

very practical, and very real. The nucleus it speaks of as being formed by the Fellows of the Society is in fact one of these karmic bands or collective groups of souls. This is not to say that everyone who signs an application form and pays dues automatically becomes part of that nucleus. To say that would be superstitious. But everyone who joins the Society has thereby an opportunity to become part of this nucleus. Whether we do so or not is up to us. It has to be a conscious decision, freely taken.

Within our ever growing collective consciousness, we each have an appointed way or duty. Following that way, doing that duty without regard to the consequence to us personally, exhausts our personal karma and develops in us the higher siddhis, which are the powers of wisdom, compassion, creativity, and harmony (verse 154). Our duty is not unchanging; rather it varies with time, and we are to follow whatever duty we have at a given time. When we are a sun, we should shine like a sun; when we are a planet, we should move as planets move (155-158).

The point about relative and varying duty is illustrated by a tradition that says the present planets Mars and Mercury were in the past suns and will in the future be suns again. Verse 157 uses names for the heavenly bodies: Migmar, Lhagpa, and Nyima, of which HPB notes: Gloss 26. *Nyima*, the Sun in Tibetan Astrology. *Migmar* or Mars is symbolized by an “eye,” and *Lhagpa* or Mercury by a “hand.”

Like Migmar with his Eye and Lhagpa with his Hand, we are to watch over and lend a helping hand by giving light and comfort to our fellow pilgrims on the Way (verse 158). In thus sacrificing what seems to be our personal interest to “Shakya-Thub-pa” or Buddha — not just the historical Gautama Buddha, but the Eternal Buddha Nature — we enter upon the Path or into the “stream,” as verse 159 states. We become, to use a traditional Buddhist term, *srotapatti*, which HPB glosses: Gloss 27. *Srotapatti* or “he who enters in the stream” of Nirvana, unless he reaches the goal owing to some exceptional reasons, can rarely attain Nirvana in one birth. Usually a chela is said to begin the ascending effort in one life and end or reach it only in his seventh succeeding birth.

Buddhism traditionally recognizes four stages on the Path to Enlightenment and Liberation: