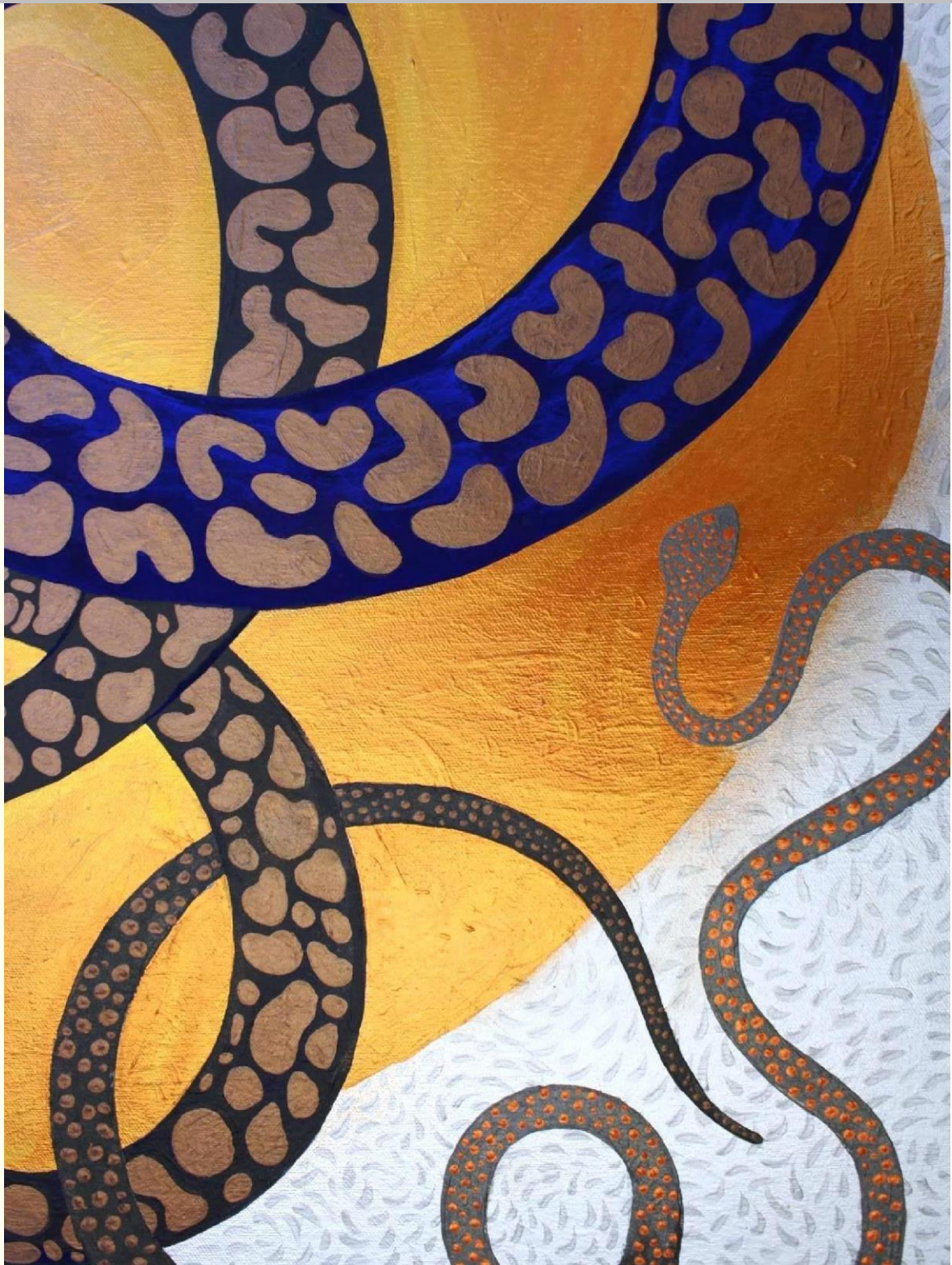


*Who can read
the Riddle of the Serpent?*



Contents and abstract of central ideas

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The Crocodile is the Egyptian Dragon, the pre-planetary form of Saturn, Sevekh’s Word-Logos.

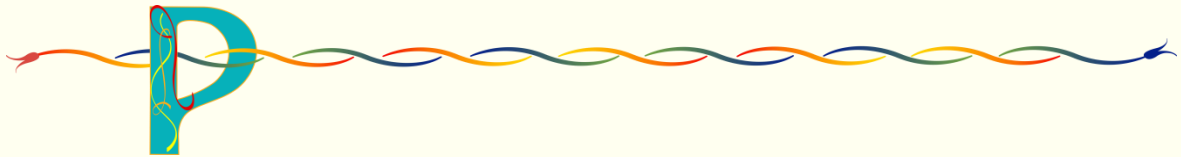
There is a universal belief that serpents are wise, cunning, and fascinating.

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Why a cold and selfish creature, voiceless and limbless, was chosen as the symbol of kingly power and occult wisdom?

Perhaps, when St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland, he was the cause of its soil having ever since produced more wit than wisdom.

From *The Path*, Vol. IX (3), June 1894, A STUDENT'S NOTES AND GUESSES SERIES, by X.R., pp. 94-98.

THE SERPENT SYMBOL is a strange one. A cold, selfish creature, voiceless and limbless; capable only of spasmodic activity as it seeks to escape, to sting, or to gulp its living prey; its life is spent in sullenness and torpor; its sole ambition is to lie "untrodden in the sun."

With a minimum of brain capacity it exhibits correspondingly little intelligence, far less than that shown by many insects.

Yet the serpent has been chosen, among all races, as the symbol of intellectual power of every grade, from a subtle cunning to the wisdom of the gods. In the Jewish mythology, it is represented as tempting the first woman with a promise of divine wisdom and power; Hermes carries the Caduceus as a token that he is a messenger between gods and men; the serpent accompanying Æsculapius signifies the healing power; Jesus exhorts his disciples to be "wise as serpents."

Mundane serpents have signified an all-sustaining and encompassing will and intelligence, both in India and the extreme north; and the serpent has been the symbol of the adept, from the Far East to ancient Peru and Mexico. . . .

Perhaps when St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland, he was the cause of its soil having ever since produced more wit than wisdom. . . .

Look into the eyes of any living creature and you touch its soul. The dog seeks from yours something which he dimly feels and would fain comprehend. There is a look in his brown eyes as he fixes them upon yours, which is not there at any other time, which he fixes upon no creature except man, and which no animal but the dog is able to give.

