

Manushya

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Manushya means a human being. In the Theosophical teaching developed by Professor Iyer, it describes the human stage of a spiritual pilgrimage: the awakening of *Manas* into thought, reflection, deliberate action and moral responsibility. The term asks us to look beyond the organism and social identity toward the conscious principle expressed through them. It concerns a shared human inheritance. A person's dignity does not depend upon present intellectual performance, educational achievement or the ability to explain this doctrine.

Professor Iyer gives the key definition. Before the monad enters the human family, it passes through aeons of experience in the lower kingdoms of Nature. Then the latent thinking faculty of *Manas* is awakened by sacrificial beings who have risen far above the human state. They kindle the spark of self-consciousness, making the unconscious monad a true man, *Manushya*, capable of thought, reflection, and deliberate action.

This means that human self-consciousness is an entrusted flame. It is not self-created in isolation. Humanity stands in debt to invisible sacrifice. The power to think, choose, reflect, and assume responsibility has been received through the vast evolutionary labor of predecessors. To be human is already to participate in a sacred inheritance.

H.P. Blavatsky links *Manu* with the root *man*, "to think," and with *Manas*, the thinking principle. But thought does not mean mere cleverness, opinion, or calculation. It means reflective self-consciousness: the capacity to step back from impulse, ask what is true, and act deliberately.

This makes the human stage both glorious and dangerous. Before self-consciousness, the monad develops by natural impulse. After the awakening of *Manas*, the human being can choose. *Manushya* can become a co-worker with Nature, or a burden upon Nature. Mind can turn upward toward *Buddhi*, becoming luminous and compassionate, or downward toward *kama*, becoming restless, possessive, and separative.

These distinctions are spiritual and philosophical. The awakening described in the texts is not identical with a child acquiring a particular skill, nor can its presence be measured by a school examination. Childhood, disability and illness may limit the expression of capacities without diminishing the person to whom care is owed. Remembering this protects the meaning of humanhood from a narrow cult of cleverness. The more capable person has a greater opportunity to assist, not a superior claim to belonging.

Professor Iyer says the significance of the man-stage lies in the prerogative and potential of becoming a co-worker with Nature, with *Amitabha*, the Boundless Age. This is the human vocation. Humanity is not meant merely to survive, consume, reproduce, and vanish. Nor is it meant to dominate Nature as an object. The true human being cooperates consciously with the One Life.

The Secret Doctrine gives the image of the Heavenly Man, an archetypal model toward which the forms of manifested life are understood to develop. Professor Iyer uses this image to place human self-consciousness within a universal evolutionary pattern. It calls for responsibility rather than human arrogance. An account that gives humanity a distinctive function also asks what that function contributes to the lives with which humanity is interdependent.

Professor Iyer calls every human being an immortal ray of the ineffable Light, ensouled by individuated *Manas*. Each person is like a microscopic drop within a cosmic ocean. Within the drop is the same life, light, wisdom, and energy found in the ocean. This gives human birth immense dignity.

Yet dignity is not ownership. Professor Iyer says every human being is given in trust what one did not make: a potential temple in which there is an indwelling god. The body, mind, speech, imagination, relationships, talents, and opportunities of one life are materials of a temple. The question is: what kind of temple is being built?

The governing image is that man became a living link between heaven and earth. Humanity belongs to earth through body, labor, history, instinct, and suffering. It belongs to heaven through *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Atman*, conscience, and spiritual aspiration. To be *Manushya* is to mediate. The task is not to despise earth for heaven, nor to forget heaven in earth, but to link them consciously.

Consider the preparation of a meal for several people. Someone notices who cannot manage a certain food, who has been working without rest, and who feels awkward asking for help. Planning, memory and practical skill are already involved. When these capacities are directed by considerate attention, an ordinary task becomes an exercise in responsible human intelligence. The action need not announce a spiritual purpose to express one. The bridge between understanding and care is strengthened by the quality of the work.

