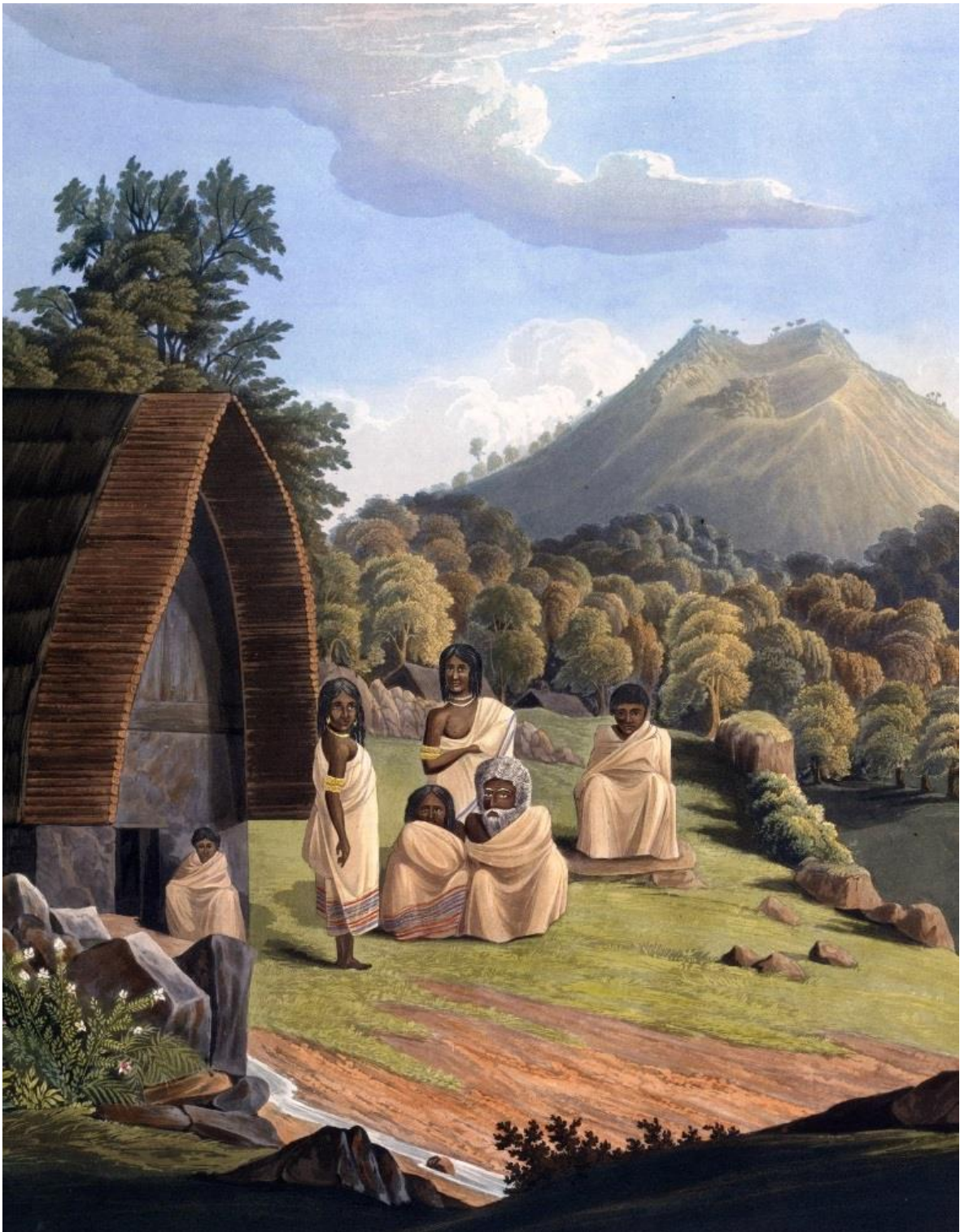


The Nilgiri Sannyasis



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The Nilgiri Sannyasis

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."*¹ London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 72-75.

[A *verbatim* translation of a Settlement Officer's statement to Mrs. E.H. Morgan.]

