

# *The Seven Creations in the Purāṇas*

by  
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H. P. Blavatsky tells us in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine* that:

The history of cosmic evolution, as traced in the Stanzas, is, so to say, the abstract algebraical formula of that Evolution. . . . The Stanzas, therefore, give an abstract formula which can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to all evolution. . . . The seven Stanzas given in this volume represent the seven terms of this abstract formula. They refer to, and describe the seven great stages of the evolutionary process, which are spoken of in the *Purāṇas* as the “Seven Creations,” and in the Bible as the “Days” of Creation.<sup>1</sup>

Blavatsky discusses these seven creations from the Purāṇas in *The Secret Doctrine* in the chapter titled, “The Seven Creations.”<sup>2</sup> There, she cites these creations from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (translated by H. H. Wilson, and edited by Fitzedward Hall),<sup>3</sup> as this great evolutionary process is presented.

## **What are the Purāṇas?**

The Purāṇas are the sourcebooks of ancient Indian tradition. There are eighteen major Purāṇas, and together they form a vast repository of legendary history, cosmogony, mythology, and Indian culture. These sacred works are said to have been compiled by the sage Vyāsa.<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally, a Purāṇa was supposed to treat five different topics. These topics are:

1. *Sarga*: creation or emanation of the universe;
2. *Pratisarga*: dissolution and re-creation;
3. *Vaṃśa*: lineage or race, the genealogies or dynasties of kings, sages, and gods;
4. *Manvantara*: the time period of a *manu* or humanity;
5. *Vaṃśānucarita*: accounts of the individual kings, sages, and gods.<sup>5</sup>

### **What are the Seven Creations in the Purāṇas?**

The seven creations are divided into two groups, primary (*prākṛta*) and secondary or derivative (*vaikṛta*).

Primary creation (*prākṛta-sarga*) consists of:

1. *Mahat-sarga*, creation or emanation of the principle of intelligence in the cosmos.
2. *Bhūta-sarga*, creation of the subtle elements (*tanmātra*-s), from which arise the great elements (*mahābhūta*-s).
3. *Indriya-sarga*, creation of the sense-faculties (*buddhīndriya*-s), the action-faculties (*karmendriya*-s), and the mind (*manas*).

Secondary creation (*vaikṛta-sarga*) consists of:

4. *Mukhya-sarga*, creation of the plant kingdom.
5. *Tiryaksrotas-sarga*, creation of the animal kingdom.
6. *Ūrdhvasrotas-sarga*, creation of the gods (*deva*-s).
7. *Arvāksrotas-sarga*, creation of the human kingdom.

Blavatsky says that these seven creations represent the seven periods of evolution:

“Esoterically, as well as exoterically, all the above enumerated Creations stand for the (7) periods of Evolution, whether after an “Age” or a “Day” of Brahmā. This is the

teaching *par excellence* of Occult Philosophy, which, however, never uses the term “creation,” nor even that of evolution, with regard to *primary* “Creation”; but calls all such *forces* “the *aspects* of the Causeless Force.”<sup>6</sup>

The seven creations of the Purāṇas do not appear to be the same as the seven stages of the evolutionary process described in the stanzas of Dzyan. Why not? Blavatsky speaks of a “very old Book” in her Introductory to *The Secret Doctrine*. This “very old Book” is the source from which a number of different texts were compiled, each in their own way, each in a different presentation. Among these are the Purāṇas. As she says:

Volume I of *Isis Unveiled* begins with a reference to “an old book”— . . .

The “very old Book” is the original work from which the many volumes of *Kiu-ti* were compiled. Not only this latter and the *Siphrah di-Tseniuthah* but even the *Sepher Yetzarah*, the work attributed by the Hebrew Kabalists to their Patriarch Abraham (!), the book of *Shu-king*, China’s primitive Bible, the sacred volumes of the Egyptian Thoth-Hermes, the *Purāṇas* in India, and the Chaldean *Book of Numbers* and the *Pentateuch* itself, are all derived from that one small parent volume. (SD 1.xlii-xliii)

So, we are told, the Purāṇas, along with these other sacred works, have all been derived from this “one small parent volume.” This is the same volume from which the many volumes of *Kiu-te* were compiled, and it is the same volume on which the “Book of Dzyan” is the first volume of secret commentaries.<sup>7</sup>

There is a tradition in the oldest Purāṇas, the *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*-s, that originally there was just one Purāṇa. It was called the Purāṇa-saṃhitā, and is there stated to have been 4,000 verses in length. It is the source from which all the other Purāṇas have been derived. It is now lost.<sup>8</sup>

In modern times, independently of this tradition, scholars also came to the conclusion that the Purāṇas come from a single source. They did so by applying the rules of textual criticism to the Purāṇas, just as they do when editing Greek and Latin texts.<sup>9</sup>

This original Purāṇa-saṃhitā is said by the Purāṇas themselves to be older than the Vedas:

In the beginning, out of sacred literature, the Purāṇa was remembered by Brahmā. Then the Vedas came forth out of his mouths.<sup>10</sup>

Although a Purāṇa was supposed to treat five different topics, very few of these five are treated in many of the Purāṇas as we have them today.

