

Mulaprakriti

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Mulaprakriti means the root of Nature. In Theosophical metaphysics it names primordial, undifferentiated substance, the hidden ground of all the forms through which a universe becomes manifest. The word asks us to reconsider what we mean by matter. Root-substance cannot be pictured as a finer material concealed behind familiar objects. It belongs to the precosmic order, prior to the distinctions through which we ordinarily recognize things. To contemplate it is to acknowledge a depth in Nature that appearances alone cannot disclose.

The image of a veil gives this teaching a particular tenderness and precision. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky quotes T. Subba Row's statement that "*Parabrahmam* is an unconditioned and absolute reality, and *Mulaprakriti* is a sort of veil thrown over it." The surrounding passage places this appearance at the standpoint of the *Logos*. The veil expresses how the Absolute is approached from the side of substance; it does not make the unconditioned Reality into an object that thought could finally possess.

Blavatsky also describes Spirit and Matter as two aspects of the Absolute, forming the basis of conditioned existence. They are inseparable in this account. *Mulaprakriti* underlies the objective planes of Nature, while precosmic Ideation supplies the root of individual consciousness. To speak of an objective aspect here does not mean that root-substance is visible or measurable. The expression indicates its place in a metaphysical relationship. Subject and object become distinguishable in manifestation, while their ultimate ground remains one.

This requires care with the language of emergence. In "Enlightenment," Professor Raghavan Iyer insists that *Mulaprakriti* is timeless and cannot be converted into something else. The changing universe is described through the image of a periodical shadow. The root remains while worlds appear and disappear. In this strict sense, it would be misleading to imagine a stock of primordial material gradually used up in making galaxies. Cosmogenesis concerns dependence upon an enduring ground, approached through successive levels of manifestation; its imagery cannot be reduced to a physical manufacturing process.

The opening Stanza of *Dzyan* portrays Eternal Parent Space wrapped in invisible robes. Blavatsky interprets those robes as the noumenon of undifferentiated Cosmic Matter, co-eternal with Space in its abstract sense. The maternal image suggests an immeasurable capacity to sustain manifestation, without turning the source into a humanlike mother. It can nevertheless awaken reverence. What appears before us has roots beyond our immediate grasp. A leaf, a body, a passing world belongs to a depth that no outward description can exhaust.

The relation to intelligence is equally necessary. Professor Iyer discusses the parallel unfoldment of *Mahat* and *Mulaprakriti*, allowing cosmic mind and substance to illuminate one another. Blavatsky names *Fohat* as the dynamic energy through which Divine Thought is impressed upon Cosmic Substance as the laws of Nature. These terms address distinct functions within a living account of manifestation. *Mahat* names cosmic intelligence; *Fohat* expresses the link between ideation and substance. *Mulaprakriti* gives the inquiry its primordial depth on the side of substance, without becoming one more force acting among other forces.

Related terms require the same attention to context. Blavatsky calls *Akasha* a radiation of *Mulaprakriti* and describes *Svabhavat* as a more concrete expression of the abstraction named by Hindu philosophy. Professor Iyer relates the seeming separation of *Mulaprakriti* and *Daiviprakriti* to the veiling process of manifestation. Such correspondences help trace relationships across different vocabularies. Their usefulness depends upon retaining the particular emphasis of each passage. A radiation, a manifested vehicle and the timeless root should not be treated as interchangeable expressions merely because they belong to one field of meaning.

The terminology also shifts with the philosophical standpoint. In “Sankhya Yoga,” Professor Iyer explains a system that distinguishes *Purusha*, pure consciousness, from *Mulaprakriti*, primordial materiality. The equilibrium of its three *gunas* is disturbed in the co-presence of *Purusha*, and differentiated experience unfolds. This is an account of the *Sankhya* categories, whose aim includes discerning Self from non-self. Its description of transformations should be read within that framework, alongside the more radically unconditioned use in “Enlightenment.” Respecting the distinction prevents an apparent contradiction from being passed over or resolved by flattening either teaching.

