

Devas, Nature and Humanity

Donna Brown and John Nash

Summary

The deva evolution includes the vast range of ethereal beings with which we share the planet. Devas are mentioned in the world's scriptures as well as in some of the greatest works of western literature. Recent clairvoyant investigations have revealed much about devas' appearance and about their roles in nature and the inner workings of the planet.

Increasing numbers of people are becoming aware of devic presence in the natural environment. Some are even making definite contact with devas of various levels of consciousness. Esoteric teachings affirm the reality of these contacts but warn of the potential dangers involved. The higher devas cannot be controlled by human will but must be approached in a spirit of humility and selflessness.

Introduction

The earth is believed to be inhabited not only by mineral, plant, animal and human life but also by beings that ordinarily are invisible to human senses. These beings are referred to in esoteric literature as *devas*. The Sanskrit word *deva* means "shining one," a reference to the entities' ethereal and possibly illumined nature; it is also the origin of the English word "divine."

Devas, as the term is used here, comprise a vast kingdom or series of kingdoms: "the entire range of those intelligences... from the lowliest of nature spirits to the mightiest of those creative powers which aid in building and guiding the universal processes through all the cycles of manifested existence."¹ For practical purposes the term is assumed to include elementals, nature spirits, fairies, angels, as well as the many other classes of beings that bear technically precise names, such as salamanders, seraphim, *archoi*, *agnisuryans* and

gandharvas. The term "devic kingdom" is often used, but "deva evolution" is preferable because of the enormous range of consciousness involved. The term also reminds us that devas are on their own evolutionary path which runs parallel to our own and occasionally interacts with it to achieve divine purpose in the context of our planet.

Culture, myth and religion are based, in large part, upon humanity's experience of nature and on a sense that the natural order is alive with beneficent and malevolent forces. Accounts of nature spirits, angels, and other ethereal beings abound in numerous cultures and civilizations: in aboriginal and indigenous cultures, in ancient Egypt, Greece and Persia, in Celtic mythology, and in Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Qabalistic traditions. Significantly, ancient cultural accounts tended to focus on devas of substantial power and influence; the existence and role of more lowly devas may have been so commonplace that they did not merit literary comment.

Most of us know comparatively little about devas, aside from the mythology of fairies and the popular "angel cult" that developed several decades ago. However, there is a considerable body of serious literature, and the present article draws on it to provide a glimpse into the-

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role of devas in nature and their relationship to the human kingdom. Studies by persons with clairvoyant gifts, who can “see” devas, help provide detailed knowledge. Complementing this research are channeled teachings that tap into sources of knowledge beyond ordinary human comprehension. These teachings are believed to come from entities on higher planes who enjoy vantage points of observation that we do not share.

Devas in Antiquity

Throughout history, people have been aware of the creative forces in nature and were moved to contemplate something larger than themselves in the magnificence of creation. Primitive people regarded mountains, forests, rivers, the sea, and the sky as inhabited by powerful but capricious spirits. Some spirits were potentially benign, while other could bring misfortune in the form of forest fires, earthquakes, storms, floods, famine, pestilence, or conquest. People enacted rituals to secure spirits’ help for their tribe or to appease spirits that might harm it. Nowadays, conditioned by trust in impersonal “laws of nature,” we tend to dismiss such beliefs and practices as “animistic” and “superstitious.”

Eastern religions abound with devas of various degrees of power. The ancient Shinto religion of Japan involved the worship of *kami*, some of which were local spirits while others were associated with natural processes like the wind and rainbows. Hinduism assigns a deva lord, or *devaraja*, to each direction of the compass. In turn the deva lord presides over devas of a lower order which can be classified by color. Thus Vaishravana, Lord of Earth, is Regent of the North and presides over the *yakshas* whose color is gold. Dhritarsashtra, Lord of Air, is Regent of the East and presides over the white *gandharvas*. Virudhaka, Lord of Water, is Regent of the South, presides over the blue *kumbhandas*. And Virupaksha, Lord of Fire, is Regent of the West and presides over the red *nagas*.²

In Pharaonic Egypt, the diverse and pluralistic world of spirits was regarded as the immanent manifestation or expression of the Universal Spirit or One Divine Thought. The concept of

the Absolute, Unchanging Source or Foundation was believed to lie behind the universe of differentiated and abundant Life.³ Based on their observations, the priests of Pharaonic Egypt developed an elaborate sacred science that permeated every facet of daily life. The powerful creative beings that inhabited that rich metaphysical system were symbols of spiritual force as it expressed itself in the world of nature.

The sixth-century BCE prophet, Zoroaster founded a religious movement that had considerable influence on the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It was based on a theology purported to have been received from angels. Zoroastrian teachings also included early hints of what would evolve into the doctrine of solar angels. In one account, Zoroaster had a vision of a bridge of light on which stood a woman “veiled in light [and radiating] superhuman joy and pride... It seemed to Zoroaster that he had known her forever; yet he could not name her.” She identified herself as Ardouizur. “Thou hast created me. I am more than myself; I am thine immortal soul... we will drink the cup of immortal life from the source of light!” The woman then transformed herself into the Angel of Victory.⁴

The existence of intelligent forces behind our visible universe was a popular topic of discussion in classical Greece. The four “elements” of fire, air, water, and earth—which refer to states of matter rather than chemical elements as we know them today—were first identified by the fifth-century BCE philosopher Empedocles. Plato (c.427–c.347), who lived roughly three generations later, characterized these elements “as the visible garb, the symbols of the informing, invisible Souls or Spirits.”⁵ The four elements continue to provide a basis for classifying the lower grades of devas. Plato also referred to “the guardian spirit who was allotted to [us] in life,” and who will lead us to the underworld, whereupon “another guide” will lead us back to the next incarnation.⁶ Neoplatonists Plotinus and Iamblichus (c.250–330 CE) also spoke of personal angels and reportedly tried to contact them by means of ceremonial magic.