Unlike the vedas, which had to be preserved unchanged, the purāṇas were expected to evolve and expand and be augmented (upabṛṃhaṇa) with new material. . . . As new material was added and old material was left out, the purāṇas evolved until in some cases there was almost nothing left in them of the one original *Purāṇa-saṃhitā*.<sup>11</sup>

In the 20th century, a few scholars,<sup>12</sup> both Indian and Western, did in-depth research on the original Purāṇa-saṃhitā. As a result of their research, the *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*s are regarded as the oldest, and are thought to have originally been one Purāṇa.<sup>13</sup>

The account of the seven creations that we will be looking at here has been based primarily on these two oldest Purāṇas, the *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa*, with reference to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, which Blavatsky cited in *The Secret Doctrine*.

As we recall, the three primary creations (*prākṛta-sarga*) are:

1. *Mahat-sarga*, creation or emanation of the principle of intelligence in the cosmos.
2. *Bhūta-sarga*, creation of the subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*), from which arise the great elements (*mahābhūta-s*).
3. *Indriya-sarga*, creation of the sense-faculties (*buddhīndriya-s*), the action-faculties (*karmendriya-s*), and the mind (*manas*).

These are all Sāṃkhya terms, for the cosmogony of the Purāṇas is based on the Sāṃkhya philosophy. Sāṃkhya is the oldest of the six *darśana-s*, or schools of Indian philosophy. So in order to understand the three primary creations, we must understand the Sāṃkhya worldview that was prevalent in ancient India.

The name “Sāṃkhya” means “to enumerate” (*sam-√khyā*), and the Sāṃkhya philosophy enumerates twenty-five *tattva-s* (lit. “that-ness”), which are the principles or constituents of reality. In the accompanying chart,<sup>14</sup> you will see the twenty-five *tattva-s* or principles that are taught in the Sāṃkhya school. This chart may be used as a guide to help explain the three primary creations found in the Purāṇas.

Just as *The Secret Doctrine* sets forth its first fundamental proposition that there is “An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE”<sup>15</sup> that precedes all manifestation in its two aspects as absolute abstract space, and absolute abstract motion, likewise, creation in the Purāṇas begins with the absolute, neuter Brahman, which has two aspects, *pradhāna* and *puruṣa*. *Pradhāna* is “primary substance,” or “matter” (also known as *prakṛti*), and *puruṣa* is “spirit.” Brahman in its two aspects, as *pradhāna* and *puruṣa*, is eternal and unmanifested.

(They are located at the top of the Sāṃkhya chart.)

*Pradhāna*, “primary substance,” is endowed with three qualities, called *guṇa*-s. All of nature is made up of these three qualities. The three *guṇa*-s are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

*Sattva* is the quality of harmony and rhythmic activity.

*Rajas* is the quality of excitement and energetic activity.

*Tamas* is the quality of inertia and sluggish activity.

A simple illustration of what these are can be seen in food. In India, food is classified as having the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*:

Fruits and vegetables that are fresh and in their prime have the quality of *sattva*.

Hot spicy food is stimulating to the body and the senses, and has the quality of *rajas*.

Fruits and vegetables that are past their prime and beginning to decay have the quality of *tamas*.

Before manifestation, the three *guṇa*-s or qualities of primary substance (*pradhāna*) are in equilibrium. When they are in equilibrium, no creation (or emanation) can take place. Once this equilibrium is disturbed, manifestation occurs. The result of this loss of equilibrium is the first creation, which is called *Mahat*.

This process has been described variously. In the Purāṇas, the principles tend to be deified. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Brahman is said to enter into *pradhāna* and *puruṣa*, and agitate them, thus disturbing the equilibrium. There, this has been expressed poetically as:

Then the supreme Brahma, the supreme soul, the substance of the world, the lord of all creatures, the universal soul, the supreme ruler, Hari, of his own will having entered into matter [*pradhāna*] and spirit [*puruṣa*], agitated the mutable and immutable principles, the season of creation

being arrived. In the same manner as fragrance affects the mind from its proximity merely, and not from any immediate operation upon mind itself, so the Supreme influenced the elements of creation.<sup>16</sup>

In the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, it is said that *puruṣa* comes into association (*saṃyoga*) with *pradhāna*, thus disturbing the equilibrium, and Mahat results.<sup>17</sup>

*Mahat* is the principle of intelligence in the cosmos. *Mahat* literally means “great.” It is great because it is the first principle (*tattva*) that was created or emanated. It is great because it is pervasive. *Mahat* is also great because it has a predominance of the *sattva guṇa*.<sup>18</sup> *Mahat* has many synonyms,<sup>19</sup> but its primary one is *buddhi*.<sup>20</sup> *Mahat* is subtle, beyond human perception.<sup>21</sup> Since *mahat* evolved from primary substance (*pradhāna*), it too possesses the three qualities, or *guṇa-s*.

When speaking of Mahat, the principle of intelligence, H. P. Blavatsky says:

Esoteric doctrine teaches that the Dhyāni-Chohans are the collective aggregate of divine Intelligence or primordial *mind* [Mahat], . . .<sup>22</sup>

This is the first creation, the *mahat sarga* (creation or emanation of the principle of intelligence in the cosmos).

Then from *Mahat*, the principle of intelligence, arose *ahaṃkāra*. *Ahaṃkāra* is the principle of self-consciousness, or the sense of individuality that we all possess. *Ahaṃkāra* means literally “making I.”<sup>23</sup> *Ahaṃkāra* has often been translated as “ego,” “egotism,” or “egoism.” Since *ahaṃkāra* evolved from *mahat*, the principle of intelligence, it too possesses the three qualities, or *guṇa-s*.<sup>24</sup>

Then from *ahaṃkāra*, in its *tamas* or inertia aspect, arose the *tanmātra-s*, which are the five subtle elements.