Frontispiece: Kandelmund Toda (1837) Plate 5 from Richard Barron's *View in India, chiefly among the Neelgherry Hills*

I WAS TOLD THAT SANNYĀSIS were sometimes met with on a mountain called Velly Mallai Hills, in the Coimbatore District, and trying to meet with one, I determined to ascend this mountain. I travelled up its steep sides and arrived at an opening, narrow and low, into which I crept on all fours. Going up some twenty yards I reached a cave, into the opening of which I thrust my head and shoulders. I could see into it clearly, but felt a cold wind on my face, as if there was some opening or crevice — so I looked carefully, but could see nothing. The room was about twelve feet square. I did not go into it. I saw arranged round its sides stones one cubit long, all placed upright. I was much disappointed at there being no Sannyāsi, and came back as I went, pushing myself backwards as there was no room to turn. I was then told Sannyāsis had been met with in the dense *sholas* (thickets), and as my work lay often in such places, I determined to prosecute my search, and did so diligently, without, however, any success.

One day I contemplated a journey to Coimbatore on my own affairs, and was walking up the road trying to make a bargain with a handy man whom I desired to engage to carry me there; but as we could not come to terms, I parted with him and turned into the Lovedale Road at 6 P.M. I had not gone far when I met a man dressed like a Sannyāsi, who stopped and spoke to me. He observed a ring on my finger and asked me to give it to him. I said he was welcome to it, but inquired what he would give me in return, he said, "I don't care particularly about it; I would rather have that flour and sugar in the bundle on your back." "I will give you that with pleasure," I said, and took down my bundle and gave it to him. "Half is enough for me," he said; but subsequently changing his mind added, "now let me see what is in your bundle," pointing to my other parcel. "I can't give you that." He said, "Why cannot you give me your swami (family idol)?" I said, "It is my swami, I will not part with it; rather take my life." On this he pressed me no more, but said, "Now you had better go home." I said, "I will not leave you." "Oh you must," he said, "you will die here of hunger." "Never mind," I said, "I can but die once." "You have no clothes to protect you from the wind and rain; you may meet with tigers," he said. "I don't care," I replied. "It is given to man once to die. What does it signify how he dies?" When I said this he took my hand and embraced me, and immediately I became unconscious. When I returned to consciousness, I found myself with the Sannyāsi in a place new to me on a hill, near a large rock and with a big *shola* near. I saw in the *shola* right in front of us, that there was a pillar of fire, like a tree almost. I asked the Sannyāsi what was that like a high fire. "Oh," he said, "most likely a tree ignited by some careless wood-cutters."

¹ March 1884, Vol. V, p. 153

“No,” I said, “it is not like any common fire — there is no smoke, nor are there flames — and it’s not lurid and red. I want to go and see it.” “No, you must not do so, you cannot go near that fire and escape alive.” “Come with me then,” I begged. “No — I cannot,” he said, “if you wish to approach it, you must go alone and at your own risk; that tree is the tree of knowledge and from it flows the milk of life whoever drinks this never hungers again.” Thereupon I regarded the tree with awe.

I next observed five Sannyāsis approaching. They came up and joined the one with me, entered into talk, and finally pulled out a hookah and began to smoke. They asked me if I could smoke. I said no. One of them said to me, let us see the swami in your bundle (here gives a description of the same). I said, “I cannot, I am not clean enough to do so.” “Why not perform your ablutions in yonder stream?” they said. “If you sprinkle water on your forehead that will suffice.” I went to wash my hands and feet, and laved my head, and showed it to them. Next they disappeared. “As it is very late, it is time you returned home,” said my first friend. “No,” I said, “now I have found you I will not leave *you*.” “No, no,” he said, “you must go home. You cannot leave the world yet; you are a father and a husband, and you must not neglect your worldly duties. Follow the footsteps of your late respected uncle; he did not neglect his worldly affairs, though he cared for the interests of his soul; you must go, but I will meet you again when you get your fortnightly holiday.” On this he embraced me, and I again became unconscious. When I returned to myself, I found myself at the bottom of Col. Jones’ coffee plantation above Coonor on a path. Here the Sannyāsi wished me farewell, and pointing to the high road below, he said, “Now you will know your way home”; but I would not part from him. I said, “All this will appear a dream to me unless you will fix a day and promise to meet me here again.” “*I promise*,” he said. “No, promise me by an oath on the head of my idol.” Again he promised, and touched the head of my idol. “Be here,” he said, “this day fortnight.” When the day came I anxiously kept my engagement and went and sat on the stone on the path. I waited a long time in vain. “At last,” I said to myself, “I am deceived, he is not coming, he has broken his oath” — and with grief I made a poojah. Hardly had these thoughts passed my mind, than lo! he stood beside me. “Ah, you doubt me,” he said; “why this grief?” I fell at his feet and confessed I had doubted him and begged his forgiveness. He forgave and comforted me, and told me to keep in my good ways and he would always help me; and he told me and advised me about all my private affairs without my telling him one word, and he also gave me some medicines for a sick friend which I had promised to ask for but had forgotten. This medicine was given to my friend and he is perfectly well now.

