

THE MYSTERY-SCHOOLS

BY

GRACE FRANCES KNOCHE

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FOREWORD

A MYSTERY-SCHOOL is a school or university of the soul; in other words a school for the study of the 'mysteries' of the inner nature of man and of surrounding nature. By understanding these 'mysteries,' the pupil perceives his intimate relationship if not ultimate union with Divinity, and strives through discipline, traditionally imposed, to become at one with his Inner God.

This Manual is an attempt to present to the student certain fundamental lines of teaching which as a whole will give a picture more or less clear of what a Mystery-School really is. We might say that full and specific knowledge of the Mystery-

Schools, where they have been, where now they function, what their chief characteristics, is not given publicly, but the student of Theosophy with the help of the philosophy as given to us by the Theosophical Leaders, can find a generous amount of information scattered here and there in the literatures of the past, and can build up for himself a coherent picture of the pageantry of the Mystery-Schools, a picture which will turn into the reality of experience only as the student becomes prepared through lifetimes of devotion to Truth and the study of the Ancient Wisdom.

That which can be discovered by the sincere student may be likened to our knowledge of the atom of science. Who, for example, has ever seen the atom? What microscope has penetrated the dark secret of its existence? Yet science today knows more about the atom than has been revealed for centuries.

Invisible to both eye and lens, man yet can photograph the *flash of its track*, its 'way of light'; through self-sacrificing labor the scientist has studied this 'way of light,' until through inference and evidence the wonderful structure of the atom, its modicum of intelligence, its almost spiritual origin, have been revealed.

Thus with the Mysteries: as we look at the pages of history, and farther into the mist of unrecorded time, we do not see the Schools themselves, but through study and devotion we glimpse the 'flash of their track,' their 'way of light.' From inference and spiritual testimony we can trace the pageantry of the light-bearers as they have passed from age to age, inaugurating the grand religions and philosophies of the Race. Some of these lights shine with immense glory, others with less strength; while still others are but fitful gleams of half-understood truth.

The physicist cannot point to his atom, yet he knows it exists as the basis, the foundation, of all matter; the student of Occultism cannot show you a Mystery-School, yet he knows it exists as the heart or 'atomic center' of the spiritual and intellectual life of the planet.

How then dare assert the non-existence of the Mysteries, of this strong invisible atom of esotericism, when the electrons of luminous power are to be seen scattered all over the world? If our physical bodies are rooted in invisible 'fiery lives,' why should not the spiritual, intellectual, and moral bodies of man likewise have their origin in the spiritual and intellectual 'fire-mist' of the planet?

An uninterrupted history of the occult network of the Race is not available for the ordinary student, for such records are the guerdon of the pledged disciple; but the Theosophist with the powerful lens of

the Ancient Wisdom can study the 'way of light' flashed forth by each light-bearer of the centuries, can recapture the atmosphere of the ancient temples; can discern the purpose of the Schools; their methods of teaching; and last but not least, can learn of the strong discipline imposed upon the candidates seeking initiation into the knowledge of their secret origin and their still more secret destiny.

“Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall into error. . . . There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.”

—*Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, ch. iv, śl. 34, 35, 38

I

FOUNDING OF THE BROTHERHOOD

MILLIONS upon millions of years ago in the darkness of pre-history, Humanity was an infant, a child of Mother Nature, unawakened, dream-like, wrapped in the cloak of mental somnolence. Recognition of egoity slept; instinctual consciousness alone was active. Like a stream of brilliance across the horizon of time, divine beings, Mânasaputras, Sons of Mind, descended among the sleeping humans, and with the flame of intellectual solar fire lighted the wick of latent mind, and lo! the Thinker stirred. Self-consciousness wakened, and man became a dynamo of intellectual and emotional power: capable of love, of hate, of glory, of defeat. Having knowledge, he

acquired power; acquiring power, he chose; choosing, he fashioned the fabric of his future; and the perception of this ran like wine through his veins.

Knowledge, more knowledge, and still greater knowledge, was required by the growing humans who looked with gratitude to the godlike beings who had come to awaken them. For many centuries they followed their guidance, as children lovingly follow the foot-steps of their Mother.

As the ages rolled by, a circulation of Divine Instructors succeeded these primeval Mânasaputras, and personally supervised the progress of the child-humanity: they initiated them in the arts and sciences, taught them to sow their fields with corn and wheat, instructed them in the ways of clean and moral living — in short, established primeval schools of training and instruction *open and free to all* to learn of things material, intellectual, and spiritual.

At this early period there were no *Mystery*-colleges, the Ancient Wisdom was the 'common heirloom' of all mankind, for as yet there had been no abuse of knowledge, and hence no need for bodies kept hid and sacred from the world of men. Truth was freely given and as freely accepted in that 'Golden Age.'*

The Race was young; not all men were adept in learning. Some through past experience in former world-periods learned quickly and with ease, choosing intuitively the path of spiritual intellection; others less awake, were good, though wayward, in progress; while a third class of humans, drugged with inertia, found learning and aspiring a burden, and became laggards in the evolutionary procession. Spiritual death to them was preferable to spiritual exertion.

Mankind as a whole progressed rapidly

*Cf. "S. D. III," 260-1.

in the acquirement of knowledge and its subsequent use. Some obviously wrought evil — others good. What had been latent spirituality, now became active good and active evil. Suffering and pain became Nature's most merciful method of restoring the heart to its primeval instinct, that of spiritual choice. As mind developed keener potentialities, and the struggle for mental supremacy overcame the spiritual, this gift of intellect became a double-edged weapon: on the one hand, the bringer of spiritual awareness and intellectual ecstasy undreamed of; and on the other, the wielder of a weapon of destruction, of horror, and in the worst cases of actual diabolism.

As H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

The mysteries of Heaven and Earth, revealed to the Third Race by their celestial teachers in the days of their purity, became a great focus of light, the rays from which became necessarily weakened as they were diffused and shed upon an uncongenial,

because too material soil. With the masses they degenerated into Sorcery, taking later on the shape of exoteric religions, of idolatry full of superstitions, . . . — *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 281

Nature is cyclical throughout: at one time she is fertile in spiritual things; at another barren. At this period of the Third Root-Race, on the great continent of Lemuria, the cycle was against spiritual progress. A great downward sweep was in force, when expansion of physical and material energies were accelerated with the consequent retardation and contraction of spiritual power. The humanity of that period were part of the general evolutionary current, and individuals reacted to the coarsening atmosphere according to their nature. Some resisted its downward influence through awakened spirituality; others, weaker in understanding, vacillated between spirit and matter, between good and evil: at one time listening to the whisper of intuition, at another sub-

merged by the rushing waves of the downward current. Still others, in whom the spark of intellectual splendor burned low, plunged headlong down the stream unmindful of the turbulent and muddy waters.

As the downward cycle proceeded, knowledge of spiritual verities and living of the life in accordance therewith, became a dull and useless tool in the hearts and minds of men.

Such folly was inevitable in the course of cosmic events, and all things were provided for. Just as there are many types of men, some spiritual, others material, some highly intelligent, others slow of thought, so are there various grades of beings throughout the Universe ranging from the lowly Mineral, through the Vegetable, Beast, and Human Kingdom, and beyond, to the Head and Hierarch of our Earth.* During these

*Cf. Manual No. IX, *Hierarchies: The Ladder of Life*, by G. van Pelt.

first millenniums, this Occult Head and Guardian of the Earth had been watching, guiding, stimulating wherever possible the individual fires of active spirituality; gradually as millennium succeeded millennium and knowledge of divine things became abused by those strong in will but weak in morality, the Truth was veiled. The Planetary Watcher now felt the need of selecting a band of co-workers to act as body-guard and protector of the Ancient Wisdom. Alone a handful of spiritually illumined men, in whom the divine fervor burned bright, acknowledged whole-hearted allegiance to their Planetary Teacher — the Spiritual Hierarchy of Humanity. Through the centuries strong-hearted men had been watched over, guided, strengthened, and tested in innumerable ways, and those who passed the fateful test of self-knowledge and self-sacrifice, were gathered together to form the first Association or College of Spiritual Men

— the Great Brotherhood. As described by Dr. de Purucker:

Then was formed or established or set in operation the gathering together of the very highest representatives, spiritually and intellectually speaking, that the human race as yet had given manifestation to; . . .

. . . the Silent Watcher of the Globe, through the spiritual-magnetic attraction of like to like, was enabled to attract to the Path of Light, even from the earliest times of the Third Root-Race, certain unusual human individuals, early forerunners of the general Mânasaputric 'descent,' and thus to form with these individuals a Focus of Spiritual and Intellectual Light on Earth, this fact signifying not so much an association or society or brotherhood as a unity of human spiritual and intellectual Flames, so to speak, which then represented on Earth the heart of the Hierarchy of Compassion. . . .

Now it was just this original focus of Living Flames, which never degenerated nor lost its high status of the mystic center on Earth through which poured the supernal glory of the Hierarchy of Com-

passion, today represented by the Great Brotherhood of the Mahâtman, . . . Thus it is that the Great Brotherhood traces an unbroken and uninterrupted ancestry back to the original focus of Light of the Third Root-Race.

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, 1048-9, footnote

There in the fastnesses of Tibet, the Elder Brothers of the Race remain “the elect custodians of the Mysteries revealed to mankind by the divine Teachers”; and it is significantly remarked by H. P. Blavatsky that “these Elect were the germ of a Hierarchy *which never died since that period*”* — i.e. since the foundation and establishment of the Great Brotherhood, some 12,000,000 years ago, at Śambhala. From this center for millions of years have been streaming in continuous procession rays of spiritual strength into the world at large, and more specifically into the hearts of those whose lives are dedicated to the service of

**The Secret Doctrine*, II, 281.

Truth. From this secret retreat, have gone forth Messengers, Masters of Wisdom, to found the grand religions of the past, and they will continue to send forth their envoys as long as mankind requires their care.

II

THE FIRST MYSTERY-SCHOOLS

TIME marched on, and the Race waxed lusty in power. As Lemuria gave birth to Atlantis,* the Third Race to the Fourth, the fiercest battle of antiquity was waged: the war between the Lords of Light and Truth and the Lords of Darkness and Ignorance.

Moral strength is not guaranteed by awakening intellect, nor by the possession of psychic and physical power. The Atlanteans at their acme of development were a civilization of vigorous intellect motivated by psycho-physical force, unreined, alas, by moral strength. Magic, which had been a

*See Manual No. VII, *Rounds and Races: Man's Divine Parentage and Destiny*, by G. van Pelt.

natural gift of the Lemurians, in the hands of these giants became “matter-magic, psychical magic”* and the Race plunged into an orgy of sorcery, the effects of which we are experiencing even today in a tragedy of hate and madness.

Not all the Atlanteans, however, were overpowered by their own strength; not by any means; nevertheless a great portion of them became Sorcerers of Evil and perished in their tracks. Others in whom the light of spirituality was “seen as through a glass darkly,” became unhappy victims of the nefarious waves of unmoral power that swept over the continental system of Atlantis; in their confusion they wandered hither and yon, following false gods, unworthy guidance. A few — probably several millions, but few in proportion to the enormous population of the Atlantean continents — re-

**The Esoteric Tradition*, 1046.

mained strong and clean throughout, morally illumined through contact with spirit. These became the chosen disciples of the Brotherhood, the stimulators of virtue and discipline in the land.

