



CONTINUITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

What does modern science know of the duration of the ages of the World, or even of the length of geological periods?

Nothing; absolutely nothing.... Indeed, in the Cimmerian darkness of the prehistoric ages, the explorers are lost in a labyrinth, whose great corridors are doorless, allowing no visible exit into the Archaic past. Lost in the maze of their own conflicting speculations, rejecting, as they have always done, the evidence of Eastern tradition, without any clue, or one single certain milestone to guide them, what can geologists or anthropologists do but pick up the slender thread of Ariadne.... They are 'prehistoric' to the naked eye of matter only. To the spiritual eagle eye of the seer and the prophet of every race, Ariadne's thread stretches beyond that 'historic periods without break or flaw, surely and steadily, into the very night of time; and the baud which holds it is too mighty to drop it, or even let it break.

The Secret Doctrine, ii 66-67

Ariadne's thread represents unbroken continuity of consciousness in the One Life. In relation to perception (*samvriti*) and knowledge (*prajna*), it stands for the principle of *Buddhi*, spiritual intuition, which by analogy and correspondence cuts through the maze of detail to the heart of the matter. Ariadne's thread is also the *sutratman*, the integrity of the immortal soul, the meta-psychological basis of individual awareness extending back over eighteen million years and serving as the storehouse of soul-memory (*anamnesis*). Through its capacity to tap *akasha*, the universal empyrean upon which are recorded all the archetypal truths behind the mass of manifested projections, the immortal soul, by reference to its inherent wisdom, can recover the most illuminating continuity of consciousness. It can bridge apparent gaps on the physical plane – between days and nights, between seasons and years – and cross chasms between incarnations. Even more important, it can span the *pralayas*, the periods of obscuration between Races and Rounds. This timeless wisdom of the soul cannot be comprehended by the ratiocinative, rationalizing mind.

Through material evidence, sensory data and induction, it is possible to accumulate masses of information which may then be submitted to logical or methodological analysis. Thus one can infer conjectural estimates of the age of the sun and the moon, of the earth and man. But such inferences, however intriguing, shed no light upon the complex relationship between cosmic and human chronology. Even if one extends anthropological estimates of the age of man to a period of nearly twenty million years, as suggested in the late work of L.S.B. Leakey, one grasps no sense of what happened to humanity during those unchronicled years. And, seeing only fragments of the conscious life of humanity, it is nearly impossible to conceive of the humanity of the hoary past, and its vital relationship to the decisive lighting up of *Manas* eighteen million years ago at the mid-point of the Fourth Round. With regard to more antique times and previous Rounds, empirical evidence that the physical earth and physical entities in space go back hundreds of millions of years reveals no helpful connections between all these enormously ancient relics and human evolution. In short, nearly nothing that is significant or definitive can be known about the primordial origins of conscious life through a reductionist methodology relying upon sensory evidence and inference from external shells and petrified astral deposits.

Instead of expecting such an unphilosophical methodology to assist in the recovery of universal continuity of consciousness, one must adopt a radically different approach, grounded in metaphysics. Employing a dialectical methodology analogous to the ontological process it seeks to apprehend, one must begin with persistent enquiry into the profound connection between the One and the many, the Logos and the Logoi. One must meditate upon phases of progressive manifestation, coming down from the most subjective level conceivable to the most objective visible level.

This radical transformation of method requires introversion, a turning within the immortal soul. But, since external evidence is so incomplete and so inadequate to understanding millions of years of conscious life, and since at the same time it is immensely difficult to turn within, it may seem impossible to make much progress. Without seed thoughts for meditation, it may appear hopeless even to begin the enquiry. Yet, this is not true. It is merely a presumptive delusion arising from the protracted *hubris* of Occidental pseudo-culture, which, out of its habitual ignorance of other languages, simply has not seriously considered the calendars and chronologies of ancient Indian, Chinese and other cultures. As H.P. Blavatsky repeatedly and forcefully affirmed a century ago, one must revert to time-honoured Eastern sources even to make sense of what may be sporadically inferred from physical evidence.