E.H. MORGAN (Mrs.)

Witchcraft on the Nilgiris

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."*¹ London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 76-81.

HAVING LIVED MANY YEARS (30) on the Nilgiris, employing the various tribes of the Hills on my estates, and speaking their languages, I have had many opportunities of observing their manners and customs and the frequent practice of Demonology and Witchcraft among them. On the slopes of the Nilgiris live several semi-wild people:

- 1 The "Curumbers," who frequently hire themselves out to neighbouring estates, and are first-rate fellers of forest;
- 2 The "Tain" ("Honey Curumbers"), who collect and live largely on honey and roots, and who do not come into civilized parts;
- 3 The "Mulu" Curumbers, who are rare on the slopes of the hills, but common in Wynaad lower down the plateau. These use bows and arrows, are fond of hunting, and have frequently been known to kill tigers, rushing in a body on their game and discharging their arrows at a short distance. In their eagerness they frequently fall victims to this animal; but they are supposed to possess a controlling power over all wild animals, especially elephants and tigers; and the natives declare they have the power of assuming the forms of various beasts. Their aid is constantly invoked both by the Curumbers first named, and by the natives generally, when wishing to be revenged on an enemy.

Besides these varieties of Curumbers there are various other wild tribes I do not now mention, as they are not concerned in what I have to relate.

I had on my estate near Ootacamund a gang of young Badagas, some 30 young men, whom I had had in my service since they were children, and who had become most useful handy fellows. From week to week I missed one or another of them, and on inquiry was told they had been sick and were dead!

One market-day I met the Moneghar of the village to which my gang belonged and some of his men, returning home laden with their purchases. The moment he saw me he stopped, and coming up to me, said, "Mother, I am in great sorrow and trouble, tell me what I can do!" "Why, what is wrong?" I asked. "All my young men are dying, and I cannot help them, nor prevent it; they are under a spell of the wicked Curumbers who are killing them, and I am powerless." "Pray explain," I said; "why do the Curumbers behave in this way, and what do they do to your people?" "Oh, Madam, they are vile extortioners, always asking for money; we have given and given till we have no more to give. I told them we had no more money and then they said, — *All right — as you please; we shall see.* Surely as they say this, we know what will follow — at night when we are all asleep, we wake up suddenly and see a Curumber *standing in our midst*, in the middle of the room occupied by the young men." "Why do you not close and bolt your doors securely?" I interrupted. "What is the use of bolts and bars to them? they come through stone walls. . . . Our doors *were* secure,

¹ September 1883, Vol. IV, p. 320

but nothing can keep out a Curumber. He points his finger at *Mada*, at *Kurira*, at Jogie — he utters no word, and as we look at him he vanishes! In a few days these three young men sicken, a low fever consumes them, their stomachs swell, they die. Eighteen young men, the flower of my village, have died thus this year. These effects always follow the visit of a Curumber at night." "Why not complain to the Government?" I said. "Ah, no use, who will catch them?" "Then give them the 200 rupees they ask this once on a solemn promise that they exact no more." "I suppose we must find the money somewhere," he said, turning sorrowfully away.

