

# Review of Blavatsky and Her Teachers

## Letter from Mr. Daniel Caldwell

### Parts Two and Three

#### II. "Maitreya" and "Serapis"

In Chapter 44 entitled "Maitreya", J.O.F. [Jean Overton Fuller] tries to identify the individual she calls "Maitreya" (the Buddha to be) with an adept mentioned by Colonel Olcott:

It was while he [Olcott] was trying to do something for a blind man, Badrinath Babu, with his magnetic passes, that the latter began to say he saw a 'shining man', though it was through closed eyelids. He then described what seemed the unlikely person (113).

At this point J.O.F. quotes Colonel Olcott's own narrative:

...he [Badrinath]...described to me an individual with blue eyes, light flowing hair, light beard, and European features and complexion...the description...fitted accurately a real personage, the Teacher of our Teachers, a *Paramaguru*,...who had given me a small colored sketch of himself in New York....<sup>17</sup>

#### J.O.F. comments:

No name is named.... There is, however, in the Theosophical Society a legend that a portrait of Maitreya was precipitated to Olcott and is possessed at Adyar. It is, moreover, asserted that the features and colouring are as described above (113).

Who is this individual "with blue eyes, light flowing hair...and European features"? J.O.F. writes that "no name is named" in Colonel Olcott's narrative. Then she attempts

to identify him as "Maitreya!" But there is evidence to show that this individual "with European...complexion" is Serapis (who is written about elsewhere in J.O.F.'s book but who is not identified by her with the "real personage" seen by Badrinath).

J.O.F. could have consulted Howard Murphet's *Hammer on the Mountain*<sup>18</sup>, where Olcott's diary for 21 April 1883 is quoted: "Badrinath saw S...again."

Who is "S...?" For an answer to this question, I submit the following extracts:

#### (1) Letter of Morya to H.S. Olcott<sup>19</sup>:

...once you had determined to make of India your new home, it was in compliance with the direct orders of our beloved Lord and Chief—him whom you know under the name of S.—and Maha Sahib that you sailed *not sooner but later than you ought to*.

#### (2) Extracts from H.S. Olcott's diary for 1878<sup>20</sup>:

*October 22. Narayan left watch—and in came Sahib [Morya]. The latter with orders from Serapis to complete all by the first days of December....*

*November 14. ...Morya walked in.... Came with definite orders from Serapis. Have to go [to India]; the latest from 15 to 20th Dec....*

#### (3) "Editor's Answer" by H.P.B.<sup>21</sup>:

...among the group of Initiates to which his [A.P. Sinnett's] mystical correspondent [Koot Hoomi] is allied,

are two of European race, and...one [Initiate, Serapis?] who is that Teacher's [Koot Hoomi's?] superior is also of that [European] origin, being half a Slavonian in his 'present incarnation', as he himself wrote to Colonel Olcott in New York. [Underlining added.]

(4) A note by K.H. to A.P. Sinnett<sup>22</sup>:

This [healing] is all done thro' the power of a lock of hair sent by our beloved younger Chohan to H.S.O.

What is one to make of J.O.F.'s reference to "a legend" about a portrait of Maitreya given to Olcott? What is her source for this "legend"? Is this just a "rumor" J.O.F. has heard bandied about in Theosophical circles?

In the *Old Diary Leaves* extract previously quoted, Colonel Olcott states that "the Teacher of our Teachers" ("S...") had given Olcott "a small colored sketch of himself in New York."

Is this "small colored sketch" identical with the one described by C. Jinarajadasa?<sup>23</sup>

...a picture of the Master Serapis...is among these early letters. It is painted on thin paper, and its size is 3 1/2 by 2 5/8 inches. It is drawn in pencil, and painted with a brush in a brown which is now faded. The background is blue. The picture shows an ascetic face, somewhat resembling Cardinal Newman's, with brown flowing hair and short rounded beard....

Is this paragraph by Jinarajadasa the source for the "legend" J.O.F. writes about?

Are there any other descriptions of Serapis that would clearly identify him as the "shining man" seen by Badrinath?

A.P. Sinnett has described Serapis in these words<sup>24</sup>:

I saw K.H. in astral form on the night of 19th of October, 1880—waking up for a moment but immediately afterwards being rendered unconscious again (in the body) and conscious out of the body in the adjacent dressing-room where I saw another of the Brothers afterwards identified with one called 'Serapis' by Olcott—'the youngest of the chohans'."

William Q. Judge gives even more details about Sinnett's "out-of-the-body experience"<sup>25</sup>:

I asked him [Sinnett] about his sight of K.H. and he related this: "He was lying in his bed in India one night, when suddenly awakening, he found K.H. standing by his bed. He rose half up, when K.H. put his hand on his head, causing him to fall at once back on the pillow. He then, he says, found himself out of his body, and in the next room, talking to another adept whom he describes as an English or European, with light hair, fair, and of great beauty. This is the one Olcott described to me in 1876 and called by name—. Please erase that when read.... S. [Sinnett] says he [the adept] is very high...."

