

CLASSIFICATION OF “PRINCIPLES”

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In a most admirable lecture by Mr. T. Subba Row on the *Bhagavad Gita*, published in the February number of *The Theosophist*, the lecturer deals, incidentally as I believe, with the question of septenary “principles” in the Kosmos and Man. The division is rather criticized, and the grouping hitherto adopted and favoured in theosophical teachings is resolved into one of *Four*.

This criticism has already given rise to some misunderstanding, and it is argued by some that a slur is thrown on the original teachings. This *apparent* disagreement with one whose views are rightly held as almost decisive on occult matters in our Society is certainly a dangerous handle to give to opponents who are ever on the alert to detect and blazon forth contradictions and inconsistencies in our philosophy. Hence I feel it my duty to show that there is in reality *no* inconsistency between Mr. Subba Row’s views and our own in the question of the septenary division; and to show, (a) that the lecturer was perfectly well acquainted with the septenary division before he joined the Theosophical Society; (b) that he knew it was the teaching of old “Aryan philosophers who have associated seven occult powers with the seven principles” in the Macrocosm and the Microcosm (see the end of this article); and (c) that from the beginning he had objected—not to the classification but to the form in which it was expressed. Therefore, now, when he calls the division “unscientific and misleading,” and adds that “this sevenfold classification is almost conspicuous by its absence in *many* (not all?) of our Hindu books,” etc., and that it is better to adopt the time-honoured classification of four principles, Mr. Subba Row must mean only some special orthodox books, as it would be impossible for him to contradict himself in such a conspicuous way.

A few words of explanation, therefore, will not be altogether out of place. For the matter of being “conspicuous by its absence” in Hindu books, the said classification is as conspicuous by its absence in Buddhist books. This, for a reason transparently clear: it was always esoteric; and as such, rather inferred than openly taught. That it is “misleading” is also perfectly true; for the great feature of the day—materialism—has led the minds of our Western theosophists into the prevalent habit of viewing the seven principles as distinct and self-existing *entities*, instead of what they are—namely, *upadhis* and correlating states—three *upadhis*, basic groups, and four principles. As to being “unscientific,” the term can be only attributed to a *lapsus linguae*, and in this relation let me quote what Mr. Subba Row wrote about a year *before he joined* the Theosophical Society in one of his ablest articles, “Brahmanism on the seven-fold principle in Man,” the best review that ever appeared of the “Fragments of Occult Truth”—since embodied in “Esoteric Buddhism.” Says the author:—

“I have carefully examined it (the teaching), and find that the results arrived at (in the Buddhist doctrine) do not seem to differ much from the conclusions of our Aryan philosophy, though our mode of stating the arguments may differ in form. Having enumerated after this the “three primary causes” which bring the human being into existence—i.e., Parabrahman, Sakti and Prakriti—he explains: “Now, according to the Adepts of ancient Aryavarta, *seven principles* are evolved out of these three primary entities. Algebra teaches us that the number of *combinations* of things taken *one* at a time, *two* at a time, *three* at a time, and so forth = $2^n - 1$. Applying this formula to the present case, the number of entities evolved from different combinations of these three primary causes amounts to $2^3 - 1 = 8 - 1 = 7$. As a general rule, whenever seven entities are mentioned in the ancient occult sciences of India, in any connection whatsoever, you must suppose that those

seven entities came into existence from three primary entities; and that these three entities, again, are evolved out of a single entity or MONAD.” (See “Five Years of Theosophy,” p. 160.)

This is quite correct, from the occult standpoint, and also kabbalistically, when one looks into the question of the *seven* and *ten* Sephiroths, and the *seven* and *ten* Rishis, Manus, etc. It shows that in sober truth there is not, nor can there be any fundamental disagreement between the esoteric philosophy of the *Trans-* and *Cis-Himalayan* Adepts. The reader is referred, moreover, to the earlier pages of the above-mentioned article, in which it is stated that “the knowledge of the occult powers of nature possessed by the inhabitants of the lost Atlantis was learnt by the ancient adepts of India and was appended by them to the esoteric doctrine taught by the residents of the sacred island (now the Gobi Desert).¹ The Tibetan adepts, however (their precursors of Central Asia), have not accepted this addition” (pp. 155-56). But this difference between the two doctrines does not include the septenary division, as it was universal after it had originated with the Atlanteans, who, as the Fourth Race, were of course an earlier race than the Fifth—the Aryan.

