



Theosophical Mystery  
by  
Olga Fröbe Kapteyn

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ESOTERIC SCHOOLS OF MEDITATION, STUDY AND SERVICE

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We three were driving back from a morning sail on the Ganges along the river front to see that unique spectacle, the morning ablutions of tens of thousands of pious Hindus. They crowded the steps of the crumbling ghâts and half-ruined palaces that line the river's edge; they sat praying on the wooden platforms, sheltered by awnings or palm-leaf roofs; they stood knee-deep in the water; they beat their washed cloths on the stone steps: ascetics smeared their bodies with sacred ashes; the women polished with mud their bright brass jars until they looked like new gold, filled them with Ganges water, and walked away with them on their left hips.



They thronged the burning-ghâṭ, where corpses were being consumed on the pyres and others waited their turn; and the morning sun shone bright on sparkling brasses, red cloths, white turbans, and the seething multitudes that pressed up and down the broad staircases that rose to the level of the crowded city streets, while peacock-prowed quaint craft rode at their moorings or floated down the stream. Such a scene is visible nowhere else as this at Holy Benares in the early hours of the day.

What makes it more impressive is the fact that this same scene has been repeated daily from earliest ages; such as it is now it was when the Krishna Avatara moved among men. But how long it will survive no man can foretell. The hand of Time is already laid upon the structures that line the shore. ODL:271

## STANZA III

1. . . . The last vibration of the seventh eternity thrills through infinitude. The mother swells, expanding from within without, like the bud of the lotus.
  2. The vibration sweeps along, touching with its swift wing the whole universe and the germ that dwelleth in darkness: the darkness that breathes over the slumbering waters of life. . .
  3. Darkness radiates light, and light drops one solitary ray into the mother-deep. The ray shoots through the virgin egg; the ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal germ, which condenses into the world-egg.
  4. Then the three fall into the four. The radiant essence becomes seven inside, seven outside. The luminous egg, which in itself is three, curdles and spreads in milk-white curds throughout the depths of mother, the root that grows in the depths of the ocean of life.
  5. The root remains, the light remains, the curds remain, and still *Oeahoo* is one.
  6. The root of life was in every drop of the ocean of immortality, and the ocean was radiant light, which was fire, and heat, and motion. Darkness vanished and was no more; it disappeared in its own essence, the body of fire and water, or father and mother.
  7. Behold, oh *Lanoo*! The radiant child of the two, the unparalleled refulgent glory: Bright Space Son of Dark Space, which emerges from the depths of the great dark waters. It is *Oeahoo* the younger, the \* \* \* He shines forth as the son; he is the blazing Divine Dragon of Wisdom; the One is Four, and Four takes to itself Three,† and the Union produces the *Sapta*, in whom are the seven which become the *Tridasa* (or the hosts and the multitudes). Behold him lifting the veil and unfurling it from east to west. He shuts out the above, and leaves the below to be seen as the great illusion. He marks the places for the shining ones, and turns the upper into a shoreless sea of fire, and the one manifested into the great waters.
  8. Where was the germ and where was now darkness? Where is the spirit of the flame that burns in thy lamp, oh *Lanoo*? The germ is that, and that is light, the white brilliant son of the dark hidden father.
  9. Light is cold flame, and flame is fire, and fire produces heat, which yields water: the water of life in the great mother.
  10. Father-Mother spin a web whose upper end is fastened to spirit—the light of the one darkness—and the lower one to its shadowy end, matter; and this web is the universe spun out of the two substances made in one, which is *Svâbhâvat*.
  11. It expands when the breath of fire is upon it; it contracts when the breath of the mother touches it. Then the sons dissociate and scatter, to return into their mother's bosom at the end of the great day, and re-become one with her; when it is cooling it becomes radiant, and the sons expand and contract through their own selves and hearts; they embrace infinitude.
  12. Then *Svâbhâvat* sends *Fohat* to harden the atoms. Each is a part of the web. Reflecting the "Self-Existent Lord" like a mirror, each becomes in turn a world.
- † In the English translation from the Sanskrit the numbers are given in that language, *Eka*, *Chatur*, etc., etc. It was thought best to give them in English. SD1:28-30

3. "Darkness" radiates light, and light drops one solitary ray into the waters, into the mother deep. The ray shoots through the virgin-egg; the ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal (periodical) germ, which condenses into the world egg (a).

