

The origin of the Mysteries

Sunday Study Group: 10/06/2018

All that is explained in the preceding sections and a hundredfold more was taught in the Mysteries from time immemorial. If the first appearance of those institutions is a matter of historical tradition with regard to some of the later nations, their origin must certainly be assigned to the time of the Fourth Root Race. The Mysteries were imparted to the elect of that Race when the average Atlantean had begun to fall too deeply into sin to be trusted with the secrets of Nature. Their establishment is attributed in the Secret Works to the King-Initiates of the divine dynasties, when the “Sons of God” had gradually allowed their country to become *Kukarmadeśa* (the land of vice).

The antiquity of the Mysteries may be inferred from the history of the worship of Hercules in Egypt. This Hercules, according to what the priests told Herodotus, was not Grecian, for he says:

‘Of the Grecian Hercules I could in no part of Egypt procure any knowledge: . . . the name was never borrowed by Egypt from Greece. . . Hercules . . . as they [the priests] affirm, is one of the twelve (great Gods), who were reproduced from the earlier eight Gods 17,000 years before the year of Amasis.’

Hercules is of Indian origin, and—his Biblical chronology put aside—Colonel Todd was quite right in his suggestion that he was Balarama or Baladeva. Now one must read the Purānas with the Esoteric key in one’s hand in order to find out how on almost every page they corroborate the Secret Doctrine. The ancient classical writers so well understood this truth that they unanimously attributed to Asia the origin of Hercules.*

* A section of the *Mahābhārata* is devoted to the history of the Hercūla, of which race was Vyāsa. Diodorus has the same legend with some variety. He says: “Hercules was born amongst the Indians and, like the Greeks, they furnish him with a club and lion’s hide.” He is the lord of the race (cūla) of Heri (Heri-cul-es) of which the Greeks might have made the compound word Hercules.

There were no Mysteries in the beginning, we are taught. Knowledge (Vidyā) was common property, and it reigned universally throughout the Golden Age (Satya-Yuga). As says the Commentary: ‘*Men had not created evil yet in those days of bliss and purity, for they were of God-like more than of human nature.*’ But when mankind, rapidly increasing in numbers, increased also in variety of idiosyncrasies of body and mind, then incarnated Spirit showed its weakness. Natural exaggerations, and along with these superstitions, arose in the less cultured and healthy minds. Selfishness was born out of desires and passions hitherto unknown, and but too often knowledge and power were abused, until finally it became necessary to limit the number of those *who knew*. Thus arose Initiation.

Every separate nation now arranged for itself a religious system, according to its enlightenment and spiritual wants. Worship of mere form being discarded by the wise men, these confined true knowledge to the very few. The need of veiling truth to protect it from desecration becoming more apparent with every generation, a thin veil was used at first, which had to be gradually thickened according to the spread of personality and selfishness, and this led to the Mysteries. They came to be established in every country and among every people, while to avoid strife and misunderstanding exoteric beliefs were allowed to grow up in the minds of the profane masses. Inoffensive and innocent in their incipient stage—like a historical

event arranged in the form of a fairy tale, adapted for and comprehensible to the child's mind—in those distant ages such beliefs could be allowed to grow and make the popular faith without any danger to the more philosophical and abstruse truths taught in the sanctuaries. Logical and scientific observation of the phenomena in Nature, which alone leads man to the knowledge of eternal truths—provided he approaches the threshold of observation unbiased by preconception and sees with his spiritual eye before he looks at things from their physical aspect—does not lie within the province of the masses. The marvels of the One Spirit of Truth, the ever-concealed and inaccessible Deity, can be unravelled and assimilated only through its manifestations by the secondary “Gods,” Its acting powers. While the One and Universal Cause has to remain forever *in abscondito*, its manifold action may be traced through the effects in Nature. The latter alone being comprehensible and manifest to average mankind, the Powers causing those effects were allowed to grow in the imagination of the populace. Ages later in the Fifth, the Āryan Race, some unscrupulous priests began to take advantage of the too easy beliefs of the people in every country, and finally raised those secondary Powers to the rank of God and Gods, thus succeeding in isolating them altogether from the One Universal Cause of all causes.*

* There were no Brāhmans as a hereditary caste in days of old. In those long-departed ages a man became a Brāhman through personal merit and Initiation. Gradually, however, despotism crept in, and the son of a Brāhman was created a Brāhman by right of protection first, then by that of heredity. The rights of blood replaced those of real merit, and thus arose the body of Brāhmans, which was soon changed into a powerful caste.

Henceforward the knowledge of the primeval truths remained entirely in the hands of the Initiates. The Mysteries had their weak points and their defects, as every institution welded with the human element must necessarily have. Yet Voltaire has characterised their benefits in a few words:

‘In the chaos of popular superstitions there existed an institution which has ever prevented man from falling into absolute brutality: it was that of the Mysteries.’

