



## THE SECRET DOCTRINE OF THE TAROT

By Paul F. Case

### CHAPTER VII.

**O**UR English "F" is derived from the Greek digamma, which was probably a modification of the Phoenician letter corresponding to the Hebrew Vau. We cannot be absolutely certain about the hieroglyphic origin of this letter, but we may be reasonably sure that Fabre d'Olivet's opinion that the primitive character was an eye is without foundation. The best modern authorities, in fact, agree that the Phoenician Vau probably stood for the object it most resembles—a yoke.

To think of a yoke is to be reminded of oxen; and in the Hebrew alphabet Aleph, the ox, is the symbol for the universal radiant energy, which is manifested as the solar force that causes almost every movement of terrestrial matter. This force has a double activity, sometimes represented by two oxen—one white, the other black. To yoke and drive this team is to master the solar force.

Figuratively, a yoke is anything that connects or binds. The captives of Rome and other nations of antiquity were made to pass under a symbolic yoke of spears, which represented their state of bondage. Later the yoke was an emblem of voluntary service, as in Jesus' words "My yoke is easy."

Service, indeed, is the heart of all religion. "Faith without works is dead." Acts are the proof of belief, which is only the beginning of the religious life.

The end or goal is knowledge, and action is the path which leads to it. "Perform thou the proper action; action is superior to inaction. Fools say, and not the wise, that renunciation and right performance of action are different. He who practices one perfectly receives the fruit of both," says the Bhagavad Gita.

Right performance of action is "yoga." This term comes from the Sanskrit root meaning "to join," to which we may also trace the noun "yoke." Thus, without doing violence either to sense or to language, Jesus' words, just quoted, might be rendered, "My yoga is easy."

Yoga leads to experimental union of the person with the Absolute. The religious leaders of the world—Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Paul, Mohammed—all had this experience. Yoga aims to enable us to share their certainty. "The teachers of the science of yoga," says Vivekananda, "declare that religion is not only based upon the experience of ancient times but that no man can be religious until he has had the same perceptions himself. Yoga is the science which teaches us how to get these perceptions."

In practice, yoga resolves itself into the control of the physical and mental manifestations of Prana, which is the very force that the Hebrew typified by the ox. In agreement with other teachers who have experimented with this force, the yogis recognize its quality.

They call its two currents "ida" and "pingala." These are the white and black oxen, and the adept who masters them can do mighty works of power. Hence the object of all the exercises is to combine the two currents in rhythmic and harmonious activity. Success in this work is thus described by Vivekananda in "Raja Yoga":

"When the yogi becomes perfect there will be nothing in nature not under his control. All the powers of nature will obey him as his slaves, and when the ignorant see these powers of the yogi, they call them miracles."

On the assumption, then, that it represents a yoke, the primitive sign for Vau implies union and service, is an em-

blem of religion, and suggests a direct experience of life's occult phases which transforms ordinary men into adepts.

Similar implicits are connected with the letter name. In dealing with these we leave the precarious foothold of assumption for a firm basis of fact, since there is no doubt about the meaning of the word "Vau." It is the Hebrew for "nail."

A more appropriate symbol for union would be hard to find. Nails, moreover, denote a special kind of union. For whether they be used to make boxes or to build houses, to fasten the parts of a toy or to join the timbers of a ship, they always combine several parts into a coherent whole. Every nail, as a sign of carpentry, building, and architecture suggests construction and organization.

As a symbol for mental action, therefore, Vau must indicate a process which results in the production of more or less permanent mental structures—in the formation of systems of thought or belief. Precisely this kind of mentation originated the propositions of the Secret Doctrine.

The same kind of thinking found artistic expression in architecture; and the art of building, as the servant of religion, has preserved all the important symbols and measurements of the sacred science. He who has a key to the geometrical basis of religious architecture, may assure himself, not only of the antiquity but also of the accuracy of the Hidden Wisdom.

Another set of implicits for Vau is derived from the practice of using nails as hooks. Thus employed, a nail represents a means whereby the support, aid, or influence of a superior power is communicated to something dependent. Religion, which claims to enable man to avail himself of the aid, support, and power of God, is such a means.