As we look into the limpid fluorescent depths of a horse's eye, our sympathies go out to the fellow-being which looks out through that window. Even when it sparkles with spirit, it is still tempered with timidity. We feel its pathetic patience, which is above [95] that of the dull ox, an intelligence which is moral rather than intellectual, and we receive the impress of an instinctive nobility and unselfishness.



Globe
Z

Duration of each Round

Round 1	154,285,714
Round 2	308,571,428
Round 3	462,857,142
Round 4	617,142,856
Round 5	771,428,570
Round 6	925,714,284
Round 7	1,079,999,998
Total	4,319,999,992

(BCW XIII 303)



Globe
A



We are here! On Globe D,
Round 4, Root-Race 5, our
Beautiful Earth, fulcrum
of the Great Kalpa, with
its Seven Root-Races.



Globe
G



Impulses of Spiritual Consciousness evolve wave-like in a 7-fold pattern along a chain of 7 man-bearing Globes (i.e., Planets or Spheres) plus 5 arupa-loka or unmanifested, re-visiting each one 7 times. A single passage through every Globe is termed Planetary Round or Ring, in the course of which 49 Root-Races of Humanity emerge, each one progressing through 7 Sub-Races (see Diagram 2). Every Round repeats on a higher scale the evolutionary work of the preceding Round. (Cf. SD I 187)

Integrative Theosophical Studies
**OUR PLANETARY CHAIN
 OF SEVEN ROUNDS**
 Diagram cum Emblem
 After *The Divine Plan*, pp. 218, 342

A Day of Brahmā (Maha Brahmā) equal to 1,000 Maha Yugas, or 4,319,999,992 terrene years, followed by the Night of Brahmā, or Naimittika Maha Pralaya, of an equal duration. For an in-depth analysis of the Caduceus of the Spheres, see "Keys to the Mystery Language" in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series.

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The patient drudge¹ is quick to respond to our wants rather than to his own; a harsh word sets his pulses bounding; a kindly look awakens instant recognition.

Contrast this with the attentive, well-regulated selfishness which gleams from the yellow eyes of a cat, as she looks debating the chances of a morsel or the possible hospitalities of a comfortable lap. Watch the change from the receptive to the active, as she hears a mouse-like rustle, and the glare of the beast of prey shines out.

Or, as she steps softly along, you are aware that she has in mind either a warm corner by the fire, an amatory interview on a back fence, or a raid on the canary bird, or an unguarded pantry. Self, and self only, is the centre around which revolve the thoughts of this courtesan of the animal world.

That domestic Arab, the rat, has had his little brain quickened, for untold generations, by contact with civilization, by its warfare against him, by the dangers and rewards of his predatory and pariah life. You can read the whole story in the mingled impudence, fear, and cunning of his beady eyes as he faces you for a moment with his whiskers a-quiver, knowing as he does his exact distance from the nearest retreat.

Compare the eye of a rat with that of his third cousin, the squirrel. In that softer little orb you read not only the alertness of his tribe, but a milder curiosity and timidity. You are to him rather a strange and possibly dangerous visitor, than a giant hereditary enemy.

Greed and limited shrewdness gleam from the small eyes of a pig, and when we see the like in a human being — we know what to expect.

What creature has the chilling, stony stare of the serpent? What can you read in those fixed eyeballs which suggests an emotion or a thought with which any human being ever had an instant sympathy? Their effect is different from that which can be produced by any fixed glassy ball. You feel the consciousness of the creature as it meets some sphere of your own, but it is an icy and utterly selfish consciousness; you recoil from the psychic touch of the snake as you do from that of his body.

A writer in the *Fortnightly Review*, in speaking of the serpent, says: [96]

“The power of continuing motionless, with the lifted head projecting forward, for an indefinite time is one of the most wonderful of the serpent’s muscular feats, and it is of the highest importance to the animal both when fascinating its victim and when mimicking some inanimate object, as, for instance, the stem and bud of an aquatic plant; here it is only referred to on account of the effect it has on the human mind, as enhancing the serpent’s strangeness. In this attitude, with the round, unwinking eyes fixed on the beholder’s face, the effect may be very curious and uncanny.”

He goes on to quote the experience of an African traveller who discovered a snake at the bottom of a pool of water: →

¹ [A person made to do hard menial work]

“Presently, without apparent motion, so softly and silently was it done, the snake reared its head above the surface and held it there erect and still, with gleaming eyes fixed on me in question of what I was. It flashed upon me then that it would be good opportunity to test the power of the human eye upon the snake, and I set myself the task of looking it down. It was foolish effort. The bronze head and the sinewy neck, about which the water flowed without a ripple, were as if carved in stone; and the cruel unwinking eyes, with the light coming and going in them, appeared to glow the brighter, the longer I looked. Gradually there came over me a sensation of sickening fear, which, if I had yielded to it, would have left me powerless to move; but with a cry I leaped up, and, seizing a fallen willow branch, attacked the reptile with a species of fury.”

The fixity of the serpent’s eye is not the cause of the peculiar impression which it makes. The eyes of fishes, though not as a rule immovable, are moved but seldom and slightly. They have not that filmy blankness we see in the dead fish, from which the idea of the “fishy eye” has been derived. Study them in an aquarium (if you can do no better), and you find nothing unpleasant in the eyes of a fish; no matter how fixed they may be. They suggest rather a restful consciousness of existence, which hardly feels its own separateness; they recall in no way the stony selfishness of the snake.

If we are fishermen, we grasp the slimy scales of a prize with eagerness, while we would shrink from the less defiling touch of the most harmless snake.

Fixity, then, is not the cause of the repellent fascination that lurks in a serpent’s eye.

Is it in the shape of his head?

Many lizards have heads closely resembling those of snakes, [97] both in colour and shape, in fact often more calculated to inspire aversion, if critically examined. Their bodies are cold and scaly and tapering. The eyes of lizards vary in colour and shape, as do those of serpents, but the expression is wholly different. Take, for instance, one of the little lizards that scuttle through dry fallen leaves of our southern forests, or, squirrel-like, scamper up a tree and shift to the opposite side as we approach, or flatten themselves against the bark, with which they seem to blend. Fix the eye of one of these reptilian sprites, if you can, and you will find nothing repulsive in it. It is bright and inquisitive, what the women would call “cute,” and you feel like feeding the little fellow with a fly, if you can convince him of your friendly intentions.

The toad is repulsive enough, even when impartially considered. Industry is not his forte, and there is a fixity in his freckled countenance as he waits patiently for what Providence may send in the shape of a fat bug, but no evil light shines from the little circular, golden-iris windows. They will but wink and roll if an occasional doubt crosses him as to the expediency of retaining on his stomach that strange-looking insect which just now he confidently swallowed, as it was rolled toward him by someone (let us say a school boy).

