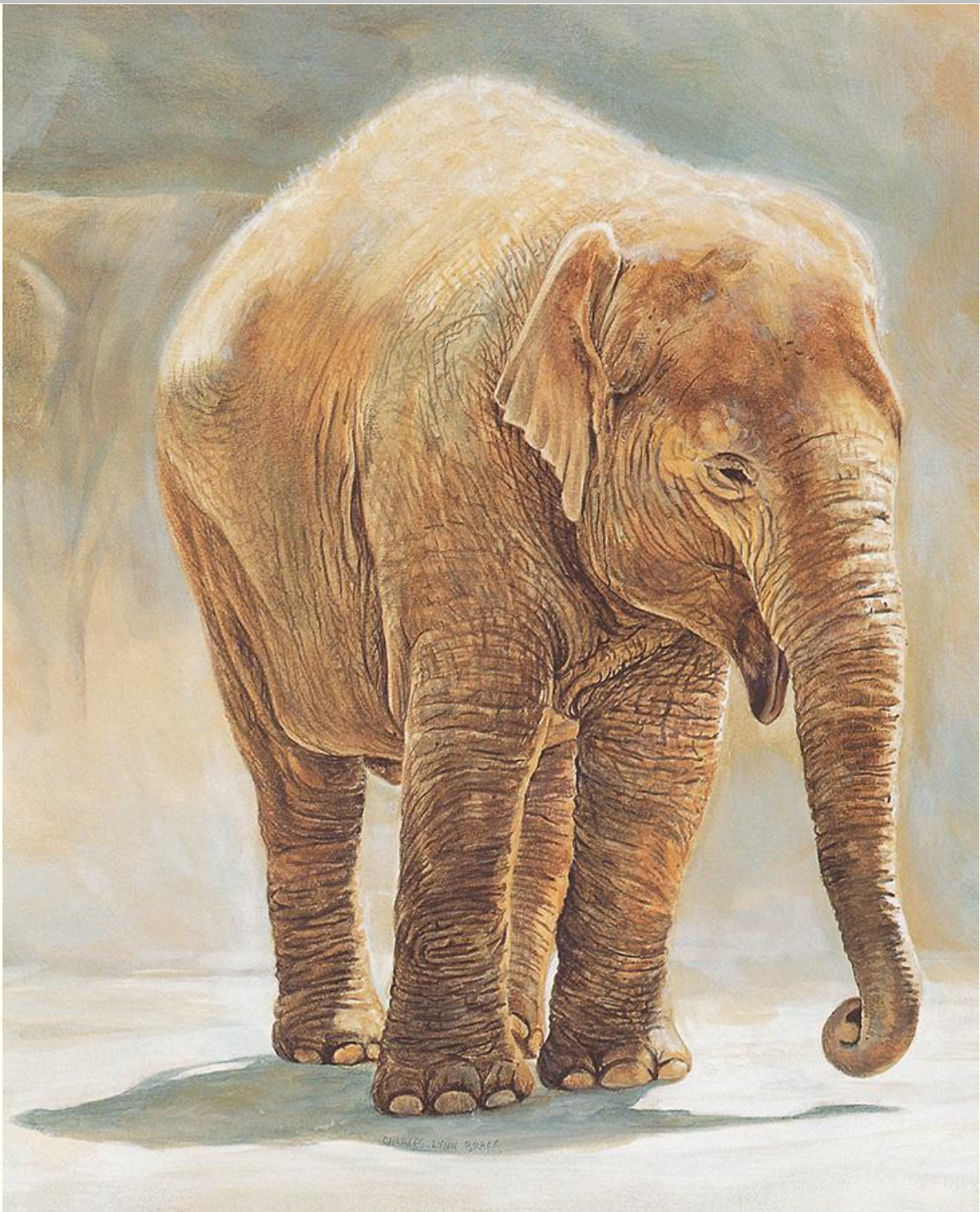


*How Theosophy rekindled  
True Brotherhood on the  
Sacred soil of India*



## *Abstract and train of thoughts*<sup>1</sup>

### **How Theosophy rekindled True Brotherhood on the sacred soil of India**

#### **And brought about a rapprochement between Brahmin and Buddhist Theosophists.**

The seeds of the True Brotherhood of Man, not of brother-religionists or sectarians only, have been finally sown on the sacred soil of India. 4