A Mr. K * * * is the owner of a coffee estate near this, and like many other planters employs Burghers. On one occasion he went down the slopes of the hills after bison and other large game, taking some seven or eight Burghers with him as gun carriers (besides other things necessary in jungle-walking — axes to clear the way, knives and ropes, &c.). He found and *severely* wounded a fine elephant with tusks. Wishing to secure these, he proposed following up his quarry, but could not induce his Burghers to go deeper and further into the forests; they feared to meet the "Mula Curumbers" who lived thereabouts. For long he argued in vain, at last by dint of threats and promises he induced them to proceed, and as they met no one, their fears were allayed and they grew bolder, when suddenly coming on the elephant lying dead (oh, horror to them!), the beast was surrounded by a party of Mulu Curumbers busily engaged in cutting out the tusks, one of which they had already disengaged! The affrighted Burghers fell back, and nothing Mr. K * * * could do or say would induce them to approach the elephant, which the Curumbers stoutly declared was theirs. They had killed him they said. They had very likely met him staggering under his wound and had finished him off. Mr. K * * * was not likely to give up his game in this fashion. So walking threateningly to the Curumbers he compelled them to retire, and called to his Burghers at the same time. The Curumbers only said, "Just you DARE to touch that elephant," and retired. Mr. K * * * thereupon cut out the remaining tusk himself, and slinging both on a pole with no little trouble, made his men carry them. He took all the blame on himself, showed them that *they* did not touch them, and finally declared he would stay there all night rather than lose the tusks. The idea of a night near the Mulu Curumbers was too much for the fears of the Burghers, and they finally took up the pole and tusks and walked home. From that day those men, all but one who probably carried the gun, sickened, walked about like spectres, doomed, pale and ghastly, and before the month was out all were dead men, with the one exception!

A few months ago, at the village of Ebanaud, a few miles from this, a fearful tragedy was enacted. The Moneghar or headman's child was sick unto death. This, following on several recent deaths, was attributed to the evil influences of a village of Curumbers hard by. The Burghers determined on the destruction of every soul of them. They procured the assistance of a *Toda*, as they invariably do on such occasions, as *without one* the Curumbers are supposed to be invulnerable. They proceeded to the Curumber village at night and set their huts on fire, and as the miserable inmates attempted to escape, flung them back into the flames or knocked them down with clubs. In the confusion one old woman escaped unobserved into the adjacent bushes. Next morning she gave notice to the authorities, and identified seven Burghers, among whom was the Moneghar or headman, and one *Toda*. As the murderers of her

people they were all brought to trial in the Courts here — except the headman, who died before he could be brought in — and were all sentenced and duly executed, that is, three Burghers and the Toda, who were proved principals in the murders.

Two years ago an almost identical occurrence took place at Kotaghery, with exactly similar results, but without the punishment entailed having *any* deterrent effect. They pleaded “justification,” as witchcraft had been practised on them. But our Government ignores all occult dealings and ‘will not believe in the dread power in the land. They deal very differently with these matters in Russia, where, in a recent trial of a similar nature, the witchcraft was admitted as an extenuating circumstance and the culprits who had burnt a witch were all acquitted. *All* natives of whatever caste are well aware of these terrible powers and too often do they avail themselves of them — much oftener than any one has an idea of. One day as I was riding along I came upon a strange and ghastly object — a basket containing the bloody head of a black sheep, a cocoanut, 10 rupees in money, some rice and flowers. These smaller items I did not see, not caring to examine any closer; but I was told by some natives that those articles were to be found in the basket. The basket was placed at the apex of a triangle formed by three fine threads tied to three small sticks, so placed that any one approaching from the roads on either side had to stumble over the threads and receive the full effects of the deadly “Soonium” as the natives call it. On inquiry I learnt that it was usual to prepare such a “Soonium” when one lay sick unto death; as throwing it on another was the only means of rescuing the sick one, and woe to the unfortunate who broke a thread by stumbling over it!

E.H. MORGAN (Mrs.)



