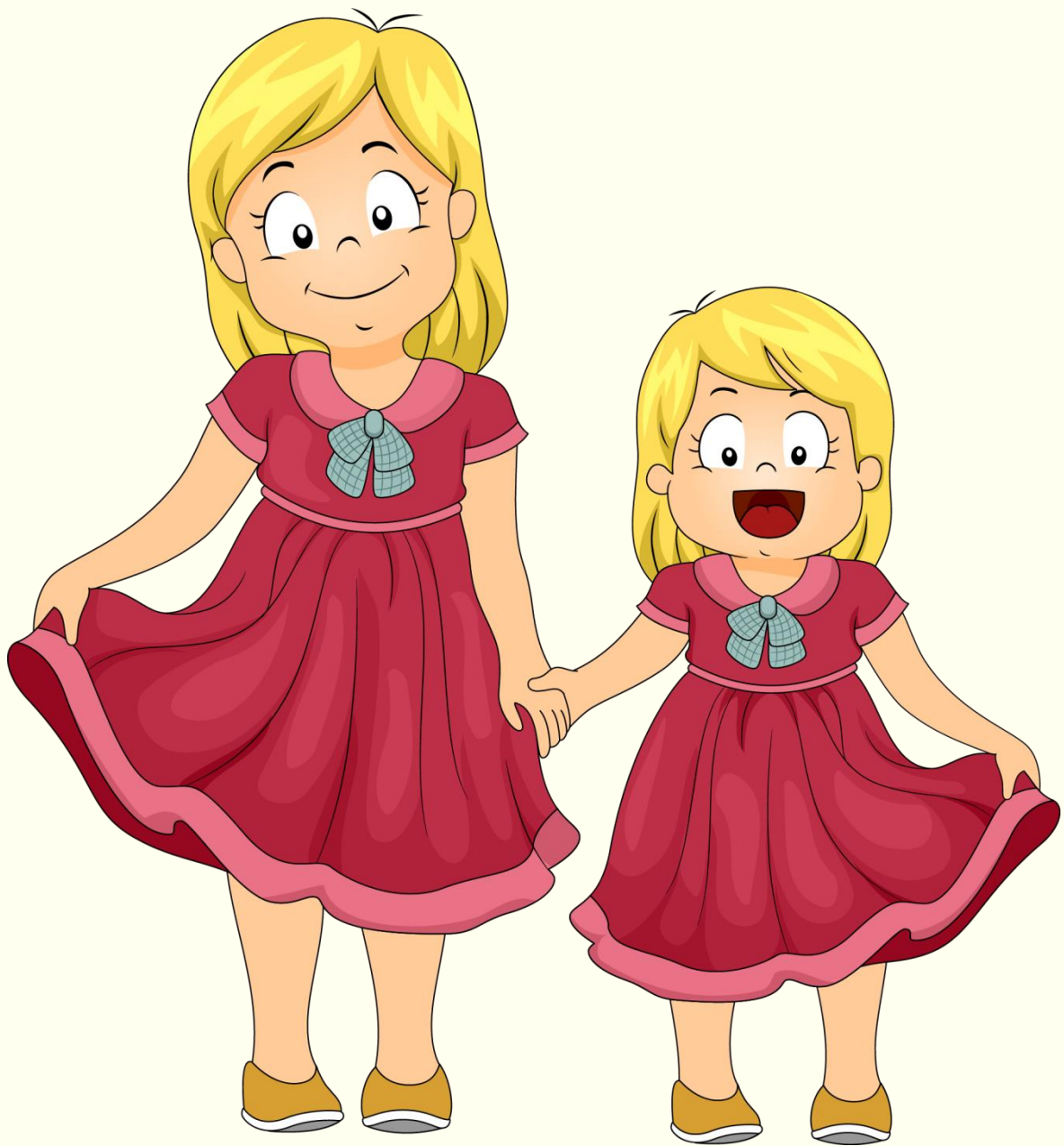


*Brahmanism is the  
elder sister of Buddhism*



**While Gautama Buddha made enlightenment open to all, the Brahmans had been jealously excluding all men without the pale of their own haughty caste from this privilege.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (4), January 1882, pp. 92-93. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ESOTERIC AXIOMS AND SPIRITUAL SPECULATIONS) III pp. 396-99.

