

## **Helen Valborg on the role of symbols**

### ***Symbols of the Eternal Doctrine: From Shamballa Symbols to Paradise***

(Theosophy Trust Publications 2006, Introduction written by Professor Berrett W. Culmback)

Symbols have long been utilized to convey an understanding and realization of the deepest realities, the arcane mysteries of Nature and Man, more profound than could be contained in words (themselves symbols, which are composed of letters or characters, also symbols). These universally distributed symbols, found in every culture and clime, from the most ancient to the present day, constitute the ancient, unchanging Language of the Mysteries. One of their notable characteristics, as every neophyte soon learns, is that they both reveal and conceal deeper Truths. Candidates for the Mysteries were and are given symbols to assist the mind in achieving a condition of concentration, a necessary prelude to any state of meditation, in which the both the mind and symbol become one, thereby granting conscious access to the symbol's corresponding and analogous meanings on higher and deeper planes of manifestation.

At the same time, however, as H.P.B. pointed out in *The Key to Theosophy*, "Not one of the ancient nations ever imparted through its priests its real philosophical secrets to the masses, but allotted to the latter only the husks." Symbols necessarily had to be used to veil from the profane truths which could easily be degraded in meaning and misused in practice. The "real philosophical secrets" are learned initially through study and meditation and, when the candidate is "ready", they are imparted through the time-honoured method of the ancient oral tradition, "from mouth to ear".