. . . The Egyptians derive their symbols from a period when men were in closer touch with the soul of the world than in these days of machinery. The manifold life which has built together the forms of dust looks out through many portals. In the ancient picture-teachings we find the human form surmounted by the head of the hawk or

WHY A COLD AND SELFISH CREATURE, VOICELESS AND LIMBLESS,
WAS CHOSEN AS THE SYMBOL OF KINGLY POWER AND OCCULT WISDOM?

the jackal, the ibis, the cat, or the crocodile. The bull and the beetle were sacred symbols, degraded in a later age.

In all of these we may read of an all-pervading power and intelligence, manifesting through a potential humanity, through different aspects of an evolving soul. Strength and swiftness, keenness and tenacity, intelligence working in earth, air, and water, were all recognized as parts of the whole, as co-ordinate psychic factors. Not one was despised as unworthy or contemptible.

The Miss Nancyism¹ of the modern sectarian affects innocence and ignorance, and will have none of these things . . . except the lamb and the dove.

Yet in the elder and broader symbology we find the serpent erect, as the symbol of kingly power and occult wisdom.

Yet the serpent that crawls in the dust or glides through the [98] tangled swamp is a thing apart and accursed; it raises itself but to threaten, or to sting, or to paralyze with the steely steadfastness of its will. It is shunned by all that lives, by all that flies or runs; hated in forest and field. The only sound it can make is a hiss, and that sound is the only one common to the language of bird and beast and man. All who can use it mean but one thing when it is sent forth; malice, defiance, separateness.

And is this reptile, with its cruel eye, its crushing fold or poison tooth; which rejects even the freshly slain as its food; which must have a living, struggling victim; is this creature, because of its sinuous path or some fancied grace, to be taken as the type of anything to which we would aspire?

Instinct and common sense says No.

But, with one accord, the solemn picture-teachings of the ages, of Jew and Gentile, of India, Egypt, and America, point to some hidden mystery, to some occult combination of power and intelligence, of which, it may be, the serpent of the dust is but the degraded rudiment.

Who can read the riddle of the serpent?



¹ [Affected nicety or primness, fussing about trifles]

The serpentine riddle unriddled.

Object of horror or of adoration, men have for the serpent an implacable hatred, or prostrate themselves before its genius. Lie calls it, Prudence claims it, Envy carries it in its heart, and Eloquence on its caduceus. In hell it arms the whip of the Furies; in heaven Eternity makes of it its symbol.

— DE CHÂTEAUBRIAND

The serpent is the most ancient symbol because the reptile preceded the bird, and the bird the mammal.

From *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, Part II, X. TREE, SERPENT, AND CROCODILE WORSHIP, pp. 403-11.

THE OPHITES asserted that there were several kinds of genii, from god to man; that the relative superiority of these was ruled by the degree [404] of light that was accorded to each; and they maintained that the serpent had to be constantly called upon and to be thanked for the signal service it had rendered humanity. For it taught Adam that if he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would raise his being immensely by the learning and wisdom he would thus acquire. Such was the exoteric reason given.

The Serpent was honoured by the Gnostic Ophites because he taught primeval men the Mysteries of Cosmos and Man.

Serpent and Dragon were some of the names given to the “Wise Ones,” the initiated adepts of olden times. The Nagas of the Hindu and Tibetan adepts were men, not reptiles.

It is easy to see whence the primal idea of this dual, Janus-like character of the Serpent: the good and the bad. This symbol is one of the most ancient, because the reptile preceded the bird, and the bird the mammal. Thence the belief, or rather the superstition, of the savage tribes who think that the souls of their ancestors live under this form, and the general association of the Serpent with the tree. The legends about the various things it represents are numberless; but, as most of them are allegorical, they have now passed into the class of fables based on ignorance and dark superstition. For instance, when Philostratus narrates that the natives of India and Arabia fed on the heart and liver of serpents in order to learn the language of all the animals, the serpent being credited with that faculty, he certainly never meant his words to be accepted literally.¹ As will be found more than once as we proceed, the “Serpent” and “Dragon” were the names given to the “Wise Ones,” the initiated adepts of olden times. It was their wisdom and their learning that were devoured or assimilated by their followers, whence the allegory. When the Scandinavian Sigurd is fabled to have roasted the heart of Fafnir, the Dragon, whom he had slain, becoming there-

¹ *De vita Apollonii*, Bk. III, ch. ix

by the wisest of men, it meant the same thing. Sigurd had become learned in the runes and magical charms; he had received the “word” from an initiate of that name, or from a sorcerer, after which the latter died, as many do, after “passing the word.” Epiphanius lets out a secret of the Gnostics while trying to expose their *heresies*. The Gnostic Ophites, he says, had a reason for honouring the Serpent: *it was because he taught the primeval men the Mysteries.*¹ Verily so; but they did not have Adam and Eve in the garden in their minds when teaching this dogma, but simply that which is stated above. The *Nāgas* of the Hindu and Tibetan adepts were human *Nāgas* (Serpents), not reptiles. Moreover, the Serpent has ever been the type of consecutive or serial rejuvenation, of IMMORTALITY and TIME.

On the lowest plane of materiality, the Serpent was adopted as a type of feminine pubescence, on account of its sloughing and self-renewal.

The numerous and extremely interesting readings, the interpretations and facts about Serpent-worship, given in *The Natural Genesis*, are very ingenious and scientifically correct. But they are far from covering the *whole* of the meanings implied. They divulge only the astronomical and physiological mysteries, with the addition of some cosmic phenomena. On the lowest plane of materiality the Serpent was, no doubt, [405] “the great mystery in the mysteries,” and was, very likely, “adopted as a type of feminine pubescence, on account of its sloughing and self-renewal.” It was so, however, only with regard to mysteries concerning terrestrial animal life, for as symbol of “reclotting and rebirth in the (universal) mysteries,” its “*final phase*”² — or shall we rather say, its incipient and culminating phases — they were not of this plane. They were generated in the pure realm of ideal light, and having accomplished the round of the whole cycle of adaptations and symbolism, the “mysteries” returned from whence they had come — into the essence of *immaterial* causality. They belonged to the highest Gnosis. And surely this could have never obtained its name and fame solely on account of its penetration into physiological and especially feminine functions!