(They are located on the right side of the *Sāṃkhya* chart.)

*Tanmātra* means literally “merely that,” and refers to the fact that the *tanmātra*-s are the rudimentary forms (or the potentials<sup>25</sup>) of sound (*śabda*), of touch (*sparśa*), of form (*rūpa*), of taste (*rasa*), and of smell (*gandha*). These subtle elements are imperceptible to our senses, and are “apprehended only by the gods.”<sup>26</sup> Blavatsky says that the creation or manifestation of the subtle elements (*tanmātra*-s) is:

. . . the period of the first breath of the differentiation of the *pre-Cosmic* Elements or matter.<sup>27</sup>

These five subtle elements, the *tanmātra*-s, in their turn, produce the five great elements, the *mahābhūta*-s (literally, the “great elements”). They are: space (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*tejas*), water (*ap*), and earth (*pṛthivī*). The great elements (*mahābhūta*-s) are perceptible to our senses, and are “apprehended by men.”<sup>28</sup>

In Gauḍapāda’s commentary on *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 38, this production is described as:

from the subtle element of smell, earth is produced;  
 from the subtle element of taste, water is produced;  
 from the subtle element of form, fire is produced;<sup>29</sup>  
 from the subtle element of touch, air is produced; and  
 from the subtle element of sound, space is produced.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, each of the great elements (*mahābhūta*-s) is endowed with the property of its corresponding subtle element (*tanmātra*). Thus:

space has the property of sound;  
 air has the property of touch;  
 fire has the property of form;  
 water has the property of taste; and  
 earth has the property of smell.<sup>31</sup>



We have now seen *ahaṅkāra*, the principle of self-consciousness, in its *tamas* aspect, produce the five subtle elements; and the five subtle elements, in their turn, produce the five great elements.

This is the second creation, the *bhūta sarga* (creation or emanation of the subtle elements, from which arise the great elements).

Just as *ahaṅkāra* produced the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*-s) from its *tamas* or inertia aspect, so *ahaṅkāra* produced the eleven faculties from its *sattva* or harmony aspect.<sup>32</sup>

These eleven faculties are:

the five sense faculties (*buddhīndriya*-s),  
 the five action faculties (*karmendriya*-s), and  
 the mind (*manas*).

(They are located on the left side of the Sāṃkhya chart.)

The five sense faculties (*buddhīndriya*-s) are the faculties of perception or knowledge, and they function through the nervous system.<sup>33</sup> They are the faculties or the capacities of 1) hearing (*śrotra*), 2) touching (*tvac*), 3) seeing (*cakṣus*), 4) tasting (*rasana*), and 5) smelling (*ghrāṇa*). Each of these sense faculties functions through its corresponding physical organ: the ear, the skin, the eyes, the tongue, and the nose, respectively.

The five faculties of action (*karmendriya*-s) function through the muscles.<sup>34</sup> They are the faculties or the capacities of 1) speaking (*vāc*), 2) grasping (*pāṇi*), 3) walking (*pāda*), 4) excreting (*pāyu*), and 5) procreating (*upastha*). Each of these action faculties functions through its corresponding physical organ: the vocal chords, the hands, the feet, the organs of excretion, and the organs of procreation.

The remaining faculty of this eleven-fold group is *manas*, the mind. *Manas* works through the five sense faculties and the five action faculties. It is said that the mind's participation

in their activities is necessary for these faculties to function. Because of its similarity to these sense and action faculties (*indriya-s*), *manas* is also said to be one of them (i.e., an *indriya*). The function of *manas* is to direct the ten faculties.<sup>35</sup>

We have now seen *ahaṃkāra*, the principle of self-consciousness, in its *sattva* aspect, produce the five sense faculties (*buddhīndriya-s*), the five action faculties (*karmendriya-s*), and the mind (*manas*).

This is the third creation, the *indriya sarga* (creation or emanation of the sense and action faculties, and the mind).

These first three creations make up what is known as primary creation (*prākṛta sarga*). Primary creation is followed by the four creations that make up what is known as secondary creation (*vaiṣṭvā sarga*). This latter results in the physical manifestation of plants, animals, gods, and men. But first, we will look at the creation, and destruction, of the cosmic egg.

\* \* \* \*

We are told that *mahat* (the principle of intelligence), *ahaṃkāra* (the principle of self-consciousness), the five subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*), and the five great elements (*mahābhūta-s*)—space, air, fire, water, and earth—are not capable of creating while they are separate and distinct from one another. Once they have combined, these principles, through their mutual association, produce the cosmic egg (*aṇḍa*).<sup>36</sup>

The *Vāyu Purāṇa* describes this egg:

Like a bubble out of water, the egg was born.... (4.67)

... Brahmā (the cosmic principle of activity) woke up in the egg of Prakṛti. (4.68)

The seven worlds and this earth with the seven continents and seven oceans lie within the cosmic egg. (4.72)

Within it are all these worlds . . . nay, the very universe itself. (4.73)<sup>37</sup>

The cosmic egg was enveloped externally by seven natural sheaths (*āvaraṇa*-s). That is, by:

1) water, 2) fire, 3) air, 4) space, 5) *bhūtādi* (*ahaṃkāra* in its *tamas* aspect), 6) *mahat* (the principle of intelligence), and 7) the unmanifest (*avyakta*), each ten times the size of the previous.<sup>38</sup>

The seven sheaths remained until the time of dissolution at the end of the *kalpa* (a day of Brahmā),<sup>39</sup> at which time they devoured each other.