Verily, as Jean Marie Ragon puts it of Masonry:

Its temple has Time for duration, the Universe for space. . . . “Let us divide that we may rule,” have said the crafty; “Let us unite to resist,” have said the first Masons. ‡

Or rather, the Initiates whom the Masons have never ceased to claim as their direct Masters.

‡ *Des Initiations Anciennes et Modernes*, [pp. 17-18. Nancy, France, F. Guérard, 2nd ed., 1842.] “The mysteries,” says Ragon, “were the gift of India.” In this he is mistaken, for the Āryan race had brought the mysteries of Initiation from Atlantis. Nevertheless he is right in saying that the mysteries preceded all civilizations, and that by polishing the mind and morals of the peoples, they served as a base for all the laws—civil, political, and religious.

The first and fundamental principle of moral strength and power is association and solidarity of thought and purpose. “The Sons of Will and Yoga” united in the beginning to resist the terrible and ever-growing iniquities of the left hand Adepts, the Atlanteans. This led to the foundation of still more Secret Schools, temples of learning, and of Mysteries

inaccessible to all except after the most terrible trials and probations. Anything that might be said of the earliest Adepts and their divine Masters would be regarded as fiction. It is necessary, therefore, if we would know something of the primitive Initiates to judge of the tree by its fruits; to examine the bearing and the work of their successors in the Fifth Race as reflected in the works of the classic writers and the great philosophers. How were Initiation and the Initiates regarded during some 2,000 years by the Greek and Roman writers? Cicero informs his readers in very clear terms. He says:

‘An Initiate must practise all the virtues in his power: justice, fidelity, liberality, modesty, temperance; these virtues cause men to forget the talents that he may lack.’

Ragon says:

‘When the Egyptian priests said: “All for the people, nothing through the people,” they were right: in an ignorant nation truth must be revealed only to trustworthy persons. . . We have seen in our days, “all through the people, nothing for the people,” a false and dangerous system. The real axiom ought to be: “All for the people and *with* the people.’

But in order to achieve this reform the masses have to pass through a dual transformation: **(a)** to become divorced from every element of exoteric superstition and priest craft, and **(b)** to become educated men, free from every danger of being enslaved whether by a man or an idea. This, in view of the preceding, may seem paradoxical. The Initiates were “priests,” we may be told—at any rate, all the Hindu, Egyptian, Chaldean, Greek, Phoenician, and other Hierophants and Adepts were priests in the temples, and it was they who invented their respective exoteric creeds. To this the answer is possible: “The cowl does not make the friar.” If one may believe tradition and the unanimous opinion of ancient writers, added to the examples we have in the “priests” of India, the most conservative nation in the world, it becomes quite certain that the Egyptian priests were no more priests in the sense we give to the word than are the temple Brāhmans. They could never be regarded as such if we take as our standard the European clergy. Laurens observes very correctly that:

‘The priests of Egypt were not, strictly speaking ministers of religion. The word “priest,” which translation has been badly interpreted, had an acceptation very different from the one that is applied to it among us. In the language of antiquity, and especially in the sense of the initiation of the priests of ancient Egypt, the word “priest” is synonymous with that of “philosopher.” . . . The institution of the Egyptian priests seems to have been really a confederation of sages gathered to study the art of ruling men, to centre the domain of truth, modulate its propagation, and arrest its too dangerous dispersion.’

The Egyptian Priests, like the Brāhmans of old, held the reins of the governing powers, a system that descended to them by direct inheritance from the Initiates of the great Atlantis. The pure cult of Nature in the earliest patriarchal days—the word “patriarch” applying in its first original sense to the Progenitors of the human race, † the Fathers, Chiefs, and Instructors of primitive men—became the heirloom of those alone who could discern the noumenon beneath the phenomenon. Later, the Initiates transmitted their knowledge to the human kings, as their divine Masters had passed it to their forefathers. It was their prerogative and duty to reveal the secrets of Nature that were useful to mankind—the hidden virtues of plants, the art of healing the sick, and of bringing about brotherly love and mutual help among mankind.

† The word “patriarch” is composed of the Greek word “Patria” (“family,” “tribe,” or “nation”) and “Archos” (a “chief”), the paternal principle. The Jewish Patriarchs who were pastors, passed their name to the Christian Patriarchs, yet they were no priests, but were simply the heads of their tribes, like the Indian Rishis.

