

# The Monad in Evolution

---

From Annie Besant's *The Seven Principles of Man...*

Perhaps a slightly more definite conception of Atmâ-Buddhi may be obtained by the student, if he considers its work in evolution as the Monad. Now Atmâ-Buddhi is identical with the universal Over-soul, "itself an aspect of the Unknown Root", the One Existence.

## **The Monad is the mainspring of all Evolution**

When manifestation begins the Monad is 'thrown downwards into matter', to propel forward and force evolution (SD2, 109); it is the mainspring, so to speak, of all evolution, the impelling force at the root of all things.

## **All the principles are "variously differentiated aspects" of Atmâ**

All the principles we have been studying are mere "variously differentiated aspects" of Atmâ, the One Reality manifesting in our universe; it is in every atom, "the root of every atom individually and of every form collectively", and all the principles are fundamentally Atmâ on different planes.

## **Stages of Evolution**

The stages of its evolution are very clearly laid down in *Five Years of Theosophy*, pages 273 et seq<sup>1</sup>. There we are shown how it passes through the stages termed elemental, "nascent centres of forces", and reaches the mineral stage; from this it passes up through vegetable, animal, to man, vivifying every form. As we are taught in the Secret Doctrine:

"The well-known Kabbalistic aphorism runs:

*'A stone becomes a plant; the plant a beast; the beast, a man; the man, a spirit; and the spirit, a god.'*

The 'spark' animates all the kingdoms in turn before it enters into and informs divine man, between whom and his predecessor, animal man, there is all the difference in the world ... The Monad (or Jîva) ... is first of all, shot down by the law of evolution into the lowest form of matter – the mineral. After a sevenfold gyration<sup>2</sup> incased in the stone, or that which will become mineral and stone in the Fourth Round, it creeps out of it, say as a lichen<sup>3</sup>. Passing thence, through all the forms of vegetable matter, into what is termed animal matter, it has now reached the point in which it has become the germ, so to speak, of the animal, that will become the physical man" (SD1, 246).

---

<sup>1</sup> et seq. - (et seek) n. abbreviation for the Latin phrase *et sequentes* meaning "and the following."

<sup>2</sup> Seven Rounds

<sup>3</sup> lichen (lî'kən) a fungus that grows symbiotically with algae, resulting in a composite organism that characteristically forms a crust like or branching growth on rocks or tree trunks.

### **Stages of Evolution - from *Five Years of Theosophy*<sup>4</sup>**

“There are seven kingdoms. The first group comprises three degrees of elementals, or nascent<sup>5</sup> centres of forces—from the first stage of the differentiation of (from) Mulaprakriti<sup>6</sup> to its third degree—i.e., from full unconsciousness to semi-perception; the second or higher group embraces the kingdoms from vegetable to man; the mineral kingdom thus forming the central or turning-point in the degrees of the “Monadic Essence”—considered as an Evolving Energy. Three stages on the elemental side (*sub-physical*); the mineral kingdom; three stages in the objective physical<sup>7</sup> side—these are the (*first*) seven links of the evolutionary chain. A descent of spirit into matter, equivalent to an ascent in physical evolution; a re-ascent from the deepest depths of materiality (the mineral) towards its *status quo ante*, with a corresponding dissipation of concrete organisms up to Nirvana—the vanishing point of differentiated matter.

The term “monad” applies to the latent life in the mineral as much as it does to the life in the vegetable and the animal...Physically or constitutionally the mineral monad differs, of course, from that of the human monad, which is neither physical, nor can its constitution be rendered by chemical symbols and elements. In short, the mineral monad is one—the higher animal and human monads are countless.

(Section: “Mr. Sinnett’s “Esoteric Buddhism.” Question V.—About The Mineral Monad. p.273)

### **The Monad Vivifies Everything - There is Nothing Inorganic**

It is the Monad, Âtma-Buddhi, that thus vivifies every part and kingdom of nature, making all instinct with life and consciousness, one throbbing whole.

