

B.P. Wadia on 'What is Man?'

Studies in The Secret Doctrine, Third Series, III, What is Man?

The ancient occult axiom, "Man, know thyself," is familiar to all; but very few have apprehended the real meaning of the Delphic Oracle. We think we know our earthly pedigree when we have looked at the genealogical family-tree; science thinks it knows the physical pedigree of man and humanity, having traced his form from the protoplasm, and its growth from savagery. Neither the modern philosopher, nor the scientist, has traced the links of heredity, psychic, intellectual and spiritual; in the absence of that knowledge, it is not surprising and is very natural that the modern estimate of the human form is altogether a mistaken one.

For all practical purposes, either of self-growth or of altruistic service, such knowledge is absolutely requisite. The intimate connection between the body, mind-soul and spirit of man has to be perceived; for then only can follow the perception of the relationship, nay the identity, which subsists between him and the triple Universe of Spirit, Intelligence and Matter. There is an indissoluble union between man and the universe. The two are but the dual aspects of the One Substance-Principle — Absoluteness in its non-manifested aspect and Eternal Motion of the Great Breath in manifestation.

The universe is the macrocosm; man, the microcosm; man, the Spirit, is the macrocosm; man, the Thinker, is the microcosm, and that Thinker in turn becomes the macrocosm to the material form in and through which he operates; thus also man becomes the macrocosm for the three lower kingdoms under him. (Cf. II. 169)

Life is consciousness but is not self-conscious in every form; only in man it attains the state, plane or condition of self-consciousness, and when by self-induced and self-devised efforts it becomes a Self-Conscious Being, it gains for itself the greatest of all opportunities, the attainment of Universal Self-Consciousness. Then man has become divine, the Atma has become Paramatma, the Purusha has become Purushottama. Such a Being is the "Vasudeva, who is all this, the Mahatma difficult to meet" of the seventh discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Of his birth *The Voice of the Silence* sings:—

The silver star now twinkles out the news to the night-blossoms, the streamlet to the pebbles ripples out the tale; dark ocean waves will roar it to the rocks surf-bound, scent-laden breezes sing it to the vales, and stately pines mysteriously whisper: "A Master has arisen, a MASTER OF THE DAY."

What a sublime goal! Not from star-dust to star-dust; but from star-dust to the manifest, nourisher, and regenerator of the never-ending stream of conditioned existence — such is the destiny of Man.

Life is universal consciousness, one and impartite. The consciousness of any universe is unitary and therefore is termed monadic. This aspect of the One Life is defined as Spirit. The second of the primal duality, Matter is the same One Life visualized as the many. To quote the words of the Mahatma K.H.:—

It is one of the elementary and fundamental doctrines of Occultism that the two are one, and are distinct but in their respective manifestations, and only in the limited perceptions of the world of senses.

Says *The Secret Doctrine*:—

Spirit is the first differentiation of (and in) SPACE; and Matter the first differentiation of Spirit. That, which is neither Spirit nor matter — that is IT — the Causeless CAUSE of Spirit and Matter, which are the Cause of Kosmos. And THAT we call the ONE LIFE or the Intra-Cosmic Breath. (Commentary, I. 258)

Though one and the same thing in their origin, Spirit and Matter, when once they are on the plane of differentiation, begin each of them their evolutionary progress in contrary directions — Spirit falling gradually into matter, and the latter ascending to its original condition, that of a pure spiritual substance. Both are inseparable, yet ever separated. In polarity, on the physical plane, two like poles will always repel each other, while the negative and the positive are mutually attracted, so do Spirit and Matter stand to each other — the two poles of the same homogeneous substance, the root-principle of the universe. (I. 247)

Spirit fails to know matter because it does not know itself. Matter is inert though animate, because that which lives and energizes and is conscious in it is not conscious of itself. That is why in the Sankhya Darshana — one of the six points of view of the Indian philosophy — Purusha-Spirit is represented as having eyes but not feet, while Prakriti-Matter has feet to move but is blind; the former mounts on the shoulders of the latter and, thus conjoint, the march of evolution of the One Life becomes possible. But only for a while. For matter has no ear to listen and the spirit has no power of speech. Time comes when the pair, even in close embrace, is lost in the slums of space. Each has to acquire knowledge of itself, its limitations and capacities, and learn the art of co-operation to seek and tread the Great Highway of the Heavens.