The Bible contains more than 200 direct references to angels. In *Genesis* we learn that the Lord appointed cherubim with flaming swords to guard the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were banished.⁷ Some angels could assume dense physical form, like the one who wrestled with Jacob,⁸ while others were purely ethereal. Angels typically are portrayed as God's messengers and are nameless. However, archangels are referred to by name; for instance Michael is mentioned 15 times.

The Archangel Gabriel makes four appearances, the most famous being to Zacharias and Mary of Nazareth to foretell the birth of their sons.⁹ He also appeared to Mohammed: "[T]hou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel."¹⁰

Later, during Mohammed's night journey to Jerusalem, Gabriel took the Prophet up the sacred ladder, through the seven heavens. Jewish apocryphal writings mention the Archangels Raphael and Uriel. Explaining the weather, Uriel showed Enoch twelve doors in the heavens

through which the rays of the sun break forth: and from them is warmth diffused over the earth, when they are opened at their appointed seasons. And for the winds and the spirit of the dew when they are opened, standing open in the heavens at the ends. As for the twelve portals in the heaven, at the ends of the earth, out of which go forth the sun, moon, and stars, and all the works of heaven in the east and in the west.¹¹

Michael, Raphael, Gabriel and Uriel may be compared to the four devarajas of Hindu tradition. Also the Christian and Islamic Satan serves a similar function to the demon Asuras in the ancient Vedic religion.

In addition to the many direct references to angels, it is important to note that, in many scriptural passages, even the word "God" refers to a collective group of creative beings or builders: the *Elohim*.¹²

The angels of scripture clearly were not all of equal power or authority, and thus developed the notion of an angelic hierarchy. The Essenes, who lived communal lives in the last two or three centuries BCE, documented an angelology of 12 ranks.

They divided the angels into two groups: one representing heavenly forces and the other earthly forces.

The former, headed by the Heavenly Father, were the Angels of Eternal Life, Creative Work, Peace, Power, Love, and Wisdom.

The latter, headed by the Earthly Mother, were the Angels of Earth, Life, Joy, the Sun, Water, and Air.¹³

An angelic hierarchy was also explored by the Gnostics of the first-fourth centuries CE. Two almost-identical Gnostic texts describe how the androgynous "First Be-

gotten" set in motion a process of unending creation of spiritual beings:

The First Begotten... created angels without number... The whole multitude of those angels are called "Assembly of the Holy Ones, the Shadowless Lights." Now, when these greet each other, their embraces become angels like themselves.¹⁴

The Judaic esoteric system of the *Qabalah* is replete with references to divine, spiritual, material and sub-material beings. An archangel is assigned to each of the ten *sephiroth*, or divine emanations, on the Tree of Life. For example, Michael is assigned to *Tiphereth*, "Beauty," often considered to be the Christ center; Raph-

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ael to *Hod*; Gabriel to *Yesod*; and Uriel to the lowest sephirah, *Malkuth*, “the Kingdom.” The Archangel Metatron—whose anomalous Greek name betrays Neoplatonic influence—is assigned to the highest sephirah, *Kether*; “the Crown.” In turn, like the Hindu deva lords, each archangel oversees an order of lower angels. For example, Metatron oversees the cherubim. Clearly the relative status assigned to archangels and cherubim is different than in Christianity.

Early Christianity faced the challenge of promoting its vision of monotheism in the Mediterranean region, Europe, and eastern Asia where people had long-standing beliefs in ethereal beings and demigods. It adopted a twofold response. Christian apologists forced powerful, benign entities into the mold of angels and archangels, or sometimes canonized them as saints, while casting malevolent ones as “demons” allied with Satan. The notion of powerful demons that tempted unfortunate Christians won wide acceptance. For example, several of the Desert Fathers reported being mocked by demons during their long years of fasting, sleep deprivation, and self-mortification.¹⁵ Good angels were encountered more rarely, although they became the subject of considerable devotion in the Middle Ages. Attempts were made to dismiss less powerful entities as the products of superstition. But in this effort the church was less successful. Belief in fairies and other denizens of nature continued for centuries, and indeed survives to this day in Ireland, Latin America, and many other countries.

