

*Blavatsky on the knighted
Oxford Sanskritist who
could speak no Sanskrit*



Abstract and train of thoughts

On a new pseudo-Oriental dirge by a very Christian Orientalist.

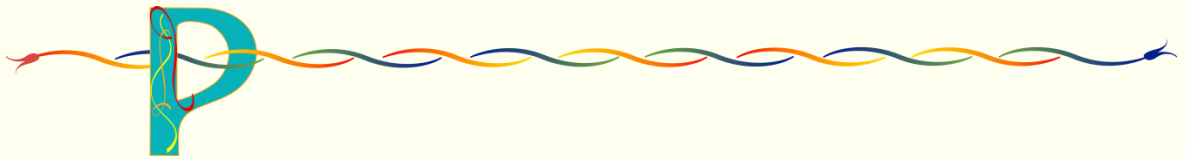
Who uses so dexterously the well-known missionary trick, that “Buddhism is the Devil’s imitation of Christianity.” 3

The Oxford Sanskritist, who attributed Buddha’s death to eating “too much dried boar’s flesh,” has never been under the influence of the author of “Esoteric Buddhism.” 4

Asiatic mystery in any form has a great charm for a certain class of minds. 5

The Theosophist and the Sanskritist approach eastern philosophy form different perspectives.

The one seeks guidance and enlightenment; the other, merely to satisfy his intellectual curiosity and advance his career. 6



On a new pseudo-Oriental dirge by a very Christian Orientalist.

Who uses so dexterously the well-known missionary trick, that “Buddhism is the Devil’s imitation of Christianity.”

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. IV (21), May 1889, pp. 251-52. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (BUDDHISM THROUGH CHRISTIAN SPECTACLES) XI pp. 205-8.

On the occasion of a new pseudo-Oriental dirge¹ by “Sir Monier Monier-Williams, K.C.I.E.”² the very *Christian* Orientalist, a *Daily* takes the opportunity of poking fun into the ribs of several members and ex-members of the T.S.³ We have had an opportunity of acquainting ourself with some of the views of the “Duff” lecturer in Edinburgh, and therefore doubt our ever opening his new volume. It has once been shown in *Lucifer*, April 1888, how the “Orientalist” of that name, scoffing at the modest title of *Light of Asia*⁴ seeks to make it pale into insignificance before the proud appellation of “*Light of the World*”⁵ — a rather paradoxical boast to make before a mankind, more than two-thirds of which are non-converted Buddhists and “heathens.” But such intellectual legerdemain, such jugglery of facts and historical data sacrificed to sectarian views, are no novelty to any reader. The *modus operandi* is as old as the Nazarene faith, and the *genus* “missionary” familiar to every admirer of Buddha, the DIVINE MAN *par excellence*. We leave therefore the *onus probandi*⁶ — easy enough, with audiences of *gobemouches*⁷ and too willing helpers — of proving the unprovable, to the clever author who uses so dexterously the well-known missionary trick, namely, that “Buddhism is the Devil’s *imitation* of Christianity.”

And why shouldn’t he, when it is the only thing in our day of shams that pays? Let Sir Monier adopt another tone; let [206] him speak truth and fact, and declare them squarely to his audiences. Let him state that neither Buddhism, nor the gospel of Krishna — nor yet the legends of the numerous Solar Gods who lived, died, and after descending into Hades, resurrected, bringing back to earth the divine light of which the Demon of Darkness, the Winter Solstice, had deprived it — could be “imitations” of the Christian legend, as they preceded it by long ages. Let him speak as every impartial historian and Orientalist is in duty bound to do, *truth and nothing but the truth*, and he will soon find that, instead of being referred to by his reviewers as “one of the most distinguished of living Orientalists” (!) he will dwindle down to the status of a fifth-rate lecturer, “talking gibberish,” “under Mr. Sinnett’s influence” (*sic*).

¹ *Buddhism, in its connection with Brahmanism and Hinduism and in its contrast with Christianity*, is the short and comprehensive title of a new work compiled from his “Duff Lectures” by Sir Monier Monier-Williams.

² [Knight Commander, one of three classes of The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire Chivalry, founded by Queen Victoria on the 1st January 1878.]

³ [Theosophical Society]

⁴ {Look up “Arnold’s *Light of Asia*,” in our *Buddhas and Initiates* Series. — ED. PHIL.]

⁵ [*The Light of the world; or, the Great Consummation*. With introductory remarks by Richard Henry Stoddard. New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1891]

⁶]the burden of proof]

⁷ [credulous persons]

The Oxford Sanskritist, who attributed Buddha’s death to eating “too much dried boar’s flesh,” has never been under the influence of the author of “Esoteric Buddhism.”