Isis Unveiled on the Todas

From *Isis Unveiled*, II pp. 613-15

IT IS SURPASSINGLY STRANGE, that with the thousands of travellers and the millions of European residents who have been in India, and have traversed it in every direction, so little is yet known of that country and the lands which surround it. It may be that some readers will feel inclined not merely to doubt the correctness but even openly contradict our statement. Doubtless, we will be answered that all that it is desirable to know about India is already known? In fact this very reply was once made to us personally. That resident Anglo-Indians should not busy themselves with inquiries is not strange; for, as a British officer remarked to us upon one occasion, “society does not consider it well-bred to care about Hindus or their affairs, or even show astonishment or desire information upon anything they may see extraordinary in that country.” But it really surprises us that at least travellers should not have explored more than they have this interesting realm. Hardly fifty years ago, in penetrating the jungles of the Blue or Nilgiri Hills in Southern Hindostan, a strange race, perfectly distinct in appearance and language from any other Hindu people, was discovered by two courageous British officers who were tiger-hunting. Many surmises, more or less absurd, were set on foot, and the missionaries, always on the watch to connect every mortal thing with the Bible, even went so far as to suggest that this people was one of the lost tribes of Israel, supporting their ridiculous hypothesis upon their very fair complexions and “strongly-marked Jewish features.” The latter is perfectly erroneous, the Tōdas, as they are called, not bearing the remotest likeness to the Jewish type; either in feature, form, action, or language. They closely resemble each other, and, as a friend of ours expresses himself, the handsomest of the Todas resemble the statue of the Grecian Zeus in majesty and beauty of form more than anything he had yet seen among men.

Fifty years have passed since the discovery; but though since that time towns have been built on these hills and the country has been invaded by Europeans, no more has been learned of the Todas than at the first. Among the foolish rumours current about this people, the most erroneous are those in relation to their numbers and to their practicing polyandry. The general opinion about them is that on account of the latter custom their number has dwindled to a few hundred families, and the race is fast dying out. We had the best means of learning much about them, and therefore state most positively that the Todas neither practice polyandry nor are they as few in number as supposed. We are ready to show that no one has ever seen children belonging to them. Those that may have been seen in their company have belonged to the Badagas, a Hindu tribe totally distinct from the Todas, in race, colour, and language, and which includes the most direct “worshippers” of this extraordinary people. We say *worshippers*, for the Badagas clothe, feed, serve, and positively look upon every Toda as a divinity. They are giants in stature, white as Europeans, with tremendously long and generally brown, wavy hair and beard, which no razor ever touched from birth. Handsome as a statue of Pheidias or Praxiteles, the Toda sits the whole day inactive, as some travellers who have had a glance at them affirm. From the many conflicting opinions and statements we have heard from the very residents

of Ootacamund and other little new places of civilization scattered about the Neilgherry Hills, we cull the following:

They never use water; they are wonderfully handsome and noble looking, but extremely unclean; unlike all other natives they despise jewellery, and never wear anything but a large black drapery or blanket of some woollen stuff, with a coloured stripe at the bottom; they never drink anything but pure milk; they have herds of cattle but neither eat their flesh, nor do they make their beasts of labour plough or work; they neither sell nor buy; the Badagas feed and clothe them; they never use nor carry weapons, not even a simple stick; the Todas can't read and won't learn. They are the despair of the missionaries and apparently have no sort of religion, beyond the worship of themselves as the Lords of Creation.¹

We will try to correct a few of these opinions, as far as we have learned from a very holy personage, a *Brāhmana-guru*, who has our great respect.

Nobody has ever seen more than five or six of them at one time; they will not talk with foreigners, nor was any traveller ever inside their peculiar long and flat huts, which apparently are without either windows or chimney and have but one door; nobody ever saw the funeral of a Toda, nor very old men among them; nor are they taken sick with cholera, while thousands die around them during such periodical epidemics; finally, though the country all around swarms with tigers and other wild beasts, neither tiger, serpent, nor any other animal so ferocious in those parts, was ever known to touch either a Toda or one of their cattle, though, as said above, they never use even a stick.

