

Lunar Pitris

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

The Lunar *Pitris* are the ancestral builders of the human form in Theosophical cosmology. They are associated with the *Barhishad Pitris* and are described as lunar ancestors or lower creative *Dhyanis*; the names require attention to the classification in use. Their work is to provide the astral prototypes and lower vestures through which the Monad may enter embodied evolution. They do not bestow *Manas*, the principle of self-conscious mind. They prepare the house of incarnation; the Solar *Pitris* light the lamp within it.

This distinction is crucial. The Lunar *Pitris* belong to the stream of physical and astral evolution. The Solar *Pitris*, or *Agnishvatta Dhyanis*, belong to the stream of intellectual and spiritual awakening. Professor Iyer explains that the Solar or *Manasa Dhyanis* are the bestowers of self-conscious intelligence upon incipient humanity, while the lunar *Pitris* are associated with the building of the mortal vestures of man. The human being is therefore not merely a physical organism, but a meeting point between lunar form and solar self-consciousness.

H.P. Blavatsky gives the central image: the *Pitris* project from their ethereal bodies more ethereal and shadowy similitudes of themselves, “doubles” or “astral forms.” These furnish the Monad with its first dwelling and give blind matter a model around which to build. The physical body is not the first reality. It is the dense outer veil of an astral prototype, a karmic and evolutionary pattern prepared through prior cycles of Nature.

The early humanity formed under the lunar stream is described as *chhaya*, shadow, and *amanasa*, mindless. This does not mean that the Lunar *Pitris* are evil or useless. It means that form alone is not yet self-conscious humanity. In this esoteric account, the preparation of a vehicle does not by itself explain the awakening of self-conscious thought. H.P. Blavatsky says that “Living Fire” was needed — the fire which gives self-perception and self-consciousness, or *Manas*.

The narrative places these progenitors within a succession of planetary chains and Rounds. A chain is the sevenfold field of worlds through which a life-wave passes; a Round is a cycle of that passage. The Moon chain is presented as preceding the Earth chain, and its more developed entities carry forward capacities required for a new evolutionary field. This is the cosmological setting of the term. It is an esoteric account of origins and continuity, and should be read in that setting rather than treated as an established account of physical human ancestry.

The doctrine therefore protects the student from two errors. One error is materialism, which mistakes the body and its processes for the whole human being. The other is body-hatred, which

despises embodiment and forgets that the body is an entrusted field of evolution. Theosophy points to a third way: reverent stewardship of the vestures under the guidance of the higher Self.

The Moon supplies a recurring image for this distinction because it shines by reflected light. In the teaching's correspondences, the lunar side of human nature is associated with astral pattern, inherited tendency and habitual response. The astronomical body, the symbolic image and the occult agencies should be distinguished. Their relationship in this cosmology cannot be reduced to a claim that a passing phase of the visible moon causes an individual's conduct.

The lower quaternary — body, astral form, vitality and desire — is the field most closely related to the Lunar *Pitris*. Professor Iyer teaches that mastery over elemental functions requires a transformed relationship between the Lunar *Pitris*, who have given humanity the lower quaternary, and the Solar *Pitris*, who have lit up the flame of self-consciousness. This is a practical psychological key. The spiritual life is not rejection of the lunar inheritance. It is its purification and transformation.

This makes the doctrine useful in ordinary life. An inherited or habitual response can be examined without being accepted as the final truth of who we are. When irritation appears, one may recognize it as part of the field entrusted to care. Recognition does not remove the feeling, but it can change the use made of it. The question becomes how these instruments might serve a wiser purpose. Such a shift joins responsibility with patience toward the actual conditions of learning.

The Lunar *Pitris* deepen compassion. Every human being is born into bodily need, psychic impression, instinctual reaction, ancestral tendency and karmic limitation. To understand this should create patience, not contempt. A person's lower nature is not the final truth of that being, but it is a real field of work. This supports Human Solidarity and Universal Brotherhood by showing that all are more than the lunar shadow, yet all must redeem that shadow through conscious effort.

