

Meditating on “The Secret Doctrine”

By Pablo Sender from *The Theosophist*, July 2006

In an earlier article (*The Theosophist*, May 2006) we considered the importance of a meditative study of universals and also the Three Fundamental Propositions of The Secret Doctrine (SD) as a broad guideline for spiritual practice. Here we will focus on the meditative process, using the First Proposition and Stanza I of the First Volume of the SD as the foundation. H.P. Blavatsky (HPB) said that the seven Stanzas of Dzyan in this volume are an abstract formula which can be applied to the manifestation of the Universe.¹

Considering that the First Fundamental Proposition is a summary of these Stanzas, and keeping in mind the hermetic axiom ‘as above, so below’, we will take this Proposition as a formula for the manifestation of the mind, and then we will apply it to the meditative process. Finally, we will examine some important hints given in the First Stanza as to the original nature of Mind.

But we have to realize that these teachings tend to move the mind towards a reality beyond concepts. Thus, the problem the student faces initially is the difficulty of understanding, at least at the intellectual level, the statements related to transcendental or essential realities, which can hardly be conveyed in words. Consequently, to start with, we will try to clarify briefly the main concepts expressed in the First Proposition.

¹ *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, 2003, TPH Adyar, 3-vol. ed., pp. 20-1.

The Process of Manifestation

This Proposition establishes that, whether the Cosmos is manifested or not, there is an Absolute Reality called Parabrahman, the Rootless Root. This Reality is Omnipresent, Eternal, Immutable, and has no attributes. Indeed, Parabrahman is not a Being but the ‘Be-ness’, that which makes possible the existence of beings. But although the Absolute does not have qualities, we can say It has two aspects, as described in the Proem:

This “Be-ness” is symbolized in the Secret Doctrine under two aspects. On the one hand, absolute abstract Space, representing bare subjectivity, the one thing which no human mind can either exclude from any conception, or conceive of by itself. On the other, absolute Abstract Motion representing Unconditioned Consciousness.²

Absolute abstract Space is called Mūlaprakṛiti, the Precosmic Root-Substance, which is coeternal with Parabrahman. HPB says that its only representation in this plane is Space—a very illuminating concept from a psycho-spiritual point of view, as we saw in the article mentioned above. But also from a metaphysical viewpoint it brings an important understanding, because the Absolute, like space, is neither affected nor modified by conditioned (manifested) things: ‘In the all-pervading space there exist clouds, stars, planets, dust-storms, and so on, but it [space] is not touched by any of them’ says a Vedāntic scripture.³ However, this representation is necessarily limited to describing absolute abstract Space, because it is not an empty space, as we may imagine: It is ‘neither a “limitless void”, nor a “conditioned fullness”, but both’.⁴ This abstract feminine principle, Mūlaprakṛiti, will give origin to the objective side of the manifested Cosmos, that is to say, all the different states of matter (planes) and the vehicles of consciousness (bodies). Its symbol is a white circle.

The Second aspect of Parabrahman is absolute abstract Movement. It is called the First Logos or Brahman (neuter) and is an abstract male aspect, because it is the Precosmic Ideation. The First Logos is the Germ of the Universal Mind, which will give origin to the subjective side of manifestation, that is, to every kind of consciousness. Being an aspect of the Absolute, it is also eternal, but it is latent or active periodically. When active, it is called the First Cause of the manifested Universe, and is symbolized by a point within a circle.

These three elements constitute the first metaphysical unmanifested Triad, which, nevertheless, is a Unity.

But once the unmanifested Logos becomes active, the process of differentiation begins, and follows the Second Logos stage, called Ālaya, the Universal Over-Soul, which is semi-manifested because it is a link between both states. At this point a subjective polarization in the Unity takes place. Although it is not an actual duality, it will give origin to all dualities in the manifested Cosmos (Spirit–Matter, Self–No Self, Subject–Object, Masculine–Feminine, Positive–Negative, and so on). Its symbol is a circle with a diameter.

² Ibid., p. 14.

³ Eleventh Book of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.

⁴ SD, I, p. 8.