When the earth was destroyed in the fire at the end of the *kalpa*, water originated from that fire.<sup>40</sup> Everything merged within it, and nothing could be seen in that one, vast ocean of water (*ekāraṇava*). In this vast ocean, Brahmā, called Nārāyaṇa,<sup>41</sup> slept in the waters for that same duration (a night of Brahmā). He is called “Nārāyaṇa” because the waters (*nāra*) were his abode (*ayana*).<sup>42</sup> This is part of a classic statement about Nārāyaṇa that is found throughout the Purāṇas (with some variation), and also in *Manu* (1.10) as:

The waters are called *nārāḥ*, (for) the waters are, indeed, the offspring of Nara; as they were his first residence (*ayana*), he thence is named Nārāyaṇa.<sup>43</sup>

Nārāyaṇa was golden in complexion, and had a thousand eyes, a thousand legs, and a thousand heads, and was beyond the range of the senses.

When he awoke, he saw that the world was a void (*śūnyam*). As Brahmā, he then searched beneath the waters, and discovered that the earth lay below.

He asked himself what form he could assume in order to lift the earth up out of the water. He thought of the form of a boar (*varāha*), a pig, playing in the water.<sup>44</sup> Brahmā then assumed the form of a mighty boar. It had an enormous body—it was approximately 90 miles in girth, and 900 miles tall.<sup>45</sup> It had curved tusks that were white, sharp, and terrible. “It resembled a dark blue cloud in complexion,” and “Its lustre was like that of the sun.”<sup>46</sup>

The description of the boar continues, likening the parts of his body to a Vedic sacrifice: his face was the altar, his tongue was the sacrificial fire, and the hair on his body was the sacred *darbha* grass, and so forth.<sup>47</sup>

This mighty boar entered the waters, going deep beneath the surface; and with his tusks he lifted the earth up from the depths of the nether world (*rasātalam*). He then set the earth on the surface of the water, where it floated like an enormous boat.<sup>48</sup>

With the desire to establish the world, he divided the earth, levelled it, and created the mountains, the oceans, the seven continents, and the four worlds.<sup>49</sup>

## The Four Secondary Creations

*“If thou would’st understand the SECONDARY [“Creation,” so called], O Lanoo, thou should’st first study its relation to the PRIMARY.”* (Commentary, *Book of Dzayan*, III, 19.)<sup>50</sup>

After creating the worlds, Brahmā began the creation of offspring. Desirous of creating various types of offspring, he went into meditation. While he was meditating, a creation of darkness (*tamas*) appeared.<sup>51</sup>

This creation was ignorance (*avidyā*) in five divisions, that is: darkness, delusion, great-delusion, pitch darkness, and blinding darkness. It is the creation of “fixed” or stationary beings (*sthāvara*)<sup>52</sup> that we know as the plant kingdom. They are called *naga-s*, which means literally “not moving.” Their intelligence (*buddhi*) and sense organs (*karaṇāni*) are latent.<sup>53</sup>

Speaking of this creation, H. P. Blavatsky says:

The *Mukhya* “Creation,” then, is the middle point between the three lower and the three higher kingdoms, which represent the seven esoteric kingdoms of Kosmos, as of Earth.<sup>54</sup>

This is the fourth creation, called the *mukhya sarga* (creation or emanation of the plant kingdom). *Mukhya* means “first” or “chief,” and this creation is so-named because it is the first of the secondary creations (*vaikṛta sarga*).

After seeing the plant creation (*mukhya*), Brahmā was not satisfied, and he thought of creating again.

While he was meditating, the *tiryaksrotas* creation took place.<sup>55</sup> This is what we know as the animal kingdom. *Tiryak* means “going horizontally” (or “crooked”), and *srotas* is a “stream” or “course.” For these creatures, their stream of life force flows horizontally. (For example, on the lowest level, the physical, their alimentary canal is generally horizontal.)

Animals have an abundance of *tamas* (inertia); therefore, ignorance predominates in this kingdom. They possess the germ of self-consciousness or self-awareness.

This is the fifth creation, called the *tiryaksrotas sarga* (creation or emanation of the animal kingdom). It is so-called because this creation moves and functions horizontally. It is the second of the secondary creations (*vaikṛta sarga*).

After creating the animals (*tiryaksrotas*), and having seen that type of creation, Brahmā thought of creating once again. While he was meditating, the *ūrdhvasrotas* creation arose.<sup>56</sup> The *ūrdhvasrotas* are the divine beings we know as *deva*-s, the gods. *Ūrdhva* means “upward,” and *srotas* is “stream” or “course.” So for the *deva*-s, their stream of life force flows upward.

The *deva* creation embodies the quality of *sattva* or harmony. The *deva*-s have an abundance of happiness (*sukha*) and satisfaction (*prīti*). They are wise and of contented mind.

This is the sixth creation, called the *ūrdhvasrotas sarga* (creation or emanation of the gods, *deva*-s). It is so-called because the stream of life force in this creation flows upward. It is the third of the secondary creations (*vaikṛta sarga*).<sup>57</sup>

After creating the *deva*-s (*ūrdhvasrotas*), Brahmā was pleased.