Furthermore the Todas do not marry at all. They seem few in number, for no one has or ever will have a chance of numbering them; as soon as their solitude was profaned by the avalanche of civilization — which was, perchance, due to their own carelessness — the Todas began moving away to other parts as unknown and more inaccessible than the Nilgiri hills had formerly been; they are not born of Toda mothers, nor of Toda parentage; they are the children of a certain very select sect, and are set apart from their infancy for special religious purposes. Recognized by a peculiarity of complexion, and certain other signs, such a child is known as what is vulgarly termed a Toda, from birth. Every third year, each of them must repair to a certain place for a certain period of time, where each of them must meet; their “dirt” is but a mask, such as a sannyāsin puts on in public in obedience to his vow; their cattle are, for the most part, devoted to sacred uses; and, though their places of worship have never been trodden by a profane foot, they nevertheless exist, and perhaps rival the most splendid pagodas — *gopuras* — known to Europeans. The Badagas are their special vassals, and — as has been truly remarked — worship them as half-deities; for their birth and mysterious powers entitle them to such a distinction.

The reader may rest assured that any statements concerning them, that clash with the little that is above given, are false. No missionary will ever catch one with his

¹ See *Indian Sketches: Life in the East*, by William L.D. O'Grady; also Appleton's *New American Cyclopaedia*, etc.

bait, nor any Badaga betray them, though he were cut to pieces. They are a people who fulfil a certain high purpose, and whose secrets are inviolable.

Furthermore, the Todas are not the only such mysterious tribe in India. We have named several in a preceding chapter, but how many are there besides these, that will remain unnamed, unrecognized, and yet ever present!



Blavatsky to the Editor of “The Spiritualist”

First published in *The Spiritualist*, London, April 5, 1878, pp. 161-62.
Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, I p. 353.

Sir,

I have read the communications of “H.M.” in your paper of the 8th inst. I would not have mentioned the “Todas” at all in my book, if I had not read a very elaborate octavo work in 271 pages, by William E. Marshall, Lieut.-Col. of Her Majesty’s Bengal Staff Corps, entitled, *A Phrenologist Among the Todas*, copiously illustrated with photographs of the squalid and filthy beings to whom “H.M.” refers. Though written by a staff officer, assisted “by the Rev. Friedrich Metz, of the Basel Missionary Society, who had spent upwards of twenty years of labours” among them, and “the only European able to speak the obscure Toda tongue,” the book is so full of misrepresentations — though both writers appear to be sincere — that I wrote what I did.

What I said I knew to be true, and I do not retract a single word. If neither “H.M.” nor Lieut. -Col. Marshall, nor the Rev. Mr. Metz have penetrated the secret that lies behind the dirty huts of the aborigines they have seen, that is their misfortune, not my fault.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

New York, March 18th, 1878

First published in *The Spiritualist*, London, 12 April 1878.
Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, I pp. 354-59.

Sir,

For my answer to the sneer of your correspondent “H.M.” about my opinion of the Todas¹ a few lines sufficed. I only cared to say that what I have written in *Isis Unveiled* was written after reading Colonel Wm. E. Marshall’s *A Phrenologist among the Todas*, and in consequence of what, whether justly or not, I believe to be the erroneous statements of that author. Writing about Oriental psychology, its phenomena and practitioners, as I did, I would have been ludicrously wanting in common sense if I had not anticipated such denials and contradictions as those of “H.M.” from every side. How would it profit the seeker after this Occult knowledge to face danger, privations, and obstacles of every kind to gain it, if, after attaining his end, he should not have facts to relate of which the profane were ignorant? A pretty set of critics the ordinary travellers or observers, even though what Dr. Carpenter euphemistically calls a “scientific officer,” or “distinguished civilian,” when, confessedly every European unfurnished with some mystical passport, is debarred from entering any orthodox Brahman’s house, or the inner precincts of a pagoda. How we poor Theosophists should tremble before the scorn of those modern Daniels when the cleverest of them has never been able to explain the commonest “tricks” of Hindu jugglers, to say nothing of the phenomena of the Fakirs! These very *savants* answer the testimony of Spir-

¹ *The Spiritualist*, 8th March

itualists with an equally lofty scorn, and resent as a personal affront the invitation to even attend a *séance*.