A nail used as a hook is also a perfect symbol for yoga. A leading tenet of yoga philosophy is that personality is absolutely dependent upon Purusha, the real Self. Thus every mental exercise described by Patanjali and other masters of yoga is intended to overcome the illusion of personal inde-

pendence. The perfect yogi says with Jesus, "Of myself I can do nothing;" for he knows that his personality is no more than a vehicle through which the One Self manifests its omnipotence.

No more; but also and emphatically, no less. The adept's certainty that his personality is a manifesting center of omniscient and omnipotent Spirit is what enables him to perform his works of power. By the nail of yoga he hangs suspended from the One, confident in his knowledge of that which supports him.

This notion of union is implied in every thought suggested by Vau. Among the links in this chain of related ideas are, affinity, agreement, harmony, conformity, and the like. Conformity brings to mind system and precedent; and to transmit system and precedent from generation to generation requires instruction which involves communication and agreement between teacher and pupils. Thus Vau is a sign for revelation, definition, explanation, and interpretation. As a symbol for a phase of human consciousness, therefore, it corresponds to Intuition.

As "V" or "U" Vau corresponds to the second letter of the sacred word AUM. In view of the fact that "A" the ox, is the first letter of the mystic syllable, this indicates a significant progression of ideas; first, the "A" or sign of the cosmic energy; second, the "V" denoting the means for controlling that energy, and a method for revealing the secret of control; and third, the "M" which, as will be shown in Chapter XIV, stands for the synthesis or manifestation, whereby the potency of the Supreme Reality is actualized in the phenomenal world.

The second letter in AUM also represents Vishnu, whose eighth avatar, Krishna, revealed the principles of yoga to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. To Hindus, therefore, as well as to Hebrews, the letter "V" suggests revelation; and that revelation is really Intuition—instruction imparted by the Higher Self—is directly stated by the Gita, when it makes Krishna declare, "I am the Ego seated in the hearts of men."

In a lecture on the Vedas, Max Mueller says:

"The name for revelation in Sanskrit is 'Sruti,' which means hearing, and this title distinguishes the Vedic hymns, and at a later time the Brahmanas also, from all other works, which, however sacred and authoritative to the Hindu mind, are admitted to have been composed by human authors."

The Bible relates that the Lord spoke to Moses, called Samuel in the night, and made Himself known to Elijah by a "still, small voice." When Jesus declared, "As I hear, I judge," he testified that his consciousness of the Divine Presence was an auditory perception. On the road to Damascus, Paul heard a Voice that not only changed the whole course of his life, but, through that change in him, worked a transformation that has affected the lives of all mankind. Mohammedans believe that the greater part of the Koran was dictated to the Prophet by Gabriel, whose presence was usually announced by the sound of a bell. Swedenborg writes of things heard in Heaven. Theosophists prepare themselves for instruction by the Voice of Silence.

Thus hearing, which unites mankind by the bonds of language, is also the link between the Divine Mind and its human expressions. Vau, sign of union and of revelation, is therefore made the symbol of hearing in the Sepher Yetzirah.

Hindu philosophy teaches that the subtle principle of hearing is Akasha, which is the root of all matter. "Everything that has form, everything that is the result of compounds, is evolved out of this Akasha. It is the Akasha that becomes the air, that becomes the liquids, that becomes the solids; it is the Akasha that becomes the sun, the earth, the moon, the stars, the comets; it is the Akasha that becomes the body, the animal body, the plants, every form that we see, everything that can be sensed, everything that exists. It itself cannot be perceived; it is so subtle that it is beyond all ordinary perception; it can only be seen when it has become gross, has taken form. At the beginning of creation there is

only this Akasha; at the end of the cycle the solids, the liquids and the gases all melt into the Akasha again, and the next creation similarly proceeds out of this Akasha."—(Vivekananda, "Raja Yoga," page 29.)

As the all-pervading Tattva, Akasha is the link between all forms. It connects all the bodies in the universe, as nails hold together the planks in a building. This uniting principle, remember, is the source of the sense of hearing. Thus the Hindu, as well as the Hebrew, conception of that sense is adequately symbolized by Vau.

