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The Writings of H P Blavatsky

Preface to the entire edition of *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, and not to a single volume only.
It was published for the first time in Volume V of the present Series, issued in 1950.



Tree of Books (2007) Vlad Gerasimov

Part 1

The writings of H.P. Blavatsky, the chief Founder of the modern Theosophical Movement, are becoming with every day more widely known.

They constitute in their totality one of the most astounding products of the creative human mind. Considering their unequalled erudition, their prophetic nature, and their spiritual depth, they must be classed, by friend and foe alike, as being among the inexplicable phenomena of the age. Even a cursory survey of these writings discloses their monumental character.



The best known among them are of course those which appeared in book form and have gone through several editions: *Isis Unveiled* (New York, 1877), *The Secret Doctrine* (London and New York, 1888), *The Key to Theosophy* (London, 1889), *The Voice of the Silence* (London and New York, 1889), *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* (London and New York, 1890 and 1891), *Gems from the East* (London, 1890), and the posthumously published *Theosophical Glossary* (London and New York, 1892), *Nightmare Tales* (London and New York, 1892) and *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan* (London, New York and Madras, 1892).

Yet the general public, as well as a great many later theosophical students, are hardly aware of the fact that from 1874 to the end of her life, H.P. Blavatsky wrote incessantly, for a wide range of journals and magazines, and that the combined bulk of these scattered writings exceeds even her voluminous output in book form.

The first articles written by H.P.B. were polemical in nature and trenchant in style. They were published in the best known Spiritualistic journals of the day, such as the *Banner of Light* (Boston, Mass.), the *Spiritual Scientist* (Boston, Mass.), the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* (Chicago, Ill.), *The Spiritualist* (London), *La Revue Spirite* (Paris). Simultaneously, she wrote fascinating occult stories for some of the leading American newspapers, including *The World*, *The Sun* and *The Daily Graphic*, all of New York.

After she went to India, in 1879, she contributed to *The Indian Spectator*, *The Deccan Star*, *The Bombay Gazette*, *The Pioneer*, *The Amrita Bazaar Pātrika*, and other newspapers.

For over seven years, namely during the period of 1879-1886, she wrote serial stories for the well-known Russian newspaper, *Moskovskiy Vedomosty* (Moscow), and the celebrated periodical, *Russkiy Vestnik* (Moscow), as well as for lesser newspapers, such as *Pravda* (Odessa), *Tiflisskiy Vestnik* (Tiflis), *Rebus* (St. Petersburg), and others.

After founding her first theosophical magazine, *The Theosophist* (Bombay and Madras), in October, 1879, she poured into its pages an enormous amount of invaluable teaching, which she continued to give forth at a later date in the pages of her London magazine, *Lucifer*, the shortlived *Revue Théosophique* of Paris, and *The Path* of New York.

While carrying on this tremendous literary output, she found time to engage in polemical discussions with a number of writers and scholars in the pages of other periodicals, especially the *Bulletin Mensuel* of the Société d'Études Psychologiques of Paris, and *Le Lotus* (Paris). In addition to all this, she wrote a number of small pamphlets and Open Letters, which were published separately, on various occasions.

In this general survey no more than mere mention can be made of her voluminous correspondence, many portions of which contain valuable teachings, and of her private *Instructions* which she issued after 1888 to the members of the Esoteric Section.

After 25 years of unremitting research, the individual articles written by H.P.B. in English, French, Russian and Italian, may be estimated at close to *one thousand*. Of special interest to readers is the fact that a considerable number of her French and



Russian essays, containing in some cases teachings not stated anywhere else, and never before fully translated into any other language, are now for the first time made available in English.

Part 2

For many years students of the Esoteric Philosophy have been looking forward to the ultimate publication of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky in a collected and convenient form. It is now hoped that this desire may be realized in the publication of the present series of volumes. They constitute a uniform edition of the entire literary output of the Great Theosophist, as far as can be ascertained after years of painstaking research all over the world. These writings are arranged in strictly chronological order according to the date of their original publication in the various magazines, journals, newspapers and other periodicals, or their appearance in book or pamphlet form. Students are thus in a position to trace the progressive unfoldment of H.P.B.'s mission, and to see the method which she used in the gradual presentation of the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, beginning with her first article in 1874. In a very few instances an article or two appears out of chronological sequence, because there exists convincing evidence that it was written at a much earlier date, and must have been held unprinted for a rather long time. Such articles belong to an earlier date than the date of their actual publication, and have been placed accordingly.