Paradoxically, despite the pioneering efforts of intrepid thinkers in the latter part of the nineteenth century in philology and phonetics connected with the entire stock of Indo-European languages, there has been subsequently an enormous shrinkage of chronologies in reference to Eastern civilizations. The balance has been redressed somewhat, in reference to China, largely through the work of Joseph Needham over the past thirty years. More recently, John Kaye, in his remarkable *The Discovery of India*, observes that there are five times as many books on India in the London Library as on China. Many were written by nineteenth-century Englishmen who confidently explored such various topics as the early relationship between India and Mediterranean civilization, the parental connection between Sanskrit and other languages, and the suggestive similarities between the oldest forms of architecture in India and architectural forms which later became prominent in Gothic Europe and throughout the Middle East.

Whilst many of these authors were overwhelmed with admiration by what they discovered over a lifetime – if not blinded by religious orthodoxy – they nonetheless could not recognize the continuing relevance of the ancient Indian records. This block arose either because they did not have free access to them and also to accurate Brahminical explanations, or because they were obsessed by the supposed primacy of Greek civilization. Now, all of this has been exploded, and anyone with a lively sense of *karma* can appreciate the appropriateness of atonement for past ingratitude. When modern Europeans came in contact with the much older and essentially noble civilization of India, and found elements far more ancient than Egyptian relics, something went clearly wrong with xenophobic assumptions and even with regard to 'scholarly' dating. *The Discovery of India* invaluablely demonstrates that many Europeans, even before the twentieth century, had traced the origins of major elements of Western civilization to ancient India. Despite their discomfort in proceeding to the fullest conclusions, they established the necessity of taking Eastern records seriously.

It is no wonder, then, that H.P. Blavatsky took the trouble in *The Secret Doctrine* to spell out certain details of ancient Indian and Brahminical calendars and chronologies. Before specifying exact figures, she remarked:

The best and most complete of all such calendars, at present, as vouched for by the learned Brahmins of Southern India, is the...Tamil calendar called the 'Tirukkanda Panchanga,' compiled, as we are told, from, and in full accordance with, secret fragments of Asuramaya's data. As Asuramaya is said to have been the greatest astronomer, so he is whispered to have also been the most powerful 'Sorcerer' of the 'WHITE ISLAND, which had become BLACK with sin,' i.e., of the islands of Atlantis.... He was an Atlantean; but he was a direct descendant of the *Wise Race, the Race that never dies*. Many are the legends concerning this hero, the pupil of Surya (the Sun-God) himself, as the Indian accounts allege.

Ibid., 67

According to this calendar, 1,955,884,687 years had elapsed between the beginning of evolution on Globe A of the earth chain in the First Round and the year 1887. It also located the manvantaric period of astral evolution in the sub-human kingdoms, and distinguished it from the subsequent period after the appearance of incipient 'humanity' on the earth chain. H.P. Blavatsky cited certain puzzles connected with the internal figures in this Tamil calendar, and also contrasted it with other orthodox Hindu calendars. As she explained both here and elsewhere, these riddles develop because esoteric figures cannot be revealed outside initiation. She then proceeded to present a simpler schema computed by Rao Bahadur P. Sreenivas Row, which begins with a single mortal day and extends all the way to the Age of Brahmâ. The telling significance of these figures is that they show that abundant knowledge is available, not only in the inaccessible cave libraries of the Kunlun Range, but also in calendars in common use in South India today, which could be employed as the basis of study. To understand this, one needs something more than a knowledge of mathematics: the method of analogy and correspondence.

Sanskrit and what is now called Tamil are *reliquiae* of ante-Diluvian and ante-Poseidonian languages. In them critical terms like *kalpa* and *manu* have a depth of occult symbolism which can only be grasped by taking them as generic terms applicable to the large and to the small and to many diverse levels of manifestation. This plasticity of meaning affords some protection to those who made these figures available but wanted to hold back certain clues that could, in the hands of unprepared human beings, become dangerous. At the same time, because of the generic nature of these words, one can understand by analogy and correspondence that what pertains to the vast *Maha-kalpa* also applies to the *kalpa* in the small. What applies to a hundred years of Brahmâ applies to one day of Brahmâ and also to the much smaller period of a *Maha-yuga*.