In a lengthy review of Arthur Lillie's book, *Buddha and Early Buddhism*, by M.A. (Oxon), our esteemed friend, the critic, takes the opportunity for another quiet little fling at his well-wishers, the Theosophists. On the authority (?) of Mr. Lillie, who seems to know all about it, the reviewer contradicts and exposes the assertions made and theories enunciated by the Theosophists. We will now quote from his review "Buddhism and Western Thought," published in the October number of the *Psychological Review*:

It will be evident to any reader, who has followed me so far, that the Buddhist belief is permeated by what I have described as a distinctive, "a peculiar note of Modern Spiritualism — *the presence and guardianship of departed spirits*" [! ?]<sup>1</sup> I confess that this struck me with some surprise, and, I may say, pleased surprise, for I had come to think that there was a marked antagonism between Eastern and Western modes of thought and belief on this point. *We have heard much in disparagement of this special article of faith from some friends who have told us a great deal about the theosophical beliefs of the Hindus, and who have chanted the praises of the Buddhistic as against the Christian faith with vehement laudation of the one, and with abundant scorn of the other. . . .* But be this as it may, we have been told so often, that we have come to accept it as a lesson from those who know better than ourselves that our Western belief in the action of departed human spirits in this world of ours is a crazy fallacy. *We have believed, at least, that such was the Eastern creed.* For ourselves, we (some of us at least) prefer our own experience to the instructions of any whose dogmatic statements are so sweeping as those with which we are met from Eastern experts. The statements and claims made have seemed to us altogether too vast. It may be, we are driven to think, [397] that departed spirits do not operate in the East, but at any rate we find that they *do* act in the West. And

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<sup>1</sup> The italics and points of exclamation are ours. We would like to know what the learned priests of Ceylon, the lights of Buddhism, such as Sumangala Unnanse, would have to say to this? [H.P. Blavatsky]

while we are far from declining to recognize the truth that pervades much of the Spiritualism of the East, and have tried our best to induce our friends to widen their view by adopting it in some degree, we have been sad to think that it should so absolutely contradict the experience of the West.

Mr. Lillie affords me some consolation. I find throughout his book not only most instructive variety of opinion, which I can correlate with my own beliefs and theories to benefit and advantage, but I find that the belief in the intervention of departed human spirits, which we had all of us imagined to be *anathema maranatha*<sup>1</sup> in the East, is, in effect, a permeating principle of Buddhism in his estimation!<sup>2</sup>

The writer, after that, proceeds to speak of “Buddhistic Spiritualism” . . . a “root-principle” of which is “a belief that the living may be brought *en rapport* with their departed friends”; of adepts being “highly developed mediums”; and quotes an interesting clause from a chapter of Mr. Lillie’s book. Says the last-named authority:

I have dwelt somewhat at length on this supernaturalism, because it is of the highest importance to our theme. *Buddhism was plainly an elaborate apparatus to nullify the action of evil spirits by the aid of good spirits operating at their highest potentiality through the instrumentality of the corpse, or a portion of the corpse of the chief aiding spirit.* The Buddhist temple, the Buddhist rites, the Buddhist liturgy, all seem based on this one idea that a whole or portions of a dead body was necessary. What were these assisting spirits? Every Buddhist, ancient or modern, would admit at once that a spirit that has not yet attained the Bodhi or spiritual awakenment cannot be a good spirit. It is still in the domains of Kāma (Death, Cupid, appetite).<sup>3</sup> It can do no good thing; more than that, it must do evil things. . . . The answer of Northern Buddhism, if we consult such books as the *White Lotus of Dharma* and the *Lalita Vistara*, is that the good spirits are the Buddhas, the dead prophets. They come from certain “fields of the Buddhas” . . .<sup>4</sup>

For all this M.A. (Oxon) rejoices, as he thinks it corroborates the Spiritual theories and is calculated to [398] confound the Theosophists. We, however, are afraid that it will confound, in the end, but Mr. Lillie. “The life of Buddha is permeated,” says the reviewer, “with what seems to me uncompromising Spiritualism . . .”; and in triumph adds: “It is a significant fact that throughout this elucidation of Buddhistic Spiritualism we have not once come upon an Elemental or Elementary Spirit.”

No wonder since they have in Buddhistic and Brāhmanical Esotericism their own special and technical names whose significance Mr. Lillie — if he understood their meaning as correctly as he did the word *Kama* — was just the person to overlook, or

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<sup>1</sup> [A highly intensified form of anathema, an ecclesiastic curse. Maran-atha is now considered as a separate sentence, meaning “Our Lord cometh,” in Aramaic. Cf. *1 Corinthians* xvi, 22.]