Unless otherwise stated, all writings have been copied *verbatim et literatim* direct from the original sources. In a very few cases, when such source was either unknown, or, if known, was entirely unprocurable, articles have been copied from other publications where they had been reprinted, apparently from original sources, many years ago.

There has been no editing whatsoever of H.P.B.'s literary style, grammar or spelling. Obvious typographical errors, however, have been corrected throughout. Her own spelling of Sanskrit technical terms and proper names has been preserved. No attempt has been made to introduce any uniformity or consistency in these particulars. However, the correct systemic spelling of all Oriental technical terms and proper names, according to present-day scholastic standards, is used in the English translations of original French and Russian material, as well as in the Index wherein it appears within square brackets immediately following such terms or names.

A systematic effort has been made to verify the many quotations introduced by H.P.B. from various works, and all references have been carefully checked. In every case original sources have been consulted for this verification, and if any departures from the original text were found, these were corrected. Many of the writings quoted could be consulted only in such large Institutions as the British Museum of London, the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and the Lenin State Library of Moscow. In some cases works quoted remained untraceable. No attempt was made to check quotations from current newspapers, as the transitory nature of the material used did not seem to justify the effort.

Throughout the text, there are to be found many footnotes signed "Ed.," "Editor," "Ed., *Theos.*," or "Editor, *The Theosophist*"; also footnotes which are unsigned. It



should be distinctly remembered that all these footnotes are H.P.B.'s own, and are not by the Compiler of the present volumes.

All material added by the Compiler — either as footnotes or as explanatory comments appended to certain articles — is enclosed within square brackets and signed “Compiler.” Obvious editorial explanations or summaries preceding articles or introducing H.P.B.'s comments are merely placed within square brackets.

Occasionally brief sentences appear which are within square brackets, even in the main body of the text or in H.P.B.'s own footnotes. These bracketed remarks are evidently by H.P.B. herself, although the reason for such usage is not readily apparent.

In a very few instances, which are self-evident, the Compiler has added within square brackets an obviously missing word or digit, to complete the meaning of the sentence.

H.P.B.'s text is followed by an Appendix which consists of three sections:

(a) Bibliography of Oriental Works which provides concise information regarding the best known editions of the Sacred Scriptures and other Oriental writings quoted from or referred to by H.P.B.

(b) General Bibliography wherein can be found, apart from the customary particulars regarding all works quoted or referred to, succinct biographical data concerning the less known writers, scholars, and public figures mentioned by H.P.B. in the text, or from whose writings she quotes. It has been thought of value to the student to have this collected information which is not otherwise easily obtainable.

(c) Index of subject matter.

Following the Preface, a brief historical survey will be found in the form of a Chronological Table embodying fully documented data regarding the whereabouts of H.P.B. and Col. Henry S. Olcott, as well as the chief events in the history of the Theosophical Movement, within the period covered by the material contained in any one volume of the Series.

Part 3

The majority of articles written by H.P. Blavatsky, for both magazines and newspapers, are signed by her, either with her own name or with one of her rather infrequent pseudonyms, such as Hadji Mora, Rāddha-Bai, Sañjñā, “Adversary,” and others.

There are however, a great many unsigned articles, both in Theosophical journals and elsewhere. Some of these have been included because a most careful study by a number of students thoroughly familiar with H.P.B.'s characteristic literary style, her well-known idiosyncrasies of expression, and her frequent usage of foreign idiom, has shown them to be from H.P.B.'s pen, even though no *irrefutable* proof of this can be advanced. Other unsigned articles are mentioned in early Theosophical books, memoirs and pamphlets, as having been written by H.P.B. In still other cases, clippings of such articles were pasted by H.P.B. in her many *Scrapbooks* (now in the



Adyar Archives), with pen-and-ink notations establishing her authorship. Several articles are known to have been produced by other writers, yet were almost certainly corrected by H.P.B. or added to by her, or possibly written by them under her own more or less direct inspiration. These have been included with appropriate comments.

A perplexing problem presents itself in connection with H.P.B.'s writings of which the casual reader is probably unaware. It is the fact that H.P.B. often acted as an amanuensis for her own Superiors in the Occult Hierarchy. At times whole passages were dictated to her by her own Teacher or other Adepts and advanced Chelas. These passages are nevertheless tinged throughout with the very obvious peculiarities of her own inimitable style, and are sometimes interspersed with remarks definitely emanating from her own mind. This entire subject involves rather recondite mysteries connected with the transmission of occult communications from Teacher to disciple.

At the time of his first contact with the Masters, through the intermediation of H.P.B., A.P. Sinnett sought for an explanation of the process mentioned above and elicited the following reply from Master K.H.