True, the Oxford Sanskritist has never been under the influence of the writer of *Esoteric Buddhism*; and his own version (See “Preface” to his work) assures us that having thrice travelled through the sacred lands of Buddhism, he has “brought to the study of Buddhism and its sacred language Pāli, a life-long preparatory study of Brāhmanism and its sacred language Sanskrit.” Yet there exists another version both in India and Oxford. Some irreverent pundits, among others the late Dayānand Saraswati, the greatest Sanskrit scholar of India,¹ laboured under the impression that in the last voyage through “the sacred lands of Buddhism,” namely Benares and beyond, made by Prof. Monier-Williams (was it in 1876 or 77?) no pundit could make head or tail of what the “most distinguished of living Orientalists” meant, when he attempted to speak Sanskrit; nor could they (the pundits) be coaxed into admitting that the illustrious Oxford Orientalist knew anything of Sanskrit at all. In fact, it was a truly benevolent action of Pundit Dayānand to have allowed his pupil, Shamji Krishnavarma, then a Theosophist by-the-by, to go to Oxford and teach the eminent Professor some *real* Sanskrit.² Whether the distinguished Orientalist has profited by the lessons of his young [207] and most intelligent *guru* — lessons which covered several years since 1879 — remains an open question. At all events he speaks like a true-blue Brahmin and reader of the Purānic dead letter of Buddha’s death having been caused by eating “too much dried boar’s flesh.” This is something, in view of Buddha’s asceticism and aversion to eating anything that had life in it, still more wonderful in its dead letter than that other statement that “prayer to the unknown (God) is among the chief duties now recognized by Buddhists.” We find it in a *Daily* that quotes from the Professor’s lecture.

Priests and brothers of Ceylon, please rise and explain!

Therefore the remark is quite true that the “work of Sir Monier-Williams, K.C.I.E.” which:

. . . will most interest those who have *dabbled* in what is called “Theosophy,” of which Colonel Olcott, Mr. A.P. Sinnett, and Madame Blavatsky are the best known exponents, is that entitled *Mystical Buddhism*. For Sir Monier holds that the Buddha himself was opposed to mysticism; that originally Buddhism “set its face against all solitary asceticism, and all secret efforts to obtain sublime

¹ [Look up “Obituary to Pundit Dayānand Saraswati,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Biographical notes concerning this remarkable Hindu scholar by Boris de Zirkoff:

Pandit Shamji Krishnavarma was a man of stifling worth and great integrity of character. He was born in 1857 and was at one time connected with the Ārya Samāja. It was he who sent to the Founders in New York an English translation of the Samāja’s Rules, which led them to rescind the Resolutions of the Council to amalgamate the T.S. with Swāmi Dayānanda’s Society. Shortly after the Founders settled in Bombay, Krishnavarma left India for Oxford, England, accepting the position of Oriental Lecturer of Balliol College. Before taking this decision, he had a serious consultation with H.P. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott. Within an incredibly short time, he had mastered Greek and Latin, and passed difficult examinations in Law and Political Economy. He was appointed Lecturer in Sanskrit, Marāthi and Gujarāti and assisted Prof. Sir Monier Monier-Williams who had originally sponsored his arrival. Upon his return to India, he was appointed to the Dewanship of the State of Junagadh. (See *The Theosophist*, IV, November 1882, p. 27, and Supplement to June 1883, p. 12; V, Supplement to October 1883, p. 14; and XVI, March 1895, pp. 403-4)

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INDEX OF VOLUME I) p. 437, Note 28]

heights of knowledge; it had no occult, esoteric system of doctrine which it withheld from ordinary men.” — *Literary World*.

Oh, Brahmā *Prabhavāpyaya!*¹ Thou God of the imperishable origin who took the *figure of a boar* — the same from eating whose DRIED *remains* Buddha is said by the metaphor-loving and wily Brahmin to have died — be merciful to thy detractors and would-be scholars! Our contemporary, the *Literary World*, launching on the dangerous depths of “Pure and impure Buddhism,” confesses after enumerating several learned works, that:

In this enumeration we have taken no account of the writings of the Theosophists or Neo-Buddhists, which pretend to initiate Western readers into the secret doctrines of Buddhism, and are generally too mystical and unintelligible for an ordinary man’s comprehension.

Asiatic mystery in any form has a great charm for a certain class of minds.

