Es2: Mysterious Agartha

By **Nicodemus** - 18 October 2026

1. Let us be reminded that W.J. Hanegraaf is a respectable scholar and has published often and extensively on this subject – esotericism and occultism. In his book *Western Esotericism…* (2013), he gives, as we saw, several definitions, theoretical and practical, general or specific. I take as basic, practical and specific, the one about "inner development" on p. 42. He refers to the study and practice of groups under Gurdjieff's and Uspensky's guidance, with "an independent and original esoteric system that includes a neo-gnostic cosmology and a complicated training system for liberating the mind… and attaining spiritual freedom… [The] techniques…have become an integral dimension of the post–1960's concern with 'self-realisation'." I focus on the terms "inner development, system, spiritual freedom, techniques, self-realisation."

Otherwise, as Hanegraaf writes on p.3, "Western Esotericism" is an "artificial category applied retrospectively to a range of currents and ideas that were known by other names at least prior to the end of the 18th century… [It] is a modern scholarly construct… [with] structural similarities… between the ideas and world-views of thinkers and movements". And this has a very useful aspect in that one can know easily these ancient and modern writings.

One clarification is needed regarding Esoteric Christianity mentioned in **ES1, §4B.** Some authors write about it in connection with (pseudo-)Dionysius Areopagite (5th cent.) and Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) who had a most profound and intimate, indescribable union with the absolute Divine. But they are almost unique cases. Neither the Byzantine mystic nor the German left a line of succession, a school of disciples, a tradition or teaching with detailed instructions of how to realize the same union. So, their writings do not constitute a stream of "Esoteric Christianity" but do point to it. I will deal with this later.

Here I now take up the curious case of the underground city of "Agartha" which cropped up not in ancient or medieval times, or even the Renaissance, but in the second half of the 19th century.

2. According to Jocelyn Godwin (*Arktos, The Polar Myth…* 1996 Kempton, Adventures Unlimited Press), the name "Agartha" (and its variety of spellings) comes from *Asgard* (Old Norse Asgarðr) which was the realm of the gods with Odin as King, in the Nordic (Germanic-Scandinavian) mythology. This name had never been used before the 1870s when Ernest Renan (writer of the *Life of Jesus,* French *Vie de Jésus* 1861) wrote in one of his Dialogues *Réves "Dreams",* 1876, about an "Asgaard" somewhere in Central Asia where, in the history of mankind, could produce "ases" (heroes, gods), great men and infallible spiritual leaders (Godwin 40-41, 80-81). Godwin traces the change in the phonetics (and variants) of Agartha and its use by subsequent writers.

But it was, in fact, another French writer, Louis Jacolliot, who at about the same period produced the myth of Agartha in his *Le Fils de Dieu "The Son of God",* 1873. Jacolliot writes that when he served as a magistrate in South India he befriended local brahmins who helped him read ancient texts, going back 15000 years (!), and later, taking him to a Shivaite orgy in an underground temple, told him the story of Agartha.

But before examining this story, we must note that two years earlier, in 1871, Edward Bulwer-Lytton had published (anonymously) a novel of a superior **subterranean** master race called *vril-iya* who used the cosmic/psychic energy "vril" with wands and so manipulated all forms of matter: with this they could also injure and destroy or heal creatures. He had used related notions, electrical or magnetical forces and spiritualism in earlier novels. Note that the *vril* was largely accepted later as valid occult energy by theosophists – the Russian lady who initiated this movement, Helena Petrovana Blavatsky (1877 *Isis Unveiled,* 1886 *Secret Doctrine*) of whom we shall hear more in ES3, and others like William Scott-Elliot (1896 *The story of Atlantis & the Lost Lemuria).*

3. According to Godwin (p.81) Jacolliot's Agartha was the City of the Sun ruled by the chief brahmin Brahmatma, "the visible manifestation of God on earth". He ruled from 13300 BCE "invisible among his wives and favorites in an immense palace" and appeared to his people only once a year. Agartha, writes Jacolliot, was in existence long before the Aryans arrived and became the Brahmin caste: Aryan meant "honorable, illustrious". They ruled for 3000 years. (We shall hear more about such migrations in the next essay.)

Agartha was destroyed around 5000 BCE, after the Aryans tried to overturn the native brahmins but eventually made an agreement with the priestly caste and they became the rulers, kshatriyas. The destruction came with the invasion of two mighty brothers Yoda and Skandah who rolled down from the Himalayas. Afterwards they moved north-west-ward and their names were immortalized among the Nordic peoples as "Odin" and "Scandinavia"! Later they marched South to capture Rome!

As an Indologist-sanskritist, I can assure you that all these supposed historical events are products of fantasy: no such texts exist and there is not the slightest evidence for such a Shivaite tradition, nor, of course, any archaeological evidence. **It is all made up – a deliberate deception.**

4. In 1876 appeared the book *Ghostland* with a similar tale under the auspices of Emma Hardinge Britten and, then, other publications up to 1980 with impressive variations, which I shall note further down.

However, the entire narration, excepting some names (aryan, brahmin, kshatriya, skandah) is sheer fantasy. Neither the name A(s)gartha nor the dates nor Yoda (? a corruption of Sanskrit **yodha = warrior?**) have any connection with the known reality. From the earliest Vedic times the religion in India was polytheistic, though it was accepted that all deities were manifestations of That One (**tad ekam**). The Ṛgveda hymn (puruṣa sūkta) 10.90.12 says that there were four castes stating plainly that from Purusha's (the Primordial Man's) mouth emerged the Brahmins (priestly, spiritual class), from his two arms the Kṣhatriyas (rulers, guardians), from his thighs the Vaiśyas (producers, traders) and his feet the Śudras (servants). Of these there is no mention in the forgery. As for Skanda, he is a post-vedic war-god (also named Kartikeya) son of Shiva, leading the heavenly hosts against the gods' enemies.

I wonder how any scholar would take such stuff as Agartha seriously and bestow on the text the term "esotericism".

One basic absurdity in this so-called esotericism, which is sheer invention about the prehistoric culture of Agartha and the Aryans and others, is the very name. It is totally unknown in any possible related form (argatha, gartha, ugartha, igratha, gathra etc.) in the Indic texts or Old Iranian (Avesta, Gathas

etc.). But there is an old Iranian common name *Agrērat* (from *Ayraēraθa*), name of the brother of Afrāsiāb in the epic *Śah-nāmeh 'King-Book'*. Only mentally unbalanced people would invent and develop such an almost complete and (in)credible culture. Let us now see what further developments or further frauds, to be more accurate, were perpetrated by the increasing adherents of this tale – as given in J. Godwin, in section §2 earlier.

5. I mentioned above the book *Ghostland* which had no ostensible author but came out (1876) under the auspices of Emma Hardinge Britten, a medium in these circles and a founding member of the Theosophical Society, which I shall examine in a future article. The narrator gets initiated into an otherwise unknown "Ellora Brotherhood" and describes the meeting place in the rock temples of that name.

I stood in a subterranean temple of immense extent fashioned in the shape of a horseshoe… in the plan of an amphitheater… with emblems of Egyptian and Chaldean worship (…) with sentences in gold in Arabic, Sanskrit and other Oriental languages. (…) Ranged in a semicircle midway on the platform were 7 tripods [with] braziers from which ascended colored flames [and] intoxicating odors. Behind each tripped, seated on thrones (…) were 7 dark-robed figures [with] masked faces. (…) Around me, (…) reclining [or] sitting were multitudes of men (…) in European [or] Hindoo costumes.

All wore masks so that one could not see their sex. There were also six galvanic batteries attached to the 6 silver thrones, occupied by Adepts who received their inspiration from the seventh. This one was always present but not always visible – being "a presence from the realm of supernal being". Through the electric batteries whose positive pole was generated by the 7 Adepts and the negative by the neophytes, "the multitude were mentally impressed with vivid images of cosmic events". After initiation, when the narrator became an Adept, he could occupy the throne while his body slept hundreds of miles away!

How ridiculous are many of the elements that make up this description is much too obvious to need comments from me. If you have the incredible power to occupy a throne while you are asleep miles away, what do you need batteries for electricity (and how is this produced)?…

6. Then in 1886 the Frenchman Saint-Yves d' Alveydre (1842-1909) published, after several other books, *Mission de l' Inde en Europe, The Mission of India in Europe.* He was a self-educated Christian Hermetist but note that ancient Hermetists of Hellenistic times had nothing to do with Christianity. He was well-married so that he had the leisure to pursue his occult concerns. He engaged the otherwise almost unknown Jamal ud Din al Afghani who presented himself as Prince Hardjij Scharipf (more commonly Haji Sharif) to teach him Sanskrit. In the course of these lessons Haji referred to the "Holy Land of Agarttha" and the original language of mankind Vattan and its 22 letters. (Hebrew has 22 letters.) Agarttha and the primordial language were still in existence. But as Haji would not bring Saint-Yves into contact with them, the Frenchman mastered the art of releasing his astral from the carnal body and so was able to visit Agarttha in person!

Agarttha is a subterranean kingdom with millions ruled by a "Sovereign Pontiff" of Ethiopian race who is called Brahmatma, assisted by Mahatma and Mahanga (these two are not present in Jacolliot!). The kingdom moved underground at the start of the Kali-yuga, i.e. 3100 BCE. Its technology was more advanced than that of France with gaslighting, rail and air travel. Its regime was Syn-archy (not an-archy or mon-archy), a form lost by other races on the surface since the 4th millennium BCE. Prophets like Moses and Jesus tried to reinstate it and now Saint-Yves would try. When this regime gets established again, then Agartha will reveal itself with all its immense material and spiritual benefits.

We should bear in mind that two years before writing this account of Agartha, Saint-Yves had read the literature of theosophists Madame Blavatsky, Sinnet and Hume, communicating with their Himalayan masters, Mahatmas Morya and Koot Hoomi, who had supreme wisdom and vast psychic powers. Saint-Yves may well have been influenced by them. In 1911-1912 appeared some articles on Agartha by one Narad Mani (Godwin, 1996, p. 86). Mani refers to Saint-Yves and places AGARTTHA somewhere under the Himalayas connecting the 22 letters with the 22 arcanas of god Hermes (of the ancient hermetists and related to, or often identified with, the Egyptian god Thoth < Ḏḥwtj.) But, again, I wonder why, if the Agarthians had such great psychic powers – why would they need advanced technology?

Here I should point out that this Vattan original language is totally unknown and with only 22 letters is perhaps equal to Hebrew (with 22 letters) but far inferior to Sanskrit which has more than 40 (!) and even English with 26.

7. Let us move on remembering that all these writings about Agartha appeared before 1900. In 1922 a Polish scientist (chemistry, physics, hydrology) Ferdynand Ossendowski published *Beasts, Men & Gods* (NY, Dutton) which narrated his travels in Russia during the Civil War between the Reds & Whites and, always according to Godwin's publication, his part in the campaigns of the Bloody Baron, Roman Ungern von Sternberg. But in this he gives in three chapters a precis of Saint-Yves book on Agarttha with many minor differences – such as making the population 800 million! He even ended with the prophecy (from his informants in Mongolia) that "the people of Argadhi [sic] would emerge on earth's surface in 2029! (So, we can now await this miraculous year!) When Ossendowski was accused of plagiarism, he denied this in the presence of Rene Guénon, then a major figure in esotericism and metaphysics and among the Traditionalists. [It is curious that people find it difficult to believe that even honorable scientists and occultists can lie bluntly!]

Guénon got interested in all this "esoteric" stuff and later, in 1927, published *Le Roi du Monde (The King of the World)* in which he wrote he had no reason to doubt Ossendowski and proceeded to furnish his own view of the matter with its ramifications. I shall deal with Guénon and his metaphysics in a future article. Here suffice it to copy what Godwin writes (1996:83): "The late Marco Pallis… translator of Guénon who wrote an article discrediting Ossendowski's sources, [1983 "Ossendowski's sources" in *Studies in Comparative Religion* 15/1-2, pp. 30-41] called *Le Roi du Monde* **disastrous** in conversation with this author [i.e. Godwin] because Guėnon, the greatmetaphysician [?] had let himself wander off into sensationalism".

