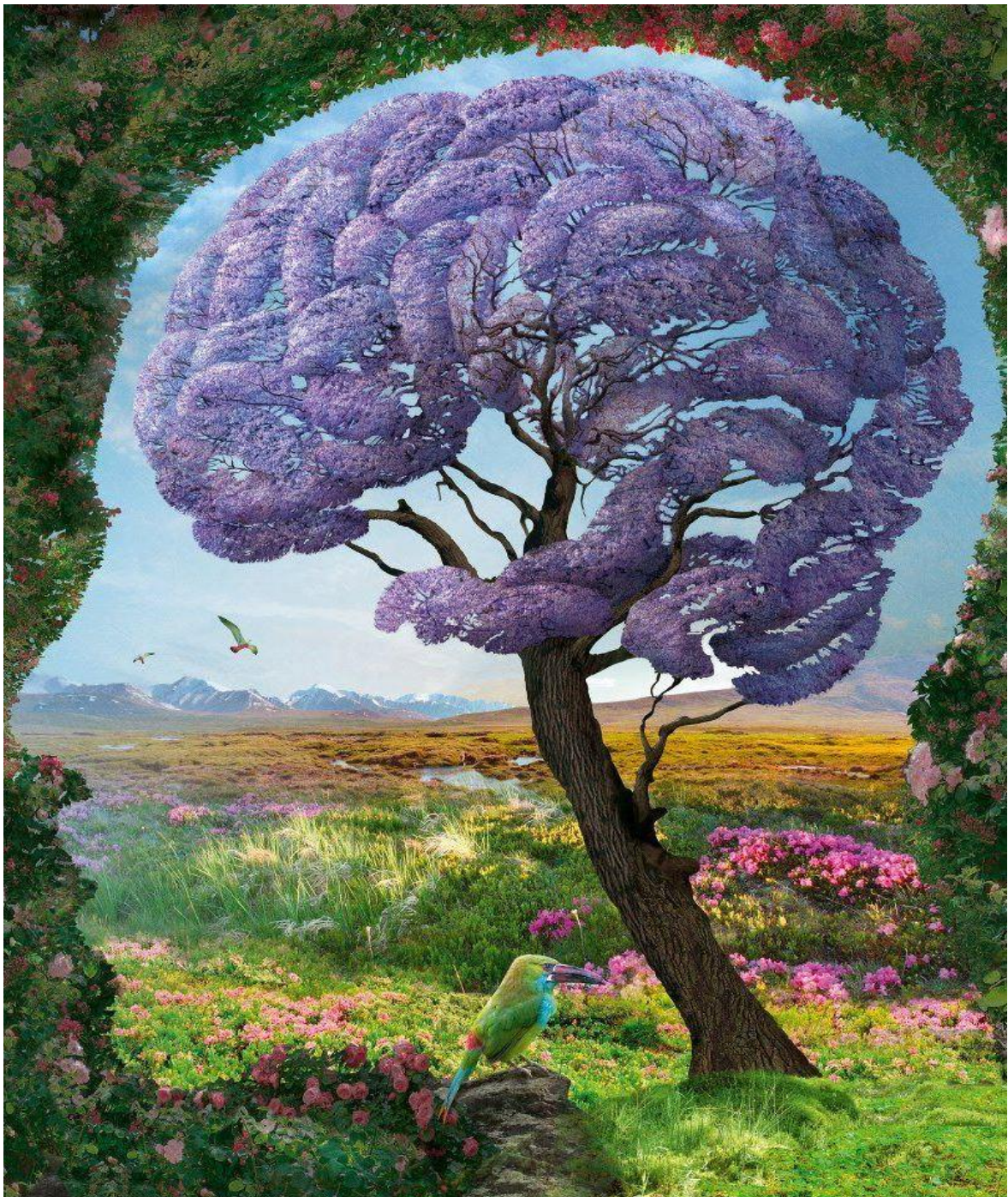


*Madame Blavatsky on
whether the Rishis exist today*



BLAVATSKY SPEAKS SERIES
ON WHETHER THE RISHIS EXIST TODAY

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Following the example of the Parsī Gentleman whose letter you published in *The Theosophist* of January, 1882, I am induced to inquire if there are Hindu Mahātmas among the Himalayan BROTHERS. By the term Hindu, I mean a believer in *Vedas* and the Gods they describe. If there are none, will any Brother of the 1st Section¹ be so kind as to enlighten the Hindu Community in general and the Hindu Theosophists in particular whether any Hindu Rishis of old still exist in flesh and blood? The adept Himalayan BROTHERS having explored the unseen universe must necessarily know the Rishis if they exist now. Tradition says that particularly the following seven are immortal, at least for the present kalpa.