Devas in Nature

The Vitality of Nature

Early people lived in a world animated by vibrant life. The authors of *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* maintain that everything was sensed to be alive:

[L]ife had individuality, in man and beast and plant, and in every phenomenon which confronts him—the thunderclap, the sudden shadow, the eerie and unknown clearing in the wood, the stone which suddenly hurts him when he stumbles while on a hunting trip.”¹⁶

They add that all of nature was experienced as “life confronting life, involving every faculty of man in a reciprocal relationship.” Novelist, poet and philosopher John Cowper Powys portrays nature as having a natural magic; some Genius or “soul” expresses the living essence hidden in each tree, each plant, each rock, each tuft of lichen or moss.¹⁷

Still others note that the spirits in nature “haven’t removed themselves from the fabric of the whole by claiming a separate existence;” rather they experience themselves as “not only one in themselves but one with the totality.”¹⁸

Modern people, even some esotericists, either dismiss the “livingness” of nature or conclude that they have no hope of ever experiencing it. But the fact is that many of us actually share the same experiences reported by “primitive” cultures, artists and poets, or the more enlightened among us. As Cowper Powys so richly describes, we respect and treasure the natural world; the immense beauty and delight it provides to the senses; the experience of being succored and uplifted by her great vitality, variety and splendor.¹⁹ We feel revitalized and encouraged by nature’s verdant gifts, her strength and the friendliness of a surprisingly broad range of living systems. Our appreciation also comes from the often-unconscious knowledge that Nature is the Mother of form as well as from the sense that she connects us to some inner part of ourselves and to that which is infinitely greater. In turn we feel obliged to honor and protect her.

Cowper Powys goes on to say that it is possible to sense a singular identity between our own being and the inner being of a certain plant, field, mountain or valley. It is this affinity, as he and many other poets and teachers understood, that allows us recognize something of the truth in the statement that humanity and the angels are expressions of the One Life. Deep reflection and communion with nature has always been encouraged as a way in which humanity can lose its sense of ego or self and become one with its surroundings. To develop such an affinity is to partake of the accord and unbroken unity that exists between the devas and the Divine.

In reflecting further upon our response to nature—specifically upon the sensation of peace, balance and serenity that we experience in natural surroundings—we might assume that this response results, in part, from the suspension of our daily routine and immersion in beauty. But in looking deeper we discover that the sensations roused in us might also stem from an intuitive awareness of devic force as it effortlessly produces harmony, cohesion and organization out of “elemental chaos” or undifferentiated energy. Through our sense of the “great organizing principle in nature, we touch an order of universal intelligence that moves in steady rhythm and alignment with the Divine Mind.”²⁰ In nature’s immediate presence our own vibration becomes aligned with those harmonizing influences.

Most people who are appreciative or sensitive to nature would agree that they feel a deep resonance with a particular landscape. One scholar and poet described this connection as both “psychical and chemical.”²¹ Esotericists will recognize this affinity as being a result of the great Law of Attraction under which the devic forces work, as well as a result of the Law of Correspondences which draws like to like. When people are drawn to springs, rivers, lakes or the ocean, there may be an essential similarity, both psychically and biologically, with the liquid aspect, the sixth plane and ray, the *agnisuryans* or animating lives of the astral plane: the water spirits and undines. The same principle of correspondences might apply to those drawn to pastoral or forested landscapes (earth), mountainous regions (air), or hot, desert climes (fire).

In observing nature we get the clear sense of an immense cooperative exchange of energy, a dance, consisting of vast aggregations of living entities, both seen and unseen and possessed of innate intelligence. At the same time we sense that we are listening in on a grand conversation that blends life and matter together in the great mystery of creation. These living entities work in unison with the Plan as it is formulated by the Logos, to further the evolution of all planetary life.

Studies of Devas in Nature

Many creative thinkers, artists and poets have recognized this animate power or intelligence in the natural world. Among them we find such notable figures as Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) who thought that Nature was the mistress of higher intelligences. William Shakespeare’s (1564–1616) play *The Tempest* features the sylph Ariel²² and a substantial number of fairies. *A Midsummer Nights Dream* features Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies. We also find Puck who can make himself visible and invisible at will and “greatly enjoys glamorizing mortals—a characteristic familiar to students of the astral and etheric regions.”²³ Many of Shakespeare’s other plays and most of his sonnets also feature munificent or malefic spirits. In each case, we get a glimpse of life that is not visible with ordinary physical senses.

At a time when church authorities were ever-watchful for signs of heresy, exploring the deva evolution in works of fiction had great advantages. If challenged, authors and playwrights could use the defense that the entities they portrayed were purely mythical. Others, who took a more serious approach to the subject, usually took the precaution of having their work published posthumously.

One of these was Paracelsus (1491–1541) who wrote a treatise on elementals. He does not seem to have actually observed them, but he built upon the folk traditions of the time, adding his own insightful speculation. As was customary, Paracelsus divided the elementals into four groups according to the element in which they lived: gnomes and manikins in earth, nymphs and undines in water, sylphs in air, and salamanders or vulcans in fire. He envisioned elementals as ethereal but humanlike. They were not descended from Adam but created in man’s image, as man was created in God’s.²⁴ Paracelsus’ elementals worked, dressed, ate, drank and procreated. They could also get sick and die; but because they had no souls, death meant annihilation. However, nymphs, who were the closest of the

elementals to humanity, could marry human men and in the process acquire immortal souls. Moreover, their offspring were fully human.²⁵ Elementals occasionally bore monsters, but fortunately they were sterile. Their purpose was to warn people of impending calamities; for example, gnomes could bear giants or dwarfs, and—most interestingly—nymphs could bear monks!²⁶