Astronomically Vau corresponds to Taurus, the ox or bull. This reminds us that Vau is probably the "yoke." Taurus rules the neck and throat. The neck implies both union and support, because it joins the head, containing the higher centres of the cosmic energy, to the body, wherein thought is transformed into action. Thought, moreover, is unuttered speech; the words that embody it are formed in the throat; and their proper formation depends almost wholly upon hearing.

The Sephirotic path assigned to Vau is Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence, "the delight of glory, and the paradise of pleasure prepared for the just." It is the third emanation from the Illuminating Intelligence of Chokmah, which it joins to the Measuring, Cohesive, or Receptacular Intelligence of Chesed. (See diagram in Chapter I.)

"Triumphant" and "Eternal," in very truth, is the mental state which is the goal of yoga. The perfect yogi triumphs over the illusions of personal existence, and conquers the limitations of environment which restrict the freedom of ordinary men. His knowledge of truth liberates him from the shackles of circumstance. His knowledge is eternal, for it is identical with the self-consciousness of Purusha, the changeless and everlasting. Hindus call this knowledge "Bliss Absolute," and Kabbalists merely expand the Hindu definition when they say this path is "the delight of glory and the paradise of pleasure."

This experimental knowledge of the Supreme Reality

bears fruit in accurate and comprehensive knowledge of nature. Kabbalists term this understanding of natural laws "Measuring" or "Cohesive" Intelligence, because it literally takes the measure of all things, and embraces the whole scheme of creation within its transcendent comprehension. As Vivekananda puts it, "If a man goes into Samadhi, if he goes into it a fool, he comes out a sage."

He learns his identity with the Supreme Spirit, and perceives that Spirit as being identical with the Ego in every human heart. For a yogi this perception is not merely the assent of his intellect to a reasonable inference from the hypothesis that Spirit is omnipresent. It is a living experience. Never can he forget it. It makes him a saint, and inspires him with love toward all creatures. Hence its fruit is mercy. Kabbalists therefore say that the path corresponding to Vau completes itself in the Sephirah of Divine Mercy.

The Tarot card symbolizing the implicits of the letter Vau is numbered Five. The mathematical properties of this number, and its many correspondences in nature, caused it to be regarded with especial veneration by the ancients. Hindu teachers give it prominence in their philosophical and magical treatises. The Greeks and Romans used it as a talisman to ward off evil spirits. In Gothic art it was a symbol of sacrifice, having a significance similar to that of the yoke. Western occultism, as interpreted by Eliphas Levi, explains it as follows:

"By the addition of unity to the quaternary, we obtain together and separately, the idea of divine synthesis and analysis and attain the number Five, which is that of the soul, represented by the quintessence resulting from the equilibrium of the four magical elements, and by the sublime and mysterious pentagram. The quinary is the religious number, for it is that of the Deity joined to that of the woman. In the Tarot this number is represented by the high priest or spiritual autocrat."

As the combination of unity with the quaternary, Five

stands for a synthesis of ideas implied by the Magician and the Emperor; (1 + 4); as the number of the Deity joined to that of the woman, it brings together the ideas behind the symbolism of the Empress and the High Priestess (3 + 2). Thus the Hierophant (5) combines the magic power, knowledge of natural laws, and initiative brought to mind by the Magician, with the authority, control, and constructive power indicated by the Emperor; and he also typifies the receptivity of the High Priestess joined to the generative power of the Empress.

The geometrical symbol for Five is the pentagram. Eliphas Levi says this figure "expresses the mind's domination over the elements, and by this sign we bind the demons of the air, the spirits of fire, the spectres of water and the ghosts of earth."

"All the mysteries of magic," he continues, "all figures of occultism, all Kabbalistic keys of prophecy, are resumed in the sign of the pentagram, which Paracelsus proclaims to be the greatest and most potent of all. It is, indeed, the sign of the absolute and universal synthesis."

The same writer calls attention to the importance of the pentagram in spiritual alchemy. He says it "designates the unique Athanor of the Hermetists of the highest grade, the chemical instrument, complete as the world and precise as mathematics themselves, by which that which is ethereal is separated from that which is gross, and the fixed is divided from the volatile."