“Occultism does not accept anything inorganic in the Kosmos. The expression employed by science, ‘inorganic substance,’ means simply that the latent life, slumbering in the molecules of so-called ‘inert matter,’ is incognisable. All is life and every atom of even mineral dust is a life, though beyond our comprehension and perception, because it is outside the range of the laws known to those who reject Occultism.”(SD1, 248)

And again: “Everything in the universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is conscious: *i.e.*, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. We men must remember that simply because *we* do not perceive any signs of consciousness, which we can recognise, say in stones, we have no right to say that *no consciousness exists there*. There is no such thing as either ‘dead’ or ‘blind’ matter, as there is no ‘blind’ or ‘unconscious’ law” (SD1, 274)

---

<sup>4</sup>*Five Years of Theosophy* –Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historic and Scientific Essays selected from “The Theosophist.” Written by various authors and edited by George Robert Snow Mead; quoted in SD1, 176.

<sup>5</sup>nascent - coming into existence; starting to grow or develop

<sup>6</sup> Mulaprakriti (Sanskrit) [from *mūla* root + *prakriti* nature] Root-nature; undifferentiated cosmic substance in its highest form, the abstract substance or essence of what later through various differentiations become the prakritis, the various forms of matter, concrete or sublimate.

<sup>7</sup> “Physical” here means differentiated for cosmical purposes and work.

### **All Nature Pulses with Life**

How many of the great poets, with the sublime intuition of genius, have sensed this great truth! To them all nature pulses with life; they see life and love everywhere, in suns and planets as in the grains of dust, in rustling leaves and opening blossoms, in dancing gnats and gliding snakes. Each form manifests as much of the One Life as it is capable of expressing, and what is man that he should despise the more limited manifestations, when he compares himself as a life-expression, not with the forms below him, but with the possibilities of expression that soar above him in infinite heights of being, which he can estimate still less than the stone can estimate him?

### **Âtma-Buddhi is the Driving Force at the Center of Evolution**

The student will readily see that we must regard this force at the centre of evolution as essentially one. There is but one Âtma-Buddhi in our universe, the universal Soul, everywhere present, immanent<sup>8</sup> in all, the One Supreme Energy whereof all varying energies or forces are only differing forms. As the sunbeam is light or heat or electricity according to its conditioning environment, so is Âtma all-energy, differentiating on different planes.

“As an abstraction, we will call it the One Life; as an objective and evident reality, we speak of a septenary scale of manifestation, which begins at the upper rung with the one unknowable causality, and ends as Omnipresent Mind and Life immanent in every atom of matter” (SD1, 139).

### **Evolutionary Course of the Monad as Outlined in the Secret Doctrine**

Its evolutionary course is very plainly outlined in a quotation given in the *Secret Doctrine*, and as students are very often puzzled over this unity of the Monad, I subjoin<sup>9</sup> the statement. The subject is difficult, but it could not, I think, be more clearly put than it is in these sentences:

“Now the monadic or cosmic essence (if such a term be permitted) in the mineral, vegetable, and animal, though the same throughout the series of cycles from the lowest elemental up to the Deva kingdom, yet differs in the scale of progression.

---

<sup>8</sup> immanent - existing or remaining within; inherent

<sup>9</sup> Subjoin - to add as a supplement or appendix

It would be very misleading to imagine a Monad as a separate entity trailing its slow way in a distinct path through the lower kingdoms, and after incalculable series of transformations flowering into a human being; in short, that the Monad of a Humboldt<sup>10</sup> dates back to the Monad of an atom of hornblende<sup>11</sup>.

Instead of saying a 'Mineral Monad,' the more correct phraseology in physical science, which differentiates every atom, would of course have been to call it '*the Monad manifesting in that form of Prakriti called the mineral kingdom.*'

The atom, as represented in the ordinary scientific hypothesis, *is not* a particle of something, animated by a psychic something, destined after aeons to blossom as a man. But *it is* a concrete manifestation of the universal energy which itself has not yet become individualised: a sequential manifestation of the one universal Monad.