Thus Theosophy brings us to the third element, “at present unknown to Western speculation” (I. 16). Modern science sees nothing beyond the ever-changing forms of matter caused by modes of motion and variety of Force. Modern religion, east and west alike, believes in that which does not exist — Spirit divorced of matter, or God beyond the earth — because it cannot understand and explain that which does exist, the phenomenal universe. “Between degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism, the White Dove of Truth has hardly room whereon to rest her weary unwelcome feet. It is time that Theosophy should enter the arena” — thus [says] a Master of Masters.

In every universe, atomic or solar or sidereal, and in every personification of it, as Heavenly Man or Adam-Kadmon, threefold is the process always going on. The world-process is triune — macrocosmically as microcosmically. In the metaphysics of India, Sat-Chit-Ananda is the macrocosmic triad as Ichcha, Gnyan and Kriya is the microcosmic. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (seventh discourse) the same basic idea is put forward — Shri Krishna and his two natures — para and apara prakriti, the eightfold inferior and the superior by which “the universe is sustained.” “The trinity in unity is an idea which all the ancient nations held in common,” wrote H.P.B. in *Isis Unveiled* (I. 160) and proceeded to enumerate the same. The Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* deal with the archetypal trinity. From the standpoint of the ever-flowing Life-Wave of Evolution *The Secret Doctrine* (I. 181) shows

that there exists in Nature a triple evolutionary scheme ... or rather three separate schemes of evolution, which in our system are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. These are the Monadic (or spiritual), the intellectual, and the physical evolutions. These three

are the finite aspects or the reflections on the field of Cosmic Illusion of ATMA, the seventh, the ONE REALITY.

1. The Monadic is, as the name implies, concerned with the growth and development into still higher phases of activity of the Monad in conjunction with:—

2. The Intellectual, represented by the Manasa-Dhyanis (the Solar Devas, or the Agnishwatta Pitris) the “givers of intelligence and consciousness” to man and:—

3. The Physical, represented by the Chhayas of the lunar Pitris, round which Nature has concentered the present physical body. This body serves as the vehicle for the “growth” (to use a misleading word) and the transformations through Manas and — owing to the accumulation of experiences — of the finite into the INFINITE, of the transient into the Eternal and Absolute.

Each of these three systems has its own laws, and is ruled and guided by different sets of the highest Dhyanis or “Logoi.” Each is represented in the constitution of man, the Microcosm of the great Macrocosm; and it is the union of these three streams in him which makes him the complex being he now is.

This is an amplification of the teaching of *Isis Unveiled* which, after affirming (II. 587) that there is no miracle and that everything that happens is the result of Law, eternal, immutable, ever-active, proceeds to lay down the basic ideas of the philosophy:—

Nature is triune: there is a visible, objective nature; an invisible, indwelling, energizing nature, the exact model of the other, and its vital principle; and, above these two, *spirit*, source of all forces, alone, eternal, and indestructible. The lower two constantly change; the higher third does not. (II. 587-88)

Man is also triune: he has his objective, physical body; his vitalizing astral body (or soul), the real man; and these two are brooded over and illuminated by the third — the sovereign, the immortal spirit. When the real man succeeds in merging himself with the latter, he becomes an immortal entity. (II. 588)

The trinity of nature is the lock of magic, the trinity of man the key that fits it. (II. 636)

A triune process begets, sustains, regenerates man and heavenly man, atom and monad, alike. In the great drama of unfoldment one does not become the other, nor does one yield place to another. The never-to-be-divided Spiritual Monad and its numberless rays called human monads; the incorruptible human monad and its numerous incarnations in matter; the material monad (named the mineral monad) and its countless physical atoms — thus threefold is the view which we have to examine (*Cf.* I. 177-79). These three Monads are not three but the three facets of a Single One. Spiritual monad is abstract spirit; human monad is embodied spirit; material monad is differentiated spirit. On the matter side, the spiritual monad may be compared to the nucleolus, the human monad to the nucleus and the material monad to the cell. But the three aspects of spirit are as distinctive in nature, make-up and function as are the nucleolus, nucleus and the cell. Therefore Van Helmont said, “Man is the mirror of the universe, and his triple nature stands in relationship to all things.”

Isis Unveiled also quotes Paracelsus and says (I. 212-13):—

“Three spirits live and actuate man” teaches Paracelsus; “three worlds pour their beams upon him; but all three only as the image and echo of one and the same all-constructing and uniting principle of production. The first is the spirit of the elements (terrestrial body and vital force in its brute condition); the second, the spirit of the stars (sidereal or astral body — the soul); the third is the *Divine* spirit (*Augoeides*).” . . .

