

There is also the danger of environmental degradation reaching a point where it threatens the whole world. Some experts believe that in another ten or fifteen years we will reach a crisis point which is beyond all present imagination. Whatever that be, it is a very serious threat. The proliferation of arms does not lead only to war. Disarmament may take place in western and eastern Europe, but arms are being distributed to many parts of the world. Violence is on the increase everywhere, in the form of terrorism, violence on the streets and so on.

There is further the problem of overpopulation which is a serious threat, bringing in its wake poverty. Perhaps those who have not been in the really poverty-stricken areas have no conception of what it means. Extreme poverty leads to moral degradation, crime, and hideousness in many forms. The poor people cannot help it because the only thing that matters to them is to stay alive.

So there are these enormous problems in the world, which is the external challenge. Unfortunately there are a number of people who do not want to face squarely even the external challenge. They prefer to ignore some or all of the aspects of that challenge. There are many more who do not realize that the challenges faced by every civilization are not merely external; the external challenge is the reflection of something inside the human being. Today this internal threat is far from clear to humanity; very, very few people realize that the real source of the problem is in the psyche of man. And we never deal adequately with the external challenges because we do not want to look at and deal with the internal challenge.

I think the work of the Theosophical Society is to point to the challenge within, because it is of much greater importance to see it and deal with it than to go on dealing with what is outside. If we do not look at the source of the problem, but only at the effects, then temporary, partial and superficial solutions are found. That is why, although we have reason to feel happy about the changes that are taking place in Europe, we cannot feel assured because we do not know in what way the stability which has been created will be disturbed once again.

If the human mind does not change, can society remain stable? In one of the Mahatma letters there is the remark: 'the origin of every evil whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the