I should therefore have let the “Todas” question pass, but for the letter of “Late Madras C.S.” in your paper of the 15th I feel bound to answer it, for the writer plainly makes me out to be a liar. He threatens me, moreover, with the thunderbolts that a certain other officer has concealed in his library closet.

It is quite remarkable how a man who resorts to an *alias*, sometimes forgets that he is a gentleman. Perhaps such is the custom in your civilized England, where manners and education are said to be carried to a superlative elegance; but not so in poor, barbarous Russia, which a good portion of your countrymen are just now preparing to strangle (if they can). In my country of Tartaric Cossacks and Kalmucks, a man who sets out to insult another, does not usually hide himself behind a shield. I am sorry to have to say this much, but you have allowed me, without the least provocation, and upon several occasions, to be unstintedly reviled by correspondents, and I am sure that you are too much of a man of honour to refuse me the benefit of an answer.

“Late Madras C.S.” sides with Mrs. Showers in the insinuation that I never was in India at all. This reminds me of a calumny of last year, originating with “spirits” speaking through a celebrated medium at Boston, and finding credit in many quarters. It was, that I was *not* a Russian, did not even speak that language, but was merely a French adventuress. So much for the infallibility of some of the sweet “angels”! Surely, I will neither go to the trouble of exhibiting to any of my masked detractors, of this or the other world, my passports *viséed* by the Russian embassies half a dozen times, on my way to India and back. Nor will I demean myself to show the stamped envelopes of letters received by me in different parts of India. *Such* an accusation makes me simply laugh, for my word is, surely, as good as that of anybody else. I will only say that more’s the pity that an English officer, who was “fifteen years in the district,” knows less of the Todas than I, who, he pretends, never was in India at all. He calls *gopura* a “tower” of the pagoda. Why not the roof, or anything else, as well? *Gopura* is the sacred pylon, the pyramidal gateway by which the pagoda is entered; and yet I have repeatedly heard the people of Southern India call the pagoda itself a *gopura*. It may be a careless mode of expression employed among the vulgar; but when we come to consult the authority of the best Indian lexicographers we find it accepted. In John Shakespear’s *Hindustani-English Dictionary*¹ the word *gopura* is rendered as “an idol temple of the Hindus.” Has “Late Madras C.S.,” or any of his friends, ever climbed up into the interior, so as to know who or what is concealed there? If not, then perhaps his fling at me was a trifle premature. I am sorry to have shocked the sensitiveness of such a philological purist, but, really, I do not see why, when speaking of the temples of the Todas — whether they exist or not — even a Brahman Guru might not say that they had their *gopuras*. Perhaps he, or some other brilliant authority in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, will favour us with the etymology of the word? Does the first syllable, *go* or *gu*, relate to the *roundness* of these “towers,” as my critic calls them (for the word *go* does mean something round),

¹ Edition of 1849, p. 1727

or to *gopa*, a cowherd, which gave its name to a Hindu caste, and was one of the names of Krishna, *go-pāla*, meaning the cowherd? Let these critics carefully read Colonel Marshall's work, and see whether the pastoral tribe, whom he saw so much, and discovered so little about, whose worship (exoteric, of course) is all embraced in the care of the sacred cows and buffaloes; the distribution of the "divine fluid" — milk; and whose seeming adoration, as the missionaries tell us, is so great for their buffaloes, that they call them the "gift of God," could not be said to have their *gopu-ras*, though the latter were but a cattle-pen, a *tiriêri*, the *mand*, in short, into which the phrenological explorer crawled alone by night with infinite pains and — neither saw nor found *anything!* And because he found nothing he concludes they have *no* religion, *no* idea of God, *no* worship. About as reasonable an inference as Dr. W.B. Carpenter might come to if he had crawled into Mrs. Showers' *séance-room* some night when all the "angels" and their guests had fled, and straightway reported that among Spiritualists there are neither mediums nor phenomena.