Consider someone learning to use a finely made tool. Its weight, balance and resistance must be understood; forcing it carelessly can spoil the work. Patient practice gradually coordinates perception and movement. The analogy is limited, but it shows why an instrument deserves respect even when it is not the directing intelligence. The bodily and habitual life may become more responsive through care, regularity and a purpose held steadily enough to guide repeated action.

The doctrine also calls for reverent stewardship. The body is made of lives, the astral form is woven of subtle forces, and the personality-field is entrusted to human care. To live carelessly

is to misuse a field given by Nature. To purify motive, refine speech, moderate appetite and consecrate action is to cooperate with the hidden builders rather than degrade their work. Embodiment is not a private possession. It is a karmic instrument received through law.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception includes the conditions in which another person must exercise that care. Fatigue, inadequate resources and a history of discouragement can make a simple task difficult. We do not need to claim knowledge of hidden karma to offer practical help. A quieter setting, a clearer explanation or assistance with a neglected burden may make responsible action more possible. The doctrine becomes humane when reverence for the inner pilgrim includes thoughtful attention to the house in which that pilgrim is living.

The early failure of the Lunar *Pitris* to produce a thinking man also has a modern meaning. A civilization may build impressive forms — institutions, technologies, images, systems — and still remain spiritually chhaya-like if *Manas* is not turned toward *Buddhi*. Form without conscience is still incomplete. The question is not only what can be built, but what light inhabits what is built.

When *Manas* turns toward *Buddhi*, the lunar inheritance is not rejected, but redeemed. The body becomes a servant of dharma. The astral nature becomes a sensitized instrument. Desire becomes energy available for aspiration. Memory becomes a teacher of patterns. Form becomes instrument. Habit becomes rhythm. Embodiment becomes service. The moonlit house of incarnation is opened to the solar fire.

The living image is the moonlit house of incarnation. It is built from ancient patterns, subtle shadows, inherited rhythms and patient labor. It shelters the pilgrim-soul, but it is dim until the solar fire is kindled within. The task is not to despise the house, nor to sleep inside it forever, but to open it to the light. The mortal vestures become, for a time, the consecrated field in which the immortal pilgrim learns to live for the good of all.

Glossary

Agni — Fire; the Vedic divine figure associated with sacred fire and creative spiritual energy.

Agnishvatta Pitris — Solar or spiritual progenitors associated with the awakening of self-conscious mind. The sources also use *Agnishwatta* and *Agnishwatha*.

Amanasa — Without awakened mind; used of early humanity before the kindling of self-conscious *Manas* in the esoteric narrative.

Astral — Pertaining to a subtle plane or vehicle, particularly the formative pattern underlying physical embodiment.

Asuras — Orders of beings within Hindu and Theosophical cosmology; *daityas* and *danavas* are associated classes. Their meaning depends on context and is not exhausted by the word demons.

Atman — The universal spiritual Self; *Atma* is another form, and Atmic means pertaining to this principle.

Barhishad Pitris — Lunar progenitors associated with the formation of astral prototypes and the lower instruments of embodiment; *Barhishad* is the glossary entry form.

Bhuta — A being, spirit or phantom; in the cited passage, a designation of the early form before reflective mind is awakened.

Brahma — The creative deity in Hindu cosmological symbolism; distinguish *Brahma* from *Brahman*, the universal spiritual Reality.

Buddhi — The spiritual soul or faculty of intuitive discernment; Buddhic means pertaining to it.

Chain — In Theosophical cosmology, a sevenfold field of globes through which an evolutionary life-wave passes.

Chhaya — A shadow or astral likeness; *chaya* is a spelling variant, and *chhayas* is the plural in the account of the lunar progenitors.

Corporeal — Having bodily form; incorporeal means without such form. The source uses this distinction in classifying the *Pitris*.