The ocean of matter does not divide into its potential and constituent drops until the sweep of the life-impulse reaches the stage of man-birth. The tendency towards segregation into individual Monads is gradual, and in the higher animals comes almost to the point.

The Peripatetics<sup>12</sup> applied the word Monad to the whole Kosmos in the pantheistic sense; and the Occultists, while accepting this thought for convenience sake, distinguish the progressive stages of the evolution of the Concrete from the Abstract by terms of which the 'mineral, vegetable, animal, Monad,' etc., are examples *{is one}*.

The term merely means that the tidal wave of spiritual evolution is passing through that arc of its circuit. The 'Monadic Essence' begins imperfectly to differentiate towards individual consciousness in the vegetable kingdom. As the Monads are un-compounded<sup>13</sup> things, as correctly defined by Leibnitz<sup>14</sup>, it is the spiritual essence which vivifies them in their degrees of differentiation, which properly constitutes the Monad – not the atomic aggregation, which is only the vehicle and the substance through which thrill the lower and the higher degrees of intelligence" (SD1, 178).

---

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Christian Karl Ferdinand von **Humboldt** (22 June 1767 – 8 April 1835) was a German (Prussian) philosopher, government functionary, diplomat, and founder of the University of Berlin, which was named after him in 1949 and also his younger brother, Alexander von Humboldt, (September 14, 1769 – May 6, 1859) was a German (Prussian) geographer, naturalist and explorer,

<sup>11</sup> **Hornblende** is a complex inosilicate (*interlocking chains of silicates*) series of minerals. Hornblende is an isomorphous (*crystals are described as isomorphous if they are closely similar in shape.*) mixture of three molecules; a calcium-iron-magnesium silicate, an aluminium-iron-magnesium silicate, and an iron-magnesium silicate.

<sup>12</sup> **Peripatetics** [from Greek *peri* about + *patein* to pace, walk] The followers of Aristotle (384-322 BC), either because he paced up and down when he lectured as commonly supposed, or from the *peripatos* or covered walk of the Lyceum. The Peripatetic school was a school of philosophy in Ancient Greece.

<sup>13</sup> **Un-compounded** – not consisting of two or more substances, ingredients, elements, or parts

<sup>14</sup> **Gottfried Leibniz**, German philosopher and polymath, 1646-1716.

### **Monad is one all the universe over – like electricity**

The student who reads and weighs this passage will, at the cost of a little present trouble, save himself from much confusion in days to come. Let him first realize clearly that the Monad – “the spiritual essence” to which alone in strict accuracy the term Monad should be applied – is one all the universe over, that Âtma-Buddhi is not his, nor mine, nor the property of anybody in particular, but the spiritual essence energizing in all. So is electricity one all the world over; though it may be active in his machine or in mine, neither he nor I can call it distinctly our electricity.

### **What are “Individualized” Monads?**

But – and here arises the confusion – when Âtma-Buddhi energizes in man, in whom Manas is active as an individualizing force, it is often spoken of as though the “atomic aggregation” were a separate Monad, and then we have “Monads,” as in the above passage. This loose way of using the word *will not* lead to error if the student will remember that the individualizing process *is not on the spiritual plane*, but Âtma-Buddhi *as seen through Manas* seems to share in the individuality of the latter. So if you hold pieces of variously coloured glass in your hand you may see through them a red sun, a blue sun, a yellow sun, and so on. None the less there is only the one sun shining down upon you, altered by the media through which you look at it. So we often meet the phrase “human Monads”; it should be “*the Monad manifesting in the human kingdom*”; but this somewhat pedantic accuracy would be likely only to puzzle a large number of people, and the looser popular phrase will not mislead when the principle of the unity on the spiritual plane is grasped, any more than we mislead by speaking of the rising of the sun.