He then thought of another creation. While he was meditating, a creation of beings appeared out of the unmanifest (*avyakta*) that were capable (*sādhaka*) of spiritual attainment. This was the creation of *arvāksrotas*, which is that of human beings (*manuṣya*).<sup>58</sup> *Arvāk* here means “downward,” and *srotas*, again, is “stream” or “course.” So, for humans, our stream of life force flows downward.

The *arvāksrotas*, human beings, are said to have an abundance of light (*prakāśa*), but they are also sprinkled with *tamas* (inertia) and have a predominance of *rajas* (energetic activity).<sup>59</sup> Therefore, humans have much suffering, and they are constantly engaged in action.

This is the seventh creation, called the *arvāksrotas sarga* (creation or emanation of the human kingdom). It is so-called because the stream of life force in this creation flows downward. It is the fourth of the secondary creations (*vaikṛta sarga*).

We have just seen the three primary and the four secondary creations, which together comprise the seven creations of the Purāṇas. Beyond these seven, there are two more creations found in the Purāṇas.

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There is an eighth creation, which is called the *Anugraha Sarga*. This creation is fourfold, and is found in all living beings.<sup>60</sup> *Anugraha* is sometimes translated as “favor” or “grace,” but in this context the *anugraha sarga* is synonymous with the “intellectual creation” (*pratyaya sarga*) of the Sāṃkhya system.<sup>61</sup> This creation consists of the four types of mental dispositions that are associated with each of the four secondary creations. They are, in fact, the four mental dispositions that we have just seen in the plant, animal, *deva*, and human kingdoms:

1) the mental disposition of ignorance, or inverted knowledge<sup>62</sup> that is associated with the plant kingdom.

2) the mental disposition of incapacity (or deficiency) (*aśakti*) that is associated with the animal kingdom. This incapacity is due to imperfections of their eleven sense faculties and intelligence (*buddhi*).<sup>63</sup>

3) the mental disposition of contentment (*tuṣṭi*) that is associated with the *deva*-s, and

4) the mental disposition of spiritual attainment (*siddhi*) that is associated with the human kingdom. That is, their “souls” are “capable of achieving spiritual progress (*siddhātmānaḥ*).”<sup>64</sup>

Each of these mental dispositions has many varieties.

According to the Purāṇas, this creation embodies the qualities of *sattva* (harmony) and *tamas* (inertia).<sup>65</sup>

Blavatsky says that this eighth creation, the *anugraha sarga*, is in fact “no *Creation* at all,” but merely a blind; “for it refers to a purely mental process: the cognition of the ‘ninth’ creation, . . .”<sup>66</sup> She goes on to say that the *anugraha sarga* is:

. . . the correct perception of our relations to the whole range of “gods” and especially of those we bear to the *Kumāras*—the so-called “Ninth Creation”—. . .<sup>67</sup>

So, according to Blavatsky, the eighth creation, the *anugraha sarga*, culminates in the perception of the ninth creation, that of the *kumāra*-s.

We have just seen the eighth creation, called the *anugraha sarga* (the creation or emanation of mental dispositions). It is the fifth of the secondary creations (*vaikṛta sarga*).

The ninth creation, the *kumāra sarga*, is the final creation in the Purāṇas. The word *kumāra* means “a boy,” “a youth.” Sanat-kumāra is perhaps the most well-known among the *kumāra*-s, and his name means “always a youth.” The *kumāra*-s

are the “mind-born” sons of Brahmā.<sup>68</sup> These “mind-born” sons are created by Brahmā in the first *kalpa*, and they live as long as Brahmā:

These sages, however, live as long as Brahmā; and they are only created by him in the first Kalpa, although their generation is very commonly, but inconsistently, introduced in the Vārāha or Pādma Kalpa.<sup>69</sup>

According to the Purāṇas, this ninth creation is both primary (*prākṛta*) and secondary (*vaiṅkṛta*).<sup>70</sup> This explains why we see the *kumāra*-s, although created at the beginning of the kalpa, “reappear” at a later time. As stated in *The Secret Doctrine*:

“The *Kumāras*,” explains an *esoteric* text, “are the Dhyānis, derived immediately from the supreme Principle, who reappear in the Vaivasvata Manu period, for the progress of mankind.” (SD 1.456-457)

Blavatsky further described this ninth creation as “an effect, manifesting in the *Secondary* of that which was a ‘Creation’ in the *Primary* (*Prākṛita*) Creation.”<sup>71</sup>

We are also told in *The Secret Doctrine* the significance that this ninth creation, that of the *kumāra*-s, has for us:

Of all the seven great divisions of Dhyāni-Chohans, or Devas, there is none with which humanity is more concerned than with the Kumāras. (SD I.458)

They may indeed mark a “special” or extra *creation*, since it is they who, by incarnating themselves within the senseless human shells of the first two Root-Races, and a great portion of the Third Root-Race—create, so to speak, a *new race*: that of thinking, self-conscious and *divine* men. (SD I.457, n.\*)



There are different enumerations of the *kumāra-s* (the mind-born sons of Brahmā) found throughout Hindu literature—most often either four or seven are given.<sup>72</sup> Even within a single Purāṇa, such as the *Vāyu*, we see different enumerations of the *kumāra-s*. For example, in part 1, chapter 6, verse 65 we find Brahmā's three mental sons—Sanandana, Sanaka, and Sanātana; while at 1.9.65-66 we find Sanandana, Sanaka, Sanātana, and Sanatkumāra; and at 1.24.78 we find these four with the addition of Ṛbhu.