In summary, J.O.F.'s attempt (to identify "Maitreya" with the "shining man" seen by Badrinath) is in error. I should also note here that she makes erroneous statements about Serapis elsewhere in her biography. I will document these in a later letter.

## REFERENCE SOURCES

<sup>17</sup> Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The History of the Theosophical Society*. Second Series, 1878-83. Second edn. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1941), 431 [1974 reprint].

<sup>18</sup> Howard Murphet, *Hammer on the Mountain: Life of Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907)*. (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), 163.

<sup>19</sup> *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom (Second Series)*. Transcribed and annotated by C. Jinârâjadasa. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1925 and Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1926), Letter 27, p.68 [1977 reprint].

<sup>20</sup> *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1874-1878*. Volume I. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. First edition (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1966), 414-15, 420 [revised edition of *The Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky*, edited by A. Trevor Barker. Volume I (1874-1879). London: Rider & Co., 1933].

<sup>21</sup> *Lucifer*, October 1888; in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, 1888-1889*. Volume X. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. First edn. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1964), 153.

<sup>23</sup> *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom (Second Series)*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H.* Transcribed, compiled, and with an introduction by A.T. Barker. Second edn. (London: Rider & Company, 1926), 10. Same page in third edn. (London: Rider & Company, 1926), 10. Same page in third edn. [Edited by Christmas Humphreys and Elsie Benjamin. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1962.]

<sup>26</sup> W.O. Judge. *Letters That Have Helped Me* (Los Angeles and New York: The Theosophy Company, 1946) 196.

### III. A Partial List of Other Errors in J.O.F.'s Biography

(a) On page 66, J.O.F. writes:

...it [reincarnation] did not figure in *Isis Unveiled*, save in a few lines dismissing it..."She [H.P.B.] told Olcott that the first her Master told her about it [reincarnation] was when they reached India, in 1879. [Underlining added.]

J.O.F.'s source for this latter statement is: "ODL, I, p. 280." If the reader turns to that page in volume I of *Old Diary Leaves [First Series: America 1874-1878]*. Second edn. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1941), he will find what Colonel Olcott actually wrote:

She [H.P.B.] told Mr. Walter R. Old—who is my informant—that she was not taught the doctrine of Reincarnation until 1879—when we were in India. I willingly accept that statement....

Therefore, contrary to what J.O.F. writes, H.P.B. did not tell Olcott....!

J.O.F. ends "her" account of "reincarnation in *Isis*" with a question and an answer:

Why was the mistake in *Isis Unveiled* allowed to occur? My guess is that... (66)

J.O.F.'s "guess" is in contradiction to the written answers to this very question given

by H.P.B., Koot Hoomi and Morya! The reader can find a summary of their views on pages 46 to 50 of the "Introductory" to volume I of *Isis Unveiled* [H.P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings: 1877: Isis Unveiled*. Edited by Boris de Zirkoff (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972.)

(b) On page 130, J.O.F. writes:

...in August, 1888, a letter was precipitated to Olcott by Koot Hoomi, in which,...[K.H.] says [P. Sreenivasrow] ...has made mistakes..."in helping thrust out of the Headquarters house one who deserved a more charitable treatment...tell my devoted though mistaken 'son' that it was most theosophical to give her protection, most untheosophical and selfish to drive her away.

J.O.F. continues:

I suggest the reference is to the expulsion of Madame Coulomb, ...the 'son' being Brown, whose part in the events cut him off from his Master.

This may sound plausible until one looks carefully at what K.H. says:

P. Sreenivasrow...has made occasional mistakes, e.g., once recently, in helping thrust out of the Headquarters house, one who deserved a more charitable treatment....<sup>26</sup> [Underlining added]

It is hard to believe (at least for me!) that K.H. is referring to the expulsion of Madame Coulomb (an event that happened more than four years prior to the receipt of this K.H. letter) when the Master writes "once recently..."!!

J.O.F. thinks that the 'son' is W.T. Brown. From reading K.H.'s words, I

understand the phrase "my devoted tho' mistaken 'son'" to refer to P. Sreenivasrow!

(c) On page 142, J.O.F. writes:

This [Mahatma Letter No. 66, 2nd ed., 366-70] appears to have been the last Mahatmic letter received by Sinnett.

Well, as the saying goes, "appearances can be deceiving!" Sinnett received at least three more "Mahatmic letters" (MLs, numbers 63, 64, and 65) after the receipt of ML no. 66.

(d) On page 75, J.O.F. writes:

[Concerning the 'cup and saucer' picnic incident]...The Sinnetts' servants packed six hampers, for Madame Blavatsky and Olcott, the Sinnetts and Major Henderson and another woman (Mrs. Henderson?)