In the early millenniums there had been no Mysteries, Truth having been the common property of mankind. With the increase of egoity,

selfishness was born out of desires and passions hitherto unknown, and but too often knowledge and power were abused, until finally it became necessary to limit the number of those *who knew*. Thus arose Initiation. — “S. D. III,” 261

To insure the safety of the Race, something had to be done. Civilization had come to such a pass that the only safeguard was to establish a spiritual center in each national unit which would act as a bodyguard, as it were, for the truths imparted therein, as well as a secret training-center where men could be disciplined and instructed, and if

found worthy, could learn Truth at first-hand — i.e. through Initiation.

The Brotherhood, therefore, which had already established invisible lines of esoteric instruction even in the late Lemurian times, wherein men sensitive enough to such could be trained and purified and made strong for the reception of Truth and the safeguarding thereof, now launched a systematic campaign. Chelas, disciples, messengers, went forth and inaugurated esoteric colleges, universities of the soul, special training-centers, for the select purpose of gathering into them the choicest of men for discipline and instruction in the Mysteries of Nature.

Thus were established some four or five millions of years ago, when Atlantis was threatening to destroy itself through spiritual iniquity, the first Mystery-Schools. From these early centers sprang other Mystery-Schools in all parts of the Atlantean world,

in every nation thereof. By the time the Atlanteans were in their heyday of *material* splendor, these Schools were working their hardest to stem the increasing tide of evil sorcery. Many — millions in fact — were saved through the establishment of the Mysteries.

The superior of the Race intuitively sought training therein, while the great bulk of humanity, though unable to partake in the sacred rites of Initiation on account of insufficient interior development, nevertheless were helped by the indirect radiation of spiritual force.

There were those, however, who had tasted of evil and found it to their liking, and whose hardening hearts led them to receive instruction in evil discipline. Simultaneously therefore with the establishment of Spiritual Centers of Light and Truth, there were Schools of Evil founded, whose pledged votaries became in time the Left-

Hand Adepts. The Lords of Light and Truth united in a calm invincible force to

resist the terrible and ever-growing iniquities of the left-hand Adepts, the Atlanteans. This led to the foundation of still more Secret Schools, temples of learning, and of Mysteries inaccessible to all except after the most terrible trials and probations.

— *Op. cit.*, III, 262

The Mysteries were imparted to the elect of that Race when the average Atlantean had begun to fall too deeply into sin to be trusted with the secrets of Nature. — *Op. cit.*, III, 258

There now occurred the most dramatic moment — a moment millions of years long — in the whole history of this Round: the turning point of the cycle from matter to spirit. At the middle of the Fourth Root-Race on this Fourth Round* the Atlanteans saw Spirit and Matter equilibrated: *Which way would the scales turn?* Towards light and spirit, and the final liberation of man-

*See Manual No. VII.

kind? Towards darkness and matter, and the enslavement of men? A great tremor shook the earth: would innate spirituality prove stronger than the weight of acquired materiality? Would the Race ascend the ladder of evolution up the Luminous Arc, or through folly and iniquity fall headlong down into the pit of matter of the descending Shadowy Arc? Of the billions of human beings whose hearts must be weighed against the feather of spirit, each one had to pass the fateful test alone: Failure, and the rush downwards into still greater materiality unable to rise to spirit during the great period of manvantara; Success, and the rise upwards in the general current of evolutionary progress until oneness with Divinity is again reclaimed.

The moment of a million years or so passed. Fortunately for the Race, due primarily to the efforts of the Mystery-Schools, the majority of men retained sufficient aware-

ness of divinity to balance the scales in their favor. An unconscious choice for millions, but nevertheless a choice made by the better part of their natures. . . . By what slender majority, perhaps we shall never know.

III

THE RAISON D'ÊTRE OF THE MYSTERIES

CATACLYSM after cataclysm occurred, and the Fourth Race sank to its doom, deluged by the waters of heaven and earth, as they flooded the lands according to karmic law. Along with the sinking of Atlantis, which extended over several millions of years, new lands had been rising in other parts of the globe which became peopled as time went by with certain of the Atlanteans who emigrated in two or three great migratory waves.*

Thus the Fourth Root-Race gave birth to the Fifth whose cradleland was the Desert of Shamo or Gobi and surrounding table-

*Cf. *The Theosophical Forum*, June, 1937.

lands — a country whose present sandy wastes give no sign of lands once green with verdure where forests and lakes witnessed a succession of civilizations the grandest the world has ever known. Here for many millions of years, while Atlantis was involved in her death-struggle, seeds of the new Race were being planted in virgin soil.

Nature is beneficent in her workings. While the evil consequences of her human children must be met and faced by them alone through the working of karma and the cycle of re-embodiment, yet at each new racial birth she casts her seed in virginal territory, so that the child Race may be conceived in purity and nurtured in spirituality. Peopled thus with egos who had remained clean and strong through the tests of Atlantean life, and helped again by the entrance into her life of semi-divine beings, the new Race became a focus of spiritual light undimmed by the iniquity of Atlantis.

As one of the Brothers, the Master K. H., wrote:

the *highest* Planetary Spirits, those, who can no longer err . . . appear on Earth but at the origin of every *new* human kind; at the junction of, and close of the two ends of the great cycle. And, they remain with man no longer than the time required for the eternal truths they teach to impress themselves so forcibly upon the plastic minds of the new races as to warrant them from being lost or entirely forgotten in ages hereafter, by the forthcoming generations. The mission of the planetary Spirit is but to strike the KEY NOTE OF TRUTH.

— *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, 40-1

Simultaneously with the establishment of the Mystery-Schools in Atlantis some four or five million years ago, the Fifth or Aryan Race was slowly coming into being, immensely aided by egos of spiritual refinement attracted thereto by ties of divine kinship. Gradually the soil was prepared and the work of striking the “keynote of Truth” having been accomplished, the demi-

gods returned to their superior spheres. One million years ago the new Race was ushered into adult existence armed with the knowledge of spiritual things.

As the centuries passed, and civilization succeeded civilization, the love of Truth once again became dimmed in the hearts of men, and the ancient precepts fell into disuse.

The Mysteries were withdrawn even more, so that the knowledge once universal now became the prized guerdon bestowed by the Great Brotherhood upon that choice minority whose lives were dedicated to Truth and Truth alone, unstained by weakness or selfish ambition.

With enduring consistency the *raison d'être* of the Mysteries has remained three-fold in character:

(1) The persistent spiritualization of the thought-life of humanity so that knowledge of things spiritual may penetrate into the

heart, and life in time may become a benediction of peace instead of a tragedy of conflict.

(2) Seeding-grounds of adepts, nurseries for future recruits, who through trial and initiation may receive the supreme dignity of membership in the Great Brotherhood.

(3) The preservation of Truth for future Races unsullied by the hand of man; and the polishing of the knowledge of Truth through investigation by trained Seers of the secrets of Universal workings in worlds visible and invisible.

The first of these aims is fulfilled by the periodic appearance of the great World-teachers, the founders of religious and philosophical schools: Messengers from the Lodge who come forth at cyclic periods to strike anew the archaic Keynote of Truth. Hence every great religion, every noble philosophy, every flash of scientific discovery, was born from the Sanctuary, as a *new* religion, a

new philosophy, a *new* science: fresh and new for the age and the people, but ancient beyond time because nurtured in the womb of esoteric antiquity.

All that is good, noble, and grand in human nature, every divine faculty and aspiration, were cultured by the Priest-Philosophers who sought to develop them in their Initiates. Their code of ethics, based on altruism, has become universal.

—“S. D. III,” 266

The second of these aims is age-long in accomplishment, and deeply occult: To awaken the sleeping fire of divinity in the human soul, and through the kindling of that flame burn the dross of imperfection, sloth, and unworthy desire from the heart. One of the impelling aims of such discipline is to restore to man *inner* sight, to free him “from every danger of being enslaved whether by a man or an idea.”*

The disciple must become *Vajra-dhara* —

*“S. D. III,” 263; cf. also *Mahatma Letters*, 40-1.

‘diamond-bearer’ — a title used of Bodhi-sattva Gautama, whose many-faceted heart was ever merciful in reflecting the sorrow of men, but whose spiritual essence was adamant as a diamond, unyielding as the core thereof, to the subtil disguise of Mâyâ — Illusion.

The Third of these aims is made possible through the accomplishment of the second: the selection of new recruits to the Brotherhood, so that (a) Truth may be preserved untarnished by the folly of man; and (b) that investigation into the arcana of Nature may go on unhindered, and the results of such occult experimentation by generations of trained seers be checked and rechecked, and recorded only then as occult fact for the benefit of Humanity.

As far as the labor of the Masters concerns the Human Race in especial, the following written by one of their number in 1881, the Mahâtman K. H., speaks for itself:

If, for generations we have “shut out the world from the Knowledge of our Knowledge,” it is on account of its absolute unfitness; and if, notwithstanding proofs given, it still refuses yielding to evidence, then will we at the End of this cycle retire into solitude and our kingdom of silence once more. . . . We have offered to exhume the primeval strata of man’s being, his basic nature, and lay bare the wonderful complications of his inner Self — something never to be achieved by physiology or even psychology in its ultimate expression — and demonstrate it scientifically. It matters not to them, if the excavations be so deep, the rocks so rough and sharp, that in diving into that, to them, fathomless ocean, most of us perish in the dangerous exploration; for it is we who were the divers and the pioneers and the men of science have but to reap where we have sown. It is our mission to plunge and bring the pearls of Truth to the surface; theirs — to clean and set them into scientific jewels. And, if they refuse to touch the ill-shapen, oyster-shell, insisting that there is, nor *cannot* be any precious pearl inside it, then shall we once more wash our hands of any responsibility before human-kind. — *Mahatma Letters*, 50-1

Unthanked, unknown, unconsidered, the Masters go on in their compassionate work for Man's salvation, a work that has never ceased in its outpouring of spiritual vitality for 12,000,000 years, to continue another such period if necessity demand, until such time as Humanity will have awakened from its lethargy, and once again wills to unite its heart with Truth. The Master continues:

For countless generations hath the adept builded a fane of imperishable rocks, a giant's Tower of INFINITE THOUGHT, wherein the Titan dwelt, and will yet, if need be, dwell alone, emerging from it but at the end of every cycle, to invite the elect of mankind to co-operate with him and help in his turn enlighten superstitious man. And we will go on in that periodical work of ours; we will not allow ourselves to be baffled in our philanthropic attempts until that day when the foundations of a new continent of thought are so firmly built that no amount of opposition and ignorant malice guided by the Brethren of the Shadow will be found to prevail. — *Op. cit.*, 51

IV

THE PATTERN OF ESOTERICISM

To the spiritual eagle eye of the seer and the prophet of every race, Ariadne's thread stretches beyond that "historic period" without break or flaw, surely and steadily, into the very night of time; and the hand which holds it is too mighty to drop it, or even let it break. — *Sec. Doct.*, II, 67

THIS thread of esotericism stretches farther still into the dawn-time of the Race, where Truth, "high-seated upon its rock of adamant, is alone eternal and supreme."* Where is this Truth, this Loom of esoteric history, and what the pattern of its fabric? In the recesses of Tibet, in the home of the Brotherhood, in Śambhala, stands this Loom, whose warp is the ancient threads

**Isis Unveiled*, I, v.

of Initiation held in occult tension by the sacrifice of Adepts, and whose weft or woof is woven century by century as each Nation spins the luminous threads of esotericism in its Mystery-Schools.