How, then, can the mind approach such an abstraction? In “Enlightenment,” Professor Iyer asks the student to imagine the disappearance of every world, planet and galaxy. The exercise carries negation beyond any particular object towards absolute abstract Space. Yet even the picture of an empty expanse retains the limits of ordinary perception. The contemplative movement gradually loosens those limits. We learn to notice how quickly thought supplies a shape, a boundary or a duration, and how easily its own picture is mistaken for the reality being considered.

“Transcendence and Transformation” gives this inquiry the language of depth. Professor Iyer distinguishes metaphysical depth from measurable length, breadth and thickness. *Mulaprakriti* is approached as the primordial plane upon which the Logoic constructions of sacred geometry arise. Diagrams can suggest relationships, but their visible lines cannot contain the meaning. This offers a discipline for study itself: an image can guide attention beyond its surface while

remaining an image. We may use it gratefully and still allow understanding to grow beyond what we first imagined.

The inward purpose becomes explicit when Professor Iyer links meditation on *Mulaprakriti* and *Prakriti*, *Parabrahm* and *Mahat*, to a better orientation towards Self and non-self. Devotion steadies this work, and intuition strengthens the heart. It asks for sustained inquiry rather than a claim of immediate attainment. A modest beginning is to notice an experience without making it the whole of ourselves. A disappointment can be acknowledged, a mistake corrected, while the mind learns to release the identity it has fastened around a passing event.

Here the doctrine touches ordinary relationships. We sometimes reduce another person to the last difficult thing they said, as though a moment could reveal an entire being. Remembering that appearances have depth can interrupt that haste. We may ask a question, listen longer, or leave room for a change we have not yet seen. This is a practical analogy, not a proof that we have directly perceived root-substance. Its value lies in the quality of attention it encourages: less eager to confine, more willing to understand.

The same reverence can inform our treatment of Nature. Within the Theosophical vision, transient forms participate in a shared life whose roots exceed their visible separateness. Their transience does not diminish our responsibility towards them. Care for a body, restraint in using resources, and gentleness towards vulnerable creatures give philosophy a place in daily conduct. Universal Brotherhood grows more concrete when kinship changes what we do. We begin with the beings and circumstances already entrusted to our attention, where a small act of care can have a real effect.

Mulaprakriti thus offers an education in humility without asking us to abandon clear thought. Its mystery invites exact distinctions, patient contemplation and a heart capable of widening its concern. We need not pull the veil aside by force of imagination. We can let the teaching make us more attentive to the life it veils. Beneath the changing forms we meet each day, the doctrine points towards an inexhaustible ground. To remember that quietly may make the next word kinder, the next judgment slower, and the next act more worthy of the life we share.

Glossary

Akasha — The subtle spiritual substance or space described in the cited teaching as a radiation of *Mulaprakriti*; its precise meaning varies with context.

Cosmic Ideation — Universal intelligence or thought considered as the guiding aspect of cosmic manifestation.

Cosmogogenesis — The emergence and unfolding of a cosmos from its metaphysical roots.

Daiviprakriti — Divine Nature or luminous spiritual radiation, considered in relation to the *Logos* and the unfoldment of primordial substance.

Divine Thought — Universal ideation, without the implication of an individual humanlike thinker.

Duration — Boundless continuity, distinguished in the cited teaching from time as measured succession.

Fohat — The dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation, linking intelligence and substance in manifestation.

Gunas — The three qualities of Nature in *Sankhya*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*; their equilibrium and differentiation are central to its account of manifestation.

Logos — The principle of divine ideation and manifested consciousness; the level intended depends upon the passage.

Logoic — Relating to the *Logos* and its expression through cosmic intelligence and order.

Mahat — Cosmic mind or intelligence; Professor Iyer distinguishes its universal ground from its expression within a manifested system.

Manvantara — A period of cosmic activity or manifestation, alternating with *pralaya*.

Meta-geometry — Professor Iyer's term for the metaphysical meaning of geometrical relationships beyond their visible or measurable representation.

