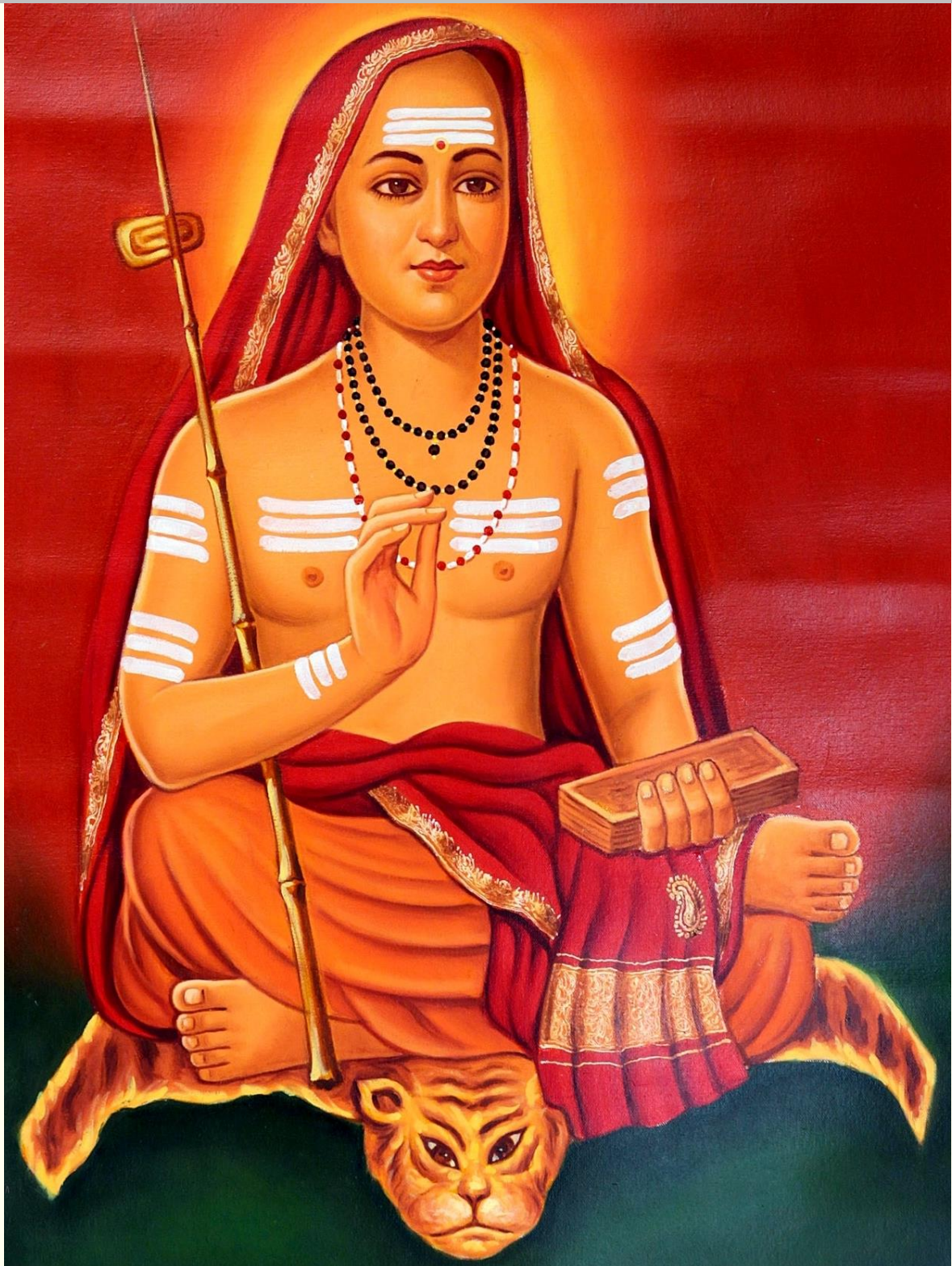


*Shankara was a contemporary
of Patanjali and his chela.*



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Subba Row on Sri Shankaracharya's date of birth and doctrine.

T. Subba Row responds to a question from F.W.H. Myers, English F.T.S.,¹ arising from A.P. Sinnett's "Esoteric Buddhism."²

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (INQUIRIES SUGGESTED BY MR. SINNETT'S "ESOTERIC BUDDHISM" – QUESTION No. 8) V, p. 140.

Śamkarāchārya's date is variously given by Orientalists, but always *after* Christ. Barth, for instance, places him about 788 A.D. In *Esoteric Buddhism* he is made to succeed Buddha almost immediately.³ Can this discrepancy be explained? Has not Śamkarāchārya been usually classed as *Vishnuite* in his teaching? And similarly has not Gaudapāda been accounted a *Sivite*, and placed much later than *Esoteric Buddhism*⁴ places him? We would willingly pursue this line of inquiry, but think it best to wait and see to what extent the Adepts may be willing to clear up some of the problems in Indian religious history on which, as it would seem, they must surely possess knowledge which might be communicated to lay students without indiscretion.

Response by Tallapragada Subba Row.

Shankara was born in 510 BC, 51 years and 2 months after the date of Buddha's nirvana. He had nothing to do with Buddhist persecution.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ŚAMKARĀCHĀRYA'S DATE AND DOCTRINE) V, pp. 176-97.

It is always difficult to determine with precision the date of any particular event in the ancient history of India; and this difficulty is considerably enhanced by the speculations of European Orientalists whose labours in this direction have but tended to thicken the confusion already existing in popular legends and traditions which were often altered or modified to suit the necessities of Sectarian Controversy. The causes that have produced this result will be fully ascertained on examining the assumptions on which these speculations are based. The writings of many of these Orientalists are often characterized by an imperfect knowledge of Indian literature, philosophy and religion and of Hindu traditions and a contemptuous disregard for the opinions of Hindu writers and pundits. Very often, facts and dates are taken by these writers from the writings of their predecessors or contemporaries on the assumption

¹ [Fellow of the Theosophical Society]

² [Students to consult "Early theosophical doctrines expounded by H.P. Blavatsky," in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series, and "Related titles for deeper study," on page 21 of this study. — ED. PHIL.]

