

Allegories and myths underlying Puranic Cosmology



Ancient Jewels of Divine Wisdom

It is the cow that gives the milk of wisdom, the cow that produces the jewels of wisdom. Its tail is the golden thread of divine knowledge that connects self with his higher counterpart.

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[Professor Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, F.T.S., on receiving an invitation to the Oriental Congress at Stockholm, in 1889, wrote a scholarly essay dealing with Philology versus Symbology in the Purānas. He sent it in, together with copies of his books, to the General Secretary of the Congress. Much later, he was told that his essay had been "mis-laid." H.P. Blavatsky rejoices in being able to present its text to the readers of *Lucifer*, "in the service of fair play." She appends a number of footnotes to various passages in this essay.]

[Concerning Trivikrama and the demon Bali . . .]

As the Purānic myths may be unfamiliar to many of our readers, we have thought it advisable to add one or two notes of explanation.

The story of Vishnu and his *Trivikrama* or "three strides" and the "demon" Bali runs as follows: The "demon" Bali, curiously enough, is said to have been an exceedingly good and virtuous Daitya King, who defeated Indra, humbled the Gods, and extended his sovereignty over the three worlds, by his *devotion and penance*. In fact he was a pious and holy ascetic, like many other "demons" in the *Purānas*, for the Asuras, as *The Secret Doctrine* has already explained at length, are divine Egos, *fallen* into matter or incarnated in human forms, the Christian myth of the "Fallen Angels" having the same significance.¹

Accordingly the Gods appealed to Vishnu for protection, and the Deity manifested himself in the Dwarf Avatāra in order to restrain Bali. Thus he approached Bali and craved the boon of three steps of ground. Bali at once granted his request, and the God stepped over heaven and the upper [150] earth (air) in two strides; but in consideration of Bali's goodness, he stopped short and left to him Pātāla, esoterically the earth.

¹ [Consult "Lucifer is Christos, Inner Light," and "Proposition 3 - Sons of the Fire-Mist," in our Secret Doctrine's Third Proposition Series on Anthropogenesis. Students should also be conversant with the metaphysical concepts set out in the same Series, particularly with those prefixed with "Proposition 3." — ED. PHIL.]

[. . . the serpent is a very significant symbol, as will appear from the names *Shesha* and *Ananta* given to it.]

Shesha is represented as a serpent with a thousand heads, which is said to be the couch and canopy of Vishnu, when he sleeps during his intervals of creation. Sometimes Shesha is shown as the supporter of the world and sometimes as the upholder of the seven Pātālas (hells, earths, etc.). Whenever he yawns, there are earthquakes. At the end of the Kalpa he vomits forth fire and so destroys all the creation. At the Churning of the Ocean (of Space), Shesha was twisted round the Mountain Mandara, and used as a great rope to cause it to revolve. The Gods were at the one end of the rope and the Demons at the other. The hood of Shesha, the thousand-headed cobra, is called the “Island of Jewels,” and his palace is said to be “jewelled walled.”¹ But these gems are not of earth, as the merest tyro in symbology will at once perceive; they are the Jewels of Wisdom and Self-knowledge.

[. . . concerning the Purānic list of the Dhruvas, Saptarshis, Indras, and Manus for every Manvantara.]

These have reference to the Pole stars, constellations, heavens, and humanities of every cycle.²

[Sampradāyas]

Commentators.

[The way to *Goloka* (the region of rays), the sun, is the *Vaitarani* of the *Garuda-Purāna*, which indicates that the being only swims (*vitri*) through space, and passes to the sun with the help of his rays (*go*), in other words, by and through the help of the currents of cosmic *Prāna* proceeding from him . . . But the dead-letter explanation makes of *Vaitarani* an objective river which the being crosses with the help of the tail of a cow (*go*).] [160]

Vaitarani — “the river that is to be crossed.” Supposed to be the river of hell, which must be crossed before the infernal regions, or subjective world, can be entered. The river is described as being filled with blood and all sorts of filth, and to run with great impetuosity. This is to be crossed in a solitary rickety boat, the steersman of which is Vishnu (the Higher Ego).³ Few people can pass, for they have to pay for the passage; those who cannot pay are turned back. According to the popular superstition, persons before death, are made to give in charity milch cows, in the belief that after death they may be able to catch hold of their tails and so be carried across the dreadful river Vaitarani, safe to the other side. The interpretation is easy for a Theosophist, for it is the cow that gives the milk of wisdom that is meant; the cow that

¹ [Also consult “Serpents bringing out Compassion,” in our Secret Doctrine’s Third Proposition Series, “When the serpent sloughs off his skin,” in our Constitution of Man Series, and “Who can read the riddle of the serpent?” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [In connection with the after-death peregrinations of the entity, known as “the passage to the sun” and “the passage to the Moon,” Madame Blavatsky refers the student to *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 86.]

³ [Consult “Higher Manas and Lower Manas,” and “Higher Self and Higher Ego,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

produces the jewels: and the tail of the cow is the ray of that knowledge, the thread of Wisdom, or Vāch, that unites us to our Higher Self.

[Garuda]

Garuda is represented with the head, wings, talons, and beak of an eagle, and the body and limbs of a man. His face is white, his wings golden, and his body red.

[Ratnas]

Jewels.

[Kailāsa]

Said to be the home of Śiva: the highest peak of Meru, the mountain used for the churning of the Ocean, where Śiva alone resorts, and where he alone can be seen.

[Tāntrika]

Magical.

[Gajānana]

Elephant-face.

[Skanda or Kārtikeya]

Corresponds to Mars.

[. . . the Vedic text: *Ekam sat vipra bahudā vadanti*]

i.e., The Brahmans in many ways declare one thing as being; or one thing to be *sat*, *i.e.*, “being” and therefore “good” (or reality).

[Purānic text: *sarva deva namaskārah Keśavam prati gachchhatī*]

Every god goes towards (approaches) Krishna with reverence.