All of this poses a formidable challenge to the intuition and provides a great deal of food for thought and meditation. Working by analogy and correspondence with various sets of figures, myriad applications may be made not only on the vast scale of cosmic evolution, but equally on the minute scales of days, hours and minutes. For example, H.P. Blavatsky cited the views set forth by Dr. Laycock in *Lancet* regarding the universal applicability of septenary cycles of days and weeks to all animal life, from the ovum of an insect up to man, and affecting all their vital functions, including birth, growth, maturity, disease, decay and death.

Dr. Laycock divides life by *three great septenary periods*; the first and last, each stretching over 21 years, and the central period or prime of life lasting 28 years, or four times seven. He subdivides the first into *seven distinct stages*, and the other two into *three* minor periods, and says that 'The fundamental unit of the greater periods is *one week of seven days, each day being twelve hours*'; and that 'single and compound *multiples* of this unit, determine the length of these periods by the same ratio, as multiples of the unit of twelve hours determine the lesser periods. *This law binds all periodic vital phenomena together, and links the periods observed in the lowest annulose animals, with those of man himself, the highest of the vertebrata.*' If Science does this, why should the latter scorn the Occult information, namely that (speaking Dr. Laycock's language) '*one week of the manvantaric(lunar) fortnight, of fourteen days (or seven manus), that fortnight of twelve hours in a day representing seven periods or seven races – is now passed*'? This language of science fits our doctrine admirably.

Ibid., 623

Anyone who tentatively explores such mysterious connections between numbers and daily life begins to touch the Ariadne's thread of the immortal soul. Exactly how this is done and what its effect will be depends upon one's motivation and the tropism of one's soul. Some, ill at ease with the shrunken categories of modern science, yet enthralled with the sky, the planets and the galaxies, may be able to discern intuitive connections which inspire them in their dreams and activate their soul-memory. Others, who tend to think philosophically and metaphysically, may find that such enquiries arouse a hunger for meditation, which in turn helps them to see the archetypal logic of these processes. At the very least, such enquiries will yield an enormous sense of freedom from all that limits the horizons of human thought, all that constrains the reach of the human imagination. Once the imagination is freed, one can make one's own discoveries, through myth and symbol, and express them, through poetry or otherwise. The core discovery strengthened by all this enquiry is a sense of kinship, not only with all humanity and all past civilization, but also with the flora and fauna of the earth, and ultimately the living cosmos in its entirety.

The recovery of continuity of consciousness and the reawakening of soul-memory are central to *The Secret Doctrine*. These cannot emerge except through devotion and gratitude, and through preparing oneself to sit at the feet of real Gurus. Hence, H.P. Blavatsky's repeated insistence that the West must relinquish its adolescent egotism; hence, too, her constant recurrence to the figure of the Arhat, the perfected man, the Adept and Initiate. Before one can recover continuity of consciousness in the *sutratman*, one must acknowledge the existence not only of soul-memory but also of perfected sages, souls free from the illusion of time and able to witness vast periods of evolution as ordinary human beings watch moments. For the Mahatma, Ariadne's thread stretches in unbroken continuity and total wakefulness beyond the manifestation of this world and into the night of *pralaya* and beyond.

The highest ideal in the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas is to gain a sense of continuity with the substratum of reality that persists even when there are no worlds, but only the night of non-manifestation. By plumbing the depths of that night, even beyond the night of time, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas find a freedom and detachment that enables them to see worlds and aeons through an instantaneous flash of Buddhist light. What the perfected human being can do in fullness every human being can attempt, if he or she will practise the toughest of all kinds of mental asceticism – turning a deaf ear to the conventional unwisdom of the exoteric world whilst remaining constantly attentive to every source of potential learning. To release this oceanic sense of universal continuity, one should turn to the sky and the stars, to the poets and the prophets.