Man is a little world — a microcosm inside the great universe. Like a foetus, he is suspended, by all his *three* spirits, in the matrix of the macrocosmos; and while his terrestrial body is in constant sympathy with its parent earth, his astral soul lives in unison with the sidereal *anima*

mundi. He is in it, as it is in him, for the world-pervading element fills all space, and *is* space itself, only shoreless and infinite. As to his third spirit, the divine, what is it but an infinitesimal ray, one of the countless radiations proceeding directly from the Highest Cause — the Spiritual Light of the World? This is the trinity of organic and inorganic nature — the spiritual and the physical, which are three in one, and of which Proclus says that “The first monad is the Eternal God; the second, eternity; the third, the paradigm, or pattern of the universe”; the three constituting the Intelligible Triad. Everything in this visible universe is the outflow of this Triad, and a microcosmic triad itself. And thus they move in majestic procession in the fields of eternity, around the spiritual Sun, as in the heliocentric system the celestial bodies move round the visible suns. The Pythagorean *Monad*, which lives “in solitude and darkness,” may remain on this earth forever invisible, impalpable, and undemonstrated by experimental science. Still the whole universe will be gravitating around it, as it did from the “beginning of time,” and with every second, man and atom approach nearer to that solemn moment in the eternity, when the Invisible Presence will become clear to their spiritual sight. When every particle of matter, even the most sublimated, has been cast off from the last shape that forms the ultimate link of that chain of double evolution which, throughout millions of ages and successive transformations, has pushed the entity onward; and when it shall find itself reclothed in that primordial essence, identical with that of its Creator, then this once impalpable organic atom will have run its race, and the sons of God will once more “shout for joy” at the return of the pilgrim.

Having reflected on this extract, the students’ attention is invited to the following from *The Secret Doctrine* (I. 246-47):—

The Monad or Jiva ... is, first of all, shot down by the law of Evolution into the lowest form of matter — the mineral. After a sevenfold gyration encased in the stone ... it creeps out of it, say, as a lichen. Passing thence, through all the forms of vegetable matter, into what is termed animal matter, it has now reached the point in which it has become the germ, so to speak, of the animal, that will become the physical man. All this ... is formless, as matter, and senseless, as consciousness. For the Monad and Jiva *per se* cannot be even called spirit: it is a ray, a breath of the ABSOLUTE, or the Absoluteness rather, and the Absolute Homogeneity, having no relations with the conditioned and relative finiteness, is unconscious on our plane. Therefore, besides the material which will be needed for its future human form, the monad requires (a) a spiritual model, or prototype, for that material to shape itself into; and (b) an intelligent consciousness to guide its evolution and progress, neither of which is possessed by the homogeneous monad, or by senseless though living matter.

The gyrations of the Monad or Jiva form the first of the three lines of evolution; the second and third, respectively, are connected with the Intelligent Consciousness and the model round which the body builds itself.

Man is composed of three men — man of dust, of thought, of light; “he is *body, soul and spirit*” (*Isis Unveiled*, II. 223); he is *chhaya*, *manas-putra* and *jiva*; he is of earth (*prithivi*) fire (*agni*) and aether (*akasha*); he is the lower, the divine, and the eternal selves (*The Voice of the Silence*) on the one side, and hands, head and heart of the body on the other.

Says our text book:—

No one will deny that the human being is possessed of various forces: magnetic, sympathetic, antipathetic, nervous, dynamical, occult, mechanical, mental — every kind of force; and that the physical forces are all biological in their essence, seeing that they intermingle with, and often merge into, those forces that we have named intellectual and moral — “the first being the vehicles, so to say, the *upadhi*, of the second. No one, who does not deny soul in man, would hesitate in saying that their presence and commingling are the very essence of our being; that they constitute the *Ego* in man, in fact. (I. 469-70)

It is necessary for the student to ask: How do these three different basic natures come to be what they are? Whose progeny are they? What destiny awaits them and their macrocosmic

parent? As we seek the answers we are forced to enquire if man is the central plank of the entire scheme of evolution; further, in Nature which is governed by Law, what specific expression thereof should be first mastered to understand the whole process? To the first a reply is given — the final evolution of everything in terrestrial nature into Man is a fact; as to the second, the rise and fall of Nature due to Karma occur in cycles. A consideration of these problems is now due and as a preparation we may offer the following extract for the purposes of meditation (II. 261):—

The occult doctrine . . . teaches a cyclic, never varying law in nature, the latter having no personal, “special design,” but acting on a uniform plan that prevails through the whole manvantaric period and deals with the land worm as it deals with man. Neither the one, nor the other have sought to come into being, hence both are under the same evolutionary law, and both have to progress according to Karmic law. Both have started from the same neutral centre of Life and both have to re-merge into it at the consummation of the cycle.