Mulaprakriti — The root of Nature; primordial, undifferentiated substance, spoken of as the veil upon the Absolute and the root of material manifestation.

Noumenon; noumenal — The underlying reality or principle behind phenomena; pertaining to that underlying order.

Parabrahman; Parabrahm; Parabrahmam — Forms used in these sources for the unconditioned Absolute, beyond limiting attributes.

Prakriti — Nature or the material principle; in the contrast with its timeless root, the realm of differentiated manifestation.

Pralaya — Cosmic dissolution or rest between periods of manifestation.

Purusha — Pure consciousness or Self in *Sankhya*, distinguished from the changing categories of Nature.

Rajas — The *guna* associated with passionate, restless or compulsive activity.

Sankhya — The philosophical system explained here through its distinction of Self and non-self and its enumeration of principles of existence.

Sattva — The *guna* associated with luminosity, intelligence and clarity.

Self and non-self — The distinction between spiritual identity or pure consciousness and the objects, changing states and vehicles with which it may be confused.

Stanzas of Dzyan — The archaic stanzas presented and interpreted in *The Secret Doctrine* as a framework for cosmic and human evolution.

Svabhavat — The plastic essence of manifestation, described by Blavatsky as a more concrete expression of the abstraction called *Mulaprakriti*.

Tamas — The *guna* associated with obscuration, inertia and lethargy.

Universal Brotherhood — The ethical recognition of the unity and kinship of living beings, expressed through responsibility and mutual care.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 10, footnote.

“In contradistinction to the manifested universe of matter, the term *Mulaprakriti* (from *Mula*, ‘the root,’ and *prakriti*, ‘nature’), or the unmanifested primordial matter—called by Western alchemists Adam’s Earth—is applied by the Vedantins to *Parabrahmam*.”

Meditation thought: Let the meaning of root lead thought beyond the first image it supplies. What changes when Nature is approached as having an inward depth beyond the forms we can measure?

2. T. Subba Row, quoted in H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 10, footnote.

“*Parabrahmam* is an unconditioned and absolute reality, and *Mulaprakriti* is a sort of veil thrown over it.”

Meditation thought: A veil invites reverence towards what it does not fully disclose. Allow the image to soften the wish to possess an ultimate answer, while keeping the inquiry clear and attentive.

3. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 15.

“Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter are, however, to be regarded, not as independent realities, but as the two facets or aspects of the Absolute (*Parabrahm*), which constitute the basis of conditioned Being whether subjective or objective.”

Meditation thought: Consider consciousness and substance together. How might their inseparability change the care we bring to the bodily and material conditions through which understanding finds expression?

4. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 35.

“Thus, the ‘Robes’ stand for the noumenon of undifferentiated Cosmic Matter. It is not matter as we know it, but the spiritual essence of matter, and is co-eternal and even one with Space in its abstract sense.”

Meditation thought: The robes suggest a presence whose visible forms do not exhaust it. Attend to one familiar thing with renewed care, remembering how much its outward appearance leaves undisclosed.

5. R.N. Iyer — “Enlightenment”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 237.

“*Mulaprakriti* is pre-cosmic Root Substance, the noumenal origin of all differentiations and types of matter – the latter term referring to the aggregate of objects of possible perception. *Mulaprakriti* is wholly noumenal and so subjective that it cannot remotely be imagined by the human mind through extrapolation from a world of phenomenal objects. Even the subtlest abstractions employed in the sciences involving intra-atomic particles and fields, will not yield a conception of the abstractness of *Mulaprakriti*.”

Meditation thought: Notice the mind’s impulse to turn every idea into a picture. Let recognition of that habit become a quiet beginning of study, with room for an understanding that is still growing.