Correspondence — A meaningful relation between different orders or levels; an instrument of analogy that requires attention to context.

Cosmogenesis — An account of the origin and emergence of a cosmos; paired with anthropogenesis, the account of human origins.

Cosmology — An account or study of the order, constitution and development of the universe.

Dharma — Sustaining law, duty, or right relation; the precise meaning depends upon the context.

Dhyanis — Meditative spiritual intelligences; *Dhyani* is the singular. *Dhyani Chohans* is a related designation of spiritual hierarchies.

Differentiation — The emergence of distinct forms, functions or levels from a less divided condition.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

Elementals — Lives or forces of Nature associated with the formation and activity of the lower instruments; their functions differ from human self-consciousness.

Esoteric — Pertaining to an inward or occult interpretation of a teaching, distinguished from its outward formulation.

Fohat — The dynamic agency relating cosmic ideation to substance in Theosophical cosmology; Fohatic means pertaining to its activity.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

Ideation — The activity of thought or the expression of ideal patterns; Divine Ideation concerns cosmic intelligence in the cited teaching.

Incarnation — The embodiment of an enduring principle or individuality in a particular life.

Incipient — Beginning to arise or develop.

Individuation — The development of distinct self-consciousness and responsibility, considered in relation to a more universal consciousness.

Karma — The continuity of action, cause and consequence; karmic law gives moral responsibility a wider field of relations.

Lha — A Tibetan designation for a divine being or spirit; the cited passage concerns lunar spirits and the ancestry of form.

Lower quaternary — The four lower aspects of the human constitution: physical body, astral form, vitality and desire.

Lunar Pitris — The ancestral builders associated with astral prototypes and the lower instruments of human embodiment in Theosophical cosmology.

Manas — The self-conscious thinking principle; in its higher sense, the reincarnating individuality. Manasic means pertaining to this principle.

Manasa Dhyanis — Spiritual intelligences associated with the kindling of self-conscious human mind; a related designation of the *Manasaputras*.

Manichean — Pertaining to Manichaeism; in the quotation, used for a rigid opposition that would divide lunar and solar principles into wholly separate powers.

Matrix — An originating or encompassing field within which forms develop.

Maya — Conditioned or illusory appearance when compared with ultimate reality; not a denial of responsibility within lived experience.

Meta-Spirit — The universal spiritual ground beyond particular manifestations, used in Professor Iyer's explanation of *Atman*.

Metaphysics — Inquiry into the fundamental nature and principles of reality, including consciousness, causation and the relation of unity to multiplicity.

Monad — The spiritual unit or pilgrim, commonly related to *Atma-Buddhi*; its essential unity is distinguished from the changing vehicles through which evolution proceeds.

Noetic — Pertaining to the higher mind and spiritual cognition, distinguished from merely personal or reactive mental activity.

Occult — Concerned with hidden principles and laws in the Theosophical account; occultism is the related field of inquiry.

One Life — The universal unity of life underlying and expressed through the many lives and forms of Nature.

Pitris — Fathers or progenitors; the sources distinguish classes and functions, including lunar and solar lines.

Planes — Levels or orders of consciousness and substance within the Theosophical account of manifestation.

Pralaya — A period of dissolution or rest between cycles of manifested activity.

Psychic — Pertaining to subtle or psychological modes of experience; its level and relation to spiritual intelligence depend upon context.

Puranas — Traditional Hindu texts concerning cosmology, sacred history and divine figures; Puranic means pertaining to them.

Round — A cycle of a life-wave through the globes of a planetary chain in Theosophical cosmology.

Rupa — Form; rupas is the plural and *arupa* means formless.

Self-consciousness — The capacity to reflect upon one's own experience, intention and action; the sources distinguish personal and more universal degrees.

Sloka — A verse or stanza.

Solar Pitris — Spiritual progenitors associated with the fire of self-conscious intelligence, distinguished from the lunar builders of form.