¹ *Panarion*, lib. I, t. II, *Hær.* xxxvii, § iii

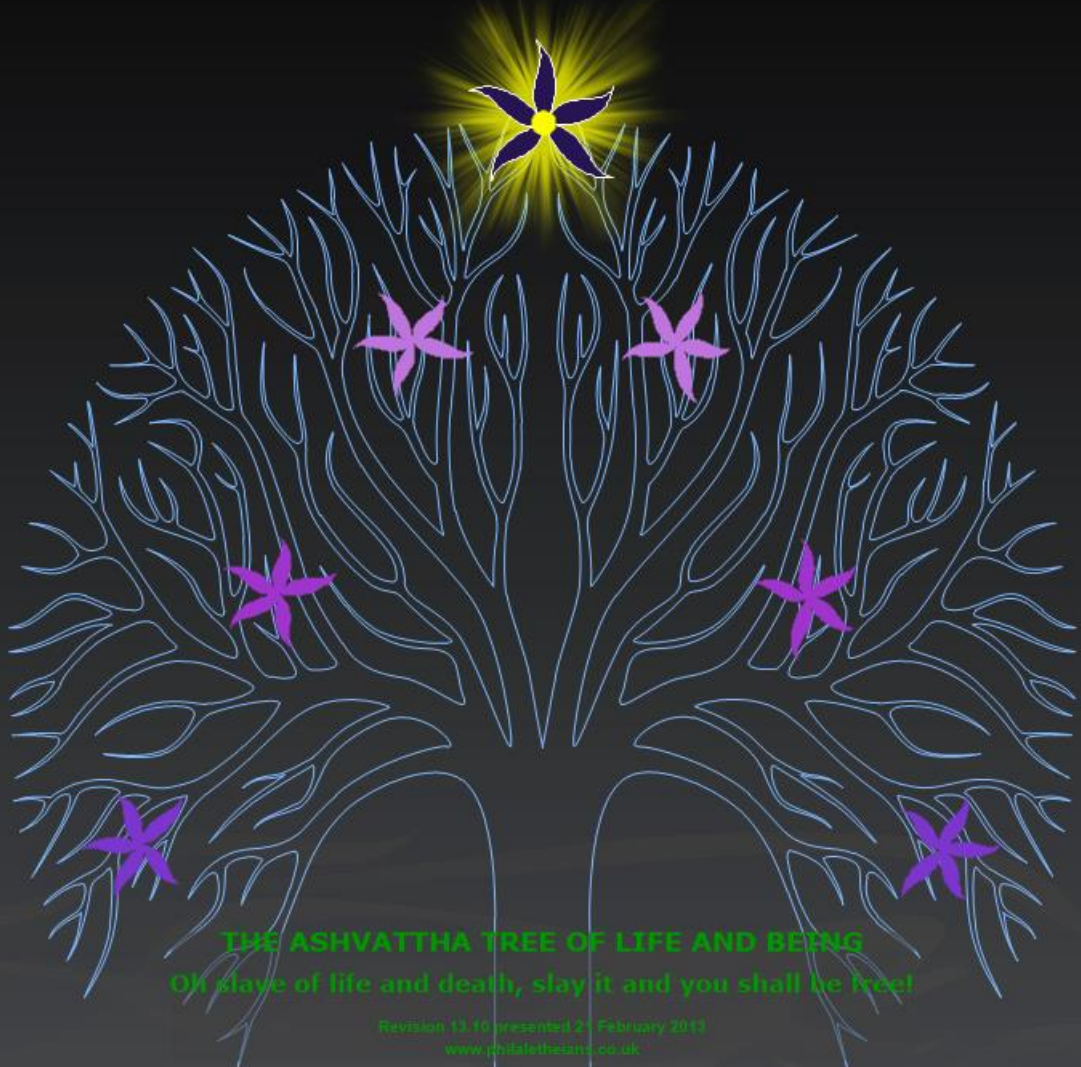
² *The Natural Genesis*, by Gerald Massey, Vol. I, p. 340

The Serpent and the Tree of Life are indissolubly connected.

These sacred symbols have never been so degraded by antiquity as they are now, in this age of the breaking of idols, not for truth's sake but to glorify gross matter.