This bridge can be luminous or broken. Humanity can become spiritually self-orphaned and parasitic upon Nature, or it can recover gratitude, devotion, benevolence, and stewardship. In modern life, this is a pressing lesson. Power without *Buddhi* becomes destructive. Technical intelligence without reverence can damage the earth and degrade the human mind.

The purpose of human evolution is not only individual self-consciousness. Professor Iyer says that after individuated centres of self-consciousness emerge, the distinctive purpose of human evolution is to arouse and activate universal self-consciousness. The “I” is meant to become a doorway into the whole. *Manas* must turn toward *Buddhi*.

This is the basis of Universal Brotherhood and Human Solidarity. Every human being is an immortal ray, a potential temple, a pilgrim in evolution. One may need discernment, boundaries, and correction, but the doctrine gives no warrant for contempt. No person can be reduced to role, race, body, wound, nation, opinion, or error.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception follows the meal beyond the table. Food arrives through the work of growers, transporters and many people whose names remain unknown. Water, soil and other living kingdoms also enter the undertaking. Gratitude can become careful use of what has been received and a willingness to share it fairly. Such recognition gives the idea of cooperation with Nature an ordinary beginning. Human intelligence becomes more adequate as it includes the relationships supporting its own activity.

Manushya also transforms ordinary life. A conversation, a task, an illness, a disappointment, or a relationship may become a place where self-consciousness is tested. Does thought contract into “me and mine,” or expand into responsibility? Does intelligence become manipulation, or service? Does suffering become resentment, or compassion? These are the actual school of humanhood.

A useful question in self-study is therefore whether increased knowledge has increased responsibility. Has it made a task clearer, a relationship more truthful, or assistance more effective? A large vocabulary can coexist with careless conduct, while a quiet person may show remarkable discernment in meeting a need. The teaching gives reflection and action a common measure: the extent to which the powers of human life become available for a purpose exceeding private advantage.

The term also gives hope. To be human is to be unfinished, not insignificant. The *Manushya-Buddha* is hidden in seed within the human constitution. The future human being is a *Buddha* in possibility. Through self-directed evolution, the light imprisoned within can pour through the human soul.

Manushya teaches that human birth is not merely an event; it is a call. The human being is a temple under construction, a bridge being strengthened, a ray remembering its Sun. To become truly human is to live as an awakened monad, entrusted with *Manas*, capable of self-correction, compassion, and conscious service to the whole.

Glossary

Alaya — The universal soul or ground of consciousness, used in Theosophical comparison with *Mahat* and *Mahabuddhi*.

Amitabha — The *Buddha* of boundless light in Buddhist symbolism; Professor Iyer invokes the name in contemplating the spiritual ground and purpose of evolution.

Anima mundi — Latin for soul of the world; used in the quoted account of universal life and its manifestations.

Archetype — An ideal pattern or prototype contemplated as prior to its particular expressions; archetypal means pertaining to such patterns.

Atman — The universal spiritual Self; *Atma* is another form, and Atmic means pertaining to this principle.

Buddhi — The spiritual soul or faculty of intuitive discernment; Buddhic means pertaining to it.

Chain — In Theosophical cosmology, a sevenfold field of globes through which an evolutionary life-wave passes.

Dhyanis — Meditative spiritual intelligences; *Dhyani* is the singular. *Dhyani Chohans* is a related designation of spiritual hierarchies.

Differentiation — The emergence of distinct forms, functions or levels from a less divided condition.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

Dzyan — Wisdom or spiritual knowledge; the name associated with the Stanzas in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Heavenly Man — The archetypal human prototype in the cited cosmology, contemplated in relation to the development of manifested forms.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

Incarnation — The embodiment of an enduring principle or individuality in a particular life.

Ineffable — Beyond adequate expression in words.

Kama — Desire or appetite; its association with mind is called *Kama-Manas*.

Krishna — The divine teacher in the *Bhagavad Gita*, representing a source of spiritual wisdom and guidance.

Logos — The Word or principle of divine expression; *Logoi* is the plural and Logoic means pertaining to it. Classifications distinguish several stages of manifestation.