No Initiate was one if he could not heal—aye, recall to life from apparent death (coma) those who, too long neglected, would have indeed died during their lethargy.* Those who showed such powers were forthwith set above the crowds, and were regarded as Kings and Initiates. Gautama Buddha was a King-Initiate, a healer, and recalled to life those who were in the hands of death. Jesus and Apollonius were healers, and were both addressed as Kings by their followers. Had they failed to raise those who were to all intents and purposes the dead, none of their names would have passed down to posterity; for this was the first and crucial test, the certain sign that the Adept had upon Him the invisible hand of a primordial divine Master, or was an incarnation of one of the “Gods.”

* There is no need to observe here that the resurrection of a *really* dead body is an impossibility in Nature.

The later royal privilege descended to our Fifth Race kings through the kings of Egypt. The latter were all initiated into the mysteries of medicine, and they healed the sick, even when, owing to the terrible trials and labours of final Initiation, they were unable to become full Hierophants. They were healers by privilege and by tradition, and were assisted in the healing art by the Hierophants of the temples, when they themselves were ignorant of Occult curative Science. So also in far later historical times we find Pyrrhus curing the sick by simply touching them with his foot; Vespasian and Hadrian needed only to pronounce a few words taught to them by their Hierophants, in order to restore sight to the blind and health to the cripple. From that time onward history has recorded cases of the same privilege conferred on the emperors and kings of almost every nation. †

† The kings of Hungary claimed that they could cure the jaundice; the Dukes of Burgundy were credited with preserving people from the plague; the kings of Spain delivered those possessed by the devil. The prerogative of curing the king’s evil was given to the kings of France, in reward for the virtues of good King Robert. Francis the First, during a short stay at Marseilles for his son’s wedding, touched and cured of that disease upwards of 500 persons. The kings of England had the same privilege.

That which is known of the Priests of Egypt and of the ancient Brāhmans, corroborated as it is by all the ancient classics and historical writers, gives us the right to believe in that which is only traditional in the opinion of sceptics. Whence the wonderful knowledge of the Egyptian Priests in every department of Science, unless they had it from a still more ancient source? The famous “Four,” the seats of learning in old Egypt, are more historically certain than the beginnings of modern England. It was in the great Theban sanctuary that Pythagoras upon his arrival from India studied the Science of Occult numbers. It was in Memphis that Orpheus popularized his too-abstruse Indian metaphysics for the use of *Magna Grecia*; and thence Thales, and ages later Democritus, obtained all they knew. It is to Saïs that all the honour must be given of the wonderful legislation and the art of ruling people, imparted by its Priests to Lycurgus and Solon, who will both remain objects of admiration for generations to come. And had Plato and Eudoxus never gone to worship at the shrine of Heliopolis, most probably the

one would have never astonished future generations with his ethics, nor the other with his wonderful knowledge of mathematics.

The great modern writer on the Mysteries of Egyptian Initiation—one, however, who knew nothing of those in India--the late Ragon, has not exaggerated in maintaining that:

‘All the notions possessed by Hindustan, Persia, Syria, Arabia, Chaldaea, Sydonia, and the priests of Babylonia [on the secrets of Nature], were known to the Egyptian priests. It is thus Indian philosophy, without mysteries, which, having penetrated into Chaldaea and ancient Persia, gave rise to the doctrine of Egyptian Mysteries.’

The Mysteries preceded the hieroglyphics. ‡ They gave birth to the latter, as permanent records were needed to preserve and commemorate their secrets. It is primitive Philosophy that has served as the foundation-stone for modern Philosophy; only the progeny, while perpetuating the features of the external body, has lost on its way the Soul and Spirit of its parent.

‡ The word comes from the Greek “hieros” (“sacred”) and “glupho” (“I grave”). The Egyptian characters were sacred to the Gods, as the Indian Devanāgarī is the language of the Gods.

Initiation, though it contained neither rules and principles, nor any special teaching of Science—as now understood—was nevertheless Science, and the Science of sciences. And though devoid of dogma, of physical discipline, and of exclusive ritual, it was yet the one true Religion—that of eternal truth. Outwardly it was a school, a college, wherein were taught sciences, arts, ethics, legislation, philanthropy, the cult of the true and real nature of cosmic phenomena; secretly, during the Mysteries, practical proofs of the latter were given. Those who could learn truth on all things—*i.e.*, those who could look the great Isis in her unveiled face and bear the awful majesty of the Goddess—became Initiates. But the children of the Fifth Race had fallen too deeply into matter always to do so with impunity. Those who failed disappeared from the world, without leaving a trace behind. Which of the highest kings would have dared to claim any individual, however high his social standing, from the stern priests, once that the victim had crossed the threshold of their sacred Adytum?