Thus, from the purely metaphysical standpoint, the remarks made on the Septenary Division in the “*Bhagavad-Gita*” Lecture hold good to-day, as they did five or six years ago in the article “Brahmanism on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” their apparent discrepancy notwithstanding. For purposes of purely theoretical esotericism, they are as valid in Buddhist as they are in Brahmanical philosophy. Therefore, when Mr. Subba Row proposes to hold to “the time-honoured classification of four principles” in a lecture on a Vedanta work—the Vedantic classification, however, dividing man into five “*kosas*” (sheaths) and the *Atma* (the six *nominally* of course),² he simply shows thereby that he desires to remain strictly within theoretical and metaphysical, and also orthodox computations of the same. This is how I understand his words, at any rate. For the *Taraka Raj-Yoga* classification is again *three upadhis*, the *Atma* being the fourth principle, and no *upadhi*, of course, as it is one with Parabrahm. This is again shown by himself in a little article called “Septenary Division in Different Indian Systems.”³

Why then should not “Buddhist” Esotericism, so-called, resort to such a division? It is perhaps “misleading”—that is admitted; but surely it cannot be called “unscientific.” I will even permit myself to call that adjective a thoughtless expression, since it has been shown to be on the contrary very “scientific” by Mr. Subba Row himself; and quite mathematically so, as the afore-quoted algebraic demonstration of the same proves it. I say that the division is due to nature herself pointing out its necessity in kosmos and man; just because the number seven is “a power, and a spiritual force” in its combination of *three* and *four*, of the triangle and the quaternary. It is no doubt far more convenient to adhere to the fourfold classification in a metaphysical and synthetical sense, just as I have adhered to the threefold classification—of body, soul and spirit—in *Isis Unveiled*, because had I then adopted the septenary division, as I have been compelled to do later on for purposes of strict analysis, no one would have understood it, and the multiplication of principles, instead of throwing light upon the subject, would have introduced endless confusion. But now the question has changed, and the position is different. We have *unfortunately*—for it was premature—opened a chink in the Chinese wall

¹ See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 600, and the appendices by the Editor to the above-quoted article in “Five Years of Theosophy”.

² This is the division given to us by Mr. Subba Row. See “Five Years of Theosophy,” p. 136, article signed T.S.

³ *Ibid*, p. 185.

of esotericism, and we cannot now close it again, even if we would. I for one had to pay a heavy price for the indiscretion, but I will not shrink from the results.

I maintain then, that when once we pass from the plane of pure subjective reasoning on esoteric matters to that of practical demonstration in Occultism, wherein each principle and attribute has to be analysed and defined in its application to the phenomena of daily and especially of *post-mortem* life, the sevenfold classification is the right one. For it is simply a convenient division which prevents in no wise the recognition of but *three* groups—which Mr. Subba Row calls “four principles associated with four *upadhis*, which are associated in their turn with four distinct states of consciousness.”⁴ This is the Bhagavad-Gita classification, it appears; but not that of the Vedanta, nor—what the Raj-Yogis of the *pre*-Aryasangha schools and of the *Mahayana* system held to, and still hold beyond the Himalayas, and their system is almost identical with the *Taraka Raj-Yoga*—the difference between the latter and the Vedanta classification having been pointed out to us by Mr. Subba Row in his little article on the “Septenary Division in Different Indian Systems.” The Taraka Raj-Yogis recognize only *three upadhis* in which *Atma* may work, which, in India, if I mistake not, are the *Jagrata*, or waking state of *consciousness* (corresponding to the *Sthulopadhi*); the *Svapna*, or dreaming state (in *Sukshmapadhi*); and the *Sushupti*, or causal state, produced by, and through *Karanopadhi*, or what we call *Buddhi*. But then, in transcendental states of *Samadhi*, the body with its *linga sarira*, the *vehicle* of the life-principle, is entirely left out of consideration: the three states of consciousness are made to refer only to the three (with *Atma* the fourth) principles which remain after death. And here lies the real key to the septenary division of man, the three principles coming in as an addition only during his life.