Mahatma — Great Soul; in the specific Theosophical usage, an Adept of high spiritual and moral attainment. *Mahatmas* is the plural.

Man — The Sanskrit root interpreted as to think in the quoted discussion of *Manu*.

Manas — The self-conscious thinking principle; in its higher sense, the reincarnating individuality. Manasic means pertaining to this principle.

Manifestation — The expression of differentiated existence from a subtler or unmanifest condition.

Manu — A progenitor or guiding intelligence of humanity in the Theosophical interpretation; *Manus* is the plural.

Manushya — A human being; in Professor Iyer's account, the human stage awakened into self-conscious thought and deliberate action.

Manushya-Buddha — A human *Buddha*, or the possibility of Buddhahood expressed through human spiritual development.

Manvantara — A period of manifestation and activity, contrasted with *pralaya*; manvantaric means pertaining to such a period.

Menes — An Egyptian name interpreted as Master-Mind in the cited historical comparison.

Mens — Latin for mind, cited in Blavatsky's comparison of traditional names.

Metempsychosis — The passage of soul through successive embodiments; metempsychoses is the plural used in the quotation.

Monad — The spiritual unit or pilgrim, commonly related to *Atma-Buddhi*; its essential unity is distinguished from the changing vehicles through which evolution proceeds.

Monas — Greek for a unit or unity; in the quoted Pythagorean comparison, a conscious thinking unit.

Noetic — Pertaining to the higher mind and spiritual cognition, distinguished from merely personal or reactive mental activity.

One Life — The universal unity of life underlying and expressed through the many lives and forms of Nature.

Paramatman — The Supreme Self or universal spiritual Self.

Planes — Levels or orders of consciousness and substance within the Theosophical account of manifestation.

Preceptor — A teacher or guide whose instruction supports the student's spiritual and intellectual development.

Self-consciousness — The capacity to reflect upon one's own experience, intention and action; the sources distinguish personal and more universal degrees.

Substance-principle — The one ground considered as undifferentiated principle in itself and as increasingly differentiated substance in manifestation.

Triad — A group of three related principles or powers.

Universal Brotherhood — The spiritual kinship of beings, expressed ethically through care extending beyond personal or sectarian boundaries.

Universal Mind — The spiritual source or field of cosmic ideation; its relation to *Mahat* varies with the standpoint being discussed.

Vesture — A sheath, vehicle or instrument through which consciousness is expressed; vestures is the plural.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. R.N. Iyer — "The Gupta Vidya", *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 10.

"The essence of life is motion, growth and expansion of awareness in every atom. Each atom is at its core a monad, an expression of the highest self (*Atman*) and its vesture is the spiritual soul (*Buddhi*). Prior to the monad's emergence in the human family, it undergoes aeons of experience in the lower kingdoms of nature, developing by natural impulse (metempsychosis) until the latent thinking faculty of *Manas* is awakened by the sacrificial efforts of beings who have risen far above the human state in *manvantaras* past."

Meditation thought: The human stage is approached through a continuity of learning within universal life.

2. R.N. Iyer — “The Gupta Vidya”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 10.

“They kindle the spark of self-consciousness, making the unconscious monad a true man (*Manushya*), capable of thought, reflection and deliberate action. The soul embarks upon a long cycle of incarnations in human form to prepare itself for entry into still greater planes of existence.”

Meditation thought: The capacity to reflect is received as a trust whose purpose includes deliberate and responsible action.

3. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Karma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 130.

“As a starting-point, one must come to see that the diverse rules and laws applying to the different kingdoms of Nature and their coordinate schemes of evolution are inseparable expressions of one universal law of growth. Whether put in terms of the relationship between the Unmanifest *Logos* and the diverse *Logoi* operating on different planes, or in terms of the differentiations of Spirit and Matter out of one homogeneous Substance-Principle, the complex structures and varied modes of growth participated in by human beings represent a single triadic process. In the language of the Commentaries upon the *Book of Dzyan*, this central principle is put in terms of the magnetic attraction exercised by the model of the Heavenly Man over every spark of sentient life evolving throughout the infinitudes of space.”