Profane history reveals scarcely anything of consecutive value; except in so far as the relics of this mystic pageantry all point to an identic *motif*. To “have a consecutive and full history of our race from its incipient stage down to the present time,”* archaic records must needs be sought. By such alone can one trace even in dim outline the ancient pattern. Access to these, however, is the privilege of the Adept alone, for such “knowledge is only for the *highest* Initiates, who do not take their students into their confidence.”† Nevertheless, the student of Theosophy has received a priceless gift: the

**The Secret Doctrine*, II, 437-8

†*Op. cit.*, II, 438.

benefit of evidence gathered by those who have penetrated the veils of the adytum and have had the compassion to return and share with us a guarded portion of their vision. Study of their findings will reveal to the uninitiate but a broken pattern, but if faithfully pursued such study will point with unmistakable clarity to one universal source of Truth.

From Central Asia whose lands comprised a vast territory, including the Desert of Gobi or Shamo, the mountains of Tien Shan and the Kuen Lun, the countries of Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkestan, went forth marching bands of emigrants, in large part glowing with determination to conquer, to subdue, and many were the battles waged in those primeval days. As efficient cause thereof, yet unrecognised as such by the multitudes, was the urge of the Brotherhood aided by Karman: the incessant need to carry the light of the Mysteries

into other lands, to spread the Ancient Wisdom far and wide on the surface of the earth. As G. de Purucker writes:

Not one people alone inhabited and built up these civilizations of Central Asia. They were recurrent waves of our present Fifth Root-Race . . . each one of such civilizations being in its turn a cradle out of which grew children-colonies sent forth to carry light and initiation to what were then barbarous and uncultivated parts of the world, such as what is now Europe, what is now China, what is now Siberia, what is now India.

— *The Theosophical Forum*, June, 1937, p. 414

To Bharata-Varsha, the land of the Âryas or 'worthy ones' — India — marched a band of emigrants who founded a civilization and a culture as yet unrivaled in esoteric history, whose ramifications of spiritual influence extended to Egypt, Asia Minor, and Europe. Another band moved westward, to Egypt, the "gift of the Nile" as Herodotus called her, and mixing with the aboriginal stock peopled her valleys. From this union sprang

a princely civilization, the pride and glory of which remains untarnished after thousands of centuries; the more so as the influence of its Âryan-Egyptian Mysteries spread far and wide, as conquering nation after conquering nation became captive to the interior grandeur of Egypt. Persia, Babylonia, Judea and Crete, Greece and Rome, all trace their spiritual inspiration to the Egyptian and early Âryan culture.

Furthermore, so immense in esoteric power were these primeval civilizations, that H. P. B. tells us:

there are records which show Egyptian priests — Initiates — journeying in a North-Westerly direction, *by land, via* what became later the Straits of Gibraltar; turning North and traveling through the future Phoenician settlements of Southern Gaul; then still further North, until reaching Carnac (Morbihan) they turned to the West again and arrived, *still travelling by land*, on the North-Western promontory of the New Continent [the British Isles].

What was the object of their long journey? And

how far back must we place the date of such visits? The archaic records show the Initiates of the Second Sub-race of the Aryan family moving from one land to the other for the purpose of supervising the building of *menhirs* and dolmens, of colossal Zodiacs in stone, and places of sepulcher to serve as receptacles for the ashes of generations to come.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 750

What was the mainspring of these civilizations but the Mystery-teachings? Teachings which penetrated into the very thought-life of the nations, perhaps unknown of source, unrecognised by the multitudes as esoteric, but actually constituting the inspiration of the artist in his search for divinity, the intuition of the poet in his yearning for truth, and the resounding harmony of the musician as he sought the 'music of the spheres.' It is no idle phrase to say that all things of spiritual, intellectual, and artistic value were born root and flower from the Sanctuary.

What are the stone and papyrus of Egypt

flaming with Solar Glory? Whence the training of their candidates in three degrees, a training which demanded absolute moral purity, spiritual vigor, and profound understanding of Truth?

What about Persia and her long line of Zoroasters, within whose mystic seven-chambered centers truths of great intellectual and spiritual value were taught to neophytes who underwent the same discipline of the Mysteries? Were her Magi born from any other source than the archaic mother of Occultism? What about the School of Orphic Mysteries, whose austere discipline and esoteric content influenced perhaps more greatly the stamina of Greek culture than even the Eleusinian Mysteries so popular for centuries? Did not Orpheus travel to India and receive initiation in her *âśramas* (or mystery-temples)? Did not Pythagoras and Plato likewise travel India-wards and bring back to their disciples the identic pattern of esotericism?

Thus one might go on, with the Norse and Germanic mysticism, the Hindû and Chinese philosophy, the Greek and Roman ceremonial — all weavers of one pattern in one universal *motif* — a *motif* applicable to all times, to all nations, because capable of infinite variations without injury to the fundamental theme.

To describe one Mystery-School therefore is to describe them all — identic not in detail of national interpretation, but in fundamental discipline.

What therefore is the test of Truth? *Its universality*: has it been taught by all those who have been “clothed with the Central Sun” of Initiation? Did Buddha-Gautama instruct his disciples in the self-same doctrine that Christ-Jesus did? Did Śankarâchârya teach the same esotericism that Pythagoras and Empedocles did? Were Zoroaster and Tsong-Kha-Pa born in their Adepthood from the same womb of the Initiation-chamber as

Apollonius of Tyana, Orpheus, or Lao-Tse? Have Persia and Greece, China and Ancient America, Wales and Babylonia, all received a message which, stripped of its outer characteristics of national swabhâva, is one in esoteric content? Inevitably so, for such patterns have been woven on one Loom — the ageless Loom of TRUTH.

In the words of G. de Purucker, these Mystery-Schools are not a unique system but based on the spiritual structure of the Universe. They were

established from the same motives of Compassion that presided over the acts of the Great Actors of the Primal Drama, the opening acts of our Manvantara. They copied, as it were in miniature, what took place in those primordial times, and what took place in actual life in the Hierarchy of Compassion on our earth, or that section, rather, of the Hierarchy of Compassion, which we call the Great White Lodge. — Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy, 275

One primeval Humanity, many children-

colonies; one Mystery-teaching, many Mystery-Schools; one archaic pattern, many variations of color and texture as each nation contributes the woof of its National Mysteries. Three are the variants of *motif* as seen from the present:

(a) the original unveiling of Truth to infant humanity by Divine Instructors working in consonance with the Spiritual Planetary of our Earth, who through the early millenniums successfully gathered together the choice few into a center of esoteric light — the Great Brotherhood;

(b) the secondary unveiling springing directly as the fruit of the first: the spiritualizing influences uninterruptedly sent forth by the Lodge, and more specifically energized at cyclic intervals by their disciples, the Great World-Teachers;

(c) the third unveiling born as the progeny of (1) and (2): the penetration of Truth into human life through the Mystery-

Schools, the centers of esoteric discipline, in whose inner chambers initiation of the 'Elect' alone takes place, but in whose outer courts the world-at-large may seek entrance to learn fundamental verities, so that Life may be ennobled, and Death faced with strength and peace.

Thus is the pattern of esotericism woven century by century on the loom of Truth.

V

DUAL CHARACTER OF THE MYSTERIES

The whole essence of truth *cannot be transmitted from mouth to ear*, . . . [nor] can any pen describe it, not even that of the recording Angel, unless man finds the answer in the sanctuary of his own heart, in the innermost depths of his divine intuitions.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 516-7

HOW are those “innermost depths” to be sounded, so that knowledge of reality may be won? Through training, through discipline, through self-born wisdom. Such training and soul-discipline is the distinguishing mark of the Mystery-colleges, which since their inauguration have been divided into two parts: the Exoteric form, commonly known as the Less Mysteries, open to all sincere and honorable candidates for deeper

learning; and the Esoteric form, or the Greater Mysteries, whose doors open but to the few, and whose final Initiation into Adeptship is the reward of those whose interior perfection enables them to pass the solar rite. (See chapters viii and ix, for more complete data about this last.)

Universal testimony of stone and papyrus, symbol and allegory, cave and crypt, all tell the self-same story: the twofold trial of their neophytes. Jesus the Avatâra spoke to the multitudes in parable, but “when they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples” (*Mark*, iv, 34).

The Essenes had their ‘greater’ and their ‘minor’ mysteries, in the former of which Jesus of Nazareth is alleged to have been initiated.

With proud fidelity the Chinese Buddhists hold to a well-loved tradition that the Buddha-Gautama had two doctrines, one for the people and his lay-chelas; the other for

his Arhats. His invariable principle was to refuse no one admission into the ranks of candidates for Arhatship, but never to divulge the final mysteries except to those who had proved themselves, during long years of probation, to be worthy of Initiation. — “S. D. III,” 361

Intensity of vigor marks the Hebrew Initiates in their dark shrouding of inner teaching; to the multitude they taught the doctrine of the Qabbâlâh, but to the few they taught the unwritten interpretation thereof, the inner wisdom,

“in darkness, in a deserted place, and after many and terrific trials” . . . Delivered *only as a mystery*, it was communicated to the candidate orally, “*face to face and mouth to ear.*”

— *Isis Unveiled*, II, 349

The Persian and Chaldean Magi were always of two castes:

the initiated and those who were allowed to officiate in the popular rites only. — *Op. cit.*, II, 306, footnote

Eleusis and Samothrace are limned in ex-

quisite silhouette against the blue-black sky of history. Classical scholars tell us that the Less Mysteries were conducted in the Springtime at Agrae, while the Greater Mysteries were celebrated in the Autumn at Eleusis. In the Less Mysteries the candidates who were admitted into the preliminary degrees were called “neophytes,” and were allowed to witness the dramatic portrayal of the soul’s descent into Hades. In the Greater Mysteries of the Eleusinian rites, the “neophytes” became the “perfect” ones — those who participated in the “mysteries of the Divine Elysium” — i.e. communion with the Divine.

Thus with the Hindû Arhat, the Scandinavian Initiate, the Welsh Bard: all guarded the citadel of esotericism with the sanctity of their lives and the discipline of their Schools.

Belonging to every temple there were attached the “hierophants” of the *inner* sanctuary, and the secu-

lar clergy who were not even instructed in the Mysteries. — *Op. cit.*, II, 306, footnote

Further, Dr. de Purucker tells us that in all ancient countries “every great temple had its private or secret Mystery-School which was unknown to the multitude or partially known,” and which was attached thereto as a secret body. He further warns us that a Mystery-School is not necessarily a School of men situated at some *specific* place, with definite and fixed locality throughout time, and with physical conditions of environment always alike. Wherever the need is great, work must be done; and the “mistake of all scholars and mystics is to put too much emphasis upon *places* as Mystery-Schools.”*

What about the temples of Greece and Rome, of Syria and Judea; the cave-temples of Elephanta and Karli in India; the dago-

**The Theosophical Forum*, Dec., 1939, pp. 439-43.

bas of Buddhist countries; the Pyramids of Egypt and Peru, Mexico and Yucatan? What of Stonehenge in England; Carnac in Brittany; Sippara in Assyria; Babylon, Borsippa, and Erech in Babylonia; Ecbatana in Media; Bibracte in Gaul; and last but not least, Iona in Ireland whose secret learning was as a jewel of wisdom set in the heart of the green isle? Where are these now? But names, relics, remnants of forgotten splendor.