No wonder our “secret doctrines of Buddhism” are *too much* for an ordinary man’s comprehension. But then the “Duff” lecturer, Sir Monier Monier-Williams is, on his own confession and statement, of very *extraordinary* comprehension and most remarkable learning. He has forgotten more than any man ever knew; and learnt more of that which all [208] the Orientalists put together had to unlearn. A few “Duff” lectures more, and the English public will be told that Sir William Jones and Colonel Wilford were, after all, right; that Gautama Buddha was a parody of the Biblical Lamech, Buddhism and Wodenism,² hence, Mercury and Buddha, are identical, and that the whole character of the Prince of Kapilavastu was copied from the mythical St. Josaphat, the Roman Catholic saint of India.

Will it be deemed very impertinent to the “greatest of living Orientalists” to say that it is only to be regretted that, having finished his Sanskrit rudiments with Shamji Krishnavarma, the eminent Oxford scholar has not turned to the Theosophists to give a little finishing touch to his Brāhmano-Buddhist knowledge? We would have never grudged him his “*Light of the World*”; but taking him lovingly to our esoteric bosoms and permitting him to “dabble” in Theosophy, we would have brought order into the confusion of his Buddhist notions and restored the equilibrium to the very unbalanced ideas culled by him in some *Purānas*, adverse to the *Light of Asia*. But now, do what we may, it is not Sir *bis*-Monier-Williams, K.C.I.E., who can ever hope to become “the Light of Orientalism.” *Sic transit gloria mundi!*³

After all it is not the Theosophists who are the losers; for never has a certain *Daily* uttered a greater truth than when saying that a certain “Radical gentleman” is

. . . *not alone in the transfer of his allegiance from Christianity to Buddhism. Since the publication of Mr. Sinnett’s “Esoteric Buddhism” various English converts have been made by the propagandists, male and female, who have devot-*

¹ [“The One Form of Existence,” from which a Cosmos emanates and into which, at the end of time, the emanation returns to and is reabsorbed into the One Element.]

² [The worship of Woden (Odin), the highest god of the Germanic pantheon; the mythology and religious doctrine of the ancient Germanic peoples, especially the Anglo-Saxons, before the introduction of Christianity.]

³ [Thus passes worldly glory!]

ed themselves to the work of proselytism; and there is no doubt that Asiatic mystery in any form has a great charm for a certain class of minds.

It has, it has; and no amount of Western pride and prejudice will ever prevent the truths which Buddha taught from coming home to the hearts of the most intelligent thinkers of the West.

The Theosophist and the Sanskritist approach eastern philosophy from different perspectives.

The one seeks guidance and enlightenment; the other, merely to satisfy his intellectual curiosity and advance his career.

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII (44), April 1891, p. 150. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (A SINCERE CONFESSION) XIII pp. 163-64.

The following quotation taken from the Introduction [p. xv] to the *Vedānta-Sūtras*, translated by Thibaut and edited by Max Müller, is significant of the spirit which animates our Western Sanskritists.

But on the modern investigator, who neither can consider himself bound by the authority of a name however great, *nor is likely to look* [164] *to any Indian system of thought for the satisfaction of his speculative wants*, it is clearly incumbent not to acquiesce from the outset in the interpretations given of the Vedānta Sūtras — and the Upanishads — by Śamkara and his school, but to submit them, as far as that can be done, to a critical investigation.¹

The italics are ours, and the sentence will serve to mark the distinction between the Theosophist and the Sanskritist. The former seeks in the Vedānta and elsewhere for wisdom and for guidance; the latter merely to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. His own Western philosophy suffices amply for him, and all the deep researches of the almost infinite past signify nothing but a curious history of philosophy to be criticised and observed from a position which he thinks has far transcended them.

We believe that, actuated by such a spirit, our Western scholars will *never* learn the true significance of Eastern thought. On their own statement they do not want to; and the *true* pandit, the inheritor, not merely of the capacity to con² Sanskrit manuscripts, but who also is master of the profound knowledge contained in them, will take these self-sufficient students at their word.



¹ [*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIV, Oxford University Press, 1890]

² [learn by heart]



- “Blavatsky cuts down to size a carping critic of heterodoxy”
- “Open letter to the American Section of the Theosophical Society”
— in the same Series.

- “Foul conspiracies and blatant lies levelled against Madame Blavatsky”
- “Prometheus, the Light-bringer, hurled down to the bowels of the earth”
- “The Religio-Philosophical Journal is neither religious nor philosophical”
- “The sparkle of *Light on the Path*, has been dimmed by a dark stain”
- “Truth is exiled from the press because it is not as beguiling as falsehood”
— in our Down to Earth Series.