“The Spiritual Monad is one, universal, boundless, and impartite<sup>15</sup>, whose rays, nevertheless, form what we, in our ignorance, call the ‘ individual Monads’ of men” (SD1, 177).

Very beautifully and poetically is this unity in diversity put in one of the Occult Catechisms in which the Guru questions the Chela:-

*“Lift thy head, O Lanoo; dost thou see one or countless lights above thee, burning in the dark midnight sky?”*

*“I sense one Flame, O Gurudeva; I see countless undetached sparks burning in it.”*

*“Thou sayest well. And now look around and into thyself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in any wise from the light that shines in thy brother-men?”*

*“It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, ‘thy soul’ and ‘my soul’ ” (SD1, 120).*

---

<sup>15</sup> impartite - undivided

### **The Seven Principles Came Together with the help of Manas**

There ought not to be any serious difficulty now in grasping the stages of human evolution; the Monad, which has been working its way as we have seen, reaches the point at which the human form can be built up on earth; an etheric body and its physical counterpart are then developed, Prâna specialized from the great ocean of life, and Kâma evolved, all these principles, the lower quaternary, being brooded over by the Monad, energized by it, impelled by it, forced onward by it towards continually increasing perfection of form and capacity for manifesting the higher energies in Nature. This was animal or physical man, evolved through two and a half Races. But the Monad and the lower quaternary could not come into sufficiently close relation with each other; a link was yet wanting.

“The Double Dragon [the Monad] has no hold upon the mere form. It is like the breeze where there is no tree or branch to receive and harbour it. It cannot affect the form where there is no agent of transmission [Manas, “Mind”], and the form knows it not” – (SD2, 57).

Then, at the middle point just reached, in the middle, that is, of the Third race, the lower Mânasaputra stepped in to inhabit the dwellings thus prepared for them, and to form the bridge between animal man and the Spirit, between the evolved quaternary and the brooding Âtma-Buddhi, to begin the long cycle of reincarnation which is to issue in the perfect man.

### **The Door Closes**

The “monadic inflow,” or the evolution of the Monad, from the animal into the human kingdom, continued through the Third Race on to the middle of the Fourth, the human population thus continually receiving fresh recruits, the birth of souls thus continuing through the second half of the Third race and the first half of the Fourth. After this, the “central turning point”<sup>16</sup> of the cycle of evolution, “no more Monads can enter the human kingdom. The door is closed for this cycle” (SD1, 182).

Since then reincarnation has been the method of evolution, this individual reincarnation of the immortal Thinker in conjunction with Âtma-Buddhi replacing the collective indwelling of Âtma-Buddhi in lower forms of matter.

---

<sup>16</sup> central turning-point i.e., after the middle point of the Fourth Race in the Fourth Round on our Globe

### **No Increase in the Number of Reincarnating Egos**

According to Theosophical teachings, humanity has now reached the Fifth Race, and we are in the fifth sub-race thereof, mankind on this globe in the present stage having before it the completion of the Fifth race, and the rise, maturity and decay of the Sixth and Seventh Races. But during all the ages necessary for this evolution, there is no increase in the total number of reincarnating Egos; only a small proportion of these are reincarnated at any special time on our globe, so that the population may ebb and flow within very wide limits, and it will have been noticed that there is a rush of birth after a local depopulation has been caused by exceptional mortality. There is room and to spare for all such fluctuations, having in view the difference between the total number of reincarnating Egos and the number actually incarnated at a given period.

### **Bibliography**

Besant, Annie. *The Seven Principles of Man*. Adyar, Chennai, India; Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 2010

Online Edition:

[http://www.anandgholap.net/Seven Principles Of Man-AB.htm](http://www.anandgholap.net/Seven_Principles_Of_Man-AB.htm)

Blavatsky, H.P. *The Secret Doctrine*, Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Edition, 1993

Online Edition

<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sd/sd-hp.htm>