³ p. 149

⁴ p. 147

that they are correct without any further investigation by themselves. Even when a writer gives a date with an expression of doubt as to its accuracy, his follower frequently quotes the same date as if it were absolutely correct. One wrong date is made to depend upon another wrong date, and one bad inference is often deduced from another inference equally unwarranted and illogical. And consequently if the correctness of any particular date given by these writers is to be ascertained the whole structure of Indian Chronology constructed by them will have to be carefully examined. It will be convenient to enumerate some of the assumptions above referred to before proceeding to examine their opinions concerning the date of Śamkarāchārya.

- 1 Many of these writers are not altogether free from the prejudices engendered by the pernicious doctrine, deduced from the Bible whether rightly or wrongly, that this world is only six thousand years old. We do not mean to say that any one of these writers would now seriously think of defending the said doctrine. Nevertheless it had exercised a considerable influence on the minds of Christian writers when they began to investigate the claims of Asiatic Chronology. If an antiquity of 5 or 6 thousand years is assigned to any particular event connected with the Ancient history of Egypt, India or China, it is certain to be rejected at once by these writers without any inquiry whatever regarding the truth of the statement.
- 2 They are extremely unwilling to admit that any portion of the *Veda* can be traced to a period anterior to the date of the *Pentateuch* even when the arguments brought forward to establish the priority of the *Vedas* are such as would be convincing to the mind of an impartial investigator untainted by Christian prejudices. The maximum limit of Indian antiquity is, therefore, fixed for them by the Old Testament and it is virtually assumed by them that a period between the date of the Old Testament on the one side and the present time on the other should necessarily be assigned to every book in the whole range of Vedic and Sanskrit literature and to almost every event of Indian History.
- 3 It is often assumed without reason that every passage in the *Vedas* containing philosophical or metaphysical ideas must be looked upon as a subsequent interpolation and that every book treating of a philosophical subject must be considered as having been written after the time of Buddha or after the commencement of the Christian era. Civilization, philosophy and scientific investigation had their origin, in the opinion of these writers, within the six or seven centuries preceding the Christian era and mankind slowly emerged, for the first time, from "the depths of animal brutality" within the last four or five thousand years.
- 4 It is also assumed that Buddhism was brought into existence by Gautama Buddha. The previous existence of Buddhism, Jainism and Arhat philosophy is rejected as an absurd and ridiculous invention of the Buddhists who attempted thereby to assign a very high antiquity to their own religion. In consequence of this erroneous impression on their part every Hindu book referring to the doctrines of Buddhists is declared to have been written subsequent to the time of

Gautama Buddha. For instance, Mr. Weber is of opinion that Vyāsa,¹ the author of *Brahma-Sūtras*, wrote them in the 5th century after Christ. This is indeed a startling revelation to the majority of Hindus.

- 5 Whenever several works treating of various subjects are attributed to one and the same author by Hindu writings or traditions, it is often assumed and apparently without any reason whatever in the majority of cases, that the said works should be considered as the productions of different writers. By this process of reasoning they have discovered two Badarayanas (Vyāsas), two Patañjalis, and three Vararuchis. We do not mean to say that in every case identity of names is equivalent to identity of persons. But we cannot but protest against such assumptions when they are made without any evidence to support them, merely for the purpose of supporting a foregone conclusion or establishing a favourite hypothesis.
- 6 An attempt is often made by these writers to establish the chronological order of the events of ancient Indian history by means of the various stages in the growth or development of the Sanskrit language and Indian literature. The time required for this growth is often estimated in the same manner in which a geologist endeavours to fix the time required for the gradual development of the various strata composing the earth's crust. But we fail to perceive anything like a proper method in making these calculations. It will be wrong to assume that the growth of one language will require the same time as that of another within the same limits. The peculiar characteristics of the nation to whom the language belongs must be carefully taken into consideration in attempting to make any such calculation. The history of the said nation is equally important. Any one who examines Max Müller's estimation of the so-called Sūtra, Brahmana, Mantra and Kanda periods, will be able to perceive that no attention has been paid to these considerations. The time allotted to the growth of these four "Śruti" of Vedic literature is purely arbitrary.

We have enumerated these defects in the writings of European Orientalists for the purpose of showing to our readers that it is not always safe to rely upon the conclusions arrived at by these writers regarding the dates of ancient Indian history.

In examining the various quotations and traditions selected by European Orientalists for the purpose of fixing Śamkarāchārya's date, special care must be taken to see whether the person referred to was the very first Śamkarāchārya who established the Advaitī doctrine or one of his followers who became the *Adhipatis* of the various *Mathams* established by him and his successors. Many of the Advaitī *Mathadhipatis* who succeeded him (especially at the Sringeri Matham) were men of considerable renown and were well-known throughout India during their time. They are often referred to under the general name of Śamkarāchārya. Consequently any reference made to any one of these *Mathadhipatis* is apt to be mistaken for a reference to the first Śamkarāchārya himself.

¹ [Cf. "Vyāsa is immortal in his incarnations." Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (DO THE RISHIS EXIST?) IV p. 367]

Mr. Barth whose opinion regarding Śamkara's date is quoted by the *London Theosophist* against the date assigned to that teacher in Mr. Sinnett's book on *Esoteric Buddhism*, does not appear to have carefully examined the subject himself. He assigns no reasons for the date given and does not even allude to the existence of other authorities and traditions which conflict with the date adopted by him. The date which he assigns to Śamkara appears in an unimportant footnote appearing on page 89 of his book on *The Religions of India* which reads thus:

Śamkara Āchārya is generally placed in the eighth century; perhaps we must accept the ninth rather. The best accredited tradition represents him as born on the 10th of the month of Mādhava (April-May) in 788 A.D.¹ Other traditions, it is true, place him in the second and the fifth centuries.² The author of the *Dabistān*,³ on the other hand, brings him as far down as the commencement of the fourteenth.

Mr. Barth is clearly wrong in saying that Śamkara is generally placed in the 8th century. There are as many traditions for placing him in some century before the Christian era as for placing him in some century after the said era, and it will also be seen from what follows that in fact evidence preponderates in favour of the former statement. It cannot be contended that the generality of Orientalists have any definite opinions of their own on the subject under consideration.

Max Müller does not appear to have ever directed his attention to this subject.

Monier Williams merely copies the date given by Mr. Wilson, and

Mr. Weber seems to rely upon the same authority without troubling himself with any further enquiry about the matter.

Mr. Wilson is probably the only Orientalist who investigated the subject with some care and attention; and he frankly confesses that "the exact period at which he [Śamkara] flourished can by no means be determined."⁴ Under such circumstances the footnote above-quoted is certainly very misleading.