As in the Macrocosm, so in the Microcosm: analogies hold good throughout nature. Thus the universe, our solar system, our earth down to man, are to be regarded as all equally possessing a septenary constitution—*four* superterrestrial and superhuman, so to say; *three* objective and astral. In dealing with the special case of man, only, there are two standpoints from which the question may be considered. Man in *incarnation* is certainly made up of seven principles, if we so term the seven states of his material, astral, and spiritual framework, which are all on different planes. But if we classify the principles according to the seat of the four degrees of consciousness, these *upadhis* may be reduced to four groups.⁵ Thus his consciousness, never being centred in the second or third principles—both of which are composed of states of matter (or rather of “substance”) on different planes, each corresponding to one of the planes and principles in kosmos—is necessary to form links between the first, fourth, and fifth principles, as well as subserving certain vital and psychic phenomena. These latter may be conveniently classified with the physical body under one head, and laid aside during trance (*Samadhi*), as after death, thus leaving only the traditional *exoteric* and metaphysical *four*. Any charge of contradictory teaching, therefore, based on this simple fact,

⁴ A crowning proof of the fact that the division is arbitrary and varies with the schools it belongs to, is in the words published in “Personal and Impersonal God” by Mr. Subba Row, where he states that “we have *six* states of consciousness, either objective or subjective ... and a state of perfect unconsciousness, etc.” (See “Five Years of Theosophy,” pp. 200-201). Of course, those who do not hold to the old school of Aryan and Arhat Adepts are in no way bound to adopt the septenary classification.

⁵ Mr. Subba Row’s argument that in the matter of the three divisions of the body “we may make any number of divisions and may as well enumerate nerve-force, blood, and bones,” is not valid, I think. Nerve-force—well and good, though it is one with the life principle and proceeds from it; as to blood, bones, etc., these are objective material things, and one with, and inseparable from the human body; while all the other six principles are in their *Seventh—the body*—purely *subjective* principles, and therefore all denied by material science, which ignores them.

would obviously be wholly invalid; the classification of principles as septenary or quaternary depending wholly on the standpoint from which they are regarded, as said. It is purely a matter of choice which classification we adopt. Strictly speaking, however, *occult*—as also profane—physics would favour the septenary one for these reasons.⁶




There are *six* Forces in Nature: this in Buddhism as in Brahmanism, whether exoteric or esoteric, and the seventh—the *all-Force*, or the absolute Force, which is the synthesis of all. Nature again in her constructive activity strikes the keynote to this classification in more than one way. As stated in the third aphorism of “*Sankhya-karika*” of *Prakriti*—“the root and substance of all things,” she (*Prakriti*, or nature) is no production, but herself a *producer of seven things*, “which, produced by her, become all in their turn producers.” Thus all the liquids in nature begin, when separated from their parent mass, by becoming a spheroid (a drop); and when the globule is formed, and it falls, the impulse given to it transforms it, when it touches ground, almost invariably into an equilateral triangle (or three), and then into an *hexagon*, after which out of the corners of the latter begin to be formed squares or cubes as plane figures. Look at the *natural* work of nature, so to speak, her artificial, or helped production—the prying into her occult work-shop by science. Behold the coloured rings of a soap-bubble, and those produced by polarized light. The rings obtained, whether in Newton’s soap-bubble, or in the crystal through the polarizer, will exhibit invariably six or seven rings—“a black spot surrounded by six rings, or a circle with a plane cube inside, circumscribed with six distinct rings, the circle itself the *seventh*” The “Noremberg” polarizing apparatus throws into objectivity almost all our occult geometrical symbols, though physicists are none the wiser for it. (See Newton’s and Tyndall’s experiments.)⁷

