

WHY I DO NOT RETURN TO INDIA

This Open Letter one of the most extraordinary and deeply pathetic documents ever penned by H.P.B., may be found among the original Manuscripts in the Adyar Archives. Written to the Indian Members of The Theosophical Society in the last year of H. P. B.'s life it is like a karmic vision that both interprets the past and throws a flood of light upon the future It embodies a message from H. P. B.'s long-suffering heart to all Theosophists without distinction. This Open Letter contains declarations very rarely made, and pronouncements which only those will understand who are firmly rooted in the Theosophical philosophy and will not mistake them for "claims," "dogmas" or delusions of grandeur. Facts and attitudes spoken of in this Letter afford a background of meaning against which may be measured various crises which took place in later years within the framework of the T.S.

N. D. Khandalavala, quoting some short passages from this Letter in The Theosophist, Vol. XX October, 1898 pp. 23-24, states that it was at first intended to be circulated to the Indian Members, but "was afterwards, for certain reasons, not published." He was permitted to take a copy of it. With the "climate" prevailing at the time in the Indian T.S., the reasons which Khandalavala does not specify are easy to determine.

There seems to be no reason to doubt the accuracy of a statement by W. E. Coleman in the Religio-Philosophical Journal (Chicago), of September 16, 1893, p. 266, that this Open Letter was sent to India by the intermediary of Bertram Keightley who left London for India, at H.P.B.'s special request, sometime in the Summer of 1890, reaching Bombay August 31, 1890 (The Theosophist, Vol. XII, Suppl. to October, 1890, pp. ii-iii). He was soon elected General Secretary of the newly-formed Indian Section of the T.S. which was chartered Jan. 1, 1891.

The Open Letter which follows is one of the most important items of "source material" available today for the use of the future historian of the Theosophical Movement and its many vicissitudes. It deserves a close study on the part of all students. — Compiler.

TO MY BROTHERS OF ÂRYÂVARTA,

In April, 1890, five years elapsed since I left India

Great kindness has been shown to me by many of my Hindu brethren at various times since I left; especially this year (1890), when, ill almost to death, I have received from several Indian Branches letters of sympathy, and assurances that they had not forgotten her to whom India and the Hindus have been most of her life far dearer than her own Country.

It is, therefore, my duty to explain why I do not return to India and my attitude with regard to the new leaf turned in the history of the T. S. by my being formally placed at the head of the Theosophical Movement in Europe. For it is not solely on account of bad health that I do not return to India. Those who have saved me from death at Adyar, and twice since then, could easily keep me alive there as They do me here. There is a far more serious reason. A line of conduct has been traced for me here, and I have found among the English and Americans what I have so far vainly sought for in India.

In Europe and America, during the last three years I have met with hundreds of men and women who have the courage to avow their conviction of the real existence of the Masters, and who are working for Theosophy on Their lines and under Their guidance, given through my humble self.

In India, on the other hand, ever since my departure, the true spirit of devotion to the Masters and the courage to avow it has steadily dwindled away. At Adyar itself, increasing strife and conflict has raged between personalities; uncalled for and utterly undeserved animosity—almost hatred —has been shown towards me by several members of the staff. There seems to have been something strange and uncanny going on at Adyar, during these last years. No sooner does a European, most Theosophically inclined, most devoted to the Cause, and the personal friend of myself or the President, set his foot in Headquarters, than he becomes forthwith a personal enemy to one or other of us, and what is worse, ends by injuring and deserting the Cause.

Let it be understood at once that I accuse no one. Knowing what I do of the activity of the forces of Kali Yuga, at work to impede and ruin the Theosophical movement, I do not regard those who have become, one after the other, my enemies—and that without any fault of my own—as I might regard them, were it otherwise.

One of the chief factors in the reawakening of Âryâvarta which has been part of the work of the Theosophical Society, was the ideal of the Masters. But owing to want of judgment, discretion, and discrimination, and the liberties taken with Their names and Personalities, great misconception arose concerning Them. I was under the most solemn oath and pledge never to reveal the whole truth to anyone, excepting to those who, like Dâmodar, had been finally selected and called by Them. All that I was then permitted to reveal was, that there existed somewhere such great men; that some of Them were Hindus; that They were learned as none others in all the ancient wisdom of Gupta-Vidyâ, and had acquired all the Siddhis, not as these are represented in tradition and the “blinds” of ancient writings, but as they are in fact and nature; and also that I was a Chela of one of them. However, in the fancy of some Hindus, the most wild and ridiculous fancies soon grew up concerning Them. They were referred to as “Mahâtmas” and still some too enthusiastic friends belittled Them with their strange fancy pictures; our opponents, describing a Mahâtma as a full Jîvanmukta, urged that, as such, He was debarred from holding any communications whatever with persons living in the world. They also maintained that as this is the Kali Yuga, it was impossible that there could be any Mahâtmas at all in our age.

These early misconceptions notwithstanding, the idea of the Masters, and belief in Them, has already brought its good fruit in India. Their chief desire was to preserve the true religious and philosophical spirit of ancient India; to defend the Ancient Wisdom contained in its Darœanas and Upanishads against the systematic assaults of the missionaries; and finally to reawaken the dormant ethical and patriotic spirit in those youths in whom it had almost disappeared owing to college education. Much of this has been achieved by and through the Theosophical Society, in spite of all its mistakes and imperfections.