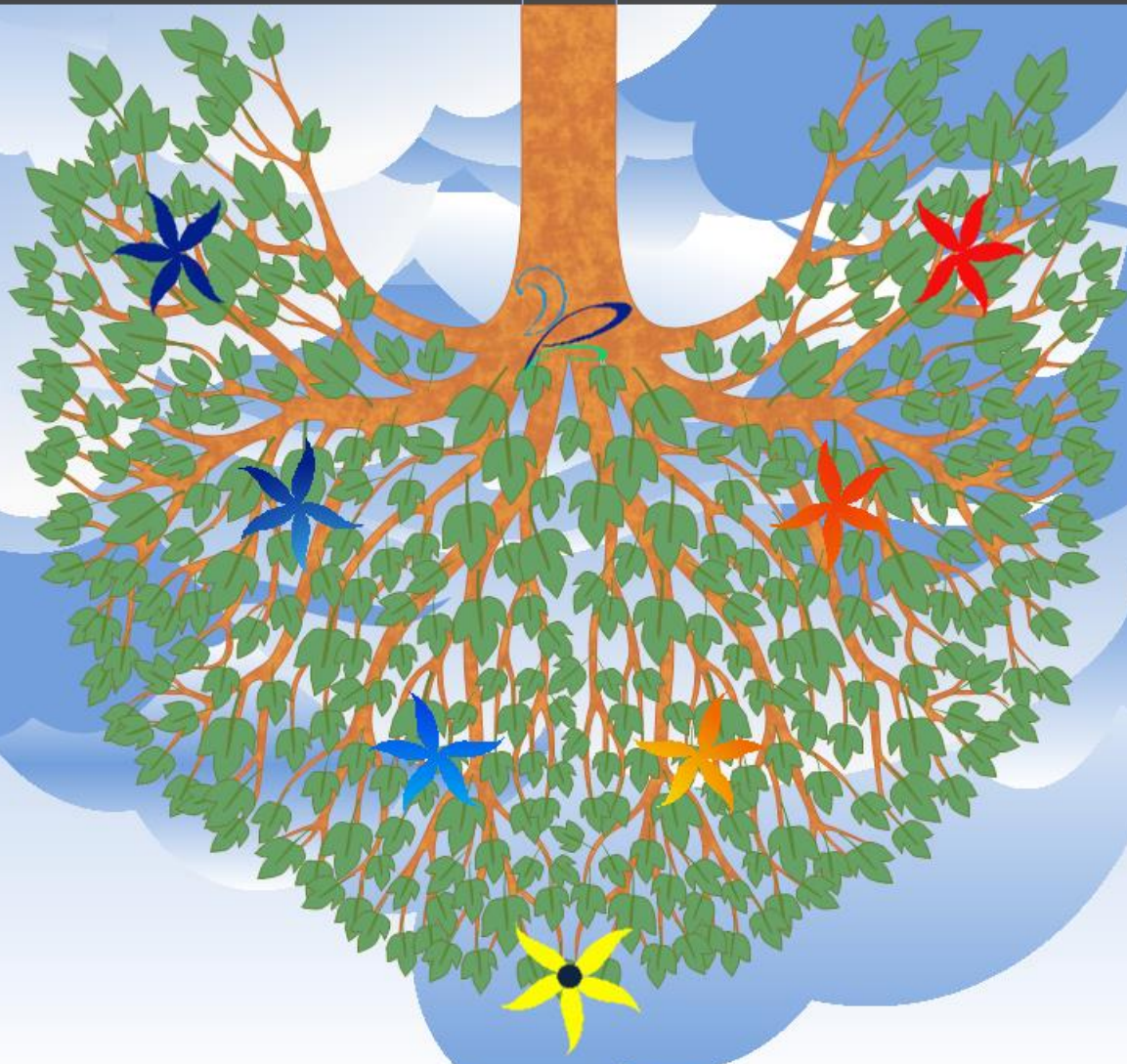
As a symbol, the Serpent had as many aspects and occult meanings as the Tree itself; the “Tree of Life,” with which it was emblematically and almost indissolubly connected. Whether viewed as a metaphysical or a physical symbol, the Tree and Serpent, jointly, or separately, have never been so degraded by antiquity as they are now, in this our age of the breaking of idols, not for truth's sake, but to glorify the more gross matter. The revelations and interpretations in *The Rivers of Life*¹ would have astounded the worshippers of the Tree and Serpent in the days of archaic Chaldean and Egyptian wisdom; and even the early Śaivas would have recoiled in horror at the theories and suggestions of the author of the said work. “The notion of Payne Knight and Inman that the cross or Tau is simply a copy of the male organs in a triadic form is radically false,” writes Mr. G. Massey, who proves what he says. But this is a statement that could be as justly applied to almost all the modern interpretations of ancient symbols. *The Natural Genesis*, a monumental work of research and thought, the most complete on that subject that has ever been published, covering as it does a wider field, and explaining much more than all the symbologists who have hitherto written, does not yet go beyond the “psycho-theistic” stage of ancient thought. Nor were Payne Knight and Inman altogether wrong; except in entirely failing to see that their interpretations of the “Tree of Life,” as the cross and phallus, fitted the symbol, and approximated it, only on the lowest and last stage of the evolutionary development of the idea of the GIVER OF LIFE. It was the last and the grossest physical transformation of nature, in animal, insect, bird, and even plant; for biune, creative magnetism, in the form of the attraction of the contraries, or sexual polarization, acts in the constitution of reptile and bird as it does in that of man. Moreover, the modern symbologists and Orientalists — from first to last — [406] being ignorant of the real mysteries revealed by occultism, can necessarily see but this last stage. If told that this mode of procreation, which the whole world of being has now in common on this earth, is but a passing phase, a physical means of furnishing the conditions to, and producing the phenomena of life which will alter with this, and disappear with the next Root-Race — they would laugh at such a superstitious and unscientific idea. But the most learned Occultists assert this because *they know it*. The universe of living beings, of all those which procreate their species, is the living witness to the various modes of procreation in the evolution of animal and human species and races; and the naturalist ought to sense this truth intuitively, even though he is yet unable to demonstrate it. And how could he, indeed, with the present modes of thought! The landmarks of the archaic history of the past are few and scarce, and those that men of science come across are mistaken for finger-posts of our little era. Even so-called “universal” (?) history embraces but a tiny field in the almost boundless space of the unexplored regions of our latest, fifth Root-Race.

¹ [By James G.R. Forlong, London 1883]



THE ASHVATTHA TREE OF LIFE AND BEING
Oh slave of life and death, slay it and you shall be free!

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Hence, every fresh signpost, every new glyph of the hoary Past that is discovered, is added to the old stock of information, to be interpreted on the same lines of pre-existing conceptions, and without any reference to the special cycle of thought which that particular glyph may belong to. How can Truth ever come to light if this method is never changed!

In the beginning of their joint existence as a glyph of Immortal Being, the Tree and Serpent were divine imagery, truly.

Thus, in the beginning of their joint existence as a glyph of Immortal Being, the Tree and Serpent were divine imagery, truly. The tree *was reversed*, and its roots were generated in Heaven and grew out of the Rootless Root of all-being. Its trunk grew and developed, crossing the planes of Plērōma, it shot out crossways its luxuriant branches, first on the plane of hardly differentiated matter, and then downward till they touched the terrestrial plane. Thus, the Ásvattha, tree of Life and Being, whose destruction alone leads to immortality, is said in the *Bhagavatgītā* to grow with its roots above and its branches below.¹ The roots represent the Supreme Being, or First Cause, the LOGOS; but one has to go beyond those roots to *unite oneself with Krishna*, who, says Arjuna,² is

. . . greater than Brahman, and First Cause . . . the indestructible, that which is, that which is not, and what is beyond them.

Its boughs are Hiranyagarbha (Brahmā or Brahman in his highest manifestations, say Śrīdhara and Madhusūdana), the highest Dhyāni-Chohans or Devas. The Vedas are its leaves. He only who goes *beyond* the roots shall never return, *i.e.*, shall reincarnate no more during this “age” of Brahmā.

In the days of the divine Dynasties on Earth, the now dreaded reptile, emblem of the heaven-born Logos, was regarded as the first beam of light that radiated from the abyss of Divine Mystery.

As the Serpent, originally dwelling beyond absolute space and infinite time, fell into the space and finite time, he was made to assume various forms: cosmic and astronomical, theistic and pantheistic, abstract and concrete.

It is only when its pure boughs had touched the terrestrial mud of the garden of Eden, of our Adamic race, that this Tree got soiled by the contact and lost its pristine purity; and that the Serpent of [407] Eternity — the heaven-born LOGOS — was finally degraded. In days of old — of the *divine Dynasties* on Earth — the now dreaded reptile was regarded as the first beam of light that radiated from the abyss of divine Mystery. Various were the forms which it was made to assume, and numerous the natural symbols adapted to it, as it crossed aiōns of Time: as from Infinite Time itself — *Kala* — it fell into the space and time evolved out of human speculation. These forms were Cosmic and astronomical, theistic and pantheistic, abstract and concrete. They became in turn the Polar Dragon and the Southern Cross, the *Alpha Draconis* of the Pyramid, and the Hindu-Buddhist Dragon, which ever threatens, yet

¹ Ch. XV, verses 1, 2

² Ch. XI, verse 37

never swallows the Sun during its eclipses. Till then, the Tree remained ever green, for it was sprinkled by the waters of life; the great Dragon, ever divine, so long as it was kept within the precincts of the sidereal fields. But the tree grew and its lower boughs touched at last the infernal regions — our Earth. Then the great serpent Nidhög — he who devours the corpses of the evil-doers in the “Hall of Misery” (human life), so soon as they are plunged into “Hvergelmer,” the roaring cauldron (of human passions) — gnawed the World-tree. The worms of materiality covered the once healthy and mighty roots, and are now ascending higher and higher along the trunk; while the Midgard-snake coiled at the bottom of the Seas, encircles the Earth, and, through its venomous breath, makes her powerless to defend herself.