Clairvoyant studies have taken the exploration of devic lives in nature a stage further. Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983) published a series of books reporting observations of fairies, including brownies, elves, manikins, spriggans, leprechauns, goblins, dwarfs, pixies, and “true fairies.”²⁷ Goblins and spriggans are regarded in a negative light. For example, goblins play tricks, sometimes malicious ones, on unsuspecting human beings; they have wit, but no sense of moral responsibility.²⁸ Others types of fairies, including brownies and elves, are regarded more positively. “True fairies” are described in particularly fond terms:

She is decidedly fair in coloring, full of laughter and happiness, very open and fearless in expression, and is surrounded by an aura of golden radiance in which the outline of her wings can be traced. There is also a hint of mockery in her attitude and expression, as of one who is enjoying a joke against the poor mortals who are studying her.²⁹

Those with first-hand knowledge describe the devas of nature as working with playful abandon and with full concentration and oneness in

all their actions.³⁰ They live, we are told, “in a sphere of immediate knowledge” with joy as their defining characteristic.³¹ Perhaps this helps explain the feelings of release, spontaneity and abandonment to the moment that many of us experience in open country, mountains or the seashore.³² The lightness of being that we feel may stem from our intuitive sense of devas as being free and unburdened by physical bodies or any struggle with choices. Since devic life is said to be a life of joy in constant service, it is not surprising that nature should

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Devas can only be seen by people whose sensory apparatus extends to etheric or sentient levels. Even then, some effort seems to be required on the devas’ part: “human consciousness can comprehend these ‘centres of force’ only if they take on a specific shape through which they can be identified mentally.”³³ Their form adapts to the situation they are in, and they seem to have some latitude in deciding how they should be seen.³⁴ In his discussion of elementals, Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) distinguishes those as-

sociated with earth, whose forms have relative permanency, from water, air and fire elementals whose forms are fleeting, ever-changing, in continuous transformation. These latter “appear flashing up like lightning, like little meteors; now flashing up, now disappearing like... will-o’-the-wisps.”³⁵

Devas often seem to appear in the form that the observer expects to see them, hence their glamourizing power or ability to make a persuasive mental image and project it into the mind of another. Fairies’ “clothing” may be

modeled after the human attire of a particular period, typically of several centuries ago, or of a particular geographical region or culture.³⁶ As Paracelsus noted, fairies seem to mimic human beings in their appearance or behavior. As reported in a more modern study, a deva described their ephemeral nature as follows:

We work in the formless worlds and are not bound or rigid in form as you are. We travel from realm to realm and are given wings to denote this movement. As we travel, our form changes, taking the qualities of different realms. Therefore you cannot pin us down to any one form. We deal directly with energy and that energy shapes us, is part of us, is us, until we breathe it out to where it is needed. We are limitless, free, and insubstantial.³⁷

Devas' Work in Nature

Nature spirits are suspicious of people but nevertheless work for the benefit of humankind. Under certain conditions they may cooperate with human beings to bring about enhancements of the "natural order." The African-American botanist George Washington Carver (c.1864–1943), whose work on improving vegetable strains is widely recognized, claimed that he had regular conversations with nature spirits. More recently, at the Findhorn Community in Scotland, devas reportedly cooperated to make vegetables and flowers grow on semi-barren soil and, initially at least, to grow to unusually large sizes.³⁸ The experiments at Findhorn echoed the work of the Essenes, who are believed to have cultivated the Palestinian desert by similar means 2,000 years ago.

Some types of devas seem to be assigned to "look after" certain aspect of nature: helping plants to grow, controlling streams and waterfalls, or regulating winds and storms. Tiny etheric forms help seeds to germinate. After they have done their work, successive teams of larger devas take over to bring the plant to maturity.³⁹ Slovenian clairvoyant investigator Marko Pogačnik observed "fauns" assisting in the growth of trees:

I see the faun in a healthy tree as a spiraling energy which encircles the branches and

also the roots deep down into the earth. The weaving of a power web by the faun seems to precede the growth of branches and roots. The faun is able to manage this leading role because he possesses not only this energy body but also a relatively autonomous intelligence.⁴⁰

Pogačnik concluded that fauns live in a symbiotic, one-to-one relationship with trees. Perhaps we can compare it to the relationship between the solar angel and its human charge, although in the latter case the angel's role is more self-sacrificial.⁴¹ Moreover, Pogačnik makes the point that, in the vegetable kingdom, the devic entity is the "embodiment" of the consciousness of a plant or tree, whereas, in the animal and human kingdoms, the entity "partially withdraws" to allow the consciousness of its charge to develop independence.⁴² This is particularly necessary in the higher animals that are moving toward individualization. Human beings, of course, are already individualized.