8. There were several more books on Agartha in the subsequent years:

In the early 1930s Roerich George and Roerich Nicholas wrote separately about their stay in Eastern and Central Asia and about Shambala, which also figures large in occult writings of this kind. In 1951 Robert E. Dickhoff published *Agharta* (Boston, Bruce Humphries). In 1960 R. Bernard published *Agharta the Subterranean Word* (Mokelumne Hill). Alec MacLelan in 1982 *The Last World of*

Agarthi: the Mystery of Vril Power, London, Gorgi Books. And several others. We shall cast a glance at L. Pauels & J. Bergiers *The Morning of the Magicians (*from French *Le Matin des Magiciens* Éditions Galimard, Paris, 1960/2009) and, afterwards, at Jean Claude Frère's 1974 *Nazisme et Sociétés Secrétes* (Paris, Culture, Arts, Loisirs).
Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier wrote (Godwin, p82):

According to the legend with which Haushofer no doubt became acquainted in 1905, and the version which René Guénon gave of it in his Le Roi du Monde*, after the cataclysm of Gobi the lords and masters of this great civilization, the All-Knowing, the Sons of Intelligences from Beyond, took up their abode in a vast underground encampment under the Himalayas. (…) [They divided themselves into two groups, one following the "Right Hand Way" and the other the "Left Hand Way". The first had its center in Agarthi, a place of meditation. (…) the second went to Shambala, a city of violence and power whose forces command the elements and the masses of humanity and hasten the arrival of the human race at the "turning point of time".*

What is the source of this development ("scenario" says Godwin, p79) of the division and rivalry between the two factions and (mythical) cities – Agatha and Shambala? The two co-writers say that "Haushofer **no doubt** became acquainted with it", but this implies that they don't know. Then they mention Guénon who might be the source. But all these details and Shambala are not in *Le Roi du Monde!* So, in the absence of sources, we can only conclude that they too invent a further stage in the development!

And Jean Claude Frère (1973, above) adds additional elements before arriving at the very same conclusion as Pauwels and Bergier. He brings in "The Wheel of the Golden Sun" lighting the Right-Hand Path (of goodness) and "The wheel of the Black Sun" lighting the Left-Hand Path (of evil), the first remaining in Agartha, the second in Shambala. And then he points out how the Nazis gained control of the masses of German people and imposed their will on them in the violent manner of Shambala.

9. Others offered additional different details and some went to so far as to say that Shambala had in fact the same good quality as Agartha!

This entire story is reminiscent of Plato's narration of the Atlantis myth (*Timaios* 24Eff and *Kritias*), which, he writes, he got from Solon who had got it from Egyptian priests. There is absolutely nothing in the Egyptian records about the people of this Atlantis island, their invasion of Europe and its eventual sinking into the ocean, and although the bottom of the Atlantic (and of the Mediterranean Sea) has been examined thoroughly and no ruins have been found, yet so many fanciful authors wrote and keep writing about it, about its culture, religion, high technology and so on. And many of them see themselves as priests or priestesses in its splendid temples or warriors, reformists and revolutionaries! (See among many others, J. Godwin's *Atlantis and the Cycles of Time: Prophecies, Traditions and Occult Revelations*, 2011, Rochester, Inner Traditions, *passim*.)

Frankly, it does not matter much.

All these people, their writings and other activities obviously have little or nothing to do with the basic aim of esotericism as we defined it in **Es1**: inner, esoteric, spiritual development with practical study and techniques that lead to spiritual freedom, enlightenment or Self-realization, as with Buddhist Mahāyāna, Zen, Vedānta, Gurdjieff/Ouspensky and similar organisations.

Such writings as we have examined above fall under the artificial umbrella term apocrypha or occult: they are fantasies, or as Hanegraaf and other writers call them "Western Esotericism". But they are strictly speaking pseudo-esotericism.