Mr. Barth does not inform his readers wherefrom he obtained the tradition referred to and what reasons he has for supposing that it refers to the first Śamkarāchārya and that it is "the best accredited tradition." When the matter is still open to discussion, Mr. Barth should not have adopted any particular date if he is not prepared to support it and establish it by proper arguments. The other traditions alluded to are not intended, of course, to strengthen the authority of the tradition relied upon. But the wording of the footnote in question seems to show that all the authorities and traditions relating to the subject are comprised therein, when, in fact, the most important of them are left out of consideration, as will be shown hereafter. No arguments are to be found in support of the date assigned to Śamkara in the other portions of Mr. Barth's book, but there are a few isolated passages which may be taken

¹ *Ind. Studien*, t. xiv, p. 353

² *Ind. Antiq.*, i, 361; vii, 282

³ ii, 141

⁴ *Essays and Lectures chiefly on the religion of the Hindus*, Vol. I, p. 201

either as inferences from the statement in question or arguments in its support, which it will be necessary to examine in this connection.

Mr. Barth has discovered some connection between the appearance of Śamkara in India and the commencement of the persecution of the Buddhists which he seems to place in the 7th and 8th centuries. In page 89 of his book he speaks of:

. . . the great reaction on the offensive against Buddhism which was begun in the Deccan in the seventh and eighth centuries by the schools of Kumārila and Śamkara;

and in page 135, he states that the:

. . . disciples of Kumārila and Śamkara, organized into military orders, constituted themselves the rabid defenders of orthodoxy. . . .

The force of these statements is, however, considerably weakened by the author's observations on pages 89 and 134 regarding the absence of any traces of Buddhist persecution by Śamkara in the authentic documents hitherto examined and the absurdity of legends which represent him as exterminating Buddhists from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin.

The association of Śamkara with Kumārila in the passages above cited is highly ridiculous. It is well-known to almost every Hindu that the followers of *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* (Kumārila commented on the *Sūtras*) were the greatest and the bitterest opponents of Śamkara and his doctrine, and Mr. Barth seems to be altogether ignorant of the nature of Kumārila's views and *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and the scope and aim of Śamkara's Vedāntic philosophy. It is impossible to say what evidence the author has for asserting that the great reaction against the Buddhists commenced in the 7th and 8th centuries and that Śamkara was instrumental in originating it. There are some passages in his book which tend to show that this date cannot be considered as quite correct. In page 135 he says that Buddhism began persecution even in the time of Aśoka.

Such being the case, it is indeed very surprising that the Orthodox Hindus should have kept quiet for nearly ten centuries without retaliating on their enemies. The political ascendancy gained by the Buddhists during the reign of Aśoka did not last very long; and the Hindus had the support of very powerful kings before and after the commencement of the Christian era. Moreover the author [Mr Barth] says in page 132 of his book, that Buddhism was in a state of decay in the seventh century. It is hardly to be expected that the reaction against the Buddhists would commence when their religion was already in a state of decay. No great religious teacher or reformer would waste his time and energy in demolishing a religion already in ruins. But, what evidence is there to show that Śamkara was ever engaged in this task? If the main object of his preaching was to evoke a reaction against Buddhism, he would no doubt have left us some writings specially intended to criticize its doctrines and expose its defects. On the other hand he does not even allude to Buddhism in his independent works. Though he was a voluminous writer, with the exception of a few remarks on the theory advocated by some Buddhists regarding the nature of perception contained in his *Commentary* on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, there is not a single passage in the whole range of his writings regarding the Buddhists or their doctrines; and the insertion of even these few remarks in his commentary was rendered neces-

sary by the allusions contained in the *Sūtras* which he was interpreting. As, in our humble opinion, these *Brahma-Sūtras* were composed by Vyāsa himself (and not by an imaginary Vyāsa of the 5th century after Christ evolved by Mr. Weber's fancy) the allusions therein contained relate to the Buddhism which existed previous to the date of Gautama Buddha. From these few remarks it will be clear to our readers that Śamkarāchārya had nothing to do with Buddhist persecution. We may here quote a few passages from Mr. Wilson's Preface to the first edition of his *Dictionary, Sanskrit and English*, in support of our remarks. He writes as follows regarding Śamkara's connection with the persecution of the Buddhists:

Although the popular belief attributes the origin of the *Bauddha* persecution to Śamkara Āchārya, yet in this case we have some reason to distrust its accuracy: opposed to it, we have the mild character of the reformer, who is described as uniformly gentle and tolerant, and, speaking from my own limited reading in Vedānta works, and the more satisfactory testimony of Rammohun Roy, which he permits me to adduce, it does not appear that any traces of his being instrumental to any persecution are to be found in his own writings, all which are extant, and the object of which is by no means the correction of the *Bauddha* or any other schism, but the refutation of all other doctrines besides his own, and the reformation or re-establishment of the fourth religious order.

Further on he observes that,

. . . it is a popular error to ascribe to him the work of persecution: he does not appear at all occupied in that odious task, nor is he engaged in particular controversy with any of the *Bauddhas*.

From the foregoing observations it will be seen that Śamkara's date cannot be determined by the time of the commencement of the Buddhist persecution, even if it were possible to ascertain the said period.

Mr. Barth seems to have discovered some connection between the philosophical systems of Śamkara, Ramanuja and Anandatirtha, and the Arabian merchants who came to India in the first centuries of the Hejira, and he is no doubt fully entitled to any credit that may be given him for the originality of his discovery. This mysterious and occult connection between Advaita philosophy and Arabian commerce is pointed out in page 212 of his book, and it may have some bearing on the present question, if it is anything more than a figment of his fancy. The only reason given by him in support of his theory is, however, in my humble opinion, worthless. The Hindus had a prominent example of a grand religious movement under the guidance of a single teacher, in the life of Buddha, and it was not necessary for them to imitate the adventures of the Arabian prophet. There is but one other passage in Mr. Barth's book which has some reference to Śamkara's date. In page 207 he writes as follows:

The Śiva, for instance, who is invoked at the commencement of the drama of "Śakuntalā," who is at once god, priest and offering, and whose body is the universe, is a Vedāntic idea. These testimonies appear to be forgotten when it is maintained, as is sometimes done, that the whole sectarian Vedāntism commences with Śamkara.

But this testimony appears to be equally forgotten when it is maintained, as is sometimes done by Orientalists like Mr. Barth, that Śamkara lived in some century after the author of Śakuntalā.

From the foregoing remarks it will be apparent that Mr. Barth's opinion regarding Śamkara's date is very unsatisfactory. As Mr. Wilson seems to have examined the subject with some care and attention, we must now advert to his opinion and see how far it is based on proper evidence. In attempting to fix Amara Sinha's date (which attempt ultimately ended in a miserable failure), he had to ascertain the period when Śamkara lived. Consequently his remarks concerning the said period appear in his preface to the first edition of his Sanskrit dictionary. We shall now reproduce here such passages from this preface as are connected with the subject under consideration and comment upon them. Mr. Wilson writes as follows:

The birth of Śamkara presents the same discordance of opinion as every other remarkable incident amongst the *Hindus*. The *Kudali Brahmans*, who form an establishment following and teaching his system, assert his appearance about 2000 years, since; some accounts place him about the beginning of the *Christian* era, others in the third or fourth century after; a manuscript history of the Icings of Conga, in Colonel Mackenzie's collection, makes him contemporary with Tiru Vicrama Deva Chacravarti, sovereign of *Scandapura* in the Dekhin [Dekkan] A.D. 178: at *Sringa giri*, on the edge of the Western Ghauts, and now in the *Mysore* territory, at which place he is said to have founded a College that still exists, and assumes the supreme control of the *Smārta Brahmans* of the Peninsula, an antiquity of 1600 years is attributed to him, and common tradition makes him about 1200 years old: the *Bhoja Prabandha* enumerates Śamkara amongst its worthies, and as contemporary with that prince, his antiquity will be between eight and nine centuries: the followers of Madhwāchārya in *Tuluva* seem to have attempted to reconcile these contradictory accounts, by supposing him to have been born three times; first, at *Sivuli* in *Tuluva* about 1500 years ago, again in *Malabar* some centuries later, and finally, at *Paducachaytra* in *Tuluva* no more than 600 years since; the latter assertion being intended evidently to do honour to their own founder, whose date that was, by enabling him to triumph over Śamkara in a superstitious controversy: the *Vaishnava Brahmans* of *Madura* say that Śamkara appeared in the ninth century of Salivāhana or tenth of our era; Dr. Taylor thinks that if we allow him about 900 years, we shall not be far from the truth, and Mr. Colebrooke is inclined to give him an antiquity of about 1000 years; this last is the age which my friend Rammohun Roy, a diligent student of Śamkara's works, and philosophical teacher of his doctrines, is disposed to concur in, and he infers, that "from a calculation of the spiritual generations of the followers of Śamkara Swami from his time up to this date, he seems to have lived between the seventh and eight centuries of the *Christian* era;" a distance of time agreeing with the statements made to Dr. Buchanan in his journey through Śamkara's native country, *Malabar*, and in union with the assertion of the *Cerala Utpatti*, a work giving an historical and statistical account of the same province, and which according to Mr. Duncan's citation of it, mentions the regulations of the castes of *Malabar* by this philosopher, to have been effected about 1000 years before

1798: at the same time it must be observed that a manuscript translation of this same work, in Colonel Mackenzie's possession, states Śamkara Āchārya to have been born about the middle of the fifth century, or between thirteen and fourteen hundred years ago, differing in this respect from Mr. Duncan's statement; a difference of the less importance, as the manuscript in question, either from defects in the original or translation, presents many palpable errors, and cannot consequently be depended upon: the weight of authority therefore is altogether in favour of an antiquity of about ten centuries, and I am disposed to adopt this estimate of Śamkara's date, and to place him in the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth century of the *Christian* era.¹

We will add a few more authorities to Mr. Wilson's list before proceeding to comment on the foregoing passage.

In a work called *The Biographical Sketches of Eminent Hindu Authors*, published at Bombay in 1860 by Janardan Ramchenderjee, it is stated that Śamkara lived 2,500 years ago, and that, in the opinion of some people, 2,200 years ago. The records of the Kumbakonam Matham give a list of nearly 66 Mathādhīpatis from Śamkara down to the present time, and show that he lived more than 2,000 years ago.

The Kudali Matham referred to by Mr. Wilson which is a branch of the Sringeri Matham, gives the same date as the latter Matham, their traditions being identical. Their calculation can safely be relied upon as far as it is supported by the dates given on the places of Samadhi (something like a tomb) of the successive Gurus of the Sringeri Matham; and it leads us to the commencement of the Christian Era.

No definite information is given by Mr. Wilson regarding the nature, origin or reliability of the accounts which place Śamkara in the 3rd or 4th century of the Christian era or at its commencement; nor does it clearly appear that the history of the kings of Konga referred to unmistakably alludes to the very first Śamkarāchārya. These traditions are evidently opposed to the conclusion arrived at by Mr. Wilson, and it does not appear on what grounds their testimony is discredited by him. Mr. Wilson is clearly wrong in stating that an antiquity of 1,600 years is attributed to Śamkara by the Sringeri Matham. We have already referred to the account of the Sringeri Matham, and it is precisely similar to the account given by the Kudali Brahmins. We have ascertained that it is so from the agent of the Sringeri Matham at Madras, who has published only a few days ago the list of teachers preserved at the said Matham with the dates assigned to them. And further we are unable to see which "common tradition" makes Śamkara "about 1,200 years old." As far as our knowledge goes there is no such common tradition in India. The majority of people in Southern India have, up to this time, been relying on the Sringeri account, and in Northern India there seems to be no common tradition. We have but a mass of contradictory accounts.

It is indeed surprising that an Orientalist of Mr. Wilson's pretensions should confound the *poet* named Śamkara and mentioned in *Bhoja Prabandha* with the great

¹ [Note by Boris de Zirkoff: The text of this passage has been compared with the original edition published at Calcutta, in 1819, and the older spellings of Sanskrit names, as well as the rather quaint punctuation, have been kept intact.]

Advaitī teacher. No Hindu would ever commit such a ridiculous mistake. We are astonished to find some of these European Orientalists quoting now and then some of the statements contained in such books as *Bhoja Prabandha*, *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*, *Raja-tarangini* and *Panchatantra* as if they were historical works. In some other part of his preface Mr. Wilson himself says that this *Bhoja Prabandha* is altogether untrustworthy, as some of the statements contained therein did not harmonize with his theory about Amarasinha's date; but now he *misquotes* its statements for the purpose of supporting his conclusion regarding Śamkara's date. Surely, consistency is not one of the prominent characteristics of the writings of the majority of European Orientalists. The person mentioned in *Bhoja Prabandha* is always spoken of under the name of Śamkara Kavi, and he is nowhere called Śamkarāchārya, and the Advaitī teacher is never mentioned in any Hindu work under the appellation of Śamkara Kavi.

It is unnecessary for us to say anything about the Madhwa traditions or the opinion of the Vaishnava Brahmins of Madura regarding Śamkara's date. It is, in our humble opinion, hopeless to expect anything but falsehood regarding Śamkara's history and his philosophy from the Madhwas and the Vaishnavas. They are always very anxious to show to the world at large that their doctrines existed before the time of Śamkara, and that the Advaitī doctrine was a deviation from their pre-existing orthodox Hinduism. And consequently they have assigned to him an antiquity of less than 1,500 years.

It does not appear why Dr. Taylor thinks that he can allow Śamkara about 900 years, or on what grounds Mr. Colebrooke is inclined to give him an antiquity of about 1,000 years. No reliance can be placed on such statements before the reasons assigned therefor are thoroughly sifted.

Fortunately, Mr. Wilson gives us the reason for Ram Mohun Roy's opinion. We are inclined to believe that Ram Mohun Roy's calculation was made with reference to the Sringeri list of Teachers or Gurus, as that was the only list published up to this time, and as no other Matham, except perhaps the Kumbakonam Matham, has a list of Gurus coming up to the present time in uninterrupted succession. There is no necessity for depending upon his calculation (which from its very nature cannot be anything more than mere guess-work) when the old list preserved at Sringeri contains the dates assigned to the various teachers. As these dates have not been published up to the present time, and as Ram Mohun Roy had merely a string of names before him, he was obliged to ascertain Śamkara's date by assigning a certain number of years on the average to every teacher. Consequently, his opinion is of no importance whatever when we have the statement of the Sringeri Matham, which, as we have already said, places Śamkara in some century before the Christian era. The same remarks will apply to the calculation in question even if it were made on the basis of the number of teachers contained in the list preserved in the Kumbakonam Matham.

Very little importance can be attached to the oral evidence adduced by some unknown persons before Dr. Buchanan in his travels through Malabar; and we have only to consider the inferences that may be drawn from the accounts contained in *Kerala Utpatti*. The various manuscript copies of this work seem to differ in the date

they assign to Śamkarāchārya; even if the case were otherwise, we cannot place any reliance upon this work for the following among other reasons:

- 1 It is a well-known fact that the customs of Malabar are very peculiar. Their defenders have been, consequently, pointing to some great Rishi or some great philosopher of ancient India as their originator. Some of them affirm (probably the majority) that Parasurama brought into existence some of these customs and left a special *Smṛiti* for the guidance of the people of Malabar; others say that it was Śamkarāchārya who sanctioned these peculiar customs. It is not very difficult to perceive why these two persons were selected by them. According to the Hindu *Purānas* Parasurama lived in Malabar for some time, and according to Hindu traditions Śamkara was born in that country. But it is extremely doubtful whether either of them had anything to do with the peculiar customs of the said country. There is no allusion whatever to any of these customs in Śamkara's works. He seems to have devoted his whole attention to religious reform, and it is very improbable that he should have ever directed his attention to the local customs of Malabar. While attempting to revive the philosophy of the ancient Rishis, it is not likely that he should have sanctioned the customs of Malabar which are at variance with the rules laid down in the *Smṛitis* of those very Rishis; and as far as our knowledge goes he left no written regulations regarding the castes of Malabar.
- 2 The statements contained in *Kerala Utpatti* are opposed to the account of Śamkara's life given in almost all the Śamkara *Vijayas* (Biographies of Śamkara) examined up to this time, viz., Vidyaranya's *Śamkara Digvijaya*, Chitsukha-charya's *Śamkara Vijayavilasa*, *Brihat Śamkara Vijaya*, &c. According to the account contained in these works, Śamkara left Malabar in his eighth year and returned to his native village when his mother was on her deathbed when he remained there only for a few days. It is difficult to see at what period of his lifetime he was engaged in making regulations for the castes of Malabar.
- 3 The work under consideration represents Malabar as the seat of Bhattapāda's triumphs over the Buddhists, and says that this teacher established himself in Malabar and expelled the Buddhists from that country. This statement alone will be sufficient to show to our readers the fictitious character of the account contained in this book. According to every other Hindu work, this great teacher of *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* was born in Northern India; almost all his famous disciples and followers were living in that part of the country, and according to Vidyaranya's account he died at Allahabad.

For the foregoing reasons we cannot place any reliance upon this account of Malabar.

From the traditions and other accounts which we have hitherto examined, Mr. Wilson comes to the conclusion that Śamkarāchārya lived in the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century of the Christian Era. The accounts of the Sringeri, Kudali and Kumbakonam Mathams, and the traditions current in the Bombay Presidency, as shown in the biographical sketches published at Bombay, place Śamkara in some century before the Christian era. On the other hand, *Kerala Utpatti*, the in-

formation obtained by Dr. Buchanan in his travels through Malabar and the opinions expressed by Dr. Taylor and Mr. Colebrooke, concur in assigning to him an antiquity of about 1,000 years. The remaining traditions referred to by Mr. Wilson are as much opposed to his opinion as to the conclusion that Śamkara lived before Christ. We shall now leave it to our readers to say whether, under such circumstances, Mr. Wilson is justified in asserting that "the weight of authority is altogether in favour" of his theory.

We have already referred to the writings of almost all the European Orientalists who expressed an opinion upon the subject under discussion; and we need hardly say that Śamkara's date is yet to be ascertained.