To trace Ariadne's thread across incarnations, much less *pralayas* affecting Races and Rounds, requires the tremendous courage that can come only through systematic meditation. This inner discipline is not merely one activity amongst others, capriciously undertaken. It is, rather, the basis for awakening the powers of discrimination of different levels of composition or aggregation, of reduction, reabsorption and dissolution. The mastery of these processes, which takes place within the subtle vestures and is centered on the *karana sharira*, has a direct relationship with the alternation of *manvantara* and *pralaya*. Broadly, the septenary Teachings of *Gupta Vidya* concerning the seven planes of matter and seven states of consciousness have a general reference to all systems within the cosmos. The Teachings also have a more specific reference to the solar system and a primary focus for humanity on this earth. Humanity, circling round the seven globes, finds itself in the Fourth Round on Globe D, the most material of the terrestrial spheres. This globe is preceded by three ethereal globes and succeeded by three globes which are also

ethereal but represent a more evolved state of consciousness.

In the present fourth life-wave, occupying millions upon millions of years in its circuit through the seven globes, humanity finds itself evolving through a sevenfold series of vestures that are adapted to matter as it exists in this system. Having attained self-consciousness over eighteen million years ago, in the middle of the Third Root Race, and now belonging to the Fifth Sub-Race of the Fifth Root Race, it still must experience many periods of relative activity and rest before arriving at the close of the present Round. The most immediately relevant shift in the basis of active manifestation applicable to humanity in general is the gradual transition from the Fifth to the Sixth Sub-Races of the Fifth Root Race. Because the Law of periodicity is universal, this transition cannot take place without a pralayaic dissolution of aspects of the human vestures and their subsequent re-manifestation in a transformed mode. Whatever the subtle consequences of this significant change on the four lower planes, the essential locus of this transmutation is in the fifth and sixth principles of human nature – *Manas* and *Buddhi*. Hence, the meaning and magnitude of the present transformation cannot be apprehended from any standpoint bound up with the lower quaternary, but only from within the Manasic principle of self-consciousness through its meditative attunement to *Buddhi*. Otherwise, the apparent *pralaya* of contemporary civilizations, as well as the promise and potential of an incipient golden age, cannot be comprehended.

The Teachings of the *Gupta Vidya* with regard to *manvantara* and *pralaya* are meant to be studied not merely out of intellectual interest or philosophic curiosity. They are intended for those who truly seek to become *yogins*: those who, by daily meditation, daily self-study and the daily renunciation of the fruits of action, seek self-consciously to bring about profound changes in their subtle vestures consonant with the present phase of evolution. Through the spiritual discipline of concentration, they aim at making the astral form coherent, and the mind controlled. In the context of such a regenerative discipline, the radical difference between psychic action – which works at the level of the molecular and the structural – and noetic action – which works at the level of the atomic – is vital. Here the term 'atomic' refers to that which is even more rudimentary than what science calls atomic or even subatomic. This cannot be apprehended unless a person experiences self-consciously the progressive refinement of magnetism, involving sub-hierarchies of colour and sound and yielding a percipient awareness of the most minute subdivisions of various classes of elementals.

The basic distinction between the psychic and the noetic applies not only to all the elements, but also to thoughts, and indeed to everything perceptible at any level of form. Through deep meditation, one may awaken the capacity to touch that golden Buddhic potency which is in everything, and thus bring about a beneficent alchemical transubstantiation. But one must first have attained to such a degree of disinterestedness that one can consciously assist and accelerate the processes of change, quickening the process of dispersion. Through meditation one must learn to cooperate intelligently with the atomic noetic potential of the higher Triad in a pralayaic process of continuous dispersion and dissolution, refusing to allow any re-coalescence of that which is dying, so as to sustain continuity of consciousness into that which is being born.

Unfortunately, through possessiveness, through enormous thirst for sensation, through reassertion of *ahankara* – the drives inherent in the Fourth Round, whose dominant principle *iskama* – most humans tend to solidify, to concretize the moribund residues of the past. This is analogous to the physical process, whereby creatures that lived in previous, more ethereal Rounds leave behind them fossils, concretized residues. If this process

of consolidation applies to all the life-atoms that make up the astral form in its aspects linked to the physical body, it is also relevant to the subtler states of the astral vesture. To understand and assist the corresponding process of perpetual dissolution, or *nitya pralaya*, is to engage in a kind of letting go, that continual practice of dying which Plato depicts in *Phaedo* as central to the life of the true philosopher. Conscious and continuous dispersion of all the elements is inseparable from an equal sensitivity to constant and perpetual creation, or *nitya sarga*. the invisible creation at the primary causal level of nature which continually maintains the universe in motion. Taken together, *nitya pralaya* and *nitya sarga* are complementary aspects of the Great Breath. Meditation upon *pralaya* and *manvantara*, dissolution and creation, is linked with mastering spiritual and mental breathing. This involves not only their rhythm but also their attunement to the subtlest level of cosmic breathing.