6. R.N. Iyer — “Enlightenment”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, pp. 237–238.

“To be able to visualize *Mulaprakriti*, one must imagine the disappearance of all worlds, all planets and all galaxies, a dissolution so complete that no thing remains. When this negation is pushed to the fullest cosmic level, one must visualize in what may be called absolute abstract Space a primordial substratum or field. At that level of abstraction, space and substance mutually imply each other. This inconceivable degree of abstract homogeneity and limitless subjectivity is prior to all worlds and continues to be at the hidden root whilst all worlds manifest and are dissolved.”

Meditation thought: Follow the invitation towards abstraction patiently. Each imagined boundary can be recognized as an addition made by thought; no strain is needed to force the mystery into an image.

7. R.N. Iyer — “Enlightenment”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 238.

“Just as the Absolute, if it is to be truly the Absolute, cannot enter any possible relationship with anything relative, so too *Mulaprakriti* cannot possibly be converted into anything else. It cannot possibly be related to any form of *prakriti*. This puzzling and challenging fact must be counterbalanced by similar considerations with regard to intelligence.”

Meditation thought: Hold the distinction between a timeless root and changing manifestations. The passage asks us to examine the limits of ordinary causal pictures, and to consider intelligence together with substance.

8. R.N. Iyer — “Cognition, Breath and Speech”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 76.

“The progressive unfoldment of *Mahat* is inconceivable without a parallel and coordinate development of undifferentiated matter or *Mulaprakriti*. Just as there is an essential aspect of *Mahat* that is independent of the alternation of *manvantara* and *pralaya*, there is that eternal root of all substance, the virginal veil of *Parabrahm*. Its first radiation may be conceived of as a super-astral or noumenal light, the mystical Sea of Fire of the *Stanzas of Dzyan*.”

Meditation thought: Reflect upon the parallel unfolding of mind and its vehicles. In daily life, what care of our habits and surroundings would better support the quality of attention we seek?

9. R.N. Iyer — “Cognition, Breath and Speech”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 77.

“If an individual has some theoretical appreciation of this dual unfoldment of *Mahat* and *Mulaprakriti*, then it becomes possible to discover within one’s own self-consciousness a means and method of drawing towards Universal Mind. Egoism must be clearly distinguished from egotism. Egoism is the pure sense of ‘I-am-I’ consciousness, bound up with the principle of individuation. It is possible to detach the pure sense of ‘I’ from every object and every kind of concern or conception which is centered upon a differentiated world.”

Meditation thought: Observe how quickly the sense of self gathers around an opinion, possession or remembered injury. Can one such attachment be loosened while the responsibility to act remains clear?

10. R.N. Iyer — “Sankhya Yoga”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 257.

“Since *purusha* is co-present with *mulaprakriti*, the symmetrical homogeneity of *mulaprakriti* was disturbed, and this broken symmetry resulted in a progressive differentiation which became the world of ordinary experience. True knowledge or pure cognition demands a return to that primordial stillness which marks the utter disentanglement of Self from non-self.”

Meditation thought: Read the passage within its *Sankhya* setting. Let its distinction of Self and non-self encourage discernment between the awareness of a passing state and identification with that state.

11. R.N. Iyer — “Transcendence and Transformation”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 356.

“Whatever the objective dimensions of an entity, they can yield no direct sense of the mystical meaning of depth. No merely visual representation, however subtle, can reveal the dimension of depth which has to do with *Mulaprakriti*, primordial root substance, the one element and force in the undifferentiated realm. *Mulaprakriti* is a paradigmatic plane upon which the Logoic constructions of meta-geometry arise.”

Meditation thought: A diagram can guide contemplation without containing its whole meaning. Allow an image to suggest depth, and leave room for the insight that continued study may bring.

12. R.N. Iyer — “Enlightenment”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 237.

“Through meditation upon *Mulaprakriti* and *Prakriti*, *Parabrahm* and *Mahat*, boundless Duration and conditioned Time, the mind can be balanced and brought into proper orientation to the problem of Self and non-self. As this inner posture is steadied by devotion, entry onto the path will come through intuition and a strengthening of the heart.”

Meditation thought: Let study be steadied by devotion and tested in conduct. A strengthening of the heart may begin quietly, in the patience and care we offer the next being we meet.