In Hindu symbology, its five points represent the five Tattvas, the five modifications of the all-pervading Akasha, which are also the subtle principles of the five senses. The yogi seeks to control these principles, and the pentagram denotes his whole personality with its gross and its subtle bodies.

In his "Kabbalah of Numbers," Sepharial gives an extended interpretation of the number Five, from which, as being especially applicable to the fifth major trump, we may select the following:



“Fatherhood; harvesting; reproduction of self in the material world; rewards and punishments; propagation; expansion; inclusiveness; comprehension; understanding; judgment.”

The Hierophant—called the Pope in medieval Tarots—is the father of the Church, which has for its great work the harvesting of souls. He is the official spokesman of a doctrine which, both exoterically and esoterically, is largely concerned with the laws of self-reproduction in the material world. The religious doctrine about rewards and punishments is an important key to the esoteric laws of self-reproduction. The Church carries on an active propaganda, by means of which it seeks to expand itself throughout the world. It promises to impart comprehension and understanding to those who obey its precepts. The Hierophant, as the head of the Church, is the type of all that the Church embodies.

In some versions of the Tarot he is called the High Priest. Literally, this title means “chief masculine elder;” and it emphasizes the idea that the true head of the Church is not an earthly being. Our “High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek” is the Originating Principle of the Universe, the Supreme Purusha.

I agree with Mr. Waite, however, that the best name for this card is the Hierophant. This was the title of the priests who initiated candidates at Eleusis. The word means “revealer of sacred mysteries.”

Now, “sacred” means holy, or perfect, and so implies completeness. The great arcanum of all initiations, no matter how diverse they may be in externals, is the mystery of the Divine Completeness. This is the mystery of the One that is the All.

Human hierophants merely repeat the original revelation imparted to the ancient sages by the Supreme Self, who is the Teacher of teachers. “I am the Author of the Vedanta,” says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. The New Testa-

ment has a parallel doctrine: "Call no man Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ."

Just as the various titles of the fifth trump have the same essential meaning, so the various designs differ only as to superficial details. Mr. Waite thinks that in its primitive form the picture did not represent the Roman Pontiff, but gives no reasons for his opinion. If the cards were invented in Europe (and to believe this seems as reasonable as to accept any of the fanciful accounts of their origin in Egypt, India, or China), the primitive symbolism would almost certainly have represented the Supreme Teacher as the Pope.

He sits between two columns, which for Eliphas Levi are those of Hermes and Solomon, while P. Christian and Papus agree that they are the columns of the sanctuary of Isis. Mr. Waite, rejecting these views, holds that the pillars are not those of the High Priestess; and his version of the Tarot is drawn to fit his theory.

None of the ancient packs affords definite proof as to the correctness of any of these opinions. They simply show two pillars which may or may not be those of Establishment and Strength. I incline, however, to the view that the pillars of the Hierophant are those of the High Priestess, because there are so many other analogies between these two trumps.

In my new version, therefore, I have seated the Hierophant between Jakin and Bohas. It will be noticed that the position of the pillars is the reverse of that shown in the second trump. The white pillar is at the High Priest's right and the black one is at his left. This is to show that he sits behind the High Priestess, on the other side of the veil that hangs between the columns. She is at the entrance to the sanctuary. He is within the Holy of Holies.

The veil is the same as that which hangs behind the High Priestess; but its ornamentation is different, because Maya has two aspects. From the point of view symbolized by the High Priestess, the veil suggests the operation of two separate principles represented by the masculine pine-

cone and the feminine rose; but seen from within, these two, though distinct, are not separate. Hence the unit of design in the embroidery on the Hierophant's side of the veil is a white trefoil in a black circle.

The Hierophant's tiara, like that of the High Priestess, is a triple crown, denoting dominion in three worlds. It is not exactly the same, however, for at the top, instead of a crescent, it has either a dotted circle or a Greek cross. Thus the Hierophant is crowned with the sun, as the High Priestess is crowned with the moon. He is the source of light; she is the reflection.

His beard indicates his identity with the Emperor. In these two pictures the Tarot shows one person holding two positions; and reminds us that royalty and priesthood originally went together. The supreme temporal power and the supreme spiritual authority are one in essence.