Higher up on the scale of consciousness are the devas of lakes, mountains, and other major geological features. Geoffrey Hodson established contact with some very large devas that ensoul whole mountain ranges. He describes one associated with the Sierra Nevada Mountains:

The great sphere of his outer aura gleams white as sunlit snow-fields across which he moves majestically. Within the white radiance, and partially veiled by it, shine the deep greens of the cypress trees, and within these again the golded glory of the noonday sun. Then glows a rosy light of softest hue, next azure blue, and last, all white and radiant, the Godlike form. The face is moulded in strength, square-jawed and powerful.⁴³

The devic hierarchy forms a vast cooperative system in which lower devas' work is supervised by higher devas. For example, Marko Pogačnik depicts the growth of an oak tree as the result of cooperation over four distinct levels corresponding to what he calls the physical body, consciousness, the soul, and spirit. An "angel of the oak archetype" at the level of

Table 1. Marko Pogačnik's Elemental Hierarchy

Level of Attainment	Element			
	Earth	Air	Water	Fire
4th level				Muses
3rd level	Pan	Master deva Deva of place Ritual deva	Nymph queen Landscape nymph	Spirits of light
2nd level	Wise old sage Loving old crone	Fairies of place Plant deva Woodland fairy	Nymphs Well nymph Pasture nymph	Spirits of maturity & transformation
1st level	Fauns Elementals of animals & humans	Sylphs Fairies	Nixies Undines Watermen Spirits of balance	Spirits of the center of the earth

spirit directs the work of the “oak deva” at the soul level, that is assisted by the “female deva master” and the “fairies of place.” In turn, at the level of consciousness, the oak deva supervises the work of a “faun,” assisted by the god Pan and a “cyclical appearance of elementals.” Finally, the faun directs the tree’s “vital-energetic structure” that draws upon biological processes to produce the oak in question.⁴⁴ The devic hierarchy can be viewed as the succession of ranks through which groups of devas—or at the higher levels, presumably individual devas—can advance in consciousness. This hierarchy, as depicted by Pogačnik, is shown in Table 1.

In a later work Marko Pogačnik concludes that devas are expressions of the “overall planetary consciousness”:

This consciousness concerns itself with the maintenance and further development of every little flower, every single beast or person, every mountain and every landscape on the surface of the earth. To carry out this almost unmanageable number of tasks, the overall consciousness of earth is individualized through a great variety of cells of consciousness, which we describe as elemental beings or nature spirits.⁴⁵

He adds that the elementals and nature spirits are not “individual beings,” like people, but are

expressions of that overall consciousness caring for a particular ambience or space. However, to clarify, we must point out that the higher devas are believed to be individualized.

Devas in Healing and Growth

Devic forces, in their various grades, “pass on Life” and function as the positive animating lives within all matter.⁴⁶ They are the builders of form and transmitters of *prana*, the all pervading, vital power in the universe. “All growth and change takes place through the life and working of the deva kingdom.”⁴⁷

Geoffrey Hodson and others have made clairvoyant studies of the female human body during pregnancy. Hodson explains:

The building Angels... concern themselves... with the construction and extremely delicate adjustment of the mechanism of consciousness. This consists physically of the body itself, the cerebro-spinal system with the seven nerve and glandular centers.⁴⁸

Devas also repair damaged forms, and therein lies their potential in healing. Edgar Cayce commented in one of his readings:

The guardian angel—that is the companion of each soul as it enters into a material experience—is ever an influence for the keeping of that attunement between the creative

energies or forces of the soul-entity and health, life, light and immortality. Thus, to be sure, it is a portion of that influence for healing forces.⁴⁹

Such healing and restorative influences underlie the practices of Qi Gong, Tai Chi, Hatha Yoga, Reiki, flower-essence therapy, homeopathy, gemstone and color therapies, and therapeutic visits to the country. They also underlie the Vedic system of healing which is based in its entirety on the laws of nature governing creation. As human receptivity increases, devas may reveal more effective therapies for the healing of disease, perhaps on a scale as yet generally unknown. However, this instruction will only be revealed when enough members of the human family can cooperate consciously with healing devas. And, in order to do that, they must understand that there are living forces in nature, and they must acquire a certain measure of selflessness and love toward one another and the subhuman kingdoms.

The Higher Devas

The devas, identified by Geoffrey Hodson and Marko Pogačnik, that preside over large geographic features would certainly compare in stature and power with those on the Christian angelic hierarchy.

Angels were accepted into the Christian consciousness, and angelology became an important component of western religious teachings. A passage in the New Testament affirms that God created “all things... that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.”⁵⁰

This passage probably lay behind the early Christian text: *Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*. The text identified nine ranks, or “choirs,” of angelic beings: angels, archangels, virtues or *archoi*, powers or *exustiai*, principalities, dominions or *kyriotetes*, thrones, seraphim, and cherubim.⁵¹ This formulation, which recalls Zoroaster’s three ranks or triads of angels, provided the basis of standard Christian angelology. The author proclaimed that “space is filled not only with matter, but with realm upon realm of spiritual beings,” some of

which are more developed than Humans.”⁵² *Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*, long attributed to Dionysius the Aeropagite mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*, is now believed to have been written by an anonymous Neoplatonist scholar, living no earlier than the fourth century. Whoever wrote it, the text had profound influence on later Christian theology, art and literature.