No, not Mrs. Henderson. Mrs. Reed. There are several sources for this tidbit of information. For example, see Olcott's account of the picnic in *Damodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement* [Compiled and ann. by Sven Eek (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1965)], 156.

(e) On the same page [75], J.O.F. writes:

...Mrs. Sinnett told one of them [the servants] to go to a nearby brewery. Olcott wrote a note for him to take...

But in *The Occult World* [9th edition, (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1969), 65], A.P. Sinnett pens a somewhat different account:

The only thing to be done was to send to a brewery, the nearest building about a mile off, and ask for water. I wrote a pencil note and a coolie went off with the empty bottles. [Underlining added]

(f) On page 81, J.O.F. writes:

How had Olcott blundered? He had received a letter from H.M. Durand...Olcott had written a jubilant but unguarded letter about this to an acquaintance who had, without his permission, made it available to *The Times of India*, where its publication had sparked new vexations.

Is this an accurate account of what actually happened? I think not. Consult the "article" entitled "The 'Purloined' Letter from Col. H.S. Olcott to Damodar" on pages 155-59 and the following "Letter to *The Times of India* (by Damodar) on pages 159-60 of the book *Damodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*.

(g) On pages 65-66, J.O.F. writes:

On 29 March [1879], Madame Blavatsky told Mooljee to fetch a buggy.... They came to the sea-shore and drove along it. Finally, they arrived at a private estate with a rose garden in the front and a bungalow with spacious verandas in the background.... He [Mooljee] watched Madame Blavatsky walk up to the front door, and saw it opened to her by a very tall Indian, dressed entirely in white...the tall Indian in white...gave [a bunch of roses] to Madame Blavatsky ...Back home, she handed the roses to Olcott, telling him Morya had said they were for him....

Just after this, Olcott was working in his office when Babula came to say a gentleman had called and would like to see him in Madame Blavatsky's bungalow...He went in and found waiting for him, in the flesh, the Master [Morya]...After speaking...he [Morya] left, on his horse.... [Underlining added]

Then on the next page (67), J.O.F. writes:

On 4 April 1879, Madame Blavatsky and Olcott set out, at Morya's suggestion, for the Karli cave temple.... [Underlining added]

From this narrative, some readers may think that Morya's visit on horseback to see Olcott and Blavatsky occurred sometime between 29 March and 4 April 1879, especially when J.O.F. uses the phrase "just after this." But the Master's visit to the T.S. Headquarters at Bombay occurred on 15 July 1879. See [*H.P.B.*] *Collected Writings (1879-1880)*, volume II [(Wheaton, Ill: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1967)], xxviii. I have verified this from the microfilm of Olcott's 1879 diary.

(h) In Chapter 33, entitled "The Arrival of the Coulombs", J.O.F. writes (72):

On 28 January [1880], the Coulombs arrived [at Bombay].

In the endnote (245-246) to this sentence, J.O.F. comments:

Ibid. [*Old Diary Leaves. Second Series, 1878-83* (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1900), p. 147. Olcott writes 28 June, but on 28 June Madame Blavatsky and he were...in Ceylon. Olcott takes all his dates from his diary, and the abbreviation 'Jan' can look much like 'June'."

If one carefully reads page 147 where Olcott mentions the "June" date, and then compares that section with the dates mentioned at the top of pages 143 and 144, one can see that "June" is obviously a mistake! But J.O.F.'s date of 28 January

1880 is also wrong! A careful reading of these pages (just cited) indicates that the date is 28 March 1880. Further confirmation is to be found in, at least, two different primary sources:

- (1) Emma Coulomb's pamphlet<sup>27</sup> where she writes:

...our journey from Galle (Ceylon) to Bombay...we were not able to leave before the 24th March, 1880 arriving at Bombay...on the 28th of the same month. (7)

- (2) Colonel Olcott's handwritten diary entry for 28 March 1880 also confirms the date of the Coulombs' arrival at Bombay.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some of these 8 mistakes (under III a-h) are somewhat minor and even trivial but they need to be considered (and corrected) for a second edition.

I am compiling a further list of minor errors. And unfortunately, there are several other major mistakes that mar this latest biography of H.P. Blavatsky. I will be working on the documentation for these corrections and hope to send it in a few months.

These criticisms are offered in a friendly spirit. We stand on the shoulders of those we criticize....

Best wishes,

[signed]  
Daniel H. Caldwell

P.O. Box 1844  
Tucson, Arizona 85702  
U.S.A.

## REFERENCE SOURCES

<sup>26</sup> *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, 1870-1900, First Series*. Transcribed and compiled by C. Jinarâjadâsa. Fifth edn. (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1964), Letter 19, 26. Quote found on p. 47 [1973 reprint].

<sup>27</sup> *Some Account of My Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884* (London: Elliott Stock, 1885).

# Theosophical History



**A Quarterly Journal of Research**

**ISSN 0951-497X**

**Volume 3, No. 4    October 1990**

**\$3.00**