Hence a Mystery-School is not dependent solely on location; rather is it an association or brotherhood of trained men, of spiritually disciplined men bound by one common purpose, service to Humanity, a service intelligently and compassionately rendered because born of love and wisdom.

It is an occult fact, nevertheless, that certain centers upon the surface of the earth are more favorable to success in spiritual things than others. Why, for instance, were

tiations, initiatory rites, usually in caves carefully prepared and hid from common knowledge, occasionally even under the open sky as the Druids did among the oaks in their semi-primeval forests in Britain and in Brittany; and even in a few cases having no permanent or set location; but the Initiates receiving word where to meet from time to time, and to carry on their initiatory functions.

— *The Theosophical Forum*, Dec., 1939

It is the places of quiet, of peace, of strong silence, where the Masters find themselves drawn, and where the secret or Greater Mysteries can most easily and efficiently function; there in the recesses of their initiation-chambers the forces and currents are those of the higher Astral Light, the Âkâśa, the tenuous substance which responds to the higher currents of spiritual and intellectual impression. In this wise does the Lodge-force transmit its strength and spiritual vitality to the initiation-halls, and the candidate whose seven-rayed soul is developed may receive the divine imprint.

VI

DEGREES OF INITIATION

EVERY country has its own methods of preserving the knowledge and tradition of the Mysteries. At times, the degrees are variously reckoned, sometimes four, five, seven, and even ten; but whatever the divisions, during the days of their purity they all accomplish the one divine purpose of consummating the spiritual marriage of the Higher Self with the awakened human soul, from which union springs the Seer, the Adept, the Master of Life. Through the ravages of time and priestcraft, and the tangle of intrigue and ignorance in which exoteric rites have been clothed, one perceives the well-worn tradition.

In Asia Minor, Theon of Smyrna writes

of five degrees in the Initiatory cycle: (1) the previous purification, “*for neither are the Mysteries communicated to all who are willing to receive them*”; (2) the admission of the neophyte to the arcane rites following upon the purificatory refinements; (3) the “epoptic revelation,” or the reception or direct intuition of truth; (4) the “*binding of the head and fixing of the crowns*” —a direct reference to the mystical authority received with the crown of Initiation; (5) and final: “friendship and interior communion” with Divinity — this was considered the highest and most solemn mystery of all, the perfect assimilation of the enlightened mind with the Divine Self.*

In Persia, during the time of Mithraism, when the sun-god was honored above earthly things, seven were the degrees, the candidate receiving a name in accordance with

*Cf. *Isis Unveiled*, I, xiv-xv; II, 101.

the stage of interior growth. According to the Graeco-Latin names that have come down to us, the first degree neophyte was called *Corax* or *Raven* — the dark bird, one in whom the light of wisdom had not as yet begun to awaken in great measure; it signified likewise a Servant: he who must serve and give of his heart completely before receiving admission into the second degree which was termed *Cryphius* or *Occult*, one definitely accepted as a disciple of esoteric Occultism; the third was *Miles*, or *Soldier*, signifying one who had received sufficient training and purification to become a Worker for good; the fourth was called *Leo* or the *Lion*; as the lion is an emblem of solar power, the reference is to the entrance of the candidate upon the Fourth Initiation wherein begins the conscious solarizing of the nature through instruction and specialized training (see chapters vii and viii). The fifth degree was called *Perses*, or *Per-*

sian, signifying to the Persians of the time one who was becoming spiritually Human — Mânasaputrized, so to say; the sixth, *Heliodromus*, or *Messenger or Runner of Helios* the Sun, is a distinctly occult reference to Mercury or Budha, as Messenger between the Sun in Cosmos and the Sun in man: the bloom of Buddhi. The final and seventh was called *Pater*, or Father, having in mind “the state of a *Full Initiate* or *Masterhood*.”*

The Hindûs likewise had various names for their neophytes as they passed from one degree to another; in one school the candidates received the names of the ten Avatâras of Vishṇu. The first degree neophyte was termed *Matsya*, or *Fish*: one yet low in the scale of occult mastery. The second was *Kûrma*, or *Tortoise*: one step higher in evolutionary development. The third degree was called *Varâha*, or *Boar*, a further advance

*Cf. *The Esoteric Tradition*, II, 864

in individualization, while the fourth was termed *Nara-simha*, or *Man-lion*. This Fourth stage signifies the turning-point, as it were, between the preliminary degrees of the Less Mysteries and the occultly important degrees of the Greater Mysteries. This title of 'Man-lion' is significant as pointing to the choice demanded of the neophyte between dominance of 'animal soul' qualities, or the supremacy henceforth of the truly 'Human' attributes. Success in this degree insured the entrance into the fifth degree which was called *Vâmana*, or *Dwarf*, wherein the neophyte assumed the robes of occult Humanhood, though such humanhood was as yet infantile compared to full Mastery. *Paraśu-Râma*, or '*Râma with an axe*,' was the name of the sixth degree neophyte, suggesting one capable of hewing his way with equanimity through the worlds of spirit and matter. In the seventh degree, the chela becomes fully Humanized, receiving the

name of *Râma*, hero of the *Râmâyana*, an important epic of Hindûsthân.

The last three degrees, the eighth, ninth, and tenth, are called respectively: *Kṛishṇa*, the Avatâra whose death ushered in the Kali-yuga some 5000 years ago; *Buddha*, whose renunciation of Nirvâṇa brought light and peace to a sorrowing world; and the final and tenth, *Kalkin* or *Kalkî*, the “white-horse” avatâra who has not yet come among men, but who is destined to “appear at the end of the Kali or Iron Age, seated on a white horse, with a drawn sword blazing like a comet, for the final destruction of the wicked, the renovation of creation, and the restoration of piety.”* In ancient symbology the horse signified the Sun, hence this tenth avatâra will come riding the steed of solar glory, ushering in the New Age “clothed with the Sun” of Spiritual Illumination.

*Cf. Dowson’s *Hindû Classical Dictionary*, p. 38.

Seven were the degrees usually contained in the Mysteries, to which the chela was admitted; in the Hindû system of ascribing the names of the ten Avatâras to the neophytes, the sevenfold system would seem to hold good, for the last three degrees above referred to actually belong to initiations of so lofty a character that the human mind has difficulty in grasping their esoteric character. In his *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, Dr. de Purucker hints of three higher degrees than the seventh, but so exquisite are these in spiritual refinement that it is for Masters alone, and for the highest and most spiritualized of these advanced beings, to comprehend and hence to undertake the Divine Initiations. Rare indeed are those who become Avatâra-like, Christ-like; rarer still, "as rare as are the flowers of the Udumbara-tree" are the Buddhas. As for the tenth and last — such we can leave unmarred by description.

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EUGENIA KING GEIGER

VII

THE LESS MYSTERIES

THE Less Mysteries are a preparation of the neophyte, through various degrees of purification and discipline combined with training in intellectual and spiritual perception, for initiation in the Greater Mysteries. As indicated in the previous chapter, seven were the degrees usually reckoned, the first three degrees comprising the Less Mysteries. The fourth degree is the turning or deciding point: in this degree the discipline and training undergone in the preliminary stages are put to the test of *actual experience* in self-identification. If the candidate passes this fourth trial successfully, then he enters upon the sterner discipline, the far greater purification, and the more intimate relationship

between Teacher and chela. Henceforth, he is a pledged disciple, his will is set firmly to do or die, and thus to pass successfully the fifth, sixth, and seventh degrees which comprise the Greater Mysteries.

The trials of the Less Mysteries are comparatively simple in the first degree; but as the disciple proves his earnestness and ability to stand the probationary tests, more rigorous becomes the training, more severe the demands upon his nature, more heavily the hand of karman deals with error.

Two particular features mark the Minor Mysteries: (a) instruction in the deeper sciences of Cosmos; and (b) dramatic presentations of that which the neophyte must *experience in actual fact*, and endure without outside help, in the Greater Mysteries. In the Eleusinian Mysteries for example, the neophyte himself took the main part in the sacred drama, which acted as a spiritual aid in stimulating the yearning for actual

experience in these higher things; as well as familiarizing him with the routes, so to say, of the initiation-chamber. To take the part as an actor in a drama is quite a different thing from suffering actual experience, yet such participation acted as preliminary fortification to the neophyte when the time actually came for the Greater Initiations.

The Less Mysteries have been known and recognised by the keenest minds of all ages, as institutions of higher learning, wherein candidates were allowed to take the first initiation only after they had proved themselves worthy and fit to pass higher.

From the Mystery-Schools, knowledge of Truth permeates the mental strata of surrounding country, as initiates in the preliminary degrees pass out again into the world of men. In Greece and Rome, it might be said that nearly all the really great men of historic note were initiates of one or more degrees of the Less Mysteries. This

does not, however, refer to conquerors by the sword, for almost universally these were not initiates of the Mysteries, though in the degenerate days of the Roman Empire many were the applicants of indifferent caliber who underwent the preliminary rites in a more or less perfunctory fashion.

In fact, the Mysteries in olden times were regarded so highly that preparation for entrance therein was deemed the most royal gift a father could bequeath to his sons. At the age of seven years, young boys were received and trained, disciplined in heart and mind, so that on reaching adulthood they either took their place in the world of men and exerted a spiritual influence among the people; or if they were especially favored by right of inner fineness, they remained within the Sanctuary and passed on as far as they could go into the Greater Mysteries. Certain ones were trained for the sole purpose of returning among men and

teaching the laws of life in university and college; others received the preliminary rites in order better to fit themselves to govern the State with equanimity and honor. Still others underwent the discipline and purification of the first degrees and then devoted their lives to bringing beauty to men, whether in sculpture or color, in verse or harmony. Thus did these early civilizations ripen in spiritual things under the guidance of initiated philosophers and statesmen, artists and musicians.