The profound Teaching regarding *nitya pralaya* and *nitya sarga*, like everything else connected with spiritual self-transformation and self-regeneration, cannot be consciously applied unless one learns to work in terms of cycles of seven and fourteen years. One must prepare for that stage by thinking out to the core who one is, why one is alive, what one truly wants, and what it is one is prepared to live for. This requires a careful preparation in detachment, as well as the courage to face and fully accept one's karmic responsibilities in the realm of *dharma*. These are the prerequisites of discipleship and practical occultism. Merely by thinking upon these ideas, individuals can tap soul-knowledge in relation to past lives, wherein this knowledge was direct and active. If a person is sufficiently compassionate, suffused with an authentic concern for the welfare of all that lives, determined to be vitally helpful to humanity in some future life – ten lives or a hundred lives from now – then he or she can sufficiently prepare for occult training by coming to understand now that which will come to one's aid at the moment of death. This self-conscious strengthening of the sutratmic thread will enhance the moment of birth in the next life, easing entry early in that life into the Bodhisattvic current.

In the nineteenth century H.P. Blavatsky sought to assure those who had retired from productive lives that even in old age they might prepare their mental luggage for the next life. Today many suffer from the opposite affliction. Through weak wills, frustrated ambitions or fearful eschatologies, they are resolved to do everything quickly or not at all. This is mental laziness, as well as a futile attempt at moral blackmail directed against the universe. Instead of such self-destructive cowardice, one should strive to be fearless in the metaphysical imagination, and dwell on the highest conceptions. One should be ready to look up to the boundless sky whilst addressing one's obligations on earth. Holding fast to a serene rhythm of selfless devotion, one should develop an ethical sensitivity to others, whilst maintaining an alert attentiveness to one's own obligations. One must refine a sense of balance, soaring to the empyrean in meditation, whilst controlling the quotidian details of ethical involvement. Thus metaphysics and ethics may be brought together, to create a steady, strong current of fervent aspiration. Thus too, the process of dissolution is quickened, the potential for continuous creation increased. By letting go, one cooperates with nature's archetypal rhythms.

Beyond these cyclic transformations lies the Triad of absolute abstract Space, Duration and Motion, the metaphysical basis for all continuity of consciousness. All three may be seen as aspects of the Three-in-One, expanding the conceptions of matter, time and motion into primordial substance, boundless eternity and divine thought. It is also helpful to concentrate on absolute abstract Motion as the One Life. This has a philosophical bearing upon one's notions of relative degrees of reality and unreality, of emptiness and

illusion, of dependence and causality. The One Life comprises both light and electricity in all their cosmic manifestations and is equivalent to the universal soul or Anima Mundi. In Sanskrit it is the *Jivatman*, the analogue of the Platonic Nous or mundane cosmic intelligence, absolutely free from differentiated matter and ever-designing action. Through the invocation of the *Jivatman*, the ever-pulsating life-principle, infinite and all-transcendent, Aryan philosophy addresses itself to that perpetual motion which is beyond the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness. Only through relation to a field of manifestation, relative to *Mahat inmanvantara* and *pralaya*, can one speak of that which is conscious, self-conscious or unconscious. So entirely does *Jivatman* transcend all human conception that it may as well be spoken of as absolute unconsciousness as absolute consciousness.