<sup>2</sup> Part II, p. 174. [Consult “A Master of Wisdom on Higher Metaphysics,” in our Master Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>3</sup> [We have not read Mr. Lillie’s book; but if he teaches in it many other things no truer than his idea that *Kama* means “Death,” his authority is likely to prove of a most fragile kind. *Kama* never meant death, but lust, desire; in this sense — a passionate desire to live again. — H.P. Blavatsky.]

<sup>4</sup> [*Buddha and Early Buddhism*, pp. 47-48. The italics are H.P. Blavatsky’s own. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

include in the generic name of “Spirits.” We will not try to personally argue out the vexed question with our friend, M.A. (Oxon), as our voice might have no more authority with him than Mr. Lillie’s has with us. But we will tell him what we have done. As soon as his able review reached us, we marked it throughout, and sent both the numbers of the magazine containing it, to be, in their turn, reviewed and corrected by two authorities. We have the weakness to believe that these Specialists in the matter of esoteric Buddhism may be regarded as far greater than Mr. Lillie or any other European authority is likely to ever be; for these two are:

- 1 H. Sumangala Unnanse, Buddhist High Priest of Adam’s Peak, Ceylon, the teacher of Mr. Rhys Davids, a member of our General Council and the most learned expounder of Southern Buddhism;
- 2 And the Chohan-Lama of Rinch-cha-tze (Tibet), the Chief of the Archive-registrars of the secret Libraries of the Talay and Tashi-Lhünpo Lamas-Rimpoche — also a member of our Society.

The latter, moreover, is a “Panchhen,” or great teacher, one of the most learned theologians of Northern Buddhism and esoteric Lamaism. From the latter we have already received the promise of showing how very erroneous are, in every case, the views of both, the author and his reviewer, the message being accompanied by a few remarks to the address of the former which would have hardly flattered his vanity as an author. The High Priest Sumangala, we hope, will give his ideas upon “Buddhistic *Spiritualism*” as well, as soon as he finds leisure — [399] no easy matter, by the way, considering his engagements. If the authority and learning of Mr. Lillie, after that, will still be placed higher than that of the two most learned *Buddhist* expounders of Southern and Northern Buddhism of our day, then we will have nothing more to say.

Meanwhile, none will deny that esoteric Buddhism and Brahmanism are *one*, for the former is derived from the latter. It is well known that the most important feature of [his] reform, perhaps, was that Buddha made adeptship or *enlightenment* (through the *Dhyāna* practices of *Iddhi*) open to all, whereas the Brahmans had been jealously excluding all men without the pale of their own haughty caste from this privilege of learning the perfect truth. Therefore, in the present connection we will give the ideas of a learned Brahman upon Spiritualism as viewed from the esoteric standpoint. The author of the article which follows, than who, no layman, perhaps, in India is better versed in the Brāhmanical Occult Sciences<sup>1</sup> outside the inner conclave of the adepts — reviews in it the *seven-fold* principle in man, as given in *Fragments of Occult Truth*,<sup>2</sup> and establishes for that purpose an exhaustive comparison between the two esoteric doctrines — the Brāhmanical and Buddhistic — which he considers “sub-

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<sup>1</sup> [Reference is to the great scholar T. Subba Row Garu. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

Consult “Subba Row on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> [A series of articles published in *The Theosophist*, initially by A.O. Hume, and later on by A.P. Sinnett. Cf. Note by Boris de Zirkoff from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III p. 384 *fn.*:]

This series of articles was started in the October 1881 issue of *The Theosophist*, the second instalment appearing in March 1882, and the third in September of the same year. From various statements in *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and several of H.P. Blavatsky’s own letters, it can be conclusively demonstrated that these three instalments were written by A.O. Hume, even though they exhibit here and there a few characteristics of Blavatsky’s style. Subsequent articles under the same title were written by A.P. Sinnett.]

stantially identical.” His letter was written at our personal request, with no view to polemics, the writer himself being probably very far from the thought while answering it that it would ever be published. Having obtained his permission, however, to that effect, we now gladly avail ourselves of the opportunity. Besides being the best review we are likely to ever obtain upon so abstruse a subject, it will show M.A. (Oxon), and our other friends, the Spiritualists, how far such authors as Mr. Lillie have seized the “root-principle” of the Asiatic religions and philosophy. At all events the readers will be enabled to judge, how much modern Spiritualism, as now expounded, is “a permeating principle” of Brāhmanism, the elder sister of Buddhism.