The same hierarchical structure found its way into modern esoteric teachings. The ranks of entities either “belong to or are the creative hierarchies”⁵³ referred to by esoteric writers. Rudolf Steiner cited Dionysius in his discussion of the higher devas.⁵⁴ Of the nine ranks, Charles Leadbeater (1854–1934) claimed that “seven correspond to the great Rays of which the solar system is composed, and two may be called cosmic.”⁵⁵ The two cosmic ranks presumably are the seraphim and cherubim.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) included a vast Hierarchy of angels in his *Divine Comedy*. The great intellectual luminary Isaac Newton (1642–1727), who is known to have had Qabalistic and alchemical interests, detailed his contacts with devic or angelic forces. Some of his greatest scientific discoveries are believed to have been based on the dialogues he established with the angels that preside over planets and stars.⁵⁶ In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton (1608–1674) mentions “Th’ Arch-Angel Uriel, one of the seav’n, Who in Gods presence, neerest to his Throne... Regent of the Sun.” Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) incorporated Milton’s vision into his oratorio *The Creation*. Haydn’s Uriel announces the words from *Genesis*: “And God saw the light, that it was good... And God said, Let there be light in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night, and to give light upon the earth... He made the stars also.”

Swedish engineer and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) claimed to be in close contact with spirits. In 1749 he wrote:

Twice or three times I was translated into the state that spirits occupy, in such a way that I was a spirit among spirits and released from the earthly body. I was with the spirits, talking to them, looking at them, and

finding out what distinguishes their life from that of men.⁵⁷

Not all of Swedenborg's spirits were benevolent; he cited contact with evil spirits. However he wrote extensively about the benevolent ones, the angels. Interestingly, he emphasized their tendency to live in the present. Although the angels have memory of the past and intuition about what is to come: "They say that the Lord gives them every moment what to think, and this with blessedness and happiness, and that thus they are without cares and anxieties."⁵⁸ The Buddha would certainly approve.

Swedenborg's spiritual writing influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Henry James Sr., Fyodor Dostoevsky, William Blake, and many others.⁵⁹ Blake (1757–1827) claimed an intimate relationship with angels. The descriptions and images of spirits that populate his work were all derived from his innate ability to see the divine in and beyond ordinary experience. Art and poetry were regarded by Blake as aspects of a unified spiritual endeavor which could help humanity overcome the limitations of the senses. Another poet with an "almost preternatural awareness of the forces within nature, the otherness of the natural world, and the paradoxical links between human sensibility and naturalistic sensations"⁶⁰ was John Keats (1795–1821). Keats, who was able to "temporarily shed his personality and consciously identify with his subjects,"⁶¹ described his poetry as an effort to give the deep feeling that life as we know it is somehow both angelic and human. "He recognized this ability for self-annihilation or "negative capacity" as he termed it, as a central quality of Shakespeare's genius and cultivated it as the governing idea of his own artistic vision."⁶²

Solar Angels

The Czech education reformer Jan Comenius (1592–1670) spoke of "an angel... given to him by God and ordained to be his guardian."⁶³ He was no doubt familiar with references to the angel in the allegorical *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* which was published seven years earlier. The Rosicrucian angel seemed to perform the same role as Plato's

guardian spirit.⁶⁴ "Holy guardian angel," coined by the medieval Qabalist Abraham the Jew,⁶⁵ became the preferred term in the western esoteric tradition, although "guardian spirit" and "genius" are also used. The equivalent in eastern literature is *manasaputra* (literally "son of mind") or solar angel.

Much has been written about the solar angel assigned to each human entity.⁶⁶ According to esoteric writer Alice Bailey (1880–1949), the solar angel has overshadowed the lower human nature for an extended period of time:

The great solar Angel, Who embodies the real man and is his expression on the plane of higher mind, is literally his divine ancestor, the "Watcher" Who, through long cycles of incarnation, has poured Himself out in sacrifice in order that man might BE.⁶⁷

The angel serves as a surrogate soul, during countless incarnations, until the individual's human soul reaches spiritual maturity; then it departs to pursue its own evolution.⁶⁸ Rarely is the name of someone's solar angel disclosed; however Edgar Cayce identified the angel assigned to one querent:

There are ever, for every soul, those that may be termed the guides or guardian angels that stand before the throne of grace and mercy. The guardian angel for this entity (as may be termed) is that one, Aruel, who stood with Marcellus at the Cross.⁶⁹

Cayce also spoke of the several roles that the angel can play: it is "the angel of hope, the angel of announcing, the angel of declaiming, the angel that would warn, the angel that would protect."⁷⁰

Angels in Music and Sacred Ritual

Scripture records that the birth of Jesus was celebrated by "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."⁷¹ From an early date these words were captured by the *Gloria*, the great song of praise incorporated into the Mass. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) commented that the angels

laud in a wonderful harmony the mysteries that have always been with God... The angels can never stop praising God... They

bear witness to the Godhead through the living resonance of their splendid voices, which are more numerous than the sands of the sea.⁷²

She added that “their voices have a richer harmony than all the sounds living creatures have ever produced.”