And then comes the Third Logos, with which manifestation begins. It is called Brahmā, the Creator, or Mahat, the Universal Mind, the guiding intelligence in Evolution. At this stage duality takes place, and also a relationship between both poles arises, ‘something’ which links spirit to matter, subject to object:

This something . . . is called by the occultists Fohat. It is the ‘bridge’ by which the ‘Ideas’ existing in the ‘Divine Thought’ are impressed on Cosmic substance as the ‘Laws of Nature’. Fohat is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the ‘Thought Divine’ transmitted and made manifest through the Dhyāni Chohans, the Architects of the visible World.⁵

The Third Logos then, is the first manifested Triad: Spirit-Fohat-Matter, Knower-Knowledge-Known, and so on, symbolized by a cross within a circle. At this point it may be useful to summarize:

Thus from Spirit, or Cosmic Ideation, comes our consciousness; from Cosmic Substance the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualized and attains to self — or reflective— consciousness; while Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life.⁶

Hereafter, diversity takes place through a vast Hierarchy of Beings (Architects, Watchers, Builders, Planetary Spirits, and so forth) who build the Universe. Matter becomes grosser and grosser while forming the Lower Cosmic Planes, and consciousness becomes more and more conditioned. This stage of activity is represented by the svastika.

Reversing the Process of Manifestation

So far, we have given a general overview of the manifestation processes. Now, we are in a position to examine the stages described above from a psychological point of view. In our normal state of consciousness, we are involved with a wide variety of psychological processes such as emotions, thoughts, memories, and longings. This state is represented by the svastika, the stage of diversity. But if we begin to examine ourselves, we will see behind all that movement there are just three elements:

- (1.) The knower, which is the subject, the self, what we call ‘I’;
- (2.) the known, the object, the non-self, all that is external; and
- (3.) knowledge, the relationship between both, the reactions that arise in ‘me’ while in contact with the ‘other’.

⁵ SD, I, p. 16.

⁶ SD, I, p. 16.

This triad represents the Third Logos. Through proper meditation, observing calmly and attentively this diversity of processes within us, we can reach a point of non-reaction, of just awareness of all that is happening. It requires that we allow all thoughts, sensations, and so on, to arise and disappear by themselves, without interfering, just watching. And then we have raised ourselves above the plane of relationship between self and non-self. However, although there is no reaction, we are observing from a centre, that is, there still is a sense of ‘I am aware of the psychological movement’, ‘the movement and me are different’. So, this is a state of duality, the Second Logos stage.

If we remain silent, quiet, in that condition, it is possible to leave behind the sense of duality. Then ‘the observer is the observed’, as J. Krishnamurti (JK) frequently said. This is a state of unity, symbolized in the First Logos. And now the door is open to reach a qualitatively different kind of consciousness, represented by Parabrahman, the Absolute beyond the reach of thought. As we can see, the process described is the principle of Rāja Yoga; we have to reverse within us the course of manifestation. This is represented by many mystical teachings, for example, when in *The Voice of the Silence* we read ‘The rose must re-become the bud born of its parent stem’ (v. 77) or ‘the drop returneth whence it came’ (v. 181).

Meditating on the First Stanza of Cosmogogenesis

The First Stanza of Cosmogogenesis describes the Absolute, the original state from which all creative forces appear. As the human being is the mirror of the Cosmos, Parabrahman can be seen as a Macrocosmic description of that state which corresponds to our mental consciousness when it is at its highest point, in its original nature. We must remember what HPB said, that when we reach the highest degree possible on a plane (the seventh subplane, the homogeneous one), the consciousness can pass to the immediately superior:

The seventh [degree] bridges across from one plane to another. The last is the idea, the privation of matter, and carries you to the next plane. The highest of one plane touches the lowest of the next.⁷

This is an important subject, because it is the very foundation of certain practical theosophical teachings, but it is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, if we bear in mind this fact while working on what follows, this Stanza can be seen as a description of that state of universality where the self is silent and the Other may make contact. Of course, it is not through the ordinary action of our brain-consciousness (kāma-manas) that we can realize that state, but if we reflect deeply about what the Stanza says and work on it, then ‘the fire of knowledge burns up all action on the plane of illusion’⁸ and we can have an intimation from the plane of reality.

⁷ SD, V, 1962, TPH Adyar, 6-vol. ed.

⁸ SD, I, 2003, p. 87.

I will not present the *śloka*-s of this Stanza in a literal form, but the concept will be conveyed in a way useful for our present purpose. Besides, we should try to apply the statements as referring to Man, instead of to the Macrocosms. Thus, in the Original state of Mind:

I.1. The only presence was the (infinite) Space: This is the basic Reality, as we have already seen. Therefore, our direction is towards non-identification with the inner movement but with that which encloses all psychological activity. Our consciousness is habituated to perceiving everything from this restricted point which is the personality, but here we have to expand our mind to the infinite and rest in a sense of non-limitation to this particular point in space.

I.2. Time was not; it lay in the infinite duration: In her comments, HPB says that ‘time is only an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness’ or as JK would say: ‘Time belongs to the brain’ and ‘time is based on thought’. Therefore, when we dwell on being all Space, we embrace every movement. There is no perception of something as ‘internal’ or ‘external’. All is within: the brain-born activity as well as Nature’s sounds. Slowly we merge into the state of a quiet, full presence, without the sense of time.