No Theosophist has ever spoken against the teachings of Christ, no more than he did against those of Krishna, Buddha, or Shankaracharya. 5

If Europeans cry against Brahmanical tyranny, caste, infant and widow marriage, and call every religious dogmatic rule idiotic, pernicious, and devilish, why should we not denounce the abuses and defects of Christian theology and sacerdotalism? 5

The Christian missionaries degrade the pure ethics of Christ by their Jesuitical and deceptive attitude towards the natives by proselytising and enticing them to an inferior kind of worship. 7



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<sup>1</sup> Title page illustration: Indian Young Elephant by James Lynn Bragg.

# How Theosophy rekindled True Brotherhood on the sacred soil of India

## And brought about a rapprochement between Brahmin and Buddhist Theosophists.

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The race of mankind would perish, did they cease to aid each other. From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid, have a right to ask it from their fellow-mortals. No one who holds the power of granting, can refuse it without guilt. — *Sir Walter Scott*.<sup>1</sup>

Several correspondents and enquirers have lately asked us “What good have you done in India?” To answer it would be easy. One has but to ask the doubters to read the January Number, 1888, of the Madras *Theosophist* — our official organ — and, turning to the report in it on the Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society, whose delegates meet yearly at Adyar, see for himself. Many and various are the good works done by the 127 active branches of the Theosophical Society scattered throughout the length and breadth of India. But as most of those works are of a moral and reformatory character, the ethical results upon the members are difficult to describe. Free Sanskrit schools have been opened wherever it was possible; gratuitous classes are held; free dispensaries — homeopathic and allopathic — established for the poor, and many of our Theosophists feed and clothe the needy.

All this, however, might have been done by people without belonging to our Brotherhood, we may be told. True; and much the same has been done before the T.S. appeared in India, and from time immemorial. Yet such work has been hitherto done, and such help given by the wealthier members of one caste or religious community exclusively to the poorer members of the same caste and religious denomination. No Brahmin would have held brotherly intercourse even with a Brahmin of another division of his own high caste, let alone with a Jain or Buddhist. A Parsee would only protect and defend his own brother-follower of Zoroaster. A Jain would feed [130] and take care of a lame and sick animal, but would turn away from a Hindu of the Vaishnava or any other sect. He would spend thousands on the “Hospital for Animals” where bullocks, old crippled tigers, and dogs are nursed, but would not approach a fellow-man in need unless he was a Jain like himself. But now, since the

<sup>1</sup> [Sir Walter Scott, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet FRSE FSA Scot, 1771–1832, Scottish historical novelist, poet, playwright, and historian. Many of his works remain classics of both English-language literature and of Scottish literature.]



advent of the Theosophical Society, things in India are, slowly it is true, yet gradually, becoming otherwise.

We have, then, to show rather the good moral effect produced by the Society in general, and each branch of it in its own district on the population, than to boast of works of charity, for which India has ever been noted. We shall not enter even into a disquisition upon the benefits to be reaped by the establishment of a Sanskrit, or rather an Oriental and European library at Adyar, which, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of the President-Founder and his colleagues, begins now to assume quite hopeful proportions. But we will draw at once the attention of the enquirers to the ethical aspect of the question; for all the visible or objective works, whether of charity or any other kind, must pale before the results achieved through the influence of the chief universal, ethical aim and idea of our Society.