We are obliged to comment at length on the opinions of European Orientalists regarding Śamkara's date, as there will be no probability of any attention being paid to the opinion of Indian and Tibetan initiates when it is generally believed that the question has been finally settled by their writings. The Adepts referred to by the London Theosophist are certainly in a position to clear up some of the problems in Indian religious history. But there is very little chance of their opinions being accepted by the general public under present circumstances, unless they are supported by such evidence as is within the reach of the outside world. As it is not always possible to procure such evidence, there is very little use in publishing the information which is in their possession until the public are willing to recognize and admit the antiquity and trustworthiness of their traditions, the extent of their powers and the vastness of their knowledge. In the absence of such proof as is above indicated, there is every likelihood of their opinions being rejected as absurd and untenable; their motives will no doubt be questioned and some people may be tempted to deny even the fact of their existence. It is often asked by Hindus as well as by Englishmen why these Adepts are so very unwilling to publish some portion at least of the information they possess regarding the truths of physical science. But in doing so, they do not seem to perceive the difference between the method by which they obtain their knowledge and the process of modern scientific investigation by which the facts of nature are ascertained and its laws are discovered. Unless an Adept can prove his conclusions by the same kind of reasoning as is adopted by the modern scientist they remain undemonstrated to the outside world. It is of course impossible for him to develop in a considerable number of human beings such faculties as would enable them to perceive their truth; and it is not always practicable to establish them by the ordinary scientific method unless all the facts and laws on which his demonstration is to be based have already been ascertained by modern science. No Adept can be expected to anticipate the discoveries of the next four or five centuries and prove some grand scientific truth to the entire satisfaction of the educated public after having discovered every fact and law of nature required for the said purpose by such process of reasoning as would be accepted by them. They have to encounter similar difficulties in giving any information regarding the events of the ancient history of India.

However, before giving the exact date assigned to Śamkarāchārya by the Indian and Tibetan initiates, we shall indicate a few circumstances by which his date may be approximately determined. It is our humble opinion that the *Śamkara Vijayas* hitherto published can be relied upon as far as they are consistent with each other regard-

ing the general outlines of Śamkara's life. We cannot however place any reliance whatever upon Ānandagiri's *Śamkara Vijaya* published at Calcutta. The Calcutta edition not only differs in some very material points from the manuscript copies of the same work found in Southern India but is opposed to every other *Śamkara Vijaya* hitherto examined. It is quite clear from its style and some of the statements contained therein that it was not the production of Ānandagiri, one of the four chief disciples of Śamkara and the commentator on his *Upanishad Bhāshya*. For instance, it represents Śamkara as the author of a certain verse which is to be found in Vidyāranya's *Adhikāranaratnāmāla* written in the fourteenth century. It represents Śamkara as giving orders to two of his disciples to preach the Visishtadwaitī and the Dwaitī doctrines which are directly opposed to his own doctrine. The book under consideration says that Śamkara went to conquer Mandanamisra in debate followed by Sureśvarāchārya though Mandanamisra assumed the latter name at the time of initiation. It is unnecessary for us here to point out all the blunders and absurdities of this book. It will be sufficient to say that in our opinion it was not written by Ānandagiri and that it was the production of an unknown author who does not appear to have been even tolerably well acquainted with the history of the Adwaitī doctrine. Vidyāranya's (or of Sāyanāchārya the great commentator of the Vedas) *Śamkara Vijaya* is decidedly the most reliable source of information as regards the main features of Śamkara's biography. Its authorship has been universally accepted and the information contained therein was derived by its author, as may be seen from his own statements, from certain old biographies of Śamkara existing at the time of its composition. Taking into consideration the author's vast knowledge and information and the opportunities he had for collecting materials for his work when he was the head of the Sringeri Matham, there is every reason to believe that he had embodied in his work the most reliable information he could obtain. Mr. Wilson however says that the book in question is "much too poetical and legendary" to be acknowledged as a great authority. We admit that the style is highly poetical, but we deny that the work is legendary. Mr. Wilson is not justified in characterizing it as such on account of its description of some of the wonderful phenomena shown by Śamkara. Probably the learned Orientalist would not be inclined to consider the Biblical account of Christ in the same light. It is not the peculiar privilege of Christianity to have a miracle-worker for its first propagator. In the following observations we shall take such facts as are required from this work.

It is generally believed that a person named Govinda Yogi was Śamkara's guru, but it is not generally known that this Yogi was in fact Patañjali — the great author of the *Mahabhashya* and the *Yoga Sūtras* — under a new name. A tradition current in Southern India represents him as one of the chelas of Patañjali; but it is very doubtful if this tradition has anything like a proper foundation. But it is quite clear from the 94th, 95th, 96th and 97th verses of the 5th chapter of Vidyāranya's *Śamkara Vijaya* that Govinda Yogi and Patañjali were identical. According to the immemorial custom observed amongst initiates Patañjali assumed the name of Govinda Yogi at the time of his initiation by Gaudapada. It cannot be contended that Vidyāranya represented Patañjali as Śamkara's Guru merely for the purpose of assigning some importance to Śamkara and his teaching. Śamkara is looked upon as a far greater man than Patañjali by the Adwaitis, and nothing can be added to Śamkara's reputation by

Vidyaranya's assertion. Moreover Patañjali's views are not altogether identical with Śamkara's views; it may be seen from Śamkara's writings that he attached no importance whatever to the practises of Hatha Yoga regarding which Patañjali composed his *Yoga Sūtras*. Under such circumstances if Vidyāraṇya had the option of selecting a Guru for Śamkara he would no doubt have represented Vyāsa himself (who is supposed to be still living) as his Guru. We see no reason therefore to doubt the correctness of the statement under examination. Therefore, as Śamkara was Patañjali's chela and as Gaudapada was his Guru, his date will enable us to fix the dates of Śamkara and Gaudapada. We may here point out to our readers a mistake that appears in page 148 of Mr. Sinnett's book on *Esoteric Buddhism* as regards the latter personage. He is there represented as Śamkara's Guru; Mr. Sinnett was informed, we believe, that he was Śamkara's Paramaguru and not having properly understood the meaning of this expression Mr. Sinnett wrote that he was Śamkara's Guru.