Powerful devic presences have often been sensed in performances of great music, particularly sacred music. Geoffrey Hodson described the appearance of devas at performances of several well-known classical compositions, including the plainchant *Agnus Dei*, the traditional melody *Greensleeves*, the *Trumpet Voluntary* by Jeremiah Clarke (1674–1707), Johann Sebastian Bach’s (1685–1750) *Prelude in C Sharp Minor*, Franz Schubert’s (1797–1828) *Ave Maria*, and the *Pie Jesu* from Gabriel Fauré’s (1845–1924) *Requiem*.⁷³ He describes the scene at a performance of the *Ave Maria* thus:

One beautiful angel, chiefly blue but with the colors of the song... hovers in the air...the whole aura waving with the rhythm of the music. A brilliant five-pointed star shines above the forehead of the Deva who is blessing the singer and, through her, the listeners.⁷⁴

Musician and Theosophist Cyril Scott (1879–1970) suggested that since most people are unable to perceive devic presence directly, composers are inspired to convey devas’ vivid life and movement through music.⁷⁵ His investigations cited Norwegian composer Edward Grieg (1843–1907) as an intermediary between the spirits of nature and humanity. The *Entrance of the Little Fauns*, a startling and uncontrolled piece, is said to typify gnomes and earth elementals in the raw.⁷⁶ Scott also pointed to *Prometheus*, by the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), as “the greatest exponent of Deva-Music that so far has been born.” Claude Debussy’s (1862–1918) *La Mer*, Ralph Vaughn Williams’ (1872–1958) *The Lark Ascending*, and Aaron Copland’s (1900–1990) *Appalachian Spring* are just a few other compositions that seem to convey the energy and motion of the devas in a powerful way.

Devic presences no doubt interact with the thoughtforms generated by the music itself and by the intentions of composers and performers. Sample thoughtforms recorded by clairvoyants when inspiring music is played, are broadly similar in appearance to angelic beings, except for the anthropomorphic features typically seen in the latter.⁷⁷ Geoffrey Hodson comments:

The composer’s idea and the superphysical effects of the music meet to produce an original form into which a measure of his egoic life and consciousness is incarnated as an ensouling principle, creating a relatively permanent entity. Thus, wherever and whenever a composition is performed, an instant rapport with the... composer’s form—and therefore with his life and consciousness—is established.⁷⁸

The Master Kuthumi, the future World Teacher and reportedly an accomplished organist, is said to use his music to communicate with the *gandharvas*.⁷⁹ The *gandharvas*, already mentioned in another context, are the devas of music, or “Sweet Songsters,” of Hindu tradition.

According to Alice Bailey, the Master Serapis, the “Egyptian Master,” works with the devic kingdom in support of the fine arts:

He is the Master upon the fourth ray, and the great art movements of the world, the evolution of music, and that of painting and drama, receive from Him an energising impulse. At present He is giving most of His time and attention to the work of the deva, or angel evolution, until their agency helps to make possible the great revelation in the world of music and painting which lies immediately ahead.⁸⁰

Not surprisingly, devic presence is strong in religious services, particularly those that involve elaborate ritual. Bailey commented:

The activity of the astral plane is being much intensified and the angels of devotion, in whom the aspect of divine love is pre-eminent, work with the astral bodies of all those who are ready to strengthen and redirect their spiritual aspiration and desire. They are the angels who guard the sanctuar-

ies of all the churches, cathedrals, temples and mosques of the world.⁸¹

Marko Pogačnik reported seeing an angel and a figure resembling Christ over the altar at a chapel in Venice.⁸² Charles Leadbeater, Theosophist and bishop in the Liberal Catholic Church, described the participation of angelic beings in the Mass, the most important being the Angel of the Eucharist.⁸³ The angel works with the love and devotion of the participants to build a vibrant thoughtform encompassing the sanctuary. Music adds to its intensity: “bringing into play an entirely new set of forces, another side of Nature, and associating with us in our work a host of great Music-Angels.”⁸⁴

Increasing Contact with Devas

At one time, when our etheric and sentient faculties were stronger, most people were able to “see” nature spirits, angels, and other devic entities. But, as we moved from that stage of primitive innocence, humanity gradually lost that lower psychism, and we entered a period of temporary blindness in which devas became invisible. The temporary blindness was deliberately orchestrated by the Planetary Hierarchy to allow humanity to focus on its mental development. It may also have been orchestrated for our own safety. Nevertheless angels did appear under certain circumstances. Hildegard of Bingen acknowledged that the “great band of angels” is only rarely seen. But she also noted that “other angels, who are in contact with human beings, show themselves to us under certain forms in accordance with God’s will.”⁸⁵

Now, as is indicated by the clairvoyant studies mentioned earlier, awareness of devic lives of all kinds seems to be increasing. Alice Bailey tells us that through meditation and ritual, people are becoming “more sensitive to the sights and sounds of the inner planes... They see devas... they catch a sound or a voice that tells them truths that they recognise as true.”⁸⁶ As we move into the Aquarian Age, and the seventh ray of Ceremonial Order comes into manifestation, such enhanced sensation can be expected to become more common:

Children will frequently be born who will see etherically as easily as the average human being sees physically; as conditions of harmony gradually evolve out of the present world chaos, devas and human beings will meet as friends.⁸⁷

Encounters are already being reported more frequently. And they are usually described in the most positive terms, enhancing the consciousness of those singled out for the experience. Playfulness, joy, beauty, and love are just some of the descriptive terms used.