The modern etymology of the word “philosophy,” is interpreted as “love of wisdom,” and is nothing of the kind. The philosophers were scientists, and philosophy was a real science— not simply verbiage, as it is in our day. The term is composed of two Greek words whose meaning is intended to convey its secret sense, and ought to be interpreted as “wisdom of love.” Now it is in the last word, “love,” that lies hidden the esoteric significance: for “love” does not stand here as a noun, nor does it mean “affection” or “fondness,” but is the term used for Eros, that primordial principle in divine creation, synonymous with *πρόθος*, the abstract desire in Nature for procreation, resulting in an everlasting series of phenomena. The “wisdom of love” (or “philosophia”) meant attraction to everything hidden beneath objective phenomena and the knowledge thereof.

The noble precepts taught by the Initiates of the early races passed to India, Egypt, and Greece, to China and Chaldaea, and thus spread all over the world. All that is good, noble, and grand in human nature, every divine faculty and aspiration, were cultured by the Priest-Philosophers who sought to develop them in their Initiates. Their code of ethics, based on altruism, has become universal. It is found in Confucius, the “atheist,” who taught that “he who loves not his brother has no virtue in him,” and in the *Old Testament* precept, “Thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself.” The greater Initiates became like unto Gods, and Socrates, in Plato’s *Phaedo*, is represented as saying:

‘The Initiates are sure to come into the company of the Gods.’

In the same work the great Athenian Sage is made to say:

‘It is quite apparent that those who have established the Mysteries, or the secret assemblies of the Initiates, were no mean persons, but powerful genii, who from the first ages had endeavoured to make us understand under those enigmas that he who will reach the invisible regions unpurified will be hurled into the abyss [the Eighth Sphere of the Occult Doctrine; that is, he will lose his personality for ever], while he who will attain them purged of the maculations of this world, and accomplished in virtues will be received in the abode of the Gods.’

A Christian Father of the Church speaks then as did the Pagan Pretextatus, the pro-consul of Achaia (fourth century A.D.), “a man of eminent virtues,” who remarked that to deprive the Greeks of “the sacred Mysteries which bind in one the whole of mankind,” was to render their very lives worthless to them. Would the Mysteries have ever obtained the highest praise from the noblest men of antiquity had they not been of more than human origin? Read all that is said of this unparalleled institution, as much by those who had never been initiated, as by the Initiates themselves. Consult Plato, Euripides, Socrates, Aristophanes, Pindar, Plutarch, Isocrates, Diodorus, Cicero, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, not to name dozens of other famous Sages and writers. That which the Gods and Angels had *revealed*, exoteric religions, beginning with that of Moses, *revealed* and hid for ages from the sight of the world. Joseph, the son of Jacob, was an Initiate, otherwise he would not have married Aseneth, the daughter of Petephre (“Potiphar”—“he who belongs to Phre,” the Sun-God), priest of Heliopolis. Every truth *revealed* by Jesus, and which even the Jews and early Christians understood, was *revealed* by the Church that pretends to serve Him. Read what Seneca says, as quoted by Dr. E.V.H. Kenealy:

“The world being melted and having reëntered the bosom of Jupiter [or Parabrahman], this God continues for some time totally centered in himself and remains concealed, as it were, wholly immersed in the contemplation of his own ideas. Afterwards we see a new world spring from him. . . . An innocent race of men is formed. . . .” And again, speaking of a mundane dissolution as involving the destruction or death of all, he [Seneca] teaches us that when the laws of Nature shall be buried in ruin and the last day of the world shall come, the Southern Pole shall crush, as it falls, all the regions of Africa; and the North Pole shall overwhelm all the countries beneath its axis. *The affrighted sun shall be deprived of its light*; the palace of heaven, falling to decay, shall produce at once both life and death, and some kind of dissolution shall equally seize upon all the deities, who thus shall return to their original chaos.

The Druids understood the meaning of the Sun in Taurus, therefore when all the fires were extinguished on the 1st of November their sacred and inextinguishable fire remained alone to illumine the horizon like those of the Magi and the modern Zoroastrian. And like the early Fifth Race and the later Chaldaeans and Greeks, and again like the Christians (who do it to this day without suspecting the real meaning), they greeted the “Morning-Star,” the beautiful Venus-Lucifer.* Strabo speaks of an island near Britannia where Ceres and Persephone were worshipped with the same rites as in Samothrace, and this was the sacred Ierne, where a

perpetual fire was lit. The Druids believed in the rebirth of man, in a series of reincarnations in this same world; for as Diodorus says, they declared that the souls of men after a determinate period would pass into other bodies. §

§ There was a time when the whole world, the totality of mankind, had one religion as they were of "one lip." "All the religions of the earth were at first one, and emanated from one centre," says G.S. Faber.

These tenets came to the Fifth Race Āryans from their ancestors of the Fourth Race, the Atlanteans. They piously preserved the teachings, while their parent Root-Race, becoming with every generation more arrogant, owing to the acquisition of superhuman powers and were gradually approaching its end.