It is generally admitted by Orientalists that Patañjali lived before the commencement of the Christian Era. Mr. Barth places him in the second century before the Christian Era, accepting Goldstücker's opinion, and Monier Williams does the same thing. A. Weber who seems to have carefully examined the opinions of all the other Orientalists who have written upon the subject comes to the conclusion that

. . . we must for the present rest satisfied, . . . with placing the date of the composition of the *Bhāṣhya* between B.C. 140 and A.D. 60 — a result which, considering the wretched state of the chronology of Indian literature generally, is, despite its indefiniteness, of no mean importance.¹

And yet even this date rests upon inferences drawn from one or two unimportant expressions contained in Patañjali's *Mahabhashya*. It is always dangerous to draw such inferences and especially so when it is known that, according to the tradition current amongst Hindu grammarians, some portions of *Mahabhashya* were lost and the gaps were subsequently filled up by subsequent writers. Even supposing that we should consider the expressions quoted as written by Patañjali himself, there is nothing in those expressions which would enable us to fix the writer's date. For instance, the connection between the expression "*arunad Yavanah Sāketam*" and the expedition of Menander against Ayodhyā between B.C. 144 and 120 relied upon by Goldstücker is merely imaginary. There is nothing in the expression to show that the allusion contained therein points necessarily to Menander's expedition. We believe that Patañjali is referring to the expedition of *Yavanas* against Ayodhyā during the lifetime of Sagara's father described in *Harivamśa*. This expedition occurred long before Rama's time and there is nothing to connect it with Menander. Goldstücker's inference is based upon the assumption that there was no other *Yavana* expedition against Ayodhyā known to Patañjali, and it will be easily seen from *Harivamśa* (written by Vyāsa) that the said assumption is unwarranted. Consequently the whole theory constructed by Goldstücker on this weak foundation falls to the ground. No valid inferences can be drawn from the mere names of kings contained in *Maha-*

¹ [Note by Boris de Zirkoff: *The History of Indian Literature*, Albrecht Friedrich Weber, p. 224, fn. 237. Translated from the 2nd German edition by John Mann, M.A., and Theodor Zachariæ, Ph.D., Trübner & Co., London, and Houghton, Osgood & Co., Boston 1878, xxiii, 360pp.]

bhashya, even if they are traced to Patañjali himself, as there would be several kings in the same dynasty bearing the same name. From the foregoing remarks it will be clear that we cannot fix, as Weber has done, B.C. 140 as the maximum limit of antiquity that can be assigned to Patañjali. It is now necessary to see whether any other such limit has been ascertained by Orientalists. As Panini's date still remains undetermined the limit cannot be fixed with reference to his date. But it is assumed by some Orientalists that Panini must have lived at some time subsequent to Alexander's invasion from the fact that Panini explains in his grammar the formation of the word *Yavanani*. We are very sorry that European Orientalists have taken the pains to construct theories upon this basis without ascertaining the meaning assigned to the word *Yavana* and the time when the Hindus first became acquainted with the Greeks. It is unreasonable to assume without proof that this acquaintance commenced at the time of Alexander's invasion. On the other hand there are very good reasons for believing that the Greeks were known to the Hindus long before this event. Pythagoras visited India according to the traditions current amongst Indian Initiates, and he is alluded to in Indian astrological works under the name of *Yavanāchārya*. Moreover it is not quite certain that the word *Yavana* was strictly confined to the Greeks by the ancient Hindu writers. Probably it was first applied to the Egyptians and the Ethiopians; it was probably extended first to the Alexandrian Greeks and subsequently to the Greeks, Persians and Arabians. Besides the *Yavana* invasion of Ayodhyā described in *Harivamśa*, there was another subsequent expedition to India by *Kala Yavana* (Black *Yavana*) during Krishna's lifetime described in the same work. This expedition was probably undertaken by the Ethiopians. Anyhow, there are no reasons whatever, as far as we can see, for asserting that Hindu writers began to use the word *Yavana* after Alexander's invasion. We can attach no importance whatever to any inferences that may be drawn regarding the dates of Panini and Kātyāyana (both of them lived before Patañjali) from the statements contained in *Katha Sarit Sagara* which is nothing more than a mere collection of fables. It is now seen by Orientalists that no proper conclusions can be drawn regarding the dates of Panini and Kātyāyana from the statements made by Hiuan Thsang,¹ and we need not therefore say anything here regarding the said statements. Consequently the dates of Panini and Kātyāyana still remain undetermined by European Orientalists. Goldstücker is probably correct in his conclusion that Panini lived before Buddha and the Buddhists' accounts agree with the traditions of the initiates in asserting that Kātyāyana was a contemporary of Buddha. From the fact that Patañjali must have composed his *Mahabhashya* after the composition of Panini's *Sūtras* and Kātyāyana's *Varttika* we can only infer that it was written after Buddha's birth. But

¹ [The name of the celebrated Chinese pilgrim and translator is spelt in English in the following ways (among others):

| | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. M. Stanislas Julien | Hiouen Thsang |
| 2. Mr. Mayers | Huan Chwang |
| 3. Mr. Wylie | Yuén Chwäng |
| 4. Mr. Beal | Hiuen Tsiang |
| 5. Prof. Legge | Hsüan Chwang |
| 6. Prof. Bunyiu Nanjio | Hhüen Kwän |

See Thomas Watters, T.W. Rhys Davis, & Vicenta A. Smith (Eds.). *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, AD 629-645. [2-vols.] London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1904-1905]

there are a few considerations which may help us in coming to the conclusion that Patañjali must have lived about the year 500 B.C. Max Müller fixed the *Sūtra* period between 500 B.C. and 600 B.C. We agree with him in supposing that the period probably ended with B.C. 500, though it is uncertain how far it extended into the depths of Indian antiquity. Patañjali was the author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, and this fact has not been doubted by any Hindu writer up to this time. Mr. Weber *thinks*, however, that the author of the *Yoga Sūtras* might be a different man from the author of the *Mahabhashya*, though he does not venture to assign any reason for his supposition. We very much doubt if any European Orientalist can ever find out the connection between the first Anhika of the *Mahabhashya* and the real secrets of Hatha Yoga contained in the *Yoga Sūtras*. No one but an initiate can understand the full significance of the said Anhika; and the “eternity of the Logos” or Śabda is one of the principal doctrines of the ancient Gymnosophists of India who were generally Hatha Yogis. In the opinion of Hindu writers and Pundits Patañjali was the author of three works, viz., *Mahabhashya*, *Yoga Sūtras* and a book on Medicine and Anatomy; and there is not the slightest reason for questioning the correctness of this opinion. We must, therefore, place Patañjali in the *Sūtra* period, and this conclusion is confirmed by the traditions of the Indian initiates. As Śamkarāchārya was a contemporary of Patañjali (being his Chela) he must have lived about the same time. We have thus shown that there are no reasons for placing Śamkara in 8th or 9th century after Christ as some of the European Orientalists have done. We have further shown that Śamkara was Patañjali’s Chela and that his date should be ascertained with reference to Patañjali’s date. We have also shown that neither the year B.C. 140 nor the date of Alexander’s invasion can be accepted as the maximum limit of antiquity that can be assigned to him, and we have lastly pointed out a few circumstances which will justify us in expressing an opinion that Patañjali and his Chela Śamkara belonged to the *Sūtra* period. We may perhaps now venture to place before the public the exact date assigned to Śamkarāchārya by Tibetan and Indian Initiates. According to the historical information in their possession he was born in the year B.C. 510 (51 years and 2 months after the date of Buddha’s nirvana), and we believe that satisfactory evidence in support of this date can be obtained in India if the inscriptions at Conjeeveram, Sringeri, Jagannātha, Benares, Kashmir and various other places visited by Śamkara are properly deciphered. Śamkara built Conjeeveram which is considered as one of the most ancient towns in Southern India; and it may be possible to ascertain the time of its construction if proper enquiries are made. But even the evidence now brought before the public supports the opinion of the Initiates above indicated. As Gaudapada was Śamkarāchārya’s guru’s guru his date entirely depends on Śamkara’s date; and there is every reason to suppose that he lived before Buddha. As this article has already become very lengthy we will now bring it to a close. Our remarks about Buddha’s date and Śamkarāchārya’s doctrine will appear in the next issue of *The Theosophist*.