On the other hand, these new abilities must be handled with caution. Bailey continues:

The temptation to force the issue, to prolong meditation, to try out certain methods that promise intensification of psychic faculty is too strong. They unwarily force matters and dire disaster results... In meditation it is literally possible to play with fire. The devas of the mental levels manipulate the latent fires of the system and thus incidentally the latent fires of the inner man. It is woefully possible to be the plaything of their endeavour and to perish at their hands. A truth I speak here; I give not voice to the interesting chimeras of a fanciful brain. Beware of playing with fire.⁸⁸

Generations of shamans and ceremonial magicians have attempted to evoke and control elementals to demonstrate their own power and to impress other people. Case histories reveal numerous examples in which ritual magic got dangerously out of hand;⁸⁹ still worse situations were probably never reported. Angels and other high devas cannot be controlled by human will. Contacts are entirely voluntary on their part.

Devas have always been of service to humanity, and we are told that the human and devic kingdoms will merge in the seventh round. Even in the relatively near future, as human consciousness further expands, some of the restrictions on contact with the higher devas will be relaxed: “The deva and human evolution will, during the next five hundred years, become somewhat more conscious of each other, and be able therefore more freely to cooperate.”⁹⁰ An important requirement for safe

interaction with devas is inner purity. Again to quote Alice Bailey:

Therefore is the emphasis laid by all wise Teachers everywhere on the Path of Purification, which must precede the Path of Illumination. They lay the emphasis on the building in of spiritual faculty before psychic faculty can be safely permitted; they demand service to the race every day throughout the scope of life before a man may be permitted to manipulate the forces of nature, to dominate the elementals, to cooperate with the devas, and to learn the forms and ceremonies, the mantrams and the key-words, that will bring those forces within the circle of manifestation..⁹¹

With regard to purity, Bailey tells us that “only those of pure life and unselfish motive can successfully reach the deva evolution, whereas in connection with the elementary lives it works the other way.”⁹² “Elementary lives” are the lowest ranks of devas, the least evolved. Her warning should be taken seriously.

Final Thoughts

A creative intelligence transcends, interpenetrates and underlies the purely physical qualities of what we see around us. Countless

individuals, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated, have witnessed or sensed the “magic” in nature. Nature may provide the first numinous experience of the universe or perhaps the first experience of God. This was certainly true for early humanity; it remains true for indigenous cultures; and it extends to significant numbers of people in post-modern industrialized societies who are trying to rise above the materialism and mechanization of our age.

As we reflect upon the relationship between the deva evolution and humanity we come to understand that the outward activity and beauty of nature and its role in sustaining life on our planet are only some of the factors lying behind the deep resonance and reverence that nature evokes. In the past we may have only dimly or habitually responded to outer appearance with its abundance of color, fragrance and form. But increased sensitivity and conscious communion can help us understand our age-old impressions and appreciate the vitality or life in nature and in ourselves.

Natural knowing and deep affinity with the earth helps us recognize that the Divine is a

living and dynamic presence within nature and that humans and the world of nature are not separate and distinct creations. In addition to sharing a composite body with the devas, we are meant to assist one another in satisfying the purpose of natural law and human evolution. As correct relationship increases, members of the human family will evolve into conscious co-creators or potent receiving and transmitting centers for these subtle life forces. In this way humanity can fulfill its pre-ordained pur-

There is growing curiosity about the deva evolution and a desire to open up more direct lines of communication. Many of us yearn for greater understanding and more detailed knowledge of devas... Certainly it would seem that the human and deva lifestreams are drawing closer together. But to force the process could be both dangerous and irresponsible. We cannot study devas like bacteria under a microscope.

pose to “act as the Divine Messenger to the world of form.”⁹³ Not only will we develop greater respect for the earth and understand the urgency of protecting the environment from chemical or biological contamination. We may be able to *think* and *will* the devas into constructive action—to produce new sources of food, protect and heal the earth, and create a profusion of new forms of the highest expression.

Devas play other major roles in the life of the planet. We understand that cooperation routinely exists between senior members of the Hierarchy and their senior devic counterparts, and some of the masters serve as intermediaries between the kingdoms. Even though our own awareness is currently limited, devic presence can be sensed in spiritual rituals, in presentations of inspired music and art, and in both conventional and complementary healing modalities. We should not ignore the possibility of devic influence in other aspects of human endeavor, including education, business and technology.

There is growing curiosity about the deva evolution and a desire to open up more direct lines of communication. Many of us yearn for greater understanding and more detailed knowledge of devas, knowledge that can be documented, examined and communicated in intellectual terms. Certainly it would seem that the human and deva lifestreams are drawing closer together. But to force the process could be both dangerous and irresponsible. We cannot study devas like bacteria under a microscope. They are living, conscious beings, some of whom have power over the very forms of our existence. We must consider the possibly adverse effects not only on the devas we seek to contact but also on ourselves.

The devic and human evolutions have coexisted during the entire history of the planet, and each has important responsibilities, delegated from the highest levels of planetary life. The possibility of increased, conscious cooperation in discharging these responsibilities is exciting and evocative. Without provoking premature contact, we can begin to prepare ourselves for eventual collaboration with the devas in implementing the divine plan. Preparation will include learning more about the devic kingdom and its work. It will also include responsibility in thought, since devic force is the “active agent” between human thought and physical plane consequences. Special emphasis must also be placed on inner purity, detachment, discernment and selflessness as the means for establishing right relationship with the forces in nature and the whole of creation.

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