**The seeds of the True Brotherhood of Man, not of brother-religionists or sectarians only, have been finally sown on the sacred soil of India.**

Yes; the seeds of a true *Universal Brotherhood* of man, not of brother-religionists or sectarians only, have been finally sown on the sacred soil of India! The letter that follows these lines proves it most undeniably. These seeds have been thrown since 1881 into that soil, which, for thousands of years, has stubbornly and systematically ejected everything foreign to its system of caste, and refused to assimilate any heterogeneous element alien to Brahmanism, the chief master of the soil of Āryāvarta, or to accept any ideas not based upon the Laws of Manu. The Orientalist and the Anglo-Indian, who know something of that tyranny of caste which has hitherto formed an impassable barrier, an almost fathomless gulf between Brahmanism and every other religion, know also of the great hatred of the orthodox “twice born,” the *dwija* Brahmin, to the Buddhist *Nāstika* (the atheist, he who refuses to recognise the Brāhmanical gods and idols); and [130] they, above all others, will realize, even if they do not fully appreciate, the importance of what has now been achieved by the Theosophical Society. It took several years of incessant efforts to bring about even the beginning of a *rapprochement* between the Brahmin and Buddhist Theosophists. A few years ago the President-Founder of the Society, Colonel H.S. Olcott, had almost succeeded in making a breach in the Chinese wall of Brahmanism. It was an unprecedented event; and it created a great stir among the natives, a sincere enthusiasm among the “Heathens,” and much malicious opposition, gossip, and slanderous denial from those who, above all men, ought to work for the idea of Universal Brotherhood preached by their Master — the *good* Christian Missionaries. Colonel Olcott had succeeded in arranging a kind of preliminary reconciliation between the Brāhmanical Theosophical Society of Tinnevely and their brother Theosophists and neighbours of Ceylon. Several Buddhists had been brought from Lanka, led by the President, carrying with them, as an emblem of peace and reconciliation, a sprout of the sacred *rājā* (king) cocoon-tree. This actually was to be planted in one of the courts of the Tinnevely pagoda, as a living and growing witness to the event. It was an extraordinary and imposing sight that day, namely October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1881, when, before an immense crowd numbering several thousands of Hindus and other natives, the Delegates of the Buddhist Theosophical Societies of Ceylon, met with their brother Theosophists of the

Tinnevelly Branch and their Brahmin priests of the pagoda. For over 2,000 years an irreconcilable religious feud had raged between the two creeds and their respective followers. And now they were brought once more together on Hindu soil, and even within the thrice sacred, and to all strangers almost impenetrable, precincts of a Hindu temple, which would have been, only a few days previous to the occurrence, regarded as irretrievably desecrated had even the very shadow of a Buddhist *Nāstika* fallen upon its outward walls. Signs of the times, indeed! The cocoanut sprout was planted with great ceremony, and to the sounds of the music of the pagoda orchestra. After [132] that, year after year, Hindus and Buddhists met together at Adyar, at the Annual Conventions for the Anniversary Meetings of the Theosophical Parent Society; but no Brahmin Theosophist had hitherto returned the visit to Ceylon to his Buddhist Brethren. The ice of the centuries had been split, but not sufficiently broken to permit anyone to dive deep enough under it to call this an entire and full reconciliation. But the impressive and long-expected and wished-for event has at last taken place All honour and glory to the son of Brahmins — the proudest; perhaps, of all India, the Northern Brahmins of Kashmir — who was the first to place the sacred duties of Universal Brotherhood above the prejudices, as potent as they are narrow, of caste and custom. We publish below extracts from his own address, which appeared in *Sarasavisandaresa*, the Singhalese organ of the Buddhists of Ceylon, and let the eloquent narrative speak for itself.

**No Theosophist has ever spoken against the teachings of Christ, no more than he did against those of Krishna, Buddha, or Shankaracharya.**

**If Europeans cry against Brahmanical tyranny, caste, infant and widow marriage, and call every religious dogmatic rule idiotic, pernicious, and devilish, why should we not denounce the abuses and defects of Christian theology and sacerdotalism?**