T. SUBBA ROW

Boris de Zirkoff on the higher sources of Subba Row's response.

From Blavatsky Collected Writings, (INQUIRIES SUGGESTED BY MR. SINNETT'S "ESOTERIC BUDDHISM") V, pp. 136-38.¹

Questions VII² and VIII are ostensibly answered by T. Subba Row, but their higher source is hinted at in the following two passages. The first is from a letter written by H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett, dated Adyar, November 17th, 1883, wherein she says:

. . . What do you mean by saying that "their Lordships" write too much for your London Society. It is my Boss and two others you do not know. It is *against* science, not for your members that they write. And I always said it was useless and time lost for no one will believe and very few will understand, I *don't*. What do you mean by abusing Subba Row? Why read his last against Cunningham — the old man wrote to him and has made him hundred questions *for the sake of science and archæology* — which Subba Row says *he will not answer*. Amen.³

The second is from a letter of Master K.H. to A.P. Sinnett, written approximately in November–December 1883, wherein he says:

. . . You are wrong in distrusting Subba Row's writings. He does not write *willingly*, to be sure, but he will never make a false statement. See his last in the November number. His statement concerning the errors of General Cunningham ought to be regarded as a whole revelation leading to a revolution in Indian archæology. Ten to one — it will never receive the attention it deserves. Why? Simply because his statements contain sober *facts*, and that what you Europeans prefer generally is *fiction* so long the latter dovetails with, and answers preconceived theories.⁴

Then there is the following passage written by Master K.H. in a letter to A.P. Sinnett, received in London, October 8th, 1883. It includes a rather definite statement as to the authorship of the Replies. It is as follows:

. . . Be more careful as to what you say upon forbidden topics. The "eighth sphere" mystery is a very confidential subject, and you are far from understanding even its general aspect. You were repeatedly warned and should not have mentioned it. You have unintentionally brought ridicule upon a solemn

¹ [For a biography of the Author, see "De Zirkoff on Subba Row," in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [The answer to this question can be found under the title "Important Dates in Indian History," in our Hellenic and Hellenistic Papers — ED. PHIL.]

³ *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 68

⁴ *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 429

matter. I have nought to do with the *Replies* to Mr. Myers, but, you may recognize in them, perhaps, the brusque influence of M.¹

The following remarks by H.P. Blavatsky clarify the situation still further. They are contained in an Editorial comment on some excerpts from a letter of G.L. Ditson, F.T.S., who had been a friend of hers for a number of years. The passage is to be found in the *Journal of The Theosophical Society*.² It runs as follows:

. . . why should our old and trusted American friend address us as though *we* were the author of the “Replies to an English F.T.S.”? It was explained, we believe, and made very clear that the letter of the English F.T.S. being addressed to the Mahatmas, it was not our province to answer the scientific queries contained in it, even if we had the ability to do so, something we never laid a claim to. In point of fact, however, there is not one word in the *Replies* that we could call our own. We have preserved packs of MSS. in the handwriting of our Masters and their Chelas; and if we got them sometimes copied in the office, it was simply to avoid desecration at the hands of the printer’s devil. . . .

Further, there is the following passage which occurs in a letter written by Col. H.S. Olcott to Miss Francesca Arundale, dated Adyar, February 9th, 1885. Speaking of a certain Hindū Yogi who came to see him, he says:

He had been sent by the Mahatma at Tirivellum [the one who dictated to H.P. Blavatsky the “Replies to an English F.T.S.”] to assure me that I should *not* be left alone.³

Finally, there is H.P. Blavatsky’s despairing remark which occurs in a postscript to her letter addressed to A.P. Sinnett, dated Adyar, November 26th, 1883. She says:

. . . What does Mr. Myers say to the *Replies*? *Disgusted* I suppose? I thought as much. Well that’s all the Adepts will get for their trouble. Adieu!⁴

It should also be borne in mind that both H.P. Blavatsky and T. Subba Row had the same Teacher, and both were actually amanuenses for that Teacher’s mind, and, upon occasion, for other adepts as well. We have therefore in the present series a case very closely similar to that of *The Secret Doctrine* itself, a great many portions of which were dictated to H.P. Blavatsky by Master M., Master K.H., and other adepts. As a matter of fact, certain portions of these replies were actually incorporated by H.P. Blavatsky into the MSS. of *The Secret Doctrine*. Careful study of this series will reveal a remarkable uniformity of style throughout. Even in those portions which are definitely signed by T. Subba Row, there occur passages and expressions strongly reminding one of H.P. Blavatsky’s style. The only distinguishing marks of the various portions of the replies are the little verbal twists and mental colourings that clung to the Master’s original thought as it passed through one or the other of his two amanuenses. The authorship of *The Secret Doctrine* and of the present series being largely

¹ *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 396

² Vol. I, No. 2, February 1884, p. 28

³ See *The Theosophist*, Vol. LIII, September 1932, p. 733

⁴ *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 73

similar in nature and transmission, the material under consideration is published *in toto*, for the benefit of the serious student.



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¹ [Comment from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, V p. 171:

No "Adept," so far as the writers know, has ever given to "Lay Chela" his "views of the moon," for publication. With Selenography, modern science is far better acquainted than any humble Asiatic ascetic may ever hope to become. It is to be feared the speculations on pp. 104 & 105 of *Esoteric Buddhism*, besides being hazy, are somewhat premature. . . . — H.P. Blavatsky.]

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