Many branches of both art and science were taught in the Less Mysteries: notably among these were Geography, Astronomy, Chemistry, Physiology, Geology, Meteorology, as well as Music, called by the Master the “most divine and *spiritual* of arts”;^{*} similarly Art and Architecture were studied whose lost “canon of proportion” has im-

^{*}*Mahatma Letters*, 188.

mortalized the Greek temples. These sciences were held as secret studies of the Mysteries, not because they would not have been understood if taught as our school-rooms and universities teach them today, but because such sciences and arts were studied from their *causal* rather than their effectual aspect. Much derision has been cast on the ancients for withholding this knowledge, when "even a child can understand the simpler forms thereof." Certainly the simpler forms were taught to the multitude, but the *occult* background thereof was kept rigidly secret (as it is even today, though the world at large little dreams of this fact) as fit only for those who would not abuse the knowledge obtained. Can as much wisdom be shown today, when as soon as science discovers some new device, instantly opportunity is found by the unregenerate to turn that invention to diabolic purposes? One is driven to admire the strength

and wisdom of the ancients who knew better than to turn knowledge over completely to those lacking in moral control. Even yet, with all our boasted superiority, we have not caught up in all lines with the ordinary scientific knowledge of our ancient forebears. As H. P. Blavatsky wrote in 1877:

If modern masters are so much in advance of the old ones, why do they not restore to us the lost arts of our postdiluvian forefathers? Why do they not give us the unfading colors of Luxor — the Tyrian purple; the bright vermilion and dazzling blue which decorate the walls of this place, and are as bright as on the first day of their application? The indestructible cement of the pyramids and of ancient aqueducts; the Damascus blade, which can be turned like a corkscrew in its scabbard without breaking; the gorgeous, unparalleled tints of the stained glass that is found amid the dust of old ruins and beams in the windows of ancient cathedrals; and the secret of the true malleable glass? And if chemistry is so little able to rival even with the early mediaeval ages in some arts, why boast of achievements which, according to strong probability,

were perfectly known thousands of years ago? The more archaeology and philology advance, the more humiliating to our pride are the discoveries which are daily made, the more glorious testimony do they bear in behalf of those who, perhaps on account of the distance of their remote antiquity, have been until now considered ignorant flounders in the deepest mire of superstition.

— *Isis Unveiled*, I, 239

In the Mysteries, Geography is not a study of ordinary topography, the location of rivers and mountains, valleys and plains; rather were the periodical risings and sinkings of continents the subject of investigation in accordance with the cyclical events of racial history; secret centers of the earth were learned of, and our intimate relation to the two poles and the four points of the compass. As H. P. B. suggestively hints:

The two poles are called the right and left ends of our globe — the right being the North Pole — or the head and feet of the earth. Every beneficent (astral and cosmic) action comes from the North;

every lethal influence from the South Pole. They are much connected with and influence “*right*” and “*left*” hand magic.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 400, footnote

Meteorology is the study of the currents of the wind and rain, etc., not from the effectual standpoint, but as bearing streams of vital energy from all parts of the solar system; lightning, thunder, etc., were not merely electro-magnetic phenomena — words that sound imposing, but unless occultly understood convey little more than a statement of effects produced; when considered from the causal aspect these are seen to be but outer manifestations of interior forces bursting from cosmic space into our atmosphere and affecting the lives of earth.

In Chaldea, Egypt, Mexico and Peru, Wales and India, Astrology was regarded with veneration. Its deeper teachings were transmitted from “mouth to ear,” so sacred and profoundly spiritual were they then con-

sidered. Mere fortune-telling and other similar trifles, were held vulgar in the eyes of the hierophants. The recognised influence of the Sun and Planets upon the men of Earth, were not considered merely mechanical reactions compelling individuals to this and that mode of conduct or of character; such interchange of planetary and solar life-energies between terrestrial beings was understood as springing from a common heritage of solar birth. The septenary nature of the planets was taken into account in reckoning the septenary nature of man, and hence the intermingling of life-atoms from the various planetary systems with the earth, and *vice versa*, constitutes one of the major studies of Esoteric Astrology. Furthermore, the science of prediction of tremendous cyclical occurrences was mastered not only in India to a fine hair's breadth,* but likewise

*Cf. the *Sûrya-Siddhânta* of Asuramaya, the oldest treatise of astronomy extant.

in Ancient Chaldea, whose modern representatives of some four and five thousand years ago still held Archaic Astrology as the strongest characteristic of their secret Mysteries. The famous Ziggurat (or 'high tower') of Borsippa in Babylonia, is strong testimonial to knowledge of the sevenfold planetary influences on Man. Called the "Stages of the Seven Spheres," each of its stories bore a different color, representative of one of the Seven Sacred Planets. At the top was a sacred shrine, often with a table or *couch* of solid gold.

Thus what looked to the multitude as mere astronomical observatories, were secret training-centers within whose inner recesses Esoteric Astrology formed one of the important studies of the Less Mysteries. Medicine and Surgery, Physics and Alchemy, Poetry, Mathematics and Philosophy likewise were studied from their occult standpoint.

This instruction consists not in the learning by rote of scores of formulae, but in the inner perception of occult rationale, so that knowledge benevolently applied for others becomes wisdom.

However fascinating to the imagination and of whatever degree of intellectual and psychical stimulation to the neophyte, these studies were not the major aim of the Mysteries, for behind all training of the mind was the *impelling urge for soul-purification through discipline and contemplation*. As stimulus and guidance therefor, dramatic presentations were given of the actual descent of the chela into the Underworld, his trial in the nether regions through meeting and conquering himself; his ascent into the stream of life and light, culminating in final communion and 'friendship' with the divinities. So effective were the dramatic rites, that participation therein actually constituted part of the initiatory training

in preparation for the Greater Mysteries.

Comparison of the ritual of these Mysteries as practised in Mexico, in Peru, in Egypt, Greece and Rome, in Wales, Persia and India, with slight variations of minor detail, reveals the universal presence of the story of the descent into the Underworld in the symbol of the wheat- or corn-goddess. The seed and the grain represents the candidate or chela. As the seed enters into the dark regions of the moist earth, many are the difficulties of soil and environment to contend with; it 'dies' in giving birth to root and stalk. Finally as the period of germination expires the tender shoots of the grain sprout above the surface of the earth; other plants welcome the newcomer, and in time the 'seed' that was bursts forth in flower with the aid of the sun. Thus the candidate must 'die' in the regions of the Underworld, the lower spheres, wherein he meets and conquers the difficulties of environment;

shedding his impermanent self he 'dies' in giving birth to root and stalk of budding masterhood. At the appropriate hour, the chela that was rises to the spheres of light and life; taken into the presence of other 'plants' of divinity, he finds friendship with the gods, and blooms into the full flower of Adepthood. Thus is dramatized in esoteric imagery the spiritual travail "of giving birth to themselves" — as an ancient Manuscript of Occultism describes the birth of the Adept within the chela, the supreme Initiation.*

*Cf. *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 559.

VIII

THE GREATER MYSTERIES

THE Greater Mysteries entered upon by the neophyte after the successful consummation of the preliminary degrees constitute the “*becoming* by individual experience” that which had been learned in the Less Mysteries. In this higher department of esoteric training, no quarter is given. The neophyte must face himself and conquer — or die. All the stretches of his complex nature, from the divinely inspired to the grossly material, must be investigated and controlled. By this time the aspirant must have developed sufficient spiritual stability to withstand Reality. He must *become* Nature in her lower and higher regions, must pass the supreme test of self-identi-

fication, and yet retain his soul-integrity.

Even as late as the second century of our era, the rites of the Egyptian Mysteries, however modified by Greek influence, were carried on with due and appropriate reverence. Disciples from surrounding countries sought initiation therein as a fitting advancement following their own ceremonies. Apuleius, the Latin Platonic Philosopher, describes in his *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*, the initiation in the Mysteries of Isis of one Lucius Patras, now uniformly believed to be Apuleius himself.

“Hear, then, and believe, for what I tell is true. I drew nigh to the confines of death, I trod the threshold of Proserpine [Hades], I was borne through all the elements and returned to earth again. I saw the sun gleaming with bright splendour at dead of night, I approached the gods above, and the gods below, and worshipped them face to face. Behold, I have told thee things of which, though thou hast heard them, thou must yet know naught.

“I will recount, therefore, only that which may

without sin be imparted to the understanding of the uninitiate. So soon as it was morning and the rites were accomplished, I came forth clothed in twelve cloaks that are worn by the initiate, a raiment that is most holy. . . . The precious cloak hung from my shoulders down my back, even to my heels, and I was adorned, wheresoever thou mightest cast thine eye, with the figures of beasts broidered round about in diverse colours.* . . . This cloak the initiates call the cloak of Olympus. In my right hand I bore a torch flaming with fire, and my head was garlanded with a fair crown of spotless palm, whose leaves stood out like rays . . . adorned as the sun and set up like to the image of a god.” — Quoted in *The Mysteries of Egypt*, pp. 70-1, Lewis Spence

In the Greater Mysteries, the passage into the Underworld ceases to be a mere ritual of the Less Mysteries in which the chela takes the chief part in a dramatic rite; he must now “approach the confines of death”

*The reference to the twelve cloaks, and the “figures of beasts” is quite clearly a veiled manner of suggesting the mystic passage through the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

with full knowledge, and in the garment of soul-consciousness pass beyond the veil of visible nature into the arena of worlds invisible. As Dr. de Purucker expresses it:

It is one of the fundamental teachings of Occultism and of our Esoteric School, that nothing can be *truly known* which is not *experienced, lived through*. . . . different stages or degrees of initiation are really a kind of “forcing-process,” for certain chosen spirits, certain chosen souls, who have proved themselves worthy: . . . These different stages or degrees of initiation are marked by preparatory purifications first. Then came the “death,” a mystic death. The body and lower principles, so to say, are paralysed, and the soul is temporarily freed. And, to a certain extent, it (the freed inner man) is guided and directed and helped by the initiators while it passes into other spheres and to other planes and learns the nature of these *by becoming them*, which is the only way by which knowledge thereof roots itself into the soul, *i. e.*, into the ego: by *becoming the thing*.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, 219

This ‘mystic death’ constitutes the Fourth

Initiation,* which consists not only in one's ability to receive Spiritual Light, but likewise in one's power to face with equanimity and awakened morality the Darkness of Evil. To *become a thing*, is actually to unite one's cognising intelligence with the essence of the being or thing become. In other words, to *take on the nature of* such entity for the time being. Hence to weld one's consciousness with beings in spheres *lower* than the human, is greatly to test the stamina of the individual: will the malefic fumes of the lower spheres stifle the delicate petals of the budding adept? Will the sensuous delights of the lower hells have any attraction for the neophyte stern in his resolve to face all? Conversely, to assume the nature of beings in spheres *higher* than the human calls for an equally strengthened constitution. Will the brilliance and splen-

*Cf. *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, 275.

dor of Truth undimmed blind the soul? Will vision of Reality shatter the Eye of Dangma, the eye of Wisdom?

This Fourth Degree may be considered as a prelude to, a minor reflexion of, the final and Seventh Degree, in which latter initiation the neophyte-initiant must undergo the trial of identification with *all* the spheres of being.

To complete the full initiatory cycle therefore, demands the awakening and strengthening of *all seven* principles in man. The chela must have so tuned his seven-stringed lyre, so energized it with spiritual harmony, that it will vibrate in perfect synchrony with the *spiritual* essence of the seven principles or spheres of Cosmos. As the Master Koot Hoomi wrote to A. O. Hume in 1882:

The degrees of an Adept's initiation mark the seven stages at which he discovers the secret of the sevenfold principles in nature and man and awakens his dormant powers.—*Mahatma Letters*, 99

Of these higher degrees, scarcely aught of precise detail has been vouchsafed to us. This is but natural, and indeed is inevitable; for how could words describe that which can be understood only by the Initiate? How could that which is essentially esoteric be revealed, and still retain its mystic integrity? Important hints, however, have been given regarding the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh degrees, and in order to preserve the esoteric content intact, we shall quote liberally from Dr. de Purucker in his *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*.