Colonel Marshall I find far less dogmatic than his admirers. Such cautious phrases as "I believe," "I could not ascertain," "I believe it to be true," and the like, show his desire to find out the truth, but scarcely prove conclusively that he has found it. At best it only comes to this, that Colonel Marshall believes one thing to be true, and I look upon it differently. He credits his friend the missionary, and I believe my friend the Brahman, who told me what I have written. Besides, I explicitly state in my book:¹

. . . as soon as their [the Todas]² solitude was profaned by the avalanche of civilization . . . the Todas began moving away to other parts as unknown and more inaccessible than the Nilgiri hills had formerly been.

The Todas, therefore, of whom my Brahman friend spoke, and whom Captain W.L.D. O'Grady, late manager of the Madras Branch Bank at Ootacamund, tells me he has seen specimens of, are not the degenerate remnants of the tribe whose phrenological bumps were measured by Colonel Marshall. And yet, even what the latter writes of these, I, from personal knowledge, affirm to be in many particulars inaccurate. I may be regarded by my critics as over-credulous, but this is surely no reason why I should be treated as a liar, whether by late or living Madras authorities of the "C.S." Neither Captain O'Grady, who was born at Madras and was for a time stationed on the Nilgiri Hills, nor I, recognized the individuals photographed in Colonel Marshall's book as Todas. Those we saw wore their dark brown hair very long, and were much fairer than the Badagas, or any other Hindus, in neither of which particulars do they resemble Colonel Marshall's types. "H.M." says:

The Todas are brown, coffee-coloured, like most other natives.

But turning to Appleton's *New American Cyclopaedia*,³ we read:

These people are of a *light complexion*, having strongly-marked Jewish features, and have been supposed by many to be one of the lost tribes.

¹ See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, pp. 614, 615; [see above.]

² [Square brackets in this article are H.P. Blavatsky's own. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

³ Vol. XII, p. 173

“H.M.” assures us that the places inhabited by the Todas are not infested by venomous serpents or tigers; but the same *Cyclopaedia* remarks that:

The base of these mountains . . . is clothed with a dense forest swarming with wild animals of all descriptions, among which elephants and tigers are numerous.

But the “Late” (defunct? — is your correspondent a disembodied angel?) “Madras C.S.” attains to the sublimity of the ridiculous when, with biting irony in winding up, he says:

All good spirits, of whatever degree, astral or elementary, . . . prevent his [Captain R.F. Burton’s] ever meeting with *Isis* — rough might be the unveiling!

Surely — unless that military Nemesis should tax the hospitality of some American newspaper, conducted by politicians — he could never be rougher than this Madras Grandison! And then, the idea of suggesting that, after having contradicted and made sport of the greatest authorities of Europe and America, to begin with Max Müller and end with the Positivists, in both my volumes, I should be appalled by Captain Burton, or the whole lot of captains in Her Majesty’s service — though each carried an Armstrong gun on his shoulder and a *mitrailleuse*¹ in his pocket — is positively superb! Let them reserve their threats and terrors for my Christian countrymen.

Any moderately equipped sciolist (and the more empty-headed, the easier) might tear *Isis* to shreds, in the estimation of the vulgar, with his sophisms and presumably authoritative analysis, but would that prove him to be right, and me wrong? Let all the records of medial phenomena, rejected, falsified, slandered, and ridiculed, and of mediums terrorized, for thirty years past, answer for me. I, at least, am not of the kind to be bullied into silence by such tactics, as “Late Madras” may in time discover; nor will he ever find me skulking behind a *nom de plume* when I have insults to offer. I always have had, as I now have, and trust ever to retain the courage of my opinions, however unpopular or erroneous they may be considered; and there are not Showers enough in Great Britain to quench the ardour with which I stand by my convictions.

There is but one way to account for the tempest which, for four months, has raged in *The Spiritualist* against Colonel Olcott and myself, and that is expressed in the familiar French proverb — “*Quand on veut tuer son chien, on dit qu’il est enragé.*”²

H.P. BLAVATSKY

New York, March 24th, 1878



¹ [Type of volley gun with multiple barrels of rifle calibre that can fire either multiple rounds at once, or several in rapid succession.]

² [*i.e.*, if one wants to put down his dog, he just says that it has rabies.]