The accounts describing the *kumāra-s* also vary. Here is the account as found in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, one of the original Purāṇa-saṃhitā texts:

At the beginning, Brahmā created three mental sons equal to himself, viz. Sanandana, Sanaka and the intelligent Sanātana who possessed great power and enlightenment. Those (sons) of great splendour and strength renounced (the world) due to their special knowledge of *Vivarta* (the unreal appearance of the world in place of Brahman) [caused by ignorance (*avidyā*)]. Due to multiplicity, they were spiritually awakened. They were abandoned (by their father). Without creating any subjects they retired.<sup>73</sup>

When they had left, Brahmā created other mental sons who could accomplish the object (*sādhaka*) [the task of creation]. . . .<sup>74</sup>

Commenting on the *kumāra-s*' refusal to create, Blavatsky remarked:

They themselves, being the "Virgin-Ascetics," refuse to create the *material* being MAN.<sup>75</sup>

The *kumāra-s* are the progenitors of spiritual humanity. In *The Secret Doctrine* we are told:

But, in the esoteric teaching, they [the *kumāra*-s] are the progenitors of the true spiritual SELF in the physical man—the higher Prajāpatis, while the Pitṛis, or lower Prajāpatis, are no more than the *fathers* of the model, or type of his physical form, made “in *their* image.” (SD I.457)

These statements of Blavatsky make abundantly clear the importance the *kumāra*-s have for us, and the sacrifice that they made for humanity. The revelation of Theosophy is that the *kumāra*-s, the mind-born sons of Brahmā, are the “fashioners of the *Inner Man*.”<sup>76</sup> It is their great sacrifice that endowed humanity with the spiritual potential that makes us *sādhaka*, “capable” of spiritual attainment.

## Notes

1. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, ed. Boris de Zirkoff (pagination unchanged), 1st ed. 1888 (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 20-21.

2. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, pp. 445-460.

3. *The Vishṇu Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, trans. H. H. Wilson, ed. Fitzedward Hall, vol. 1 (London: Trübner & Co., 1864).

4. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa.

5. Reigle, David. “Creation Stories: The Cosmogony Account from the Purāṇas. Part 1. On the Original *Purāṇa-samhitā*.” Home page. 14 Aug. 2012. <<http://prajnaquest.fr/blog/creation-stories-the-cosmogony-account-from-the-pura%E1%B9%87as/>>.

6. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 446.

7. “The *Book of Dzyan* . . . is the first volume of the Commentaries upon the seven secret folios of *Kiu-te*, and a Glossary of the public works of the same name.” From “The Secret Books of ‘Lam-Rim’ and Dzyan,” *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 14 (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1985), p. 422.

“Kiu-te” has been identified as *rgyud-sde*, the Tibetan Buddhist tantras. See David Reigle, *The Books of Kiu-te, or the Tibetan Buddhist*

*Tantras: A Preliminary Analysis* (San Diego: Wizard's Bookshelf, 1983).

8. David Reigle, "Creation Stories. . . . On the Original *Purāṇa-saṃhitā*."

9. Ludo Rocher, *The Purāṇas* (1986), p. 45, cited in "Creation Stories. . . . On the Original *Purāṇa-saṃhitā*."

10. *The Vāyu Purāṇa*, trans. G. V. Tagare, part 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), sec. 1, ch. 1, v. 54, p. 9.

11. David Reigle, "Creation Stories. . . . On the Original *Purāṇa-saṃhitā*."

12. F. E. Pargiter, S. P. L. Narasimhaswami, W. Kirfel, V. S. Agrawala.

13. David Reigle, "Creation Stories. . . . On the Original *Purāṇa-saṃhitā*."

14. Titled: "The 25 Principles (*tattva*-s) of the Sāṃkhya System" and "The Seven Creations in the Purāṇas."

15. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 14.

16. *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 2 [vv. 28-30], pp. 26-27.

17. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verses 20-22.

18. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, pt. 1, sec. 1, ch. 3, v. 15.

19. In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* at 1.4.25 we find this list of synonyms: *manas*, *mahat*, *matī*, *brahmā*, *pūḥ*, *buddhi*, *khyāti*, *īśvara*, *prajñā*, *citi*, *smṛti*, *saṃvit*, and *vipura*.

20. In the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 23, *buddhi* is defined as ascertainment (*adhyavasāyah*).

21. Gerald James Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2nd rev. ed., 1979), p. 10.

22. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 452.

23. *Aham* is the first-person pronoun in Sanskrit.

24. *Ahaṃkāra* is threefold: it is called *vaikārika* in its *sattva* aspect, *taijasa* in its *rajas* aspect, and *bhūtādi* in its *tamas* aspect (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.2.35-36). See also *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 25.

25. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940): "The *tanmātras*

are the potential conditions of qualities and hence the qualities are not manifested there (499)”; and “sound-potential (*śabda-tanmātra*),” etc. (504).

26. Gauḍapāda’s commentary on the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 38, in: *The Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*, ed. and trans. Har Dutt Sharma (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1933), p. 51. The subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*) are said to be *aviśeṣa*, lit. “without distinction.” See also *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.52 for *aviśeṣa*.

27. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 452.

28. Gauḍapāda’s commentary on the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 38, trans. Har Dutt Sharma, p. 51. The great elements (*mahābhūta-s*) are said to be *viśeṣa*, lit. “with distinction.” See also *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.61-62.

29. This line is missing in the currently available printed editions of the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*. However, it is found in the University of Pennsylvania manuscript 1919 as: *rūpa-tanmātrāt tejah*.

30. While both the classical Sāṃkhya account and the Purāṇas state that the subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*) produce the great elements (*mahābhūta-s*) (as above), in the Purāṇas the generation of the subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*) is described somewhat differently. In classical Sāṃkhya, *bhūtādi* (*ahaṃkāra* in its *tamas* aspect) produces the five subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*) (*Sāṃkhya-kārikā* 25). But in some of the Purāṇas, although the first subtle element, the *śabda-tanmātra*, is produced from *bhūtādi*, each successive subtle element (*tanmātra*) is said to be produced from its immediately preceding great element (*mahābhūta*). An excerpt from the *Kūrma Purāṇa* illustrates this. Here, the great element space (*ākāśa*) has been translated as ether:

1.4.24. It is traditionally said that when the *Bhūtādi* undergoes modifications, it creates the subtle element of sound (*Śabda-tanmātra*). The ether is born thereof and *Śabda* (Sound) is considered to be its quality.

1.4.25. When the ether undergoes transformation, it evolves the subtle element of tangibility (*Sparśa-tanmātra*). The wind is born therefrom and they know that its characteristic quality is touch. . . . (*The Kūrma Purāṇa*, trans. Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare, part 1, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, p. 42. See also *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.2.37-39; and *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.46-49.)

H. H. Wilson says: “The successive series of rudiments and elements, and their respectively engendering the rudiments and elements next in the order, occur in most of the Purāṇas, in nearly the same words.” *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, p. 35, n. 1 (chap. 2, n. 24).

31. This attribution of properties is found throughout the Purāṇas. See, for example, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.2.37-43.

In a number of the Purāṇas, such as the *Vāyu*, the great elements (*mahābhūta-s*) are endowed not only with the property of their corresponding subtle element (*tanmātra*), but with the properties of the preceding subtle elements as well. Therefore:

space has the property of sound;  
 air has the properties of sound and touch;  
 fire has the properties of sound, touch, and form;  
 water has the properties of sound, touch, form, and taste;  
 earth has the properties of sound, touch, form, taste, and smell.  
 (*Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.57-60. See also *Kūrma Purāṇa* 1.4.29-32;  
 and so forth.)

This endowment being inclusive, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* can therefore say: “Among all gross elements, earth alone possesses five attributes.” (*The Vāyu Purāṇa*, trans. Tagare, part 1, 1.4.60, p. 35.)

32. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.53-54. In the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 25, the eleven faculties also come forth from *ahaṃkāra* in its *sattva* aspect (*vaikārika*), with the assistance of its *rajas* aspect (*taijasa*) to bring them into manifestation.

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1.2.46), ten faculties (*indriya-s*) are produced from *ahaṃkāra* in its *rajas* aspect (*taijasa*), and only the eleventh faculty, *manas*, is produced from *ahaṃkāra* in its *sattva* aspect (*vaikārika*).

In the *Kūrma Purāṇa* (1.4.22-23), ten faculties (*indriya-s*) are produced from *ahaṃkāra* in its *rajas* aspect (*taijasa*), while *manas* is a product of both the *rajas* (*taijasa*) and *sattva* (*vaikārika*) aspects of *ahaṃkāra*.

33. Jagadish Chandra Chatterji, *The Wisdom of the Vedas* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), p. 30.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

35. According to *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 27, the function of *manas* is *saṃkalpapakam*, which means “conceptualization,” “intention,” “determination,” “resolve,” “purpose,” i.e., directing the ten faculties. This is in accordance with Gauḍapāda’s *bhāṣya*. This term is glossed differently in Vācaspatimiśra’s *Tattva-kaumudī* and in the *Yuktidīpikā*.

36. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.65-66; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.2.51-53.

37. *The Vāyu Purāṇa*, trans. Tagare, part 1, p. 36.

38. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.4.75-77; *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.3.32-34.

39. A cycle of manifestation equal to 4,320,000,000 years.

40. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.1. See also *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.1.

41. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.3.

42. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.5; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.5. The noun *ayana* literally means “[the act of] moving,” or “motion.” Sir William Jones has translated it as “*place of motion*” (cited in *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, p. 56, n. 1 [ch. 4, n. 2]). This word then comes to mean “abode,” or “residence.”

43. *The Laws of Manu*, trans. G. Bühler, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 25 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1886), p. 5.

44. This is a reference to *Viṣṇu* in his third incarnation as *Varāha*.

45. There is no consensus as to what distance a *yojana* represents. It has been cited by various sources as ranging between 4 to 9 miles. In his *Sanskṛit-English Dictionary*, Monier Monier-Williams says that a *yojana* is “sometimes regarded as equal to 4 or 5 English miles, but more correctly = 4 *Krośas* or about 9 miles; . . . (858).” Here, it has been taken as 9 miles in the calculation of the boar’s size (10 x 100 *yojana*-s).

46. *The Vāyu Purāṇa*, trans. Tagare, part 1, 1.6.12-13, p. 44.

47. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.16-22; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.16-22.

48. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.26.

49. *Bhūrloka* (earth), *bhuvarloka* (atmosphere), *svarloka* (heaven), and *maharloka* (world of the sages).

50. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, p. 113. Speaking of this period of secondary creation, Blavatsky says: “In this *secondary* Period, the three degrees of Elemental or Rudimental Kingdoms are evolved in this world, corresponding *inversely* in order to the three *Prākṛitic* creations during the Primary period of Brahmā’s activity. . . . in this

one [the secondary], the order of the Elemental Forces stands thus: (1) The *nascent* centers of Force (intellectual and physical); (2) the rudimental principles—*nerve force*, so to say; and (3) nascent *apperception*, which is the *Mahat* of the lower kingdoms, especially developed in the third order of Elementals; these are succeeded by the objective kingdom of minerals, in which latter that apperception is entirely latent, to redevelop only in the plants.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, pp. 454-455.)

51. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.29 ff.; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.32 ff.

52. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.57.

53. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.37.

54. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 455.

55. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.36 ff.; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.39 ff. Blavatsky speaks further about this creation (as well as the other three secondary creations) in *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, pp. 162-163. Note that the incorrect “(the *Arvaksrota*)” in the original edition (p. 162, line 29) was corrected to “(the *Tiryaksrotas*)” in the third edition of *The Secret Doctrine* of 1893, and retained in the Adyar 6-volume edition of 1938 and in the edition of 1978 edited by Boris de Zirkoff.

56. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.42 ff.; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.44 ff.

57. Wilson notes here that: “The commentator, however, considers the *Ūrdhwasrotas* creation, or that of the superhuman beings, to be the same with that of the *Indriyas* or senses, over which they preside; by which the number [of creations] is reduced to six.” (*The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, p. 74, top note (n. 2, cont. from p. 73) [chap. 5, n. 8].)

58. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.49; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.51.

59. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.48; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.17. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.50 adds “*sattva*” here (even though it also has *prakāśa*).

60. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.60; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.62.

61. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 46. In his commentary on this verse, Gauḍapāda equates *pratyaya* with *buddhi* (*mahat*, the principle of intelligence): *pratyayo buddhir ity uktā*.

62. *Vīparyaya*, “contrariety,” or wrong knowledge. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 46. See also *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.53, 1.6.62; and *vīparyāsa*, 1.6.63.

63. See *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verses 47, 49. Note that here we have a major variant reading. The *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, as well as Wilson’s

manuscript of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, read: *aśakti*, “incapacity.” (See *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, p. 76, end of note 1 [chap. 5, n. 11].) Although the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1.5.24) does not refer to *aśakti* or *śakti*, we find *aśakti* in its two printed commentaries (of Viṣṇucitti, and Śrīdhara). In some of the Purāṇas, such as *Brahmāṇḍa* (1.1.5.51, 1.1.5.61), and in the printed editions of *Vāyu* (Veṅkaṭeśvara ed. 1.6.53, 1.6.63; Ānandāśrama ed. 1.6.57, 1.6.68), we find *śakti*, “capacity.” *Aśakti* appears to be the older reading (see *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verses 46, 47, 49).

64. *The Vāyu Purāṇa*, trans. Tagare, part 1, 1.6.63, p. 49.

65. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.5.57; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.59; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.24.

66. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 456.

67. *Ibid.*

68. The *kumāra-s* are known by many names in *The Secret Doctrine*. Geoffrey A. Barborka has compiled a list of these names in his book *The Divine Plan*, p. 134 (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1st ed. 1961; 3rd ed. 1972).

69. *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, p. 78, footnote (chap. 5, n. 13). For their duration, see also *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.65-67.

We are currently in the Vārāha Kalpa; the previous *kalpa* was the Pādma, the seventh. See *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.4.33; *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.5.46 and 1.21.11 (Padma).

70. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 1.6.60; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.25.

71. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 456. On this point, Wilson adds: “The Kaumāra creation is the creation of Rudra or Nīlalohita, a form of Śīva, by Brahmā, . . . and of certain other mind-born sons of Brahmā, of whose birth the Viṣṇu P. gives no further account. . . .” Wilson also notes that according to the commentator [Śrīdhara], the creation of Rudra is the primary (*prākṛta*) creation, and that of the *kumāra-s* is the secondary (*vaikṛta*) creation. See *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Wilson/Hall, vol. 1, p. 77, note 1 (chap. 5, n. 13); and Śrīdhara’s commentary on *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.25 for further details.

72. In Gauḍapāda’s commentary on the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, verse 1, seven *kumāra-s* are listed: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Āsuri, Kapila, Voḍhu, and Pañcaśikha. In his commentary on verse 43, he lists four *kumāra-s* (in conjunction with the four natural dispo-



sitions, *bhāva*-s): Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, and Sanatkumāra. This list of four includes Sanatkumāra, who was not included in the list of seven.

Speaking of these four, Blavatsky says—“The exoteric four are: Sanat-Kumāra, Sanandana, Sanaka, and Sanātana; and the esoteric three are: Sana, Kapila, and Sanatsujāta.” (*The Secret Doctrine* 1.457)

73. “Retired,” *pratisargaṃ gatāḥ punaḥ*.

74. *The Vāyu Purāṇa*, part 1, trans. Tagare, 1.6.65-67, pp. 49-50.

75. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 459.

76. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 87 (Stanza 4.1).

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