The number seven is at the very root of occult Cosmogony and Anthropogony. No symbol to express evolution from its starting to its completion points would be possible without it. For the circle produces the point; the point expands into a triangle, returning after two angles upon itself, and then forms the mystical *Tetraktis*—the plane cube; which *three* when passing into the manifested world of effects, differentiated nature, become geometrically and numerically $3 + 4 = 7$. The best kabbalists have been demonstrating this for ages ever since Pythagoras, and down to the modern mathematicians and symbologists, one of whom has succeeded in wrenching forever *one of the seven* occult keys, and has proven his victory by a volume of figures. Set any of our theosophists interested in the question to read the wonderful work called “The Hebrew-Egyptian Mystery, the Source of Measures;” and those of them who are good mathematicians will remain aghast before the revelations contained in it. For it shows indeed that occult source of the measure by which were built kosmos and man, and then by the latter the great Pyramid of Egypt, as all the towers, mounds, obelisks, cave-temples of India, and pyramids in Peru and Mexico, and all the archaic monuments; symbols in stone of Chaldea, both Americas, and even of the Easter Island—the living and solitary witness of a submerged

⁶ In that most admirable article of his, “Personal and Impersonal God”—one which has attracted much attention in the Western Theosophical circles, Mr. Subba Row says, “Just as a human being is composed of *seven* principles, differentiated matter in the solar system exists in *seven* different conditions. These do not all come within the range of our present objective consciousness, but they can be perceived by the spiritual ego in man. Further, *Prajna* or the capacity of perception exists in *seven different aspects* corresponding to the seven conditions of matter. Strictly speaking, there are but *six* states of differentiated *pragna*, the seventh state being a condition of perfect unconsciousness (or absolute consciousness). By differentiated *pragna* I mean the condition in which *pragna* is split up into various states of consciousness. Thus we have six states of consciousness, etc., etc.” (“Five Years of Theosophy,” pp. 200 and 201.) This is precisely our Trans-Himalayan Doctrine.


⁷ One need only open Webster’s Dictionary and examine the snowflakes and crystals at the word “Snow” to perceive nature’s work. “God geometrizes,” says Plato.

prehistoric continent in the midst of the Pacific Ocean. It shows that the same figures and measures for the same esoteric symbology existed throughout the world; it shows in the words of the author that the kabbala is a “whole series of developments based upon the use of geometrical elements; giving expression in numerical values, founded on integral values of the circle” (one of the seven keys hitherto known but to the Initiates), discovered by Peter Metius in the 16th century, and re-discovered by the late John A. Parker.⁸ Moreover, that the system from whence all these developments were derived “was anciently considered to be one resting in *nature* (or God), as the *basis* or *law* of the exertions practically of creative design;” and that it also underlies the Biblical structures, being found in the measurements given for Solomon’s temple, the ark of the Covenant, Noah’s Ark, etc., etc.,—in all the symbolical myths, in short, of the Bible.

And what are the figures, the measure in which the sacred Cubit is derived from the esoteric Quadrature, which the Initiates know to have been contained in the *Tetraktis* of Pythagoras? Why, it is the universal primordial symbol. The figures found in the *Ansated Cross* of Egypt, as (I maintain) in the Indian *Swastika*, “the sacred sign” which embellishes the thousand heads of Sessa, the Serpent-cycle of eternity, on which rests Vishnu, the deity in Infinitude; and which also may be pointed out in the threefold (*tretra*) fire of Puraravas, *the first fire in the present Manvantara*, out of the forty-nine (7 x 7) mystic fires. It may be absent from many of the Hindu books, but the Vishnu and other Puranas teem with this symbol and figure under every possible form, which I mean to prove in the “SECRET DOCTRINE”. The author of the “Source of Measures” does not, of course, himself know as yet, the whole scope of what he has discovered. He applies his key, so far, only to the esoteric language and the symbology in the Bible, and the Books of Moses especially. The great error of the able author, in my opinion, is, that he applies the key discovered by him chiefly to post-Atlantean and quasi-historical phallic elements in the world religions; feeling, intuitionally, a nobler, a higher, a more transcendental meaning in all this—*only* in the Bible—and a mere sexual worship in all other religions. This phallic element, however, in the older pagan worship related, in truth, to the physiological evolution of the human races, something that could not be discovered in the Bible, as it is absent from it, (the Pentateuch being the latest of all the old Scriptures). Nevertheless, what the learned author has discovered and proved mathematically, is wonderful enough, and sufficient to make our claim good: namely, that the figures    and $3+4=7$, are at the very basis, and are the soul of cosmogony and the evolution of mankind.

