternal, we shall not only experience something of that great tranquillity, but we shall get a sense of perspective and proportion, and see a little more of the ways in which those difficulties can be resolved.

Then instead of recoiling from the magnitude of the task, we shall experience an eagerness and ability to go forward as our *real* selves—the eternal agents of the Cosmic Mind.

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