The dragons and serpents of antiquity are seven-headed, one head for each root-race.

They are all seven-headed, the dragons and serpents of antiquity — “one head for each race, and every head with seven hairs on it,” as the allegory has it. Aye, from Ananta, the Serpent of Eternity which carries Vishnu through the Manvantara, from the original primordial Śesha, whose seven heads become “one thousand heads” in the Purānic fancy, down to the seven-headed Akkadian Serpent. This typifies the Seven principles throughout nature and man; the highest or *middle* head being the seventh. It is not of the Mosaic, Jewish Sabbath that Philo speaks in his *Creation of the World*, when saying that the world was completed “according to the perfect nature of number 6.”¹ For,

. . . when that reason [nous] which is holy in accordance with the number seven, has entered the soul [rather the living body], the number six is thus arrested, and all the mortal things which that number makes.²

And again:

Number 7 is the festival day of all the earth, the *birthday of the world*. I know not whether anyone would be able to celebrate the number 7 in adequate terms.³

The author of *The Natural Genesis* thinks that: [408]

. . . the septenary of stars seen in the Great Bear [the *Saptarshis*] and seven-headed Dragon furnished a visible origin for the symbolic seven of time above. The goddess of the seven stars was the mother of time, as Kep; whence Kepti and Sebti for the two times and number seven. So this is the star of the Seven by name. Sevekh (Kronos), the son of the goddess, has the name of the seven or seventh. So has Sefekh Abu who builds the house on high, as Wisdom (Sophia) built hers with seven pillars. The primary Kronotypes were seven, and thus the beginning of time in heaven is based on the number and the name of seven, on account of the starry demonstrators. The seven stars as they turned round annually kept pointing, as it were, with the forefinger of the right hand, and de-

¹ *De Opificio Mundi*, § xxx [For in-depth analysis, consult “The Number of the Beast is the Number of Man,” in our Planetary Rounds and Globes Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² *Legum Allegoriæ*, § vi

³ *De Opificio Mundi*, § xxx

scribing a circle in the upper and lower heaven.¹ The number seven naturally suggested a measure by seven, that led to what may be termed *Sevening*, and to the marking and mapping out of the circle in seven corresponding divisions which were assigned to the seven great constellations; and thus was formed the celestial heptanomis of Egypt in the heavens.

When the stellar heptanomis was broken up and divided into four quarters, it was multiplied by four, and the twenty-eight signs took the place of the primary seven constellations; the lunar zodiac of twenty-eight days being the registered result.² . . . In the Chinese arrangement, the four sevens are given to four Genii that preside over the four cardinal points; [In Chinese Buddhism and Esotericism the genii are represented by four Dragons — the “Mahārājahs” of the Stanzas] or rather the seven Northern constellations make up the Black Warrior; the seven Eastern (Chinese autumn) constitute the White Tiger; the seven Southern are the Vermilion Bird; and the seven Western (called Vernal) are the Azure Dragon. Each of these four Spirits presides over its heptanomis during one lunar week. The genitrix of the first heptanomis (Typhon of the Seven Stars) now took a lunar character; . . . in this phase we find the goddess Sefekh, whose name signifies number 7, is the feminine word or logos in place of the mother of time, who was the earlier *Word*, as goddess of the seven stars.³



¹ For the same reason the division of the principles in man into seven are thus reckoned, as they describe the same circle in the human higher and lower nature. [H.P. Blavatsky]

² Thus the septenary division is the oldest and preceded the four-fold division. It is the root of archaic classification. [H.P. Blavatsky]

³ Gerald Massey, *The Natural Genesis*, Vol. II, p. 313

The Crocodile is the Egyptian Dragon, the pre-planetary form of Saturn, Sevekh's Word-Logos.

The author shows that it was the goddess of the Great Bear and mother of Time who was in Egypt from the earliest times the “*Living Word*,” and that

“Sevekh-Kronos, whose type was the Crocodile-Dragon, the pre-planetary form of Saturn, was called her son and consort; he was her Word-Logos.”¹

The above is quite plain, but it was not the knowledge of astronomy only that led the ancients to the process of *Sevening*. The primal cause goes far deeper and will be explained in its place.

The above quotations are no digressions. They are brought forward as showing

- (a) The reason why a full Initiate was called a “Dragon,” a “Snake,” a “Nāga”; and
- (b) That our septenary division was used by the priests of the earliest dynasties in Egypt, for the same reason and on the same basis as by us.

This needs further elucidation, however. As already stated, that which Mr. G. Massey calls the four genii of the four cardinal points; and the Chinese, the Black Warrior, White Tiger, [409] Vermilion Bird, and Azure Dragon, [are] called in the Secret Books the “Four Hidden Dragons of Wisdom” and the “Celestial Nāgas.” Now, as shown, the seven-headed or septenary DRAGON-LOGOS had been in course of time split up, so to speak, into *four* heptanomic parts or twenty-eight portions. Each lunar week has a distinct occult character in the lunar month; each day of the twenty-eight has its special characteristics; as each of the twelve constellations, whether separately or in combination with other signs, has an occult influence either for good or for evil. This represents the sum of knowledge that men can acquire on this earth; yet few are those who acquire it, and still fewer are the wise men who get to the root of knowledge symbolized by the great Root-Dragon, the spiritual LOGOS of these visible signs. But those who do, receive the name of “Dragons,” and they are the “Arhats of the Four Truths of the 28 Faculties,” or attributes, and have always been so called.



¹ *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 321

The Alexandrian Neo-Platonists asserted that to become real *Chaldees* or Magi,¹ one had to master the science or knowledge of the periods of the Seven Rectors of the world, in whom is all wisdom. In Proclus,² Iamblichus is credited with another version, which does not, however, alter the meaning. He says that:

. . . the Assyrians have not only preserved the records of seven and twenty myriads of years, as Hipparchus says they have, but likewise of the whole apocatastases and periods of the seven rulers of the world.³

There is a universal belief that serpents are wise, cunning, and fascinating.