“ . . . Besides, bear in mind that these my letters are not written, but *impressed*, or precipitated, and then all mistakes corrected. . . .

“ . . . I have to think it over, to photograph every word and sentence carefully in my brain, before it can be repeated by precipitation. As the fixing on chemically prepared surfaces of the images formed by the camera requires a previous arrangement within the focus of the object to be represented, for otherwise — as often found in bad photographs — the legs of the sitter might appear out of all proportion with the head, and so on — so we have to first arrange our sentences and impress every letter to appear on paper in our minds before it becomes fit to be read. For the present it is *all* I can tell you. When science will have learned more about the mystery of the lithophyl (or litho-biblion), and how the impress of leaves comes originally to take place on stones, then I will be able to make you better understand the process. But you must know and remember one thing — we but follow and servilely copy Nature in her works.”¹

In an article entitled “Precipitation,” H.P.B., referring directly to the passage quoted above, writes as follows:

“Since the above was written, the Masters have been pleased to permit the veil to be drawn aside a little more, and the *modus operandi* can thus be explained now more fully to the outsider. . . .

“ . . . The work of writing the letters in question is carried on by a sort of psychological telegraphy; the Mahatmas very rarely write their letters in the ordinary way. An electro-magnetic connection, so to say, exists on the psychological plane between a Mahatma and his chelas, one of whom acts as his amanuensis. When the Master wants a letter to be written in this way, he draws the attention of the chela, whom he selects for the task, by causing an astral bell

¹ A.P. Sinnett. *The Occult World* (orig. ed. London: Trübner and Co., 1881), pp. 143-44. Also *Mahatma Letters*, No VI, with small variations.



(heard by so many of our Fellows and others) to be rung near him just as the despatching telegraph office signals to the receiving office before wiring the message. The thoughts arising in the mind of the Mahatma are then clothed in words, pronounced mentally, and forced along the astral currents he sends towards the pupil to impinge on the brain of the latter. Thence they are borne by the nerve-currents to the palms of his hand and the tips of his fingers which rest on a piece of magnetically prepared paper. As the thought-waves are thus impressed on the tissue, materials are drawn to it from the ocean of *ākās* (permeating every atom of the sensuous universe), by an occult process, out of place here to describe, and permanent marks are left.

“From this it is abundantly clear that the success of such writings as above described depends chiefly upon these things: (1) The force and the clearness with which the thoughts are propelled, and (2) the freedom of the receiving brain from disturbance of every description. The case with the ordinary electric telegraph is exactly the same. If, for some reason or other the battery supplying the electric power falls below the requisite strength on any telegraph line or there is some derangement in the receiving apparatus, the message transmitted becomes either mutilated or otherwise imperfectly legible. . . . Such inaccuracies, in fact, do very often arise as may be gathered from what the Mahatma says in the above extract. ‘Bear in mind,’ says He, ‘that these my letters are not written, but *impressed*, or precipitated, and *then all mistakes corrected.*’ To turn to the sources of error in the precipitation. Remembering the circumstances under which blunders arise in telegrams, we see that if a Mahatma somehow becomes exhausted or allows his thoughts to wander off during the process or fails to command the requisite intensity in the astral currents along which his thoughts are projected, or the distracted attention of the pupil produces disturbances in his brain and nerve-centres, the success of the process is very much interfered with.”²

To this excerpt may be added H.P.B.’s words which occur in her unique article entitled “My Books,” published in *Lucifer* the very month of her passing. [See p. 196.]

“ . . . Space and distance do not exist for thought; and if two persons are in perfect mutual psycho-magnetic *rapport*, and of these two, one is a great Adept in Occult Sciences, then thought-transference and dictation of whole pages become as easy and as comprehensible at the distance of ten thousand miles as the transference of two words across a room.”³

It is of course self-evident that if such dictated passages, long or short, were to be excluded from her *Collected Writings*, it would be necessary to exclude also very large portions of both *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, as being either the result of direct dictation to H.P.B. by one or more Adepts, or even actual material precipitated by occult means for her to use, if she chose to do so. Such an attitude towards H.P.B.’s writings would hardly be consistent with either common sense or her own

² *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4 (51-52), Dec. – Jan., 1883-84, p. 64

³ *Lucifer*, London, Vol. VIII, No. 45, May 15, 1891, pp. 241-47



view of things, as she most certainly did not hesitate to append her name to most of the material which had been dictated to her by various high Occultists.

Part 4

A historical survey of the various steps in the compiling of H.P.B.'s voluminous writings should now be given.