In the Fifth Initiation, the neophyte *meets his own god-self face to face*, and for a longer or shorter time *becomes one with it*.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, 242

This degree was called by the Greeks *Theophany*, a Greek word signifying ‘divine appearance,’ or ‘showing forth of a divinity,’ i.e. the appearance or manifestation of man’s own Higher Self to himself. And while in

the average candidate this sublime moment of intellectual ecstasis and high vision lasted but a short time, with further spiritual progress of the candidate the Theophanic communion became more enduring and lasting, until finally, ultimately, man knew himself, not merely as the offspring spiritually of his own inner god, but as that inner god himself, in his essential being. — *Op. cit.*, 386-7

The Sixth Initiation was consummated as the inevitable course of events following upon the successful spiritualization of the entire nature. This was called *Theopneusty* by the Greeks — a Greek word literally signifying ‘god-breathing,’ or ‘divine inspiration’ — where the disciple

felt the inbreathing from his own inner god, and became, thus, inspired, the very word “inspiration” meaning “inbreathing.” With the passing of time and the greater purification of the soul-vehicle, which is man himself, this inbreathing or inspiration became permanent. — *Op. cit.*, 386

Or, as Dr. de Purucker describes it on

page 242 of the same work, in this degree the inner god of the candidate breathes down into him, for a longer or shorter time, depending upon his advancement, the wisdom and the knowledge of all the universe . . .

and on page 220 the following suggestive hint is given:

in the sixth Degree, instead of one's own Higher Self, the initiant meets another One, a matter which we will to-night pass over in silence.

Then comes the Seventh and last of the Degrees of Initiation before Masterhood is achieved. This Initiation usually took place at the time of the Winter Solstice, when the Sun starts again on its northward journey. The ancient Pagan initiates considered the four points of the year, the Winter and Summer Solstices and the Spring and Autumnal Equinoxes, as physical representatives of holy workings in Cosmos. The birth of the Sun at the beginning of the year

symbolized to them the mystic birth of the Initiate, and it is significant that nearly all the great World-Saviors, such as Jesus the Christ, Kṛishṇa the Avatâra, Apollonius of Tyana, and others, celebrate their 'birth-days' at this sacred time of the rebirth of the Solar Deity.

This Seventh Degree was called by the Greeks *Theopathy* — a word meaning 'god-suffering,' or 'divine-enduring'; the

most sublime mystery of all . . . the initiand, the candidate, suffered himself to become, abandoned himself fully to be, a truly selfless channel of communication of his own inner god, his own Higher Self; he became lost as it were in the greater Self of his own Higher Self. — *Op. cit.*, 386

Few indeed are those whose soul-strength is so great that they can suffer or endure in fulness the presence of Divinity. This is the reward of the Highest Adepts, those whose sacrifice and wisdom surround Humanity with a Guardian Wall diamond-like

in compassion and adamantine in protection.

In the Seventh Degree, the neophyte passes
the portals of the Sun;

*he becomes for a passing moment the Wondrous
Watcher himself**

— the Solar Initiation is complete: the
chela dies and the Hierophant is born.

**Op. cit., 220-1.*

IX

ROUTES OF INITIATION

IN the deeper mystery-training, the chela must not only learn to build the 'mystic vessel' of awakened consciousness which will carry him from plane to plane, but in the process of such individual becoming must rediscover for himself the ancient routes of Initiation.

In wisdom and foresight, Nature is consistent throughout: one law, one plan, one structure. With charming thrift she rehearses the pathways of Initiation through the rhythm of Sleep and Death. To understand even in minor degree the Greater Mysteries, one must have a thorough grounding in the teachings of Death. Hence Death and its processes form the heart and core

of the Initiation-doctrine: through death of the inferior the superior finds birth. Except the seed die, the flower cannot bloom; except the flower die, the seed cannot form. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (*Matt.*, x, 39)

Sleep is an incomplete Death — unconsciously performed; Death is a complete Sleep — unconsciously performed; Initiation is a self-conscious 'sleep' or 'death' of the lower elements with an equally self-cognising liberation of the Spiritual soul along the same pathways of Sleep and Death.

In Sleep, the body is cast aside, 'dies,' imperfectly, for the golden cord remains linked in spiritual protection over the slumbering body. If the soul is not weighted with material desire, then a natural paralysis of the terrestrial elements ensues. During the brief hours of nightly sleep, if the karma be favorable the freed spirit-soul may ascend out of the sphere of earth along the

invisible magnetic pathways to higher realms. The ascent is instantaneous, followed by the immediate return along identic pathways until the soul once again enters the sleeping body, and a new day dawns.

These pathways of Sleep traversed night after night constitute an *unconscious* journey along the routes of Initiation. Such momentary and unrecognised contact during Sleep is not wasted; the very repetition of the self-same process acts as a kind of invisible spur to the ordinary man: If the aspirations be continued, and life made purer, faint impressions of beauty and grandeur will penetrate the dulled soul, intuitions will manifest, and the aspirant will find benediction sweeping into his day through nightly communion with higher spheres.

Death is the following of the same processes of Sleep, only perfectly so. The body is cast off permanently and falls apart; the golden cord is withdrawn, and the soul, freed

of its terrestrial elements, enters the spheres of temporary purgation. Liberated and cleansed of earthly dross in the kâma-loka, the soul ascends to its spiritual parent, the Higher Self, and in peace and bliss undreamed of, travels the identic journey of Sleep. In each of the mansions of Space, a stop is made, shorter or longer depending upon the links of affinity formerly made through past experience of the spiritual soul, until strengthened by divine contact, it once again rethreads the ancient pathway, and a child is born on earth.

Thus in Death the age-old routes of Initiation are perfectly followed in conscious recognition by the Spiritual Monad, but as yet in unconscious appreciation of inherent values by the ordinary human soul.

Man is many-sided: he has within him a Divine Monad, a Spiritual Soul, and a Human Soul which works through his vital-astral-physical nature. We must guard

against the dominion of the lower over the higher, and particularly in our discussion of these holy things, we must carefully watch ourselves lest we become fascinated by their beauty and intellectual splendor, and forget the essential strength of the Mysteries: that of Ethics. Unless a man has made Ethics the foundation of his character, then his heart and mind will be continually shaken by the storm of desire. The multitude who care for little beyond the needs of the ordinary mind and body, will have no attraction to deeper things, but those who have begun to think and to feel intuitively, will find themselves irresistibly drawn to the study of the Ancient Wisdom. It is to these who are already stirring from the sleep of matter, that particular warning is given against entertaining the fond notion that initiation is just waiting around the corner. One must defend the heart from selfish desire for so-called 'occult powers' as one would defend

oneself against the bite of the serpent. The Initiations referred to herein, and particularly in the previous chapter, are not *described*, but only alluded to in vague words, as hints of what some day the worthy disciple may find himself fortunate enough to experience.

Over and over again the journey of Initiation is traversed: in Sleep imperfectly; in Death perfectly; nightly by the soul in Sleep; periodically by the soul in Death. Unconsciously performed, Nature thus rehearses that which the soul must one day follow with will and consciousness fully active. This latter process is the journey of Initiation: the deliberate paralysis of terrestrial influence followed by the self-perceptive journey through every plane and sphere of Cosmos.

In connexion with the progress of the Spiritual Monad after Death, Dr. de Pu-rucker writes:

The purpose of the passing of the Monad post mortem through the various planetary chains is to allow it to free itself on each such planetary chain of the integument or habiliment or vehicle which belongs to the vital essence of such planetary chain. It is only thus that the Monad strips off from itself one after the other the different 'coatings' with which it has enwrapped itself during its long evolutionary journey; and thus when it has freed itself from all seven 'coatings' it is then ready, because freed and in its pure and 'unclothed' state, to enter into its own native spiritual Home. When the return journey towards Earth's planetary chain begins, the Monad then passes through all these same seven planets, but in reverse order to that by which it had ascended through them, and in each such planet that it visits . . . it picks up and re-assumes or clothes itself in the life-atoms forming the 'coatings' that it had previously dropped or cast off in each one of these seven planets respectively."

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, 869-70

So important is this journey that the Greater Mysteries dealt almost in their entirety with processes of the mystic death.

As described in the previous chapter, the Fourth Initiation comprised a partial descent in the lower spheres, accompanied by the partial ascent into the superior spheres. The soul as yet has not developed sufficient strength to withstand the full reaches of the Universe.*

*There is an exquisite legend of Babylonia which points to an identic tradition of esotericism to be found in one guise or another in all lands, in all countries, in all Mystery-Schools. Ishtar, bereft of her lover Tammuz through death, descends to the Underworld to restore him to life and immortality. Arriving at the gates of Aralu [Hades], Ishtar stands, beautiful and royal in mien. The archaic decree, however, demands that none may enter the dread precincts of the Underworld who are not bare of garment or jewel.

“Therefore at each of the successive gates through which Ishtar must pass, the keeper divests her of some garment or ornament: first her crown, then her ear-rings, then her necklace, then the ornaments from her bosom, then her many-jeweled girdle, then the spangles from her hands and feet, and lastly her

This descent is not an automatic process, but a willing, *spiritually* willing, decision to undertake the journey as a supreme test of intellectual and spiritual integrity. If the candidate succeeds, then union with the divine and glory supernal will be his; if he

loin-cloth." — Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization — I: Our Oriental Heritage*, p. 238

Free and pure she enters Aralu. Her sister, Ereshkigal, full of jealousy, sends against Ishtar diseases sixty in number. Passing the tests of the lower world, Ishtar releases Tammuz, through whose love and self-sacrifice he now receives immortality. Triumphant, she retraces her steps through the seven gates, receiving in reverse order those garments or jewels which she had cast aside on her descending journey. First her loin-cloth, then her spangles for hands and feet, third her girdle; fourth her breast-pins, fifth her necklace, sixth her ear-rings, and finally as she ascends into the regions of light, she is adorned with the seventh jewel, the crown of spiritual glory. One need make no comment of interpretation but leave such to the intuition of the individual student.

fail, then death or madness lies in store. Far better that he who fails had never ventured upon these initiations, for fearful indeed are the trials. If the inner man has through austerity and utterly benevolent devotion, discipline and learning, become as gold in the fire, then swift and sure will be his passage through the lower worlds.

With the strength and spirituality burning within, the successful candidate will rise, and in the boat of his own making, sail to the spheres superior, where the passage from mansion to mansion is made with full awareness of heart and mind. Passing the supreme test, the chela, now become Master, returns through the spaces to earth, and once again picks up his entranced body. The Guardian of the Initiation-Chamber who has watched with patient and loving care the body of his chela, now is filled with joy: the final initiation is complete, his chela has not failed.

X

THE CLOSING OF THE MYSTERY- SCHOOLS

THIRTEEN centuries ago sounded the death-knell of the Mysteries in Europe when the Emperor Justinian, acting on behalf of the petition of the Pagan Initiates themselves, closed the Mysteries of the Roman Empire which at that time comprised Thrace, Macedonia, Crete, Syria, and Egypt. So degenerate had the rites become, so decadent the spirit of the once sacred gatherings, that the few remaining pagan-initiates refused to accept further candidates. That which had once been held as beautiful and holy — the dramatic ritual of the union of the Higher Self with the aspiring soul — now became orgies of the most degraded sort.