Universal Brotherhood — The spiritual kinship of beings, expressed ethically through care extending beyond personal or sectarian boundaries.

Vayu Purana — A Hindu sacred text concerning cosmology, sacred history and divine beings; cited here in the classification of the *Pitris*.

Vesture — A sheath, vehicle or instrument through which consciousness is expressed; vestures is the plural.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Karma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 131.

“Although Monadic evolution is spoken of as equivalent to spiritual evolution, both Spirit and Matter, with all their differentiations, are ultimately One, inseparable from meta-Spirit or *Atman*. Nonetheless, within the planes of differentiated existence and consciousness, it is helpful to distinguish the realized degrees of universality and individuation of consciousness attributable to the evolving sparks of the One Life. Hence, in the metaphysics of *The Secret Doctrine* there is a fundamental distinction between the hosts of solar and lunar Monads, the *Agnishwatha* and *Barhishad Pitris*. Within the stream of intellectual evolution, and associated with the Solar or *Manasa Dhyanis*, are to be found the exalted bestowers of self-conscious intelligence upon incipient humanity. Within the stream of physical evolution and associated with the building of the mortal vestures of man are to be found the hosts of the lunar *Pitris*. Whilst it is possible to distinguish the ancestry and attributes of the various principles of sevenfold man, ultimately there is only One Principle – the *Atman*.”

Meditation thought: Distinguish the streams of evolution while keeping their common spiritual ground in view.

2. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Karma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 131.

“The development of humanity in the present series of globes began at a point like the intersection of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis. As the sevenfold theatre of evolution known as the earth emerged from *pralaya*, and the Fohatic life-wave began to quicken the sleeping centres, those Monads from the moon chain which had attained the highest degree of physical evolution on the old chain commenced their activity in the first of the new worlds. Restricted in their degree of Monadic activity to the fourth plane, these builders of form were capable of recapitulating evolutionary development only up to the incipient human-germ stage. Progressively, over the first three and one-half Rounds of the development of the earth chain, these lunar *Dhyanis* unfolded, through the power of instinctual intelligence, the rupas that constitute the lower kingdoms of Nature.”

Meditation thought: The preparation of a form belongs to a longer continuity than its present visible appearance.

3. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 248.

“Thus the two processes — for the two creations: the animal and the divine man — differ greatly. The *Pitris* shoot out from their ethereal bodies, still more ethereal and shadowy similitudes of themselves, or what we should now call ‘doubles,’ or ‘astral forms,’ in their own likeness. This furnishes the Monad with its first dwelling, and blind matter with a model around and upon which to build henceforth. But Man is still incomplete.”

Meditation thought: A dwelling enables a life to unfold, while the dwelling alone does not explain its conscious inhabitant.

4. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 91.

“The *Pitris* being divided into seven classes, we have here the mystic number again. Nearly all the *Purânas* agree that three of these are *arupa*, formless, while four are corporeal; the former being intellectual and spiritual, the latter material and devoid of intellect. Esoterically, it is the *Asuras* who form the first three classes of *Pitris* — ‘born in the body of night’ — whereas the other four were produced from the body of twilight. Their fathers, the gods, were doomed to be born fools on Earth, according to *Vayu Purâna*. The legends are purposely mixed up and made very hazy: the *Pitris* being in one the sons of the gods, and, in another those of *Brahmâ*; while a third makes them instructors of their own fathers. It is the Hosts of the four material classes who create men simultaneously on the seven zones.”

Meditation thought: The source distinguishes classes and functions within a symbolic account of human origins.

5. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 89.

“There are seven classes of *Pitris*, as shown below, three incorporeal and four corporeal; and two kinds, the *Agnishwatta* and the *Barhishad*. And we may add that, as there are two kinds of *Pitris*, so there is a double and a triple set of *Barhishad* and *Agnishwatta*.”

Meditation thought: Sacred names require attention to context; an apparent repetition may conceal a difference of function.

6. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 102.

“The ‘*Lha*’ of the Moon, the lunar spirits, were, as already stated, only the ancestors of his form, i.e., of the model according to which Nature began her external work upon him. Thus primitive man was, when he appeared, only a senseless *Bhûta* or a ‘phantom.’ This ‘creation’ was a failure, the reason of which will be explained in the Commentary on *Sloka 20*.”

Meditation thought: The astral prototype and the awakening of self-consciousness occupy distinct places in the teaching.

7. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 102.

“This attempt was again a failure. It allegorizes the vanity of physical nature’s unaided attempts to construct even a perfect animal — let alone man. For the ‘Fathers,’ the lower Angels, are all Nature-Spirits and the higher Elementals also possess an intelligence of their own; but this is not enough to construct a thinking man. ‘Living Fire’ was needed, that fire which gives the human mind its self-perception and self-consciousness, or *Manas*.”

Meditation thought: The fire image marks the difference between a prepared instrument and reflective, responsible intelligence.

8. R.N. Iyer — “Spirit, Mind and Matter”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 145.

“Prior to the present Round and to the present physical plane, Nature traced out the astral prototypes of all her kingdoms in subtler fields of matter. Before the shifting balance of spirit and matter reached the midpoint of evolution, Akashic ideation was translated by the Lunar *Pitris* into the astral matrix that is presently veiled by a thin veneer of physical form.”

Meditation thought: Visible form is contemplated in relation to a subtler pattern and a preceding history.

9. R.N. Iyer — “Degrees of Enlightenment”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 107.

“This entirely realistic example reveals the ever-present possibility in human ideation of delegating whole classes of functions through trained elementals. In practice, this requires a transformed relationship between the Lunar *Pitris* – who have given humanity all the elements of its lower quaternary – and the Solar *Pitris* – who have lit up in humanity the flame of self-consciousness. Only by forming self-conscious affinities with the *Agnishvatta Pitris*, who are responsible for all the *Manasa*, may one gain such mastery.”

Meditation thought: Mastery is presented as a transformed relationship between the higher and lower constitution.

10. R.N. Iyer — “Degrees of Enlightenment”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 107.

“To establish that relationship one must move to a realm of meta-ethics and of noetic magic, far removed from all ordinary conceptions. What in other people are involuntary and compulsive tendencies can, in fact, be brought together in ways in which there is a precision in the orchestration of elemental intelligences in the performance of a wide variety of activities. All these activities would be commanded by the astral shadow of the Lunar *Pitris*, which itself has become highly responsible and wholly responsive to the Solar *Dhyani* who has become more fully incarnated.”

Meditation thought: The advanced ideal invites modest beginnings in collected attention and reliable conduct.

11. R.N. Iyer — “The Fires of Self-Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 156.

“These sacred fires are the priceless inheritance of every human being but this inheritance must be claimed by each individually. The integrity of the universe and the evolutionary logic of creativity, birth and growth must be accepted and examined in each avenue of one's life before they can be discovered within one's higher nature. As the dual progeny of the Solar and Lunar *Pitris*, man must discover how to incarnate the solar in the lunar, raise *Agni* in *maya*, thus aiding the forward impulse of Manasic evolution. The lunar realm is not wholly and inherently inimical to man. Indeed, this could not be so except in some absurd Manichean scheme which totally divorces the sun from the moon.”

Meditation thought: Embodiment offers a field for intelligent cooperation; spiritual aspiration need not become hostility toward the body.

12. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 53, “Barhishad”.

“*Barhishad* (Sk.). A class of the ‘lunar’ *Pitris* or ‘Ancestors’, Fathers, who are believed in popular superstition to have kept up in their past incarnations the household sacred flame and made fire-offerings. Esoterically the *Pitris* who evolved their shadows or *chhayas* to make there-with the first man.”

Meditation thought: The shadow image concerns the formation of a vehicle and should not be confused with the whole human being.