If the One Life or *Jivatman* is beyond all these distinctions, this implies that absolute and abstract continuity of consciousness has nothing to do with the purposes and processes of manifestation. It could, for example, be confusing to speak as Hegel does of the Absolute seeking to attain self-consciousness, or, in Hindu terms, of *Parabrahm* having some motive in manifestation. The notion of pure being or absolute consciousness admits of no contrast or polarity, and can participate in no relativities whatsoever. Nor can it have anything to do with the infinite extension of any attribute of finite manifestation (even so subtle an attribute of manifestation as thought, which necessarily presupposes the differentiation of a field and its perceiver). If, then, one is going to meditate upon universal life as a boundless ocean of energy without frontier or finite purpose, one must be freed of all binding conceptions and limiting teleologies, and even all thought bound up with mental instantiation in time. One of the Rishis likened the Reality apprehended in *pralaya* to the depths of a boundless ocean of ceaseless energy.

In that fathomless divine abyss, everything is potential, but as a formless and fundamental rhythm or pulsation without reference to any worlds or to manifestation itself. It cannot be understood in relation to the absence of worlds. It is neither definable through affirmation nor through negation, neither through instantiation nor through privation. Cyclic or periodic existence, on the other hand, involves changes of form and state. Archetypally, this may be understood in terms of the potential of the seed, which gestates, then sprouts, then, as a tree with branches and limbs, bears in turn a myriad seeds. On an abstract level, this entire process contains an intrinsic reference to form and matter as it appears to minds that perceive it, and therefore, also a reference to variations of states of perceptive consciousness. These contrasts within manifested matter and consciousness are essential to cyclic existence but in no way characterize the impartite and boundless Reality beyond manifestation.

To every cycle there is a mayavic element, a veiling of that which is indestructible and entirely unaffected by transformation. The life potency that is in the seed in essence is a reflection of something on the akashic plane unaffected by the seed's sprouting. Some beings on this plane may worry whether seeds sprout, but in terms of the essence, the sprouting is of no significance. Once this idea is grasped, one can begin to understand how it is possible, through perception of formless spiritual essences, to change one's perspective in reference to any cycle or to relate the phases of one cycle to another. One may, for example, relate the seven days of the week to the seven planets, and both to the seven phases of human life. Thus one may discern both sequence and possibility, whilst stripping certain cycles of a portion of their limitation. The ability to do this at will depends upon the extent to which one's consciousness is freed from the clutches of *kamamanas*, desire, time and sensation. When the ray of the *Jivatman* is emancipated from the bondage

of change, it can experience the universal pulsation of its omnipresent source. Thus it is possible to create a certain negative capability, in the Keatsian sense, a capacity for awareness of the unmanifest side of nature. The greater this capacity, the more one can correct the natural tendency within incarnation of being caught up in the results and rancours of yesterday, today or tomorrow.

Authentic continuity of consciousness consists of unbroken self-conscious experience of the universality of the life-process, enjoying and relishing its unity amidst all the diversity. It is the ability to trace the Ariadne's thread of the One Life in all the seven kingdoms of nature amidst all the multitudinous forms, whilst at the same time reverencing it at its very root in a realm that is beyond manifestation, beyond the realm of form, exempt from change, undivided by subject and object. The purpose of all study of the sacred and secret science is to gain this freedom for the imagination and this depth for meditation, so that one may become better able to see to the core, and better able to discard that which obscures the Monadic spark. In practice, this means elevating, through daily discipline, one's ethical nature to the same level as one's metaphysical imagination.

One must reach a point where one's only desire or wish is on behalf of the whole, and where one's celebration of all human beings in one's own silent meditation is so real and so joyous that the boundaries of selfhood are shattered. Too often, the two wings of metaphysics and ethics are unbalanced, and spiritual aspirants find that they cannot convert metaphysics into magic. They lack the strength of mind and heart to void their sense of egoity and enclose all humanity within the vast continuity of universal self. Hence, the exercise of the metaphysical imagination must be strengthened daily through meditation, in the midst of the therapeutic practice of self-study and the cheerful performance of *dharma*. When ethics and metaphysics retain a durable continuity, and flow with a graceful balance, they can be synthesized, to awaken Buddhimanasic wisdom and the soul-memory of the *sutratman*. Drawing upon that wisdom and sacrificing all strivings at its universal fire, one can make the requisite changes in consciousness, in the substance of the subtle vestures, and in one's magnetic field, so as to become effortless in the continual self-conscious enactment of the AUM.

[Hermes](#), April 1983