(a) The "Mundane Egg" is, perhaps, one of the most universally adopted symbols, highly suggestive as it is, equally in the spiritual, physiological, and cosmological sense. Therefore, it is found in every world-theogony, where it is largely associated with the serpent symbol; the latter being everywhere, in philosophy as in religious symbolism, an emblem of eternity, infinitude, regeneration, and rejuvenation, as well as of wisdom. (See Part II. "Tree and Serpent and Crocodile Worship.") The mystery of apparent self-generation and evolution through its own creative power repeating in miniature the process of Cosmic evolution in the egg, both being due to heat and moisture under the efflux of the unseen creative spirit, justified fully the selection of this graphic symbol. The "Virgin Egg" is the microcosmic symbol of the macrocosmic prototype— the "Virgin Mother"— Chaos or the Primeval Deep. The male Creator (under whatever name) springs forth from the Virgin female, the immaculate root fructified by the Ray. Who, if versed in astronomy and natural sciences, can fail to see its suggestiveness? Cosmos as receptive Nature is an Egg fructified— yet left immaculate; once regarded as boundless, it could have no other representation than a spheroid. The Golden Egg was surrounded by seven natural elements (ether, fire, air, water), "four ready, three secret." It may be found stated in *Vishnu Purâna*, where elements are translated "Envelopes" and a secret one is added: "*Aham-kâra*" (see Wilson's *Vishnu Purâna*, Book I., p. 40). The original text has no "*Aham-kâra*;" it mentions seven Elements without specifying the last three (see Part II. on "The Mundane Egg"). SD1:65-6

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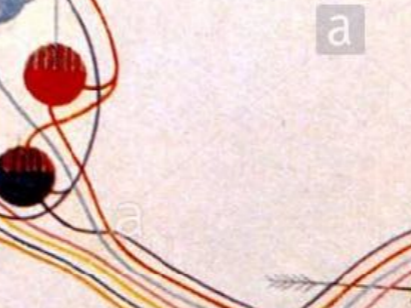
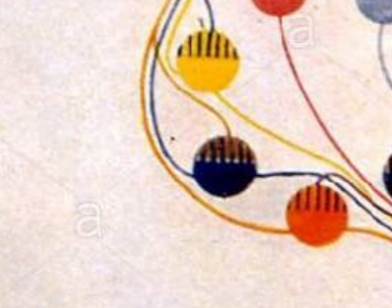
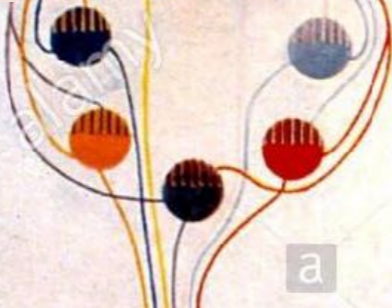
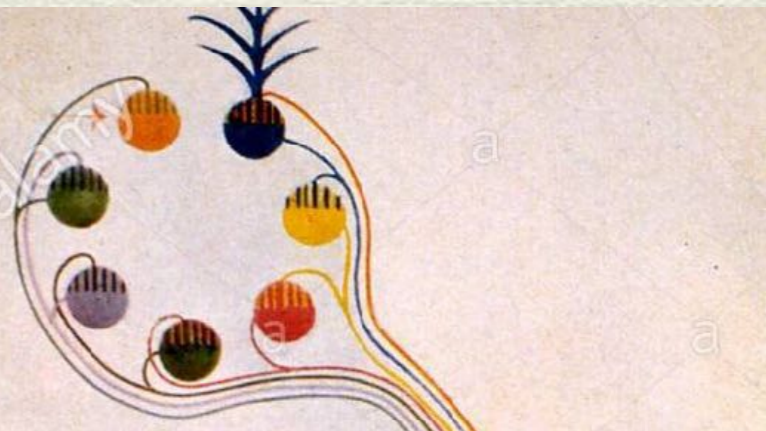
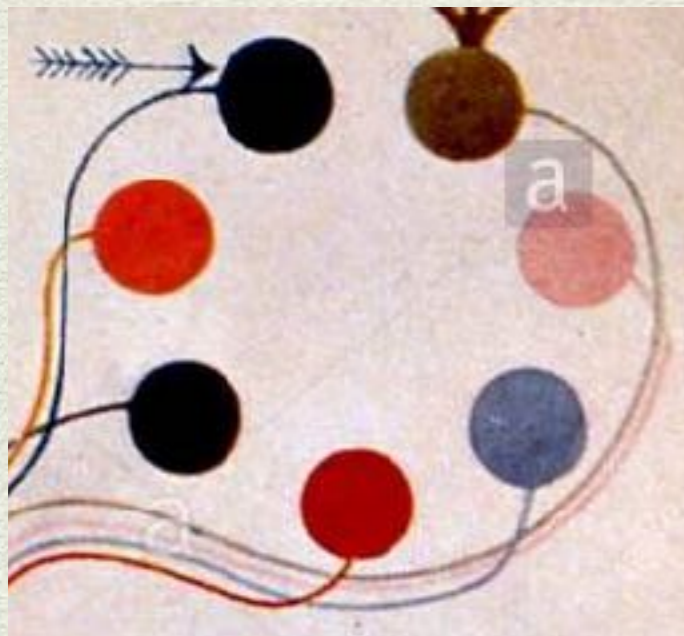
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The Rounds  
by  
Charles Leadbeater