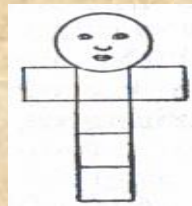
To whosoever desires to display this process by way of symbol, says the author speaking of the *ansated cross*, the *Tau* ♀ of the Egyptians and the Christian cross—“it would be by *the figure of the cube unfolded in connection with the circle whose measure is taken off onto the edges of the cube*. (The cube unfolded becomes, in superficial display, a *cross proper*, or of the *tau* form, and the attachment of the circle to this last gives the *ansated cross* of the Egyptians, with its obvious meaning of *the Origin of Measures*.)⁹ Because, also, this kind of measure was made to coordinate with the idea of *the origin of life*, it was made to assume the type of the *hermaphrodite*, and, in fact, it is placed by representation to cover this part of the human person in the Hindu form...” (It is “the hermaphrodite Indranse Indra, the nature goddess, the *Issa* of

⁸ Of Newark, in his work *The Quadrature of the Circle*, his “problem of the three revolving bodies” (N.Y. John Wiley and Son.)

⁹ And, by adding to the cross proper + the symbol of the four cardinal points and infinity at the same time, thus  the arms pointing above, below, and right, and left, making six in the circle—the Archaic sign of the Yomas—it would make of it the Swastika, the “sacred sign” used by the order of “Ishmael masons”, which they call the Universal Hermetic Cross, and do not understand its real wisdom, nor know its origin.

the Hebrews, and the *Isis* of the Egyptians,” as the author calls them in another place.) (“...It is very observable that, while there are but 6 faces to a cube, the representation of the cross as the cube unfolded as to the cross-bars, displays one face of the cube *as common to two bars*, counted as belonging to either; then, while the faces originally represented are but six, the use of the two bars counts the square as four for the upright and three for the cross-bar, making seven in all. Here we have the famous four, three and seven again, the four and three on the factor members of the Parker (quadrature and of the “three revolving bodies”) problem”... (pp. 50-51).

And they are the factor members in the building of the Universe and MAN. Wittoba,—an aspect of Krishna and Vishnu—is therefore the “man crucified in space,” or the “cube unfolded,” as explained (See Moore’s *Pantheon*, for Wittoba). It is the oldest symbol in India, now nearly lost, as the real meaning of *Visvakarma* and *Vikartana* (the “sun shorn of his beams”) is also lost. It is the Egyptian *ansated cross*, and *vice versa*, and the latter—even the *sistrum*, with its cross-bars—is simply the *symbol* of the *Deity as man*—however phallic it may have become later, after the submersion of Atlantis. The *ansated cross* ♀ is of course, as Professor Seyffarth has shown—again the *six* Seyffarth says: “It is the skull with the brains, the nerves extending to the spine, back, and stone translates it repeatedly by *anthropos* Coptic *ank*, (*vita*, life), properly *anima*, The Egyptian *anki* signifies “my soul.”¹⁰



with its head—the *seventh*. the seat of the soul, and with eyes or ears. For the Tanis (man), and we have the properly meaning *anima*.

It means in its synthesis, the *seven principles*, the details coming later. Now the *ansated cross*, as given above, having been discovered on the backs of gigantic statues found on the Easter Island (mid-Pacific Ocean) which is a part of the submerged continent; this remnant being described as “thickly studded with cyclopean statues, remnants of the civilization of a dense and cultivated people;”—and Mr. Subba Row having told us what he had found in the old Hindu books, namely, that the ancient Adepts of India had learned occult powers from the Atlanteans (vide supra)—the logical inference is that they had their septenary division from them, just as our Adepts from the “Sacred Island” had. This ought to settle the question.