Aśvatthama, Bali, Vyāsa, Hanuman, Vibhīshana, Kripa, Paraśurāma.

A HINDU THEOSOPHIST

¹ No chela need answer this, except the editor. — A.H.T.

IN REPLY TO THE FIRST QUESTION we are happy to inform our correspondent that there are Mahātmas among the Himalayan Brothers who are Hindus — *i.e.*, born of Hindu and Brahmin parents and who recognize the *esoteric* meaning of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. They agree with Krishna, Buddha, Śuka, Gaudapāda, and Śamkarāchārya in considering that the *Karma-kanda* of the *Vedas* is of no importance whatsoever so far as man’s spiritual progress is concerned. Our questioner will do well to remember in this connection Krishna’s celebrated advice to Arjuna. “The subject-matter of the *Vedas* is related to the three Gunas; oh Arjuna, divest thyself of these gunas.” Śamkarāchārya’s uncompromising attitude towards *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* is too well known to require any special mention here.¹

Although the Himalayan Brothers admit the esoteric meaning of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, they refuse to recognize as Gods the powers and other spiritual entities mentioned in the *Vedas*. The language used in the *Vedas* is allegorical and this fact has been fully recognized by some of the greatest Indian Philosophers. Our correspondent will have to prove that the *Vedas* really “describe Gods” as they exist, before he can fairly ask us to declare whether our Masters believe in such gods. We very much doubt if our correspondent is really prepared to contend seriously that *Agni* has four horns, three legs, two heads, five hands and seven tongues, as he is stated to possess in the *Vedas*; or that Indra committed adultery with Gautama’s wife. We beg to refer our learned correspondent to Kullūka-Bhatta’s² explanation of the latter myth (and it is a mere myth in his opinion) and Patañjali’s remarks on the profound esoteric significance of the four horns of *Agni*, in support of our assertion that the *Vedas* do not in reality describe any gods as our questioner has supposed.

In reply to the second question we are not prepared to say that “any Hindu Rishis of old still exist in flesh and blood” although we have our own reasons to believe that some of the great Hindu Adepts of ancient times have been and are reincarnating themselves occasionally in Tibet and Tartary; nor is it at all easy for us to understand how it can ever reasonably be expected that our Himalayan Brothers should discover Hindu Rishis “in flesh and blood” in their explorations in the “Unseen Universe,” since astral bodies are not usually made up of those earthly materials.

The tradition alluded to by our correspondent is not literally true; then, what connection is there between the seven personages named and the Hindu Rishis? Though we are not called upon to give an explanation of the tradition in question from our own standpoint, we shall give a few hints which may enable our readers to ascertain its real significance from what is contained in *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*.

¹ [Cf. “It is well-known to almost every Hindu that the followers of *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* (Kumārila commented on the *Sūtras*) were the greatest and the bitterest opponents of Śamkara and his doctrine, and Mr. Barth seems to be altogether ignorant of the nature of Kumārila’s views and *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* and the scope and aim of Śamkara’s Vedāntic philosophy. It is impossible to say what evidence the author has for asserting that the great reaction against the Buddhists commenced in the 7th and 8th centuries and that Śamkara was instrumental in originating it.” *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (SAMKARĀCHĀRYA’S DATE AND DOCTRINE) V, p. 181. See this remarkable excerpt into context under the title “Shankara was a contemporary of Patanjali and his chela,” in our *Buddhas and Initiates Series*. — ED. PHIL.]

² [In the same volume of *The Theosophist*, p. 202, a correspondent points out that this is a printer’s error for Kumārila Bhatta who lived some centuries ago in Southern India. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

- *Aśvatthama* has gained an *immortality of infamy*.
- *Paraśurāma*'s cruelty made him immortal but he is not supposed to live in flesh and blood now; he is generally stated to have some sort of existence in fire though not necessarily in what a Christian would call "hell."
- *Bali* is not an individual properly speaking. The principle denoted by the name will be known when the esoteric meaning of *Trivikrama Avatāra* is better comprehended.
- *Vyāsa* is *immortal in his incarnations*. Let our respected Brother count how many *Vyāsas* there have been from first to last.
- *Hanuman* was neither a human being nor a monkey: it is one of the powers of the 7th principle of man (*Rāma*).
- *Vibhīshana*. Not a *Rākshasa* really but the personification of *Sattvaguna* which is immortal.
- *Kripa*'s association with *Aśvatthama* will explain the nature of his immortality.