Meditation thought: The visible organism is understood within a more extensive account of consciousness and its vehicles.

4. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Karma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 130.

“For all human beings in the present period of evolution, spiritual growth consists in awakening noetic awareness of formless spiritual essences, a process of Manasic maturation which requires precise apprehension of the different sets of *Dhyanis* and ancestors involved in the complex karmic heredity of humanity.”

Meditation thought: A common evolutionary inheritance can support respect across differences of circumstance.

5. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Karma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 130.

“Humanity is the beneficiary of vast processes of evolution that were completed on preceding globes both in the present earth chain and in the previous chain of globes known to us as the moon chain. Like dwarfs seated upon the shoulders of giants, men and women of the present enjoy the privilege of self-conscious existence and survey the grand prospects of future evolution only because of the sacrifice of *Mahatmas* and *Dhyanis* throughout ages without number.”

Meditation thought: Consider the many forms of labor and care upon which a single human life depends.

6. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Karma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 131.

“Metaphysically, there is neither a beginning nor an end to the series of vast epochs of manifestation, and the significance of reaching the man-stage of evolution lies in the prerogative and potential of becoming a co-worker with Nature, with *Amitabha*, the Boundless Age.”

Meditation thought: Cooperation with Nature gives self-consciousness a purpose wider than private acquisition.

7. R.N. Iyer — “The Dawning of Wisdom”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 55.

“The plane of that circle is the universal soul, the *Anima Mundi*, *Alaya*, the *Paramatman*, and every human being is an immortal ray of that ineffable Light. Divine Wisdom is at the hidden core of all manifestation, and hence one cannot possibly understand nature without seeing it as intelligent, as innately a manifestation of divine Reason.”

Meditation thought: A universal horizon can enlarge the meaning of the particular life we are living.

8. R.N. Iyer — “The Dawning of Wisdom”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 55.

“Every human being is ensouled by individuated *Manas*, which affords, through the sum of states of consciousness, an initial representation of Universal Mind, in which Divine Thought is potentially ever present.”

Meditation thought: The inward dignity attributed to every person calls for a corresponding quality of attention.

9. R.N. Iyer — “Universality and Sectarianism”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 43.

“Hence in art, in literature and in traditions of mystical training, the celebration of the privilege of birth in a human form. It became part of the recognition that every man is given in trust that which he did not make — a potential temple in which there is an indwelling god — where *Krishna* is closer to each one of us than anyone else outside.”

Meditation thought: A wider understanding of human possibilities may change the way we help another person learn.

10. R.N. Iyer — “Theurgy and Transmutation”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 365.

“When first the dark fire of their formless intelligence ignited self-consciousness in the evolved forms of terrestrial humanity over eighteen million years ago, man became a living link between heaven and earth. Conscious of the divine presence within his preceptors, his companions and himself, he was governed by a natural impulse towards gratitude, devotion and benevolence.”

Meditation thought: The bridge between higher and lower life is sustained through the responsible use of the mind.

11. R.N. Iyer — “Buddhi Yoga”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 170.

“Monadic evolution aims initially at establishing individuated centres of human self-consciousness. Once millions upon millions of these have emerged under natural law, the distinctive purpose of human evolution thereafter is to arouse and activate universal self-consciousness through a series of progressive awakenings.”

Meditation thought: Individual awareness is contemplated as a beginning from which a more universal awareness may grow.

12. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 91.

“*Manu*, as already remarked, comes from the root ‘*man*’ to think, hence ‘a thinker.’ It is from this Sanskrit word very likely that sprung the Latin ‘*mens*,’ mind, the Egyptian ‘*Menes*,’ the ‘Master-Mind,’ the Pythagorean *Monas*, or conscious ‘thinking unit,’ mind also, and even our ‘*Manas*’ or mind, the fifth principle in man.”

Meditation thought: The connection between the human being and thought invites reflection on the moral direction of intelligence.