Never, never in the history of Occultism,

past, present, or future, can it be said that the Mysteries — *in their purity and spiritual integrity* — cater to the personal and emotional side of man. It is precisely to free the soul of limitation, to purify the heart of conflict, to discipline the mind from wandering, that the Mystery-training is so severe, for in Initiation only spiritual strength, only diamond-caliber, can withstand the searching ordeal.

Birth, growth, maturity and senescence are the inevitable processes of Nature in all her departments. The old age of a Mystery-School need not be a degenerate senescence, any more than the declining years of a man need be marked with degradation. But alas, as with men the seeds of degeneracy and ambition are too frequently sowed in the heyday of material success, so likewise in the glory and power of a flourishing Mystery-center, if the trial of spiritual success be not met with even greater austerity of heart

than in days of probation, the venomous seeds of inner decay take root and grow. Degradation usurps quiescence, and the School decays. The Spirit of the Brotherhood retreats, the rind of ritual remains.

The efficient cause therefore of the closing of the Mystery-schools is the *inner faithlessness* of the guardians of the Temple. Never would the light die out if the hierophants remained loyal to the archaic principles of the School, for the Brotherhood watches with the "eagle eye of the Seer" for every burning light, and when the call is strong and the cry for truth and light powerful, the Mysteries remain *ipso facto* pure and clean, because freshened perennially from the Fount of Light, the Brotherhood of Tibet.

As Dr. de Purucker writes:

When the human race, or any branch of it, or even an individual, makes the spiritual and intellectual appeal in terms so strong, with spiritual energy

so vibrant, with the very fiber of the inner life so to say, it actually operates with the spiritual magnetism of a Teacher, and the call is heard in the Great Brotherhood invariably, and an Envoy or Messenger appears in the world as its representative. The Mysteries have always degenerated because men became involved more and more in selfishness and the self-seeking ways of the material world, and lost the inner touch, the inner consciousness of communion with the spiritual Powers mentioned above.— *The Esoteric Tradition*, 1053

There are only two paths in Occultism: the Right-hand Path of White Magic and Spiritual Progress; and the Left-hand Path of Black Magic and Spiritual Retrogression. No third Path of Cessation or Rest exists. If one go not forwards, then one will remain behind, in automatic (if not deliberate) retrogression. The stream of evolutionary progress is upwards, towards the light of spirit and truth; if one travels not this path, one falls by the wayside; the caravan moves on, the idler remains below.

The farther one proceeds on the path of esoteric training, the sharper must be the line of demarcation between the two paths; yet paradoxically enough, just because of the richer development of the chela, the finer sensitivity to right and wrong, the greater are the depths sounded as well as the heights attained. The middle line of wisdom becomes ever more and more elusive as progress in spiritual things is made. It is not the gross pitfalls of former lives that the chela need guard against, but the subtil refinements of Mâra, the 'tempter,' who with cruel and insidious measure tries the soul with relentless insistence. There is an ancient proverb in Eastern Occultism which says that between the "right and the left hand [Magic] there is but a cobweb thread."* He who would remain on the path must cleave with all the strength and courage of the Divine

*"S. D. III," 108.

to that luminous cobweb thread of Wisdom.

One of the most effective weapons of the Dark Forces is Doubt — doubt of oneself, doubt of one's aspirations, doubt of one's inherent strength. This is a natural and inevitable reaction of chelaship; but a highly dangerous state while it lasts. If not checked with the stern resolve to conquer or die, and to keep on keeping on, *no matter how often one fall, or how grave the error*, then self-pity obtains mastery, and the door to a graver peril is opened: Doubt of the Teacher, Doubt of the School, Doubt of the Brotherhood. Herein flourishes the fatal seed of interior disarray, which if not cast out from the heart will sprout and grow into the weed of Infidelity strangling the candidate with its rank growth.

Terrible are the tests of chelaship, and severe have been the warnings to the over-eager aspirant for Adeptship. As K. H. wrote to Sinnett in 1881:

“those who engage themselves in the occult sciences . . . must either reach the goal or perish. Once fairly started on the way to the great Knowledge, to doubt is to risk insanity; to come to a dead stop is to fall; to recede is to tumble backward, headlong into an abyss. — Mahatma Letters, 31

There were three results of Initiation: (a) success and glory illimitable; (b) failure which meant death; and (c) partial failure which usually meant madness.*

It is for this latter reason that the Masters and their disciples have repeatedly warned their pupils against an undue rushing into Occultism. Far safer to remain in the outer courts of the Temple of Wisdom as earnest and sincere aspirants for greater Knowledge, as learners therein, striving with all the strength of their souls to practise the age-old rules of the Sanctuary: loyalty, duty, and selfless fidelity to the cause of Humanity. If these three are cherished in the heart,

*Cf. *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, 249.

and held to through all the trial and heart-ache of human existence, then the time will inevitably come when help will be forthcoming, and the aspirant will know that he has been chosen. Until such time, wiser to live a noble life in the position karman has ordained, than to live an ignoble one, because of innate incapacity to do better in such an exalted state, in places superior to one's nature.

Unwise ardor for spiritual discipline, however, is not half so dangerous as selfish desire for occult training merely for the gaining of power. It was this latter aim that stimulated the rush for 'occult powers' which laid the foundation for degeneration of the Mystery-Schools in the early centuries of our era. For hundreds of years the Mysteries had been slowly losing their sanctity; thousands had been received into the preliminary degrees not by virtue of inner development, but for temporal reasons.

The rites became perfunctory observances, and perception of interior worth diminished. Dogma, ritual, and priestcraft waxed lusty, the spirit of Truth and Esotericism waned. The few — and they were too few indeed — who had remained faithful to their sacred pledge, fled the precincts of the Mysteries which had become in later Roman times so degenerate as actually to repel from their chambers those whose hearts alone sought Esotericism.

The Light was withdrawn, but so compassionately does the Brotherhood work that the truths were preserved in symbol and stone, in allegory and mythos. As H. P. Blavatsky describes this in regard to Egypt:

Her [Egypt's] sacred Scribes and Hierophants became wanderers upon the face of the earth. Those who had remained in Egypt found themselves obliged for fear of a profanation of the sacred Mysteries to seek refuge in deserts and mountains, to form and establish secret societies and brotherhoods — such as the Essenes; those who had crossed the

oceans to India and even to the (now-called) New World, bound themselves by solemn oaths to keep silent, and to preserve secret their Sacred Knowledge and Science; thus these were buried deeper than ever out of human sight. In Central Asia and on the northern borderlands of India, the triumphant sword of Aristotle's pupil swept away from his path of conquest every vestige of a once pure Religion: and its Adepts receded further and further from that path into the most hidden spots of the globe. — "S. D. III," 298

Thus periodically is accomplished the work of the Brothers of the Shadow, the destruction of the *outposts* of the Mysteries, but the core and heart thereof, the Great Brotherhood of Light, remains unscarred by defeat. Never, never will the hand of Darkness lay its clammy fingers upon the Heart of Esotericism which beats as strongly today as it did some 18,000,000 years ago, and will continue to pulsate in undiminished power till the death of our Solar System, and beyond. The light of Truth is the light

of the Spiritual Sun of our Universe. As long as its rays gleam down into the world of earth, so long will the rays of Spirit warm the hearts of men.

In the words of the Master K. H. to A. O. Hume:

Fear not; . . . our knowledge will not pass away from the sight of man. It is the "gift of the gods" and the most precious relic of all. The keepers of the sacred Light did not safely cross so many ages but to find themselves wrecked on the rocks of modern scepticism. Our pilots are too experienced sailors to allow us [to] fear any such disaster. We will always find volunteers to replace the tired sentries, and the world, bad as it is in its present state of transitory period, can yet furnish us with a few men now and then.

— *Mahatma Letters*, 215

XI

LINE OF OCCULT SUCCESSION

THE Greeks were adept in the use of imagery to convey profound esoteric truths, often using the form of sport; or conversely, they would read into the exercises of the stadium occult significance. One of the most charming instances of this was their portrayal through the 'Torchbearer Race' of the mystic line of succession of Great Teachers.

In the torch-race, the torch-bearer ran from post to post. On reaching the end of his stage he handed the lighted torch which he carried to the one there waiting, who immediately took up the race and in his turn handed it to the one waiting for him. This exercise of the arena or stadium was taken by many Greek and Latin writers as symbolizing the carrying on of Light from age to age, and as point-

ing to the spiritual Torch-bearers who pass the Torch of Truth from hand to hand throughout unending time. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 1071

This handing on of the Light of Truth 'throughout unending time' has formed the theme of nearly all Mystery-parables. The Greeks again referred to this spiritual succession as the 'Golden Chain of Hermes' which they believed to stretch far into the realms of Olympus, to

Father Zeus downwards through a series or line of spiritual beings and then through certain elect and lofty human beings to ordinary men.

— *Op. cit.*, 1070-1

Ancient Vedic thought described this mystic succession as the *Guruparamparâ* — a Sanskrit compound literally meaning 'teacher beyond beyond.' This word signifies a line of teachers reaching 'beyond the beyond' through past, present, and future, whose sublime purpose is ever the same: the work of spiritualization.

The ancient Mystery-Schools of every country of the globe and of whatever epoch in time, have had each one a Succession of Teachers trained and authorized by their training to teach in their turn; and as long as this transmission of the light of Truth was a reality in any one country, it was in every sense a truly spiritual institution.

— *Op. cit.*, 1071

One of the most outstanding examples of this ancient transmission of authority is the succession of 'Living Buddhas' of Tibet, which up to the present

is a real one, but of a somewhat special type, and it is by no means what Occidental scholars mistake it to be or have frequently misunderstood it to be.

— *Op. cit.*, 1071

Furthermore, Dr. de Purucker tells us that in the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece,

Hierophants were drawn from one family, the Eumolpidae, living in Athens, and the Torchbearers were drawn from another family, the Lycomidae, living in Athens; and we have reason to believe that

the Mysteries of Samothrace, the seat of an older rite, and which were, like the Mysteries of Eleusis, a state-function, were also conducted in the same manner by the passing on of the tradition held sacred and incommunicable to outsiders; and the bond of union between the initiates of these so-called Mysteries, was considered indissoluble, impossible of dissolution, for death merely strengthened the tie.