Had it not been for Theosophy, would India have had her Tukaram Tatya doing now the priceless work he does, and which no one in India ever thought of doing before him? Without the Theosophical Society, would India have ever thought of wrenching from the hands of learned but unspiritual Orientalists the duty of reviving, translating and editing the Sacred Books of the East, of popularizing and selling them at a far cheaper rate, and at the same time in a far more correct form than had ever been done at Oxford? Would our respected and devoted brother Tukaram Tatya himself have ever thought of doing so, had he not joined the Theosophical Society? Would your political Congress itself have ever been a possibility, without the Theosophical Society? Most important of all, one at least among you has fully benefited by it; and if the Society had never given to India but that one future Adept (Dâmodar) who has now the prospect of becoming one day a Mahâtma,

Kali Yuga notwithstanding, that alone would be proof that it was not founded at New York and transplanted to India in vain. Finally, if any one among the three hundred millions of India can demonstrate, proof in

hand, that Theosophy, the T.S., or even my humble self, have been the means of doing the slightest harm, either to the country or any Hindu, that the Founders have been guilty of teaching pernicious doctrines, or offering bad advice—then and then only, can it be imputed to me as a crime that I have brought forward the ideal of the Masters and founded the Theosophical Society.

Aye, my good and never-to-be-forgotten Hindu Brothers, the name alone of the holy Masters, which was at one time invoked with prayers for Their blessings, from one end of India to the other—Their name alone has wrought a mighty change for the better in your land. It is not to Colonel Olcott or to myself that you owe anything, but verily to these names, which, but a few years ago, had become a household word in your mouths.

Thus it was that, so long as I remained at Adyar, things went on smoothly enough, because one or the other of the Masters was almost constantly present among us, and their spirit ever protected the Theosophical Society from real harm. But in 1884, Colonel Olcott and myself left for a visit to Europe, and while we were away the Padri-Coulomb “thunderbolt descended.” I returned in November, and was taken most dangerously ill. It was during that time and Colonel Olcott’s absence in Burma, that the seeds of all future strifes, and—let me say at once—disintegration of the Theosophical Society, were planted by our enemies. What with the Patterson-Coulomb-Hodgson conspiracy, and the faintheartedness of the chief Theosophists, that the Society did not then and there collapse should be a sufficient proof of how it was protected. Shaken in their belief, the fainthearted began to ask: “Why, if the Masters are genuine Mahâtmas, have They allowed such things to take place, or why have they not used Their powers to destroy this plot or that conspiracy, or even this or that man and woman?” Yet it had been explained numberless times that no Adept of the Right Path will interfere with the just workings of Karma. Not even the greatest of Yogis can divert the progress of Karma or arrest the natural results of actions for more than a short period, and even in that case, these results will only reassert themselves later with even tenfold force, for such is the occult law of Karma and the Nidânas.

Nor again will even the greatest of phenomena aid real spiritual progress. We have each of us to win our Moksha or Nirvâna by our own merit, not because a Guru or Deva will help to conceal our shortcomings. There is no merit in having been created an immaculate Deva or in being God; but there is the eternal bliss of Moksha looming forth for the man who becomes as a God and Deity by his own personal exertions. It is the mission of Karma to punish the guilty and not the duty of any Master. But those who act up to Their teaching and live the life of which They are the best exemplars, will never be abandoned by Them and will always find Their beneficent help whenever needed, whether obviously or invisibly. This is of course addressed to those who have not yet quite lost their faith in Masters; those who have never believed, or have ceased to believe in Them, are welcome to their own opinions. No one, except themselves perhaps some day, will be the losers thereby.

As for myself, who can charge me with having acted like an impostor? with having, for instance, taken one single pie from any living soul? with having ever asked for money, or even with having accepted it, notwithstanding that I was repeatedly offered large sums! Those who, in spite of this, have chosen to think otherwise, will have to explain what even my traducers of even the Padri class and Psychical Research Society have been unable to explain to this day, viz., the motive for such fraud. They will have to explain why, instead of taking and making money, I gave away to the Society every penny I earned by writing for the papers, why at the same time I nearly killed myself with overwork and incessant labour year after year, until my health gave way, so that but for my Master’s repeated help, I should have died long ago from the effects of such voluntary hard labour. For the absurd Russian spy theory, if it still finds credit in some idiotic heads, has long ago disappeared, at any rate from the official brains of the Anglo-Indians.

If, I say, at that critical moment, the members of the Society, and especially its leaders at Adyar, Hindu and European, had stood together as one man, firm in their conviction of the reality and power of the Masters, Theosophy would have come out more triumphantly than ever, and none of their fears would have ever been realised, however cunning the legal traps set for me, and whatever mistakes and errors of judgment I, their humble representative, might have made in the executive conduct of the matter.

But the loyalty and courage of the Adyar Authorities, and of the few Europeans who had trusted in the Masters, were not equal to the trial when it came. In spite of my protests, I was hurried away from Headquarters. Ill as I was, almost dying in truth, as the physicians said, yet I protested, and would have battled for Theosophy in India to my last breath, had I found loyal support. But some feared legal entanglements, some the Government, while my best friends believed in the doctors' threats that I must die if I remained in India. So I was sent to Europe to regain my strength, with a promise of speedy return to my beloved Âryāvarta.

Well, I left, and immediately intrigues and rumours began. Even at Naples already, I learnt that I was reported to be meditating to start in Europe "a rival Society" and bust up Adyar (!!). At this I laughed. Then it was rumoured that I