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A REFLECTION ON *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, No. 21

Like billboards flanking the sides of the freeway, certain major themes such as polarity and cyclicity appear repeatedly along the avenues of thought permeating *The Secret Doctrine*. As with the casual traveler who exits the interstate highway in favor of rustic back-roads, it is often in a passing reference, or stray footnote, that a slight detour into unfamiliar territory rewards the inquisitive reader with the joy of discovery.

One detour worth taking is the consideration of the term *laya*, which variously appears as laya-center, laya-state, or zero-point. *Laya* is a Sanskrit word meaning “vanishing point” and is derived from the verb-root *Lî*, meaning “to dissolve” or “to disintegrate.” The laya-centers described in *The Secret Doctrine* involve the sudden disappearance of planets and universes. No, they are not to be compared with the black holes of our modern cosmologists, nor are they the products of a creative literary mind, analogous to the famed rabbit hole of *Alice in Wonderland*. They are something altogether different.

Blavatsky describes the laya-state as “that point where substance becomes homogeneous and is unable to act or differentiate.” The “ever-invisible robes” spoken of in the opening sloka of the Stanzas of Dzyan refers to primordial matter in its undifferentiated state during the state of universal Pralaya. Laya also means “dissolving center” or “revolving center.” Stanza VI cites the creation of seven laya-centers as part of the formation of the new universe. Judith Tyberg describes them as “channels through which consciousness or life-atoms pass when going from one plane to another . . . they are like doors which lead in two directions.” Or as Purucker puts it, they are “canals of both egress and ingress” for every kind of entity that exists, whether a man, a planet, or a sun. “When a planet dies,” says H. P. Blavatsky, “its informing principles are transferred to a *laya* or sleeping centre.”

So, as you make your journey through *The Secret Doctrine*, don’t hesitate to take an occasional detour onto the back-roads, where the mystery of the unknown awaits.

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