## STANZA III

1. . . . The last vibration of the seventh eternity thrills through infinitude. The mother swells, expanding from within without, like the bud of the lotus.
2. The vibration sweeps along, touching with its swift wing the whole universe and the germ that dwelleth in darkness: the darkness that breathes over the slumbering waters of life. . .
3. **Darkness radiates light, and light drops one solitary ray into the mother-deep. The ray shoots through the virgin egg; the ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal germ, which condenses into the world-egg.**
4. Then the three fall into the four. The radiant essence becomes seven inside, seven outside. The luminous egg, which in itself is three, curdles and spreads in milk-white curds throughout the depths of mother, the root that grows in the depths of the ocean of life.
5. The root remains, the light remains, the curds remain, and still *Oeaoahoo* is one.
6. The root of life was in every drop of the ocean of immortality, and the ocean was radiant light, which was fire, and heat, and motion. Darkness vanished and was no more; it disappeared in its own essence, the body of fire and water, or father and mother.
7. Behold, oh *Lanoo!* The radiant child of the two, the unparalleled refulgent glory: Bright Space Son of Dark Space, which emerges from the depths of the great dark waters. It is *Oeaoahoo* the younger, the \* \* \* He shines forth as the son; he is the blazing Divine Dragon of Wisdom; the One is Four, and Four takes to itself Three,† and the Union produces the *Sapta*, in whom are the seven which become the *Tridasa* (or the hosts and the multitudes). Behold him lifting the veil and unfurling it from east to west. He shuts out the above, and leaves the below to be seen as the great illusion. He marks the places for the shining ones, and turns the upper into a shoreless sea of fire, and the one manifested into the great waters.
8. Where was the germ and where was now darkness? Where is the spirit of the flame that burns in thy lamp, oh *Lanoo?* The germ is that, and that is light, the white brilliant son of the dark hidden father.
9. Light is cold flame, and flame is fire, and fire produces heat, which yields water: the water of life in the great mother.
10. Father-Mother spin a web whose upper end is fastened to spirit—the light of the one darkness—and the lower one to its shadowy end, matter; and this web is the universe spun out of the two substances made in one, which is *Svâbhâvat*.
11. It expands when the breath of fire is upon it; it contracts when the breath of the mother touches it. Then the sons dissociate and scatter, to return into their mother's bosom at the end of the great day, and re-become one with her; when it is cooling it becomes radiant, and the sons expand and contract through their own selves and hearts; they embrace infinitude.
12. Then *Svâbhâvat* sends *Fohat* to harden the atoms. Each is a part of the web. Reflecting the "Self-Existent Lord" like a mirror, each becomes in turn a world.