Soon after H.P.B.'s death, an early attempt was made to gather and to publish at least some of her scattered writings. In 1891, resolutions were passed by all the Sections of The Theosophical Society that an "H.P.B. Memorial Fund" be instituted for the purpose of publishing such writings from her pen as would promote "that intimate union between the life and thought of the Orient and the Occident to the bringing about of which her life was devoted."

In 1895, there appeared in print Volume I of "The H.P.B. Memorial Fund Series," under the title of *A Modern Panarion: A Collection of Fugitive Fragments from the pen of H.P. Blavatsky* (London, New York and Madras, 1895, 504 pp.), containing a selection from H.P.B.'s articles in the Spiritualistic journals and a number of her early contributions to *The Theosophist*. It was printed on the H.P.B. Press, 42 Henry Street, Regent's Park, London, N.W., Printers to The Theosophical Society. No further volumes are known to have been published, although it would appear that other volumes in this series were contemplated.

The compiling of material for a uniform edition of H.P. Blavatsky's writings was begun by the undersigned in 1924, while residing at the Headquarters of the Point Loma Theosophical Society, during the administration of Katherine Tingley. For about six years it remained a private project of the Compiler. Some 1,500 pages of typewritten material were collected, copied, and tentatively classified.

Many foreign sources of information were consulted for correct data, and a great deal of preliminary work was done.

It was soon discovered in the formative stage of the plan that an analytical study of the early years of the modern Theosophical Movement was essential, not only as a means of discovering what publications had actually published articles from the pen of H.P.B., but also as providing data for running down every available clue as to dates of publication which often had been wrongly quoted.

It was at this particular time that a far-flung international correspondence was started with individuals and Institutions in the hope of eliciting the necessary information. By the end of the summer of 1929, most of this work had been completed in so far as it concerned the initial period of 1874-79.

In August, 1929, Dr. Gottfried de Purucker, then Head of the Point Loma Theosophical Society, was approached regarding the plan of publishing a uniform edition of H.P.B.'s writings. This idea was immediately accepted, and a small Committee was formed to help with the preparation of the material. It was intended from the outset to start publication in 1931, as a tribute to H.P.B. on the Centennial Anniversary of her birth, provided a suitable publisher could be found.



After several possible publishers had been considered, it was suggested by the late Dr. Henry T. Edge — a personal pupil of H.P. Blavatsky from the London days — to approach Rider and Co., in London.

On February 27, 1930, A. Trevor Barker, of London, Transcriber and Compiler of *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, wrote to Dr. G. de Purucker and among other things advised that he and his friend, Ronald A.V. Morris, had been for some time past working upon a plan of collecting H.P.B.'s magazine articles for a possible series of volumes to be published in the near future. Close contact was immediately established between these gentlemen and the Committee at Point Loma. They first sent a complete list of their material, and in July, 1930, the collected material itself, which consisted mainly of articles from *The Theosophist* and *Lucifer*. While duplicating to a very great extent what had already been collected from these journals, their material contained also a number of valuable items from other sources. In May, 1930, A. Trevor Barker also suggested Rider and Co., of London, as a possible publisher.

In the meantime, namely, on April 1, 1930, the suggestion had been made by the Compiler that this entire work become an Inter-Organizational Theosophical project in which all Theosophical Societies would collaborate. Since this idea dovetailed with the Fraternization Movement inaugurated by Dr. G. de Purucker at the time, it was accepted at once and steps were taken to secure the cooperation of other Theosophical Societies.

On April 24, 1930, a letter was written to Dr. Annie Besant, President, The Theosophical Society (Adyar), asking for collaboration in the compilation of the forthcoming Series. Her endorsement was secured, through the intermediation of Lars Eek, at the Theosophical Convention held in Geneva, Switzerland, June 28 – July 1, 1930, at which she presided.

After a period of preliminary correspondence, constructive and fruitful literary teamwork was established with the officials at the Adyar Headquarters. The gracious permission of Dr. Annie Besant to utilize material in the Archives of The Theosophical Society at Adyar, and the wholehearted collaboration of C. Jinarājadāsa, A.J. Hamerster, Mary K. Neff, N. Sri Ram, and others, extending over a number of years, have been factors of primary importance in the success of this entire venture.

The help of a number of other individuals in different parts of the world was accepted and the work of the compilation took on the more permanent form of an Inter-Organizational Theosophical project, in which many people of various nationalities and Theosophical affiliations cooperated.