— *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, 245

In Egypt, Persia, as well as Greece, we find this line of Occult Succession manifesting in another form. There were the thirteen or more Zoroasters whose esoteric contribution to Persia's history was the inspiration of that once mighty civilization. In Egypt Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the 'thrice greatest') stands out from the long Hermes line, whose writings and teachings were founded on the ancient Mystery-doctrine. In Greece again, we find the School of Orphic Mysteries, from whose halls of esoteric instruction came forth many who

bore the name of their Master Orpheus.*

What impelled these pupils to take the names of their Teachers? Why did they sign their writings, or give oral instruction, in the name of Orpheus, Hermes, or Zoroaster? Was it in a sense of occult plagiarism, or was it rather because of a compelling gratitude to the Teacher who had given them ALL; who had lighted the flame of

*The following remarks which appear in the May *Theosophical Forum*, for 1940, under the 'Question and Answer' section, throw illumination on the mystery of the Hermes, Orpheus, and Zoroaster series. Speaking of Zoroaster in particular, Dr. de Pu-rucker writes:

"The number of Zoroasters who have appeared from time to time is confusing, so long as we consider, and wrongly consider, these Zoroasters to be reimpodiments of one single ego, instead of different egos imbodying what we may interpret from the occult records the 'Zoroaster-spirit.' The truth of the matter is that in the scheme and terminology of Zoroastrianism, every Root-Race and sub-race,

esoteric fire in their hearts? Surely the latter, for whatever message they had of inspiration and light they deemed not theirs, but "his who sent me." "As we have received it from the Teacher, thus shall we pass it on." This system is distressing in the extreme to later historians who struggle always to attach correct labels to things, yet one cannot help love these old disciples for

and minor race of the latter, has its own Zoroaster or Zoroasters. The term Zoroaster means in Zoroastrianism very much what the term Buddha does in Buddhism, or Avatâra does in Brâhmanism. Thus there were great Zoroasters, and less Zoroasters — the qualificatory adjective depending upon the work done by each Zoroaster, and the sphere of things. Hence we can speak of the Zoroasters as being thirteen in number from one standpoint, or fourteen from another, or like the Manus in Brâhmanism, or like the Buddhas in Buddhism, we can multiply each of these by seven again, or even fourteen if we take in every little branchlet-race with its guiding Zoroaster-spirit."

that loyalty of the heart which banishes all thought of *individual* greatness.

The relationship between chela and Teacher is a most holy, most sacred bond of spiritual intimacy. Gratitude wells up from the disciple commensurate with the greatness of his heart: the little of heart feel only resentment when the warmth of guidance and protection is offered; but the large of heart burn with the flame of loving and inextinguishable gratitude. The links in this Golden Chain of Hermes of Spiritual Succession are joined by gratitude. As each link is coupled with its brother-link, heart is linked with heart, Teacher with pupil, pupil with Teacher: each Teacher a pupil to the one above, each pupil a Teacher to the one below: all chained by unbreakable links of love, fidelity, and gratitude, to the Teacher, to the Brotherhood, to the Esoteric Wisdom.

In the words of H. P. Blavatsky:

Like signal-fires of the olden times, which, lighted

and extinguished by turns upon one hill-top after another, conveyed intelligence along a whole stretch of country, so we see a long line of "wise" men from the beginning of history down to our own times communicating the word of wisdom to their direct successors. Passing from seer to seer, the "Word" flashes out like lightning, and while carrying off the initiator from human sight forever, brings the new initiate into view.

— *Isis Unveiled*, II, 571

This "long line of Wise men" is kept unbroken by two methods: (a) the actual reincarnations of Adepts into the Brotherhood, allowing for succession of teacher after teacher; and (b) the birth of the 'Initiate' out of the chela, the fruit of the Final Initiation (cf. ch. viii and ix). Thus the Lodge revitalizes its membership through the physical birth of Hierophants within the walls of the Sanctuary; and the spiritual birth of recruits from the ranks of the Mystery-chambers.* The "Passing of the Word"

*Cf. *The Esoteric Tradition*, 1070.

was the final rite of the Solar Initiation: without it no transmission of occult authority could be made from Initiator to chela.

Hence the line of esoteric authority and wisdom advances in serial order through grade after grade of chelaship to the World Teacher; from World-Teachers to high Mahâtmas; from high Mahâtmas to Buddhas; from Buddhas to Dhyâni-Buddhas; from Dhyâni-Buddhas to the Spiritual Guide and Protector of the Planetary Chain of Earth; from the Earth Planetary Spirit to the Heart of the Sun. Truly a line of luminous glory linking the humblest disciple of wisdom through direct lineal descent to the Solar Logos itself.

XII

THE MYSTERY-SCHOOLS OF TODAY

THE Brotherhood of Great Ones never desert men. Underneath and behind and within, there pulsates the Eternal Heart of Compassion. Withdrawal of the Mystery-Schools from public knowledge by no means indicates the withdrawal of the ancient support of the Masters. Mystery-centers are to be found today all over the world, writes H. P. Blavatsky, for

the Secret Association is still alive and as active as ever . . . still accessible to those "who know."

— *Isis Unveiled*, II, 100

Guarded with jealous care by their Protectors, the precise location of these Schools is undiscoverable except by the worthy, but

a veil of secrecy is not synonymous with non-existence.

Does the physical body remain alive and functional if the heart ceases to pump blood into the circulatory system, if the organs do not receive their vital flow from the heart?

Thus with the spiritual body of the Earth, whose heart is Śambhala, and from whose ventricles flows forth into specified organic centers the esoteric life-blood of the Brotherhood. Every Mystery-center is an organic focus, every man is a living cell, all owing allegiance in spiritual things to the central heart of Śambhala. Is it logical to infer that a heart beats in vain? Is it logical to infer that organs exist apart from the heart? Such conclusions are against reason or experience.

Three are the distributions, as it were, of this esoteric life-flow:

(1) Through the "same system of Mystery-Schools" the Exoteric and the Esoteric

Mysteries. The Exoteric or Less Mysteries are now “largely replaced by the different activities of the Theosophical Movement”; whereas the Esoteric or Greater Mysteries, because of the weight of matter blinding the world-consciousness, are at present far more carefully hid; though significantly enough, just because of the increased need for light and truth, they are “perhaps more numerous today than they have been for thousands of years.”*

This fact is of far-reaching importance for the Theosophist as for all seekers after Truth. Once the power and force of the Ancient Wisdom, the Theosophical teachings, seizes the citadel of the heart, one may receive not only genuine spiritual uplift through contact with the Exoteric Mysteries, but greater still, one actually places oneself in direct line of Inspiration from the Eso-

*Cf. *The Theosophical Forum*, Dec., 1939, 441.

teric Mysteries, the seats or organic centers of the Lodge in Tibet.

(2) Through organic foci of National compass. In the circulation of spiritual things all countries are in magnetic and sympathetic vibration with Śambhala. Every great country has its esoteric centers, in fact,

every single National Unit of the globe, has its own secret spiritual protectors, who as a body form a true esoteric center. We can call these the Occult Guardians of a people. Thus Britain has hers, Germany has hers, Russia has hers, likewise so with Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, China, India, Japan, the United States, Mexico, Canada, Brazil, etc., etc., etc. . . . a little country like the Netherlands might be the center of a secret Mystery-School whose ramifications and influence would extend over half of Europe. — *Op. cit.*

These National Occult Guardians never meddle in political affairs; their work is spiritual, intellectual, wholly benevolent, and indeed universal, and is a

silent guide to the intuitive minds of the different races. — *Op. cit.*

(3) The third channel of esoteric work is one of the most fascinating, yet least recognised: that of preserving the knowledge from age to age. As Dr. de Purucker expresses it:

There are actually groups whose sole business is forming occult centers of Initiation, preparation of students for esoteric work in the world, and for the safe-guarding of priceless treasures, the heirlooms of the human race, treasures both intellectual and material. — *Op. cit.*

The generations of Seers are not wasteful, nor are the grand systems of philosophy and religion lost in the darkness of receding ages. All that is of essential occult value is preserved in the secret archives of the planet. H. P. Blavatsky writes that there are

scattered throughout the world, a handful of thoughtful and solitary students, who pass their lives in

obscurity, far from the rumors of the world, studying the great problems of the physical and spiritual universes. They have their secret records in which are preserved the fruits of the scholastic labors of the long line of recluses whose successors they are. The knowledge of their early ancestors, the sages of India, Babylonia, Nineveh, and the imperial Thebes; the legends and traditions commented upon by the masters of Solon, Pythagoras, and Plato, in the marble halls of Heliopolis and Saïs; traditions which, in their days, already seemed to hardly glimmer from behind the foggy curtain of the past; — all this, and much more, is recorded on indestructible parchment, and passed with jealous care from one adept to another. — *Isis Unveiled*, I, 557-8

Some day worthy explorers of spiritual depths, will recover the lost keys, and mystery after mystery will be solved; temples will be unearthed; secrets of the initiatory chambers revealed; the occult history of the planet and races of men unfolded. When? At the appointed hour, an hour not fixed by whim or fancy, but brought into being as man's 'third eye' now "most carefully

hidden and inaccessible” opens once again in esoteric birth.

The chief of these occult centers has its home in Śambhala, with branches in Syria, Mexico, Egypt, the United States, and Europe, each one “subordinate to the mother-group of the Occult Hierarchy in Śambhala.”*

There is a wonderful description given by the Master Morya in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, of a secret ‘retreat’ wherein his Brother and Friend, K. H., enters the silence of further Initiation. Masters themselves, though vastly superior to us men, are still human beings, grandly human, but human nevertheless, and must undergo further testing, but such Initiations are of supernal character. Of the trial of his co-worker, Master M. writes:

Two days later when his [K. H.’s] “retreat”

*Cf. *The Theosophical Forum*, Dec., 1939.

was decided upon in parting he asked me: "Will you watch over my work, will you see it falls not into ruins?" [his work for the T. S.] I promised. What is there I would not have promised him at that hour! At a certain spot not to be mentioned to outsiders, there is a chasm spanned by a frail bridge of woven grasses and with a raging torrent beneath. The bravest members of your Alpine clubs would scarcely dare to venture the passage, for it hangs like a spider's web and *seems* to be rotten and impassable. Yet it is not; and he who dares the trial and succeeds — as he will if it is right that he should be permitted — comes into a gorge of surpassing beauty of scenery — to one of *our* places and to some of *our* people, of which and whom there is no note or minute among European geographers. At a stone's throw from the old Lamasery stands the old tower, within whose bosom have gestated generations of Bodhisattvas. It is there, where now rests your lifeless friend — my brother, the light of my soul, to whom I made a faithful promise to watch during his absence over *his* work. — *Mahatma Letters*, 219

There in the Sanctuaries of Tibet are
 "gestated generations of Bodhisattvas,"

whose esoteric purpose is the illumination of men. Through all the heart-ache and sorrow of the world, this strong network of occult vitality flows in unceasing rhythm to and fro along the invisible arteries and veins of the body-spiritual of our Earth. So profound is the Compassion of the Brotherhood, so untiring its labor, that not until the heart-beat of every man shall pulsate in rhythmic harmony with the Heart of Śambhala will they lay down their work.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE, by H. P. Blavatsky.

GOLDEN PRECEPTS OF ESOTERICISM, by G. de Purucker.

THE MASTERS AND THE PATH OF OCCULTISM, by G. de Purucker.

THE MAHATMA LETTERS TO A. P. SINNETT, particularly Section II: 'Probation and Chelaship.'

THE ESOTERIC TRADITION, by G. de Purucker. Ch. xxxv: 'The Esoteric Schools'; ch. xxxvi: 'Some Misunderstood Teachings of the Mysteries.' Consult Index under Mysteries, Occultism, Symbolology, Masters.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY, by G. de Purucker. Chs. xlvii and xlviii; also consult Index under Initiation, Mystery-Schools, etc.

THE SECRET DOCTRINE, by H. P. Blavatsky. Consult Index under Adepts, Initiates, Initiations, Mysteries, Occultism.

ISIS UNVEILED, by H. P. Blavatsky. Consult Index under Adepts, Secret Brotherhoods, Mysteries, Initiation, Symbolism.

THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY, by H. P. Blavatsky. Ch. i; also Index under Occultism, and Mysteries.

THE MYSTERIES OF EGYPT, by Lewis Spence.



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