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**Darkness:** In theosophical philosophy light is not regarded as self-existent, but as primordially the spiritual effect of a spiritual cause. This unknown divine substratum, the original super-spiritual intelligence-substance of the universe, is sometimes called darkness; likewise, it is spoken of as absolute light. Thus absolute light and absolute darkness are the same, so that manifested light sprang from unmanifested light or darkness. Philosophically, darkness is Father-Mother and light, their Son. Night or darkness preceded day and light in cosmogony, as is recognized in Genesis, where darkness broods over the face of the deep. The emanation of light from darkness is the first step in cosmic manifestation. Light thus is truly called original substance or spiritual matter; darkness, purest spirit. Synonymous with this darkness are Ayn Soph, the Boundless, the bridgeless abyss, the unmanifest, the ever-invisible robes of the eternal parent.

**Nārāyaṇa:** (Sanskrit) [from *nāra*, human + *ayana*, going] The mover on the waters of space [the darkness that breathes over the slumbering waters of life]. In esoteric symbology *Narayana* stands for the primeval manifestation of the life principle spreading in infinite space, or again the Isvara, the Logos, the inner guide of all individual souls in the universe. OTG

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4. Then the three (*triangle*) fall into the four (*quaternary*). The radiant essence becomes seven inside, seven outside (*a*). The luminous egg (*Hiranyagarbha*), which in itself is three (*the triple hypostases of Brahmâ, or Vishnu, the three "Avasthas"*), curdles and spreads in milk-white curds throughout the depths of mother, the root that grows in the ocean of life (*b*).

(a) The use of geometrical figures and the frequent allusions to figures in all ancient scriptures (see *Purânas*, Egyptian papyri, the "Book of the Dead" and even the Bible) must be explained. In the "Book of Dzyan," as in the Kabala, there are two kinds of numerals to be studied— the figures, often simple blinds, and the Sacred Numbers, the values of which are all known to the Occultists through Initiation. The former is but a conventional glyph, the latter is the basic symbol of all. That is to say, that one is purely physical, the other purely metaphysical, the two standing in relation to each other as matter stands to spirit—the extreme poles of the one Substance. SD1:66



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"The smallest as the most immense creations, are they not to be distinguished from each other by their quantities, their qualities, their dimensions, their forces and attributes, all begotten by the Number? The infinitude of the Numbers is a fact proven to our mind, but of which no proof can be physically given. The mathematician will tell us that the infinitude of the numbers exists but is not to be demonstrated. God is a Number endowed with motion, which is felt but not demonstrated. *As Unity, it begins the Numbers, with which it has nothing in common. . . .* The existence of the Number depends on Unity, which, without a single Number, begets them all. . . . What! unable either to measure the first abstraction yielded to you by the Deity, or to get hold of it, you still hope to subject to your measurements to the mystery of the Secret Sciences which emanate from that Deity? . . . And what would you feel, were I to plunge you into the abysses of Motion, the Force which organizes the Number? What would you think, were I to add that *Motion and Number\** are begotten by the Word, the Supreme Reason of the Seers and Prophets, who, in days of old, sensed the mighty Breath of God, a witness to which is the Apocalypse?"

\*Number, truly; but never Motion. It is *Motion* which begets the Logos, the Word, in occultism. SD1:66-7

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"The smallest as the most immense creations, are they not to be distinguished from each other by their quantities, their qualities, their dimensions, their forces and attributes, all begotten by the Number? The infinitude of the Numbers is a fact proven to our mind, but of which no proof can be physically given. The mathematician will tell us that the infinitude of the numbers exists but is not to be demonstrated. God is a Number endowed with motion, which is felt but not demonstrated. ***As Unity, it begins the Numbers, with which it has nothing in common. . . . The existence of the Number depends on Unity, which, without a single Number, begets them all. . . .*** What! unable either to measure the first abstraction yielded to you by the Deity, or to get hold of it, you still hope to subject to your measurements to the mystery of the Secret Sciences which emanate from that Deity? . . . And what would you feel, were I to plunge you into the abysses of Motion, the Force which organizes the Number? What would you think, were I to add that *Motion* and *Number*\* are begotten by the Word, the Supreme Reason of the Seers and Prophets, who, in days of old, sensed the mighty Breath of God, a witness to which is the Apocalypse?"

