

Blavatsky on Blavatsky



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One of our many friends, a distinguished writer and publicist, received a letter about the Theosophists from one of his confrères in America (United States); we inserted it without imagining that it contained errors and a somewhat fantastic story; a letter from Madame H.P. Blavatsky enables us to rectify what we inserted in good faith, and we hasten to do so as a duty, and with pleasure: our friend seems to us to have been misinterpreted by someone who hardly knows her; we have absolute proof of it. This is rather a surprise to us.

Here is, textually, Madame Blavatsky's letter:

HARDLY HAD I RETURNED FROM A JOURNEY when I found in the June number of *La Revue Spirite* an article entitled “Les Théosophes — Madame Blavatsky,” a fairly accurate translation of a story published last year in the *New York World*; this article repeats — quite innocently no doubt — the hallucinations of Mr. American Reporter.

There exists a race of bipeds — the rather recent production of our century of steam and iconoclasm *par excellence* — that the Academies of Science have hitherto neglected to classify under the heading of “Teratology,” or the Science treating of human monsters. The monsters or *lusus naturae*,¹ are called *reporters* here — as they are everywhere — but there is this difference, however, that the one of the land of Christopher Columbus and General Tom Thumb differs from his trans-atlantic cousin as much as the wild buffalo of the virgin forest does from the domestic bull. If the latter sometimes becomes guilty of havoc committed on the fence of a neighbour, the former destroys whole forests in his furious career; he rushes blindly and kills and crushes everything that stands in his way. As to Messrs. the American Reporters I really do not know why the good citizens of the United States take the trouble to fasten their doors; there is neither a lock sufficiently patented, nor a family secret sacred enough to prevent them from intruding, from ferreting out, from meddling in everything, and above all from substituting in their daily publication the most strangely dressed-up fiction for the bare truth.

For five years I have been the victim of these hunters for literary sensations. When I try to shut my door in the face of one of these Arguses of the press, he comes in by the window. Swept from his observation post, he substitutes what he *might have*

¹ [freak of nature]

seen by what he never saw at all, and by what never existed; how can I, then, good-naturedly consent to pass in the eyes of the worthy readers of *La Revue Spirite* for an accomplice in these efforts of the imagination? Although in substance the article which treats of what the reporter and several other persons saw in my house one evening, may be accurate enough towards the end, the details that precede the apparition of the two Shades are hardly so.

To begin with I am not a *Countess* so far as I know. Without overlooking the fact that it would be more than ridiculous — it would be *unconstitutional* — in a citizen or citizenship of the Republic of the United States — who abjures all titles of nobility upon being naturalized — to claim one, above all one which never belonged to him or her — I am too democratic, and I love and respect the people sufficiently, having devoted all my sympathy to them, and this without distinction of race or colour, to trick myself out in any kind of title! I have always publicly protested against this ridiculous inclination in a Republic like ours of giving every foreigner a more or less high-sounding title.

However — and although I may not be a *Countess* — I have never been in the habit of offering pipes to my guests. One may be a democrat, bereft of every title, and yet not accept — above all at my age — a ridiculous and unseemly rôle.

Speaking of age, and although the newspapers of the country may have voted me respectively and at various times, the ages of 25, 60, 86, 92 and — 103 years, I must assure your readers that I have not “passed more than thirty years in India.” It is precisely my age — however respectable it may be — that is radically opposed to that fantastic chronology. Neither have I embraced the “Buddhist faith” either “from conviction” or for any other reason.

It is true that I regard the philosophy of Gautama Buddha as the most sublime system; the purest, and, above all, the most *logical* of all. But the system has been distorted during the centuries by the ambition and fanaticism of the priests and has become a popular religion; the forms and the *exoteric* or popular cult proceeding from that system, too closely resemble those of the Roman church which has slavishly plagiarized from it, for me ever to be converted to it. Just as in every pure and primitive system, introduced by the great religious reformers of the ancient world, its rays have diverged too far from their common centre — *the Vedas of the Āryans*; and although among all modern beliefs the Buddhist Church may be the only one to encourage its members to question its dogmas and to seek the last word of every mystery which is taught therein — I much prefer to hold to the *mother* source rather than to depend upon any of the numerous streams that flow from it.

Do not believe what I tell you just because it is I, your Buddha, who says it — but only because your judgment is not opposed to the truth of my assertion

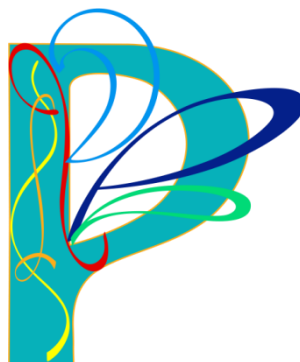
— says Gautama in his Sūtras or aphorisms. Now although I admire with all my soul the lofty philosophy of Siddhārtha, or Śākya-Muni, I bow quite as much before the moral grandeur and the powerful logic of the Hindu Kapila, the great Āchārya, who was, however, the most implacable enemy of the Buddha. While the latter looked on the *Vedas* as the supreme authority — the Buddhists rejected them after all, though it was proved, nevertheless, that Gautama in his reform and protest against the

abuses of the wily Brāhmanas, based himself entirely upon the esoteric meaning of the grand primitive Scriptures. Then, if the reporter — the author of the article in question — had simply said that I belonged to the religion that had inspired the Buddha, instead of presenting me to the public as a Buddhist turning the *Wheel of the Law* — he would have spoken nothing but the truth. One can be a Platonist without necessarily being a pagan or an idolater at that, as one may remain a Christian without belonging to any of the Churches which have been fighting one another for eighteen hundred years in the name of the Man-God.

If our trans-atlantic *brothers* are interested in knowing what is the religion, or rather the system to which we — Theosophists (of the inner section) — adhere, I am ordered by the administrative Council of the “*Theosophical Society of the Ārya Samāj of India*” to tell you about it immediately on receipt of your request. We make no secret of it. Only — do not call us Buddhists anymore, because you would make a very serious mistake.

In concluding, I assure you that I have not mentioned half the absurdities attributed to me in the article in question. I never asserted, for example, that I *myself* did the delicate operation with the sheep and goats of Tibet, for the simple reason that I never went to the mountainous and almost inaccessible places where the phenomenon of artificial trance takes place, it is said. I only repeated what has been told to me, but personally I believe in the possibility of that act — with certain reservations however. The possibilities of animal magnetism are infinite, and I believe in Magnetism — and you also, I think. On that subject, we fraternally shake hands across the Atlantic, and . . . do not trust too much in future to articles of American origin.

H.P. BLAVATSKY



NOTE — We hasten to accept the promised exposition of the system promulgated by Theosophists, and we shall insert whatever our correspondent will kindly send us; we shall be greatly interested in reading it.