The legends of every nation and tribe, whether civilized or savage, point to the once universal belief in the great wisdom and cunning of the Serpents. They are “charm-ers.” They hypnotise the bird with their eye, and man himself, very often, does not feel above their fascinating influence; therefore the symbol is a most fitting one.

The Crocodile was the dual symbol of Heaven and Earth, of Sun and Moon, made sacred to Osiris and Isis because of its amphibious nature.

The crocodile is the Egyptian dragon. It was the dual symbol of Heaven and Earth, of Sun and Moon, and was made sacred, in consequence of its amphibious nature, to Osiris and Isis. According to Eusebius, the Egyptians represented the sun in a ship as its pilot, this ship being carried along by a crocodile “to show the motion of the Sun in the moist (Space)”;⁴ The crocodile was moreover the symbol of Egypt herself — the *lower*, as being the more swampy of the two countries. The Alchemists claim another interpretation. They say that the symbol of the sun in the ship on the Ether of Space meant that the hermetic matter is the principle, or basis, of gold, or again the *philosophical* sun; the water, within which the crocodile is swimming, is that water or matter made liquid; the ship herself, finally, representing the vessel of nature, in which the sun, or the sulphuric, igneous principle, acts as a pilot: because it is the sun [410] which conducts the work by his action upon the *moist* or *mercury*. The above is only for the Alchemists.

¹ [Consult “Chaldeans, Hierophants of the Aryan Root-Race,” in our Atlantean Realities Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timæus of Plato*, Book I, 100.29-101.2

³ [Translated by Thomas Taylor.]

Note 35 by Boris de Zirkoff: Some variants are possible in the translation of this passage from Proclus’ *Commentary on the Timæus*. The Greek term *apokatastases* <αποκαταστασεις>* actually means recurrences, and *periodos* <περιόδος> can mean circuits or cycles. The term *urias* <μυριας> has two meanings: one is rather indefinite, but the other is definite enough and stands for 10,000. On the whole, therefore, the translation is correct and embodies a very important statement on the antiquity of astronomical observations by the ancients.

*Return to the original position, Ascl. *Tatc.*, 10.1; αποκαταστασις αστρων, return of the stars to the same place in heavens as in the former years, Plu. 2.237f, D.S. 12.36, etc.; periodic return of the cosmic cycles, *Stoic.*, 2.184, 190; and of planet, returning to a place in heavens occupied at a former epoch, *Antioch. Astr. ap. Cat. Cod Astr.*, 7.120,121. Excerpted from *Liddell & Scott* by ED. PHIL.]

⁴ *Prepar. evang.*, lib. III, ch. xi

The Serpent was degraded as the symbol of evil and devil, only during the middle ages.

The Serpent became the type and symbol of evil, and of the Devil, only during the middle ages. The early Christians — besides the Ophite Gnostics — had their dual Logos: the Good and the Bad Serpent, the Agathodaimōn and the Kakodaimōn. This is demonstrated by the writings of Marcus, Valentinus, and many others, and especially in *Pistis Sophia* — certainly a document of the earliest centuries of Christianity. On the marble sarcophagus of a tomb, discovered in 1852 near the Porta Pia, one sees the scene of the adoration of the Magi. Remarks the late C.W. King in *The Gnostics*:

. . . or else, the prototype of that scene, the “Birth of the New Sun.”

The mosaic floor exhibited a curious design which might have represented either

- (a) Isis suckling the babe Harpocrates, or
- (b) The Madonna nursing the infant Jesus.

The Sun, Tree, Serpent, Crocodile, and other ancient symbols were imported wholesale by dogmatic Christianity and passed in full into the Christian Church.

In the smaller sarcophagi that surrounded the larger one, eleven leaden plates rolled like scrolls were found, three of which have been deciphered. The contents of these ought to be regarded as final proof of a much-vexed question, for they show that either the early Christians, up to the VIth Century, were *bona fide* pagans, or that dogmatic Christianity was borrowed wholesale, and passed in full into the Christian Church — Sun, Tree, Serpent, Crocodile, and all.¹

On the first is seen Anubis . . . holding out a scroll; at his feet are two female busts; below all are two serpents entwined about . . . a corpse swathed up like a mummy. In the second scroll . . . is Anubis . . . holding out a cross, the “Sign of Life.” Under his feet lies the corpse encircled in the numerous folds of a huge serpent, the Agathodaimōn, guardian of the deceased. . . . In the third scroll . . . Anubis bears on his arm . . . the outline of . . . a complete Latin cross . . . At the god’s foot is a rhomboid, the Egyptian “Egg of the World,” towards which crawls a serpent coiled into a circle . . . Under the busts . . . is the letter ω repeated *seven* times in a line, reminding one of the “Names” . . . Very remarkable also is the line of characters, apparently Palmyrene, upon the legs of the first Anubis. As for the figure of the *serpent*, supposing these talismans to emanate not from the Isiac but the newer Ophite creed, it may well stand for that “True and perfect Serpent,” who “leads forth the souls of all that put their trust in him out of the Egypt of the body, and through the Red Sea of Death into the Land of Promise, saving them on their way from the Serpents of the Wilderness, that is, from the Rulers of the Stars.”²

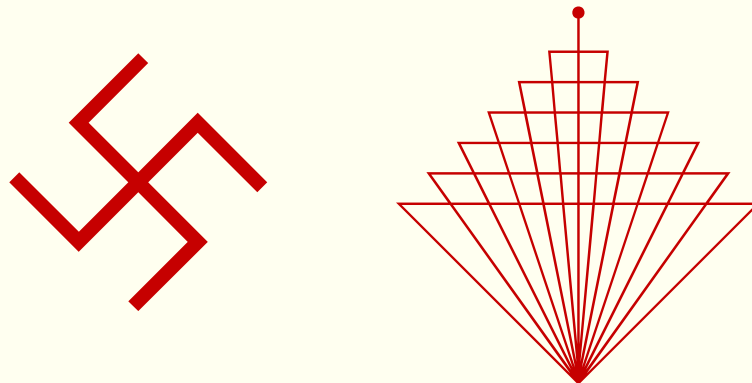
¹ [Consult “Against Ecclesiastical Christianity and Religious Dogmatism,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² Charles William King, *The Gnostics and their Remains, Ancient and Mediæval*, 2nd ed., 1887, pp. 366-68

The “True and Perfect Serpent,” the Dark Serpent of Absolute Wisdom of the Ophite creed, is the seven-vowelled God, represented by the Swastika – the seven-fold androgyne Logos unfolding out of its own essence the faculties and powers latent in Saptaparna, the seven-leaved Man-plant.