While work proceeded on various portions of the mass of material already available, the main effort was directed towards completing Volume I of the Series, which was to cover the period of 1874-1879. This volume proved, in some respects, to be the most difficult to produce, owing to the fact that material for it was scattered over several continents and often in almost unprocurable periodicals and newspapers of that era.

Volume I was ready for the printer in the summer of 1931, and was then sent to Rider and Co., of London, with whom a contract had been signed. Owing to various delays over which the Compiler had no control, it did not go to press until August,



1932, and was finally published in the early part of 1933, under the title of *The Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky*.

A stipulation was made by the publisher that the name of A. Trevor Barker should appear on the title page of the Volume, as the responsible Editor, owing to his reputation as the Editor of *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*. This stipulation was agreed to as a technical point intended for business purposes only.

Volume II of the Series was also published in 1933; Volume III appeared in 1935, and Volume IV in 1936. The same year Rider and Co. published a facsimile edition of *Isis Unveiled*, with both volumes under one cover, and uniform with the preceding first four volumes of the *Complete Works*.

Further unexpected delays occurred in 1937, and then came the world crisis resulting in World War II which stopped the continuation of the Series. During the London “blitz,” the Offices of Rider and Co. and other Publishing Houses in Paternoster Row, were destroyed. The plates of the four volumes already published were ruined (as were also the plates of *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and other works), and, as the edition was only a small one, these volumes were no longer available and have remained so for the last fourteen years.

During the World War period, research work and preparation of material for future publication went on uninterruptedly however, and much new material was discovered. Very rare articles written by H.P.B. in French were unexpectedly found and promptly translated. A complete survey was made of all known writings in her native Russian, and new items were brought to light. This Russian literary output was secured in its entirety, direct from the original sources, the most rare articles being furnished free of charge by the Lenin State Library of Moscow.

The hardships of the economic situation in England, both during and after World War II, made it impossible for Rider and Co. to resume work on the original Series. In the meantime the demand for the writings of H.P. Blavatsky has been steadily growing, and an ever increasing number of people have been looking forward to the publication of an American Edition of her Collected Works. To satisfy this growing demand, the present edition is being launched. Its publication in the seventy-fifth year of the modern Theosophical Movement fills a long-felt need on the American Continent, where the cornerstone of the original Theosophical Society was laid in 1875.

The writings of H.P. Blavatsky are unique. They speak louder than any human commentary, and the ultimate proof of the teachings they contain rests with the disciple himself — when his heart is attuned to the cosmic harmony they unveil before his mind’s eye. Like all mystic writings throughout the ages, they conceal vastly more than they reveal, and the intuitive student discovers in them just what he is able to grasp — neither more nor less.

Unchanged by time, unmoved by the phantasmagoria of the world’s pageant, unhurt by scathing criticism, unsoiled by the vituperations of trivial and dogmatic minds, these writings stand today, as they did on the day of their first appearance, like a majestic rock amidst the foaming crests of an unruly sea. Their clarion call resounds



as of yore, and thousands of heart-hungry, confused and disillusioned men and women, seekers after truth and knowledge, find the entrance to a greater life in the enduring principles of thought contained in H.P.B.'s literary heritage.

She flung down the gauntlet to the religious sectarianism of her day, with its gaudy ritualism and the dead letter of orthodox worship. She challenged entrenched scientific dogmas evolved from minds which saw in Nature but a fortuitous aggregate of lifeless atoms driven by mere chance. The regenerative power of her Message broke the constricting shell of a moribund theology, swept away the empty wranglings of phrase weavers, and checkmated the progress of scientific fallacies.

Today this Message, like the Spring flood of some mighty river, is spreading far and wide over the earth. The greatest thinkers of the day are voicing at times genuine theosophical ideas, often couched in the very language used by H.P.B. herself, and we witness daily the turning of men's minds towards those treasure chambers of the Trans-Himālayan Esoteric Knowledge which she unlocked for us.

We commend her writings to the weary pilgrim, and to the seeker of enduring spiritual realities. They contain the answer to many a perplexing problem. They open wide portals undreamt of before, revealing vistas of cosmic splendor and lasting inspiration. They bring new hope and courage to the fainthearted but sincere student. They are a comfort and a staff, as well as a Guide and Teacher, to those who are already travelling along the age-old Path. As for those few who are in the vanguard of mankind, valiantly scaling the solitary passes leading to the Gates of Gold, these writings give the clue to the secret knowledge enabling one to lift the heavy bar that must be raised before the Gates admit the pilgrim into the land of Eternal Dawn.

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Semicolon in Georgia (2008) Vlad Gerasimov