I.3. Mind was not; there was no one to contain it and hence to manifest it: From a microcosmic point of view, ‘mind’ here means our lower mind, *kāma-manas*. Thought cannot conceive (and, therefore, functions) in a state of Infinity (*śloka* I.1) and Eternity (*śloka* I.2). As JK has said: ‘The thinker is the thought. There is no thinker separate from thought.’⁹ In this state the brain consciousness and its product, the self, ceases.

I.4. The way to bliss and the cause of misery were not, for there was no one to produce and get ensnared by them: The self is limited, and is the source of separateness from which attractions and repulsions arise. Therefore, when this illusory center is not, there is neither struggle to be happy nor possibility of sorrow. But then, what is there?

I.5. Darkness alone filled the boundless all.

I.6. All is immersed in Absolute Non-Being. Naught was: When there is no ‘self’, from the standpoint of the lower consciousness, all is in darkness. But is this state where ‘naught was’ merely an annihilation, an unconscious state like when we are knocked out? The following dialogue between JK and Dr David Bohm gives us a hint:

JK: Consciousness is made up of all that it has remembered: beliefs, dogmas, rituals, fears, pleasures, sorrow.

DB: Yes. Now if all that were absent, would there be no consciousness?

JK: Not as we know it.

DB: But there would still be a kind of consciousness?

JK: A totally different kind.¹⁰

⁹ *The Future of Humanity*, First Conversation, Brockwood Park, 11 June 1983.

¹⁰ *Idem*.

I.7. The causes of existence had been done away with, all rested in eternal nonbeing — the one being.

I.8. Alone the one form of existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless throughout that All-Presence which is sensed by the opened eye of the purified soul: In the previous quote JK said that when the self is absent there remains ‘a totally different kind of consciousness’. Maybe he is referring to that ‘non-being’, the One being. But we should note that, as the Stanza asserts, this state is ‘causeless’, and appears when ‘the causes of (personal) existence are done away’ with. How is this done? In Vedānta philosophy it is said that Ātman (the One Being) is like the sun covered by the clouds (the personal self). When the wind (spiritual perception) removes the clouds, the sun shines. But the sun was not produced by the wind; it acted over the clouds, while the sun itself remains always the same, untouched. Therefore, in order to awaken spiritual consciousness (sunlight) nothing is to be added, only removed. Spiritual Consciousness is not produced by any conditioned movement, but arises when the self is absent. As JK said:

To put it very simply, when the self is not, there is beauty, silence, space; then that intelligence, which is born of compassion, operates through the brain. It is very simple.¹¹

So, this state comes freely, spontaneously. However, it does not mean that it will appear magically, without requiring any work from us. All spiritual discipline aims to ‘prepare the ground’ where that state may come into existence, and without the necessary work it is almost impossible for this selfless awareness to appear. JK gave as an example that if you open the window, the breeze may enter. You cannot produce the breeze, you can only keep the window open; but if you do not open the window, then the breeze will never enter.

And what will keep the window open? The śloka refers to ‘that all-presence which is sensed by the opened eye of the purified soul’. The ‘purified soul’ could represent that alertness, with a non-centred presence where the Intuition or spiritual perception can manifest:

DB: Now if the brain is silent, if it is not thinking of a problem, then still the space is limited, but it is open to

JK: . . . to the other.

DB: Would you say that, through attention, or in attention, the mind is contacting the brain? . . . Does it (intelligence) operate through attention?

JK: Of course.

DB: So attention seems to be the contact.

JK: Naturally. We said too that attention can only be, when the self is not.¹²

¹¹ *The Future of Humanity*, Second Conversation, Brockwood Park, 20 June 1983.

¹² *Idem*.

I.9. Then, all were in the absolute reality: Finally, mental consciousness reaches the absolute reality of its own level. And from that state, creative powers can arise, modifying the very structure of the brain to give form to a more suitable vehicle for this new and different kind of energy and consciousness. As JK has it:

So can the brain, with all its cells conditioned, can those cells radically change? . . . We are saying that they can, through insight; insight being out of time, . . . It has nothing to do with any time and thought.¹³

This could be one of the reasons why HPB said, about working with the SD:

Ordinary intellectual activity moves on well-beaten paths in the brain, and does not compel sudden adjustments and destructions in its substance. But this new kind of mental effort calls for something very different—the carving out of ‘new brain paths’, the ranking in different order of the little brain lives.¹⁴

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¹³ *The Future of Humanity*, First Conversation.

¹⁴ Robert Bowen, *Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy*, TPH Adyar, pp. 12-13.