\*Number, truly; but never Motion. It is *Motion* which begets the Logos, the Word, in occultism. SD1:66-7

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(b) "The radiant essence curdled and spread throughout the depths of Space." From an astronomical point of view this is easy of explanation: it is the "milky way," the world-stuff, or primordial matter in its first form. It is more difficult, however, to explain it in a few words or even lines, from the standpoint of Occult Science and Symbolism, as it is the most complicated of glyphs. Herein are enshrined more than a dozen symbols. To begin with, the whole pantheon of mysterious objects,† every one of them having some definite Occult meaning, extracted from the allegorical "churning of the ocean" by the Hindu gods. Besides *Amrita*, the water of life or immortality, *Surabhi* the "cow of plenty," called "the fountain of milk and curds," was extracted from this "Sea of Milk." Hence the universal adoration of the cow and bull, one the productive, the other the generative power in Nature: symbols connected with both the Solar and the Cosmic deities. The specific properties, for occult purposes, of the "fourteen precious things," being explained only at the fourth Initiation, cannot be given here; but the following may be remarked. In the *Satapatha Brâhmana* it is stated that the churning of the "Ocean of Milk" took place in the *Satya Yuga*, the first age which immediately followed the Deluge.

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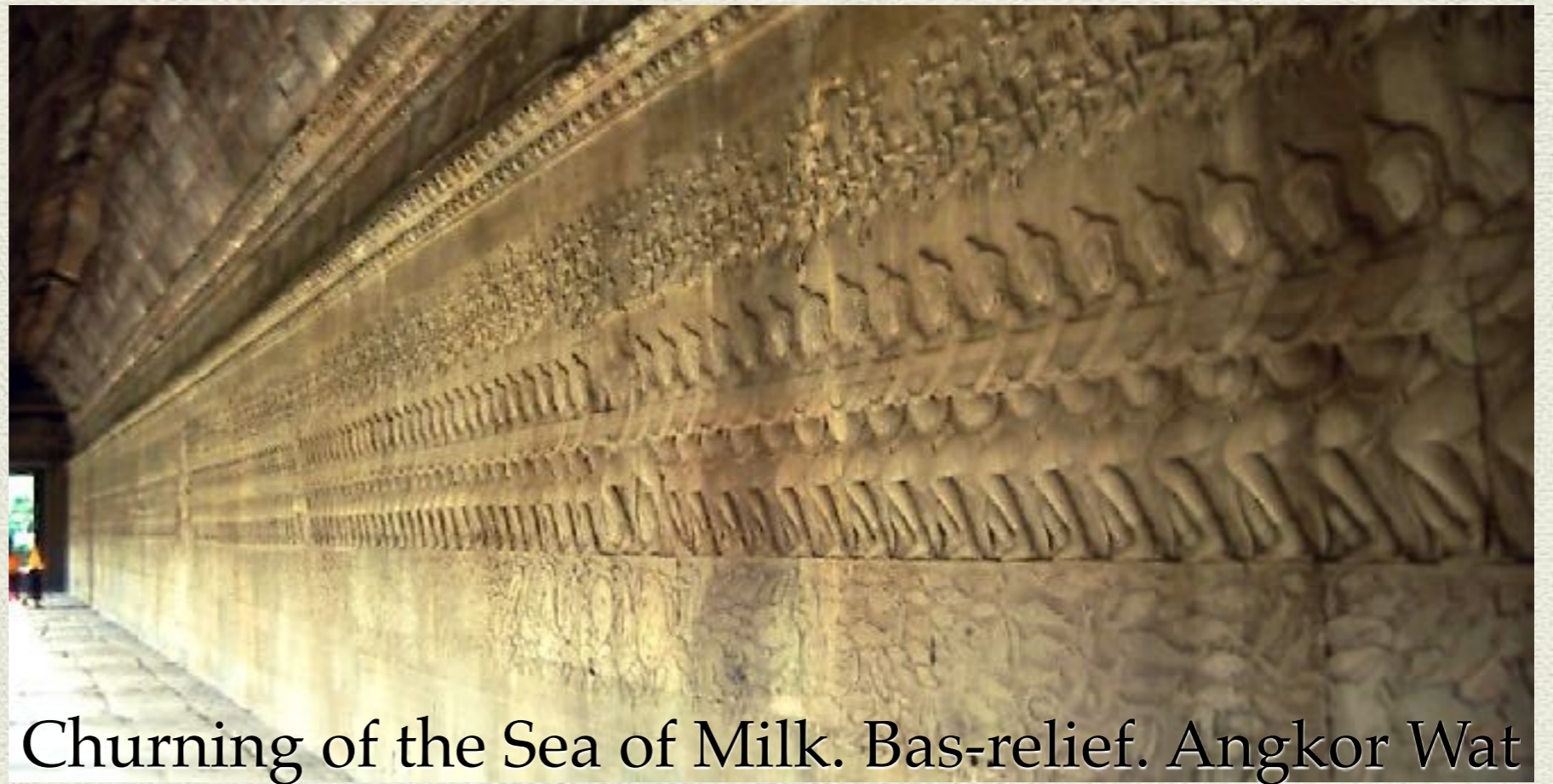
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Churning of the Sea of Milk. Bas-relief. Angkor Wat















- (1) Chandra, the moon,
- (2) Parijata, a beautiful and fragrant tree now planted in Indra's heaven,
- (3) The four-tusked elephant Airavata, Indra's mount,
- (4) Kamadhenu, the cow of plenty,
- (5) Madira, the goddess of wine, who became Varuni, the wife of Varuna,
- (6) Kalpavriksha, the wish-fulfilling tree,
- (7) The apsaras (celestial dancers),
- (8) The celestial horse Uccaihshravas,
- (9) The goddess Lakshmi, who became Vishnu's wife,
- (10) Panchajanya, Vishnu's conch,
- (11) Vishnu's mace and magic bow,
- (12) Various gems, and
- (13–14) Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods, who rose up out of the waters carrying in his hands the supreme treasure, the amrita.**

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**Amrita** (Sanskrit) The water of life or immortality, the ambrosial drink or spiritual food of the gods. According to the *Puranas*, *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata*, *Amrita* is the elixir of life produced during the contest between the devas and *asuras* when churning the “milky sea” (the waters of life).

**Churning of the Ocean** The agitation of milk, separating the uniform fluid into butter and buttermilk, is used as a figure with various applications, but chiefly to a stage in cosmogenesis when the one cosmic substance becomes differentiated into the “cosmic curds.” By this churning, according to the Hindu tale, is produced *amrita*, the cosmic *soma*, the fluid of immortality; but inevitably at the same time is produced *visha* (poison), this being the polar qualities in the cosmic forces, and likewise in ethics good and evil. The Ocean of Milk or Life, space, is churned by the gods; the radiant essence curdled and spread throughout the depths. It is said in the *Satapatha-Brahmana* that this took place in *satya yuga*, but the reference here is to cosmic *yugas*, a period before the earth’s earliest formation. The allegory however may apply to the initial stages of cycles of various magnitudes, and has also astronomical and geographical applications to the formation of world-stuff out of primary matter.

**Kurma-avatara** (Sanskrit) The Tortoise avatara; a descent of Vishnu, the sustainer of life, in the form of a tortoise. In the *Puranas*, a portion of cosmic Vishnu descended as the *kurma* to restore to mankind the mystic nectar (*amrita*), the essence of life and truth, as well as other holy and precious things needful to humanity, which had been lost. Vishnu ordered the gods to churn the sea of milk that they might procure once more these precious things, and he promised to become the tortoise on which the mountain *Mandara* as a churning stick should rest. Out of the sea of churned milk arose the 14 precious things, and with these the gods won their authority over the demons once more. Cosmically this churning of the sea of milk relates to a period before the earth’s formation, the sea of milk being the expanse of space populated by the nebulae and diffuse star-stuff, the seeds and substance of future worlds and their hierarchies. OTG