With his right hand the Hierophant makes the sign of esotericism, reminding us, as Mr. Waite says, of "the distinction between the manifest and concealed parts of doctrine." It also denotes meditation and silence.

These however, are lesser mysteries. To perceive the deeper significance of this sign we must recognize its phallic origin, remembering that its meaning goes far beyond the physical facts that suggested it. It denotes the union of the visible and invisible. The visible is the lingam or masculine triad, corresponding to the trefoils on the veil, and represented by the two opened fingers and thumb. The invisible is the yoni, because the feminine phases of the generative process are hidden within the body of the woman. It corresponds to the black circles enclosing the trefoils, and is represented by the two closed fingers because two is the number of the woman.

The triple cross in the Hierophant's left hand is also a very ancient symbol of union, a conventionalized palm with seven branches. The three bars are the three feminine "gates of life," the external, middle and interior barriers, with their openings. The upright is the lingam. The three

bars also denote the three qualities of Prakriti. The lowest, or outermost, is Tamas, the quality of matter on the physical plane; the middle is Rajas, the astral; and Sattva, the spiritual, is innermost and highest.

The Hierophant wears three garments; the inner is white; the middle, blue; and the outer, scarlet. He is therefore clothed in light, water and fire. It will be remembered, moreover, that the Magician wears a white tunic and a red robe, while the dress of the High Priestess is blue. Thus the Hierophant's vestments indicate that he combines the functions of the Magician and the High Priestess.

Before him kneel two priests. In Mr. Waite's Tarot they wear albs, one of which is embroidered with lilies, the other with roses. This is ingenious, for it implies that the ministers personify the principles typified by the lilies and roses in the Magician's garden. To make the correspondence wholly consistent, however, the wearer of the rose-embroidered alb should be a woman, since roses are symbols of Prakriti. Interesting and suggestive then, as Mr. Waite's variation may be, it is not only a radical departure from the traditional picture, but it also involves a contradiction in the terms of the symbolism. To avoid this, I adhere to the older design; which shows one priest wearing red, the other, black.

Red is the color of Rajas, passion and action; black stands for Tamas, ignorance and inertia. The priests therefore denote human passions and ignorance brought under the control of the real Self, and acting as ministers to whom he communicates his wisdom and entrusts the execution of his will.

Their heads are tonsured, to show that they represent specializations of the universal radiant energy; for the tonsure is a very ancient sun-symbol. The implicit is that both passion and ignorance are states of Prana, as it is expressed through the human organism. A single force enters into both conditions.

In yoga practice both are made to obey the will of

the adept. All the exercises involving restraint make use of inertia, or Tamas; those that transfer Prana from lower to higher centers of expression partake of the quality of action or Rajas. The gross body of a yogi in Samadhi is inert and apparently lifeless (Tamas); but his higher vehicles are intensely active (Rajas).

Such, in brief, are some of the implicits of this picture. Other interpretations will be suggested to the student, as he becomes ready for them. They will be revealed by the very Teacher symbolized by this trump.

Nothing is hid from the Hierophant, for he is the All-Knower. In his transcendent comprehension are embraced Past, Present, and Future. He knows the totality of manifestation and grasps every detail in that stupendous whole. He therefore knows the true history of the Tarot, and all the meanings of every symbol.

He knows also every thought of every person; perceives the exact stage of development attained by each; and understands precisely what each one needs. Our most secret aims and aspirations are an open book to him. He already knows whatever we want to know; and he is willing and able to solve all our problems.

"Take my yoke upon you; learn of me; ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," is the Christian promise. It is essentially the same as the declaration of the Gita: "I am the Ego seated in the hearts of men; be with thy mind fixed on me, be my devotee, my worshipper, bow down to me and thou shalt come even to me; take sanctuary with me alone. I shall liberate thee from all sins; do thou not grieve!"

The Hierophant is the maker of these promises in every age; for there are not many gods, but one Spirit. That One, from generation to generation, repeats to mankind the same triumphant and eternal truth: "All things are from One; from that One nothing can be separated; realize thine identity with Him and be free."

*To be continued*