And this Tau cross is ever *septenary*, under whatever form—it has many forms, though the main idea is always one. What are the Egyptian *oozas* (the eyes) the amulets called the “mystic eye,” but symbols of the same? There are the *four* eyes in the *three* smaller ones in the lower. Or again, the *ooza* with the *seven* it, “the combined melody of which *creates one man*,” say the *luths* hanging from hieroglyphics. Or again, the *hexagon* formed of six triangles, whose apices converge to a point thus: *the symbol of the Universal creation*, which Kenneth Mackenzie tells us “was worn as a ring by the Sovereign Princes of the Royal Secret”—which they never knew by the bye. If *seven* has nought to do with the mysteries of the universe and man, then indeed from Vedas down to the Bible all the archaic Scriptures—the Puranas, the Avesta and all the fragments that have reached us—have no *esoteric* meaning, and must be regarded as the Orientalists regard them—as a farago of childish tales.



It is quite true that the *three upadhis* of the *Taraka Raj-Yoga* are, as Mr. Subba Row explains in his little article, “The Septenary Division in Different Indian Systems”, “the best and simplest”—but only in purely *contemplative* Yoga. And he adds: “Though there are *seven* principles in man, there are but *three* distinct *upadhis*, in each of which his *Atma* may work independently of the rest. These three *upadhis* can be separated by the Adept without killing

¹⁰ Quoted in “Source of Measures.”

himself. He cannot separate the seven principles from each other without destroying his constitution.” (“Five Years of Theosophy,” p. 185). Most decidedly he cannot. But this again holds good only with regard to his lower three principles—the body and its (in life) inseparable *prana* and *linga sarira*. The rest can be separated, as they constitute no *vital*, but rather a mental and spiritual necessity. As to the remark in the same article objecting to the fourth principle being “included in the third kosa, as the said principle is but the vehicle of will-power, which is but an energy of the mind,” I answer: Just so! But as the higher attributes of the fifth (*Manas*), go to make up the original *triad*, and it is just the *terrestrial* energies, feelings and volitions which remain in the *Kama loka*, what is the vehicle, the *astral* form to carry them about as *bhoota* until they fade out—which may take centuries to accomplish? Can the “false” personality, or the *pisacha*, whose ego is made up precisely of all those terrestrial passions and feelings, remain in *Kama loka*, and occasionally appear, without a substantial vehicle, however ethereal? Or are we to give up the seven principles, and the belief that there is such a thing as an *astral body*, and a *bhoot*, or *spook*?

Most decidedly not. For Mr. Subba Row himself once more explains how, from the Hindu standpoint, the *lower fifth*, or *Manas*, can reappear after death, remarking very justly, that it is absurd to call it a *disembodied spirit*. (“Five Years of Theosophy,” p.174.) As he says: “It is merely a power or force retaining the impressions of the thoughts or ideas of the individual *into whose composition it originally entered*. It sometimes summons to its aid the *Kamarupa* power, and creates for itself some particular ethereal form.”

Now that which “sometimes summons” *Kamarupa*, and the “power” of that name make already two principles, two “powers”—call them as you will. Then we have *Atma* and its vehicle—*Buddhi*—which make *four*. With the three which disappeared on earth this will be equivalent to *seven*. How can we, then, speak of modern Spiritualism, of its materializations and other phenomena, without resorting to the Septenary.

To quote our friend and much respected brother for the last time, since he says that “our (Aryan) philosophers have associated seven *occult* powers with *the seven principles* (in men and in the kosmos), which seven occult powers correspond in the microcosm with, or are counterparts of, occult powers in the macrocosm,—¹¹” quite an esoteric sentence,—it does seem almost a pity, that words pronounced in an extempore lecture, though such an able one, should have been published without revision.

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¹¹ “Brahmanism on the Sevenfold Principle in Man.”