But after reading the extracts let not our critics rise once more against the policy of the Theosophical Society, and take the opportunity of calling it intolerant and uncharitable *only as regards one creed, namely Christianity* because facts will be found in this *Address* which speak loudly against its vicious system. No Theosophist has ever spoken against the teachings of Christ, no more than he did against those of Krishna, Buddha, or Shankaracharya; and willingly would he treat every Christian as a Brother, if the Christian himself would not persistently turn his back on the Theosophist. But a man would lose every right to the appellation of a member of the Universal Brotherhood, were he to keep silent in the face of the crying bigotry and falseness of all the theological, or rather sacerdotal, systems — the world over. We, Europeans, expatiate loudly and cry against Brāhmanical tyranny, against caste, against infant and widow marriage, and call every religious dogmatic rule (save our own) idiotic, pernicious, and devilish, and do it orally as in print. Why should not we confess and even denounce the abuses and defects of Christian theology and sacerdotalism as well? How dare we say to our “brother” — Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye, and refuse to [133] consider “*the beam that is in our own eye*”? Christians have to choose — either they “shall not judge that they be not judged,” or if they do — and one has but to read the missionary and clerical organs to see how cruel, un-

christian, and uncharitable *their* judgments are — they *must be prepared to be judged in their turn*.

These are portions of an address delivered at the Theosophical Hall, Colombo, on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1888, by Pundit Gopi Nath, of Lahore.<sup>1</sup>

In the address referred to, Pundit Nath, a Kashmiri Brahmin, expresses his deep gratitude to the T.S. for the courage and impetus it gave him to over-leap the barriers of caste and custom in coming to the Buddhists of Ceylon. He pleads brotherhood between the two related religions of Buddhism and Brahmanism, while urging them to respect their own religions and not to succumb to missionary attack upon the T.S. and its founders.

“It is the rule of the T.S. that its members, whatever their creed may be, shall treat the religions of other members with deference; and its principle is that all religions have some truth underlying them. . . . But between Brāhmanism and Buddhism we may have something much greater than mere toleration — we must have the deepest mutual esteem and reverence, for all learned people know that there is but little difference between our philosophies.”

Why then, is there so much bitter opposition between them, he asks? He attributes these quarrels and riots to the most ignorant and uneducated sources, people who do not appreciate the “bonds of mutual esteem.”

Further the pundit urges the Ceylonese Buddhists boldly to respect their own ancestral faith rather than adopt Christian names and customs, merely in hope of becoming respected by Europeans. This, he adds, is never the real outcome anyway. He cites several examples of a caste system, an extravagance and narrow-mindedness of a far worse nature among these very criticizers of their culture. Special warning is given to the people not to entrust their women and children into the hands of missionaries.

These foreigners do not come here and spend money for *our* benefit; no — they have one, and only one, great object always in view, and that is to make proselytes. However fair may be the outward appearance of their work, that design underlies everything they do, like a snake hidden under a flower, and for this object they will hesitate at no misrepresentation of your religion . . . [134] →

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<sup>1</sup> See the Ceylon paper, the *Sarasavisandaresa*, of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1888.

**The Christian missionaries degrade the pure ethics of Christ by their Jesuitical and deceptive attitude towards the natives by proselytising and enticing them to an inferior kind of worship.**

This sincere and unpretentious address shows better than pages written by ourselves could, the work that the Theosophical Society has done in India, as also the reason why the missionaries in that country bear to us such a mortal hatred, hence — why they slander us. They degrade the pure ethics of Christ by their Jesuitical and deceptive attitude towards the natives; and we protect the latter against such deception by telling them:

There is but ONE Eternal Truth, one universal, infinite and changeless Spirit of Love, Truth and Wisdom, impersonal, therefore bearing a different name with every nation, one Light for all, in which the whole Humanity lives and moves, and has its being. Like the spectrum in optics, giving multicoloured and various rays, which are yet caused by one and the same sun, so theologies and sacerdotal systems are many. But the Universal religion *can only be one*, if we accept the real, primitive meaning of the root of that word. We, Theosophists, so accept it; and therefore say: We are all brothers — by the laws of Nature, of birth, and death, as also by the laws of our utter helplessness from birth to death in this world of sorrow and deceptive illusions. Let us, then, love, help, and mutually defend each other against this spirit of deception; and while holding to that which each of us accepts as his ideal of truth and reality — *i.e.*, to the religion which suits each of us best — let us unite ourselves to form a practical “nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF RACE, CREED, OR COLOUR.”