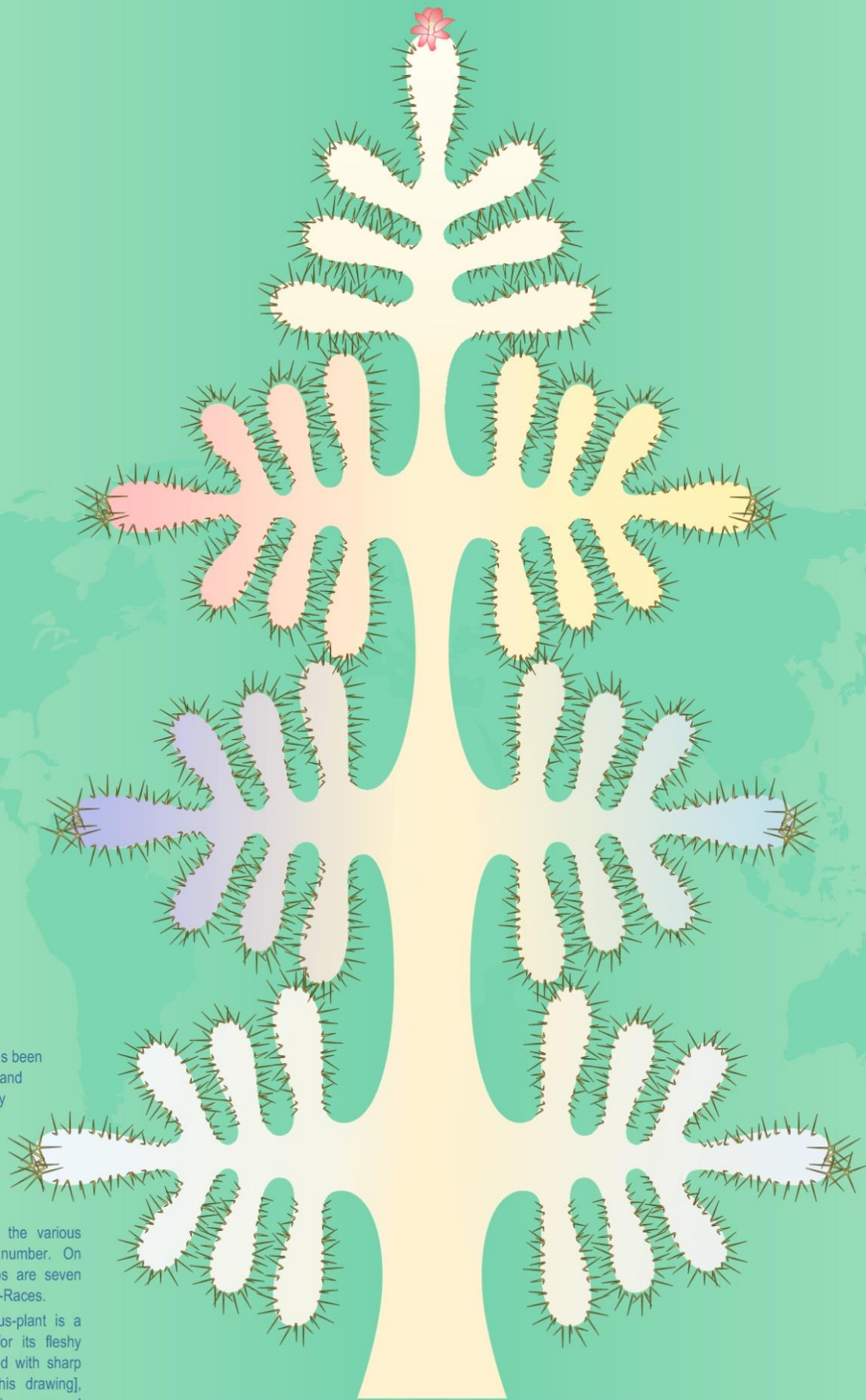
And this “True and Perfect Serpent” is the seven-lettered God who is now credited with being Jehovah, and Jesus *One with him*. To this Seven-vowelled god the candidate for initiation is sent by Christos, in the *Pistis Sophia*, a work earlier than St. John’s *Revelation*, and evidently of the same school. “The (Serpent of the) Seven Thunders uttered [411] these seven vowels,” but “seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not,” says *Revelation* x, 4. “Do ye seek after these mysteries?” inquires Jesus in *Pistis Sophia*.¹ “No mystery is more excellent than they [the seven vowels]: for they shall bring your souls unto the Light of Lights” — *i.e.*, true Wisdom. “Nothing, therefore, is more excellent than the mysteries which ye seek after, saving only *the mystery of the Seven Vowels and their FORTY AND NINE Powers, and the numbers thereof.*”

In India, it was *the mystery of the Seven FIRES* and their forty-nine fires or aspects, or “the members thereof,” just the same.



These seven vowels are represented by the Swastika signs on the crowns of the seven heads of the Serpent of Eternity, in India, among esoteric Buddhists, in Egypt, in Chaldea, etc. etc., and among the Initiates of every other country. It is on the Seven zones of *post mortem ascent*, in the Hermetic writings, that the “mortal” leaves, on each, one of his “Souls” (or Principles); until arrived on the plane above all zones, he remains as the great Formless Serpent of absolute wisdom — or the Deity itself. The seven-headed serpent has more than one signification in the Arcane teachings. It is the seven-headed *Draco*, each of whose heads is a star of the Lesser Bear; but it was also, and pre-eminently, the Serpent of Darkness (*i.e.*, inconceivable and incompressible) whose seven heads were the seven *Logoi*, the reflections of the one and first manifested Light — the universal LOGOS.

¹ § 378



The human Race has been compared to a tree, and this serves admirably as an illustration.

The main stem of a tree may be compared to the Root-Race.

Its larger limbs to the various Sub-Races; 7 in number. On each of these limbs are seven Branches, or Family-Races.

After this the cactus-plant is a better illustration, for its fleshy "leaves" are covered with sharp spines [1,449 in this drawing], each of which may be compared to a nation or tribe of human beings. (Cf. SD II, 434-35)

The term Root-Race applies to one of the seven great Races [e.g., Lemurian, Atlantean, Aryan, etc.], sub-Race to one of its great Branches, and Family-Race to one of the sub-divisions, which include nations and large tribes. (SD II, 198 fn)

Integrative Theosophical Studies

HUMANITY'S FIFTH ROOT-RACE

After *The Secret Doctrine* II, pp. 434-35

Illustration of the Human Race and its branches on Planet Earth, Tree of Life and Knowledge Eternal. The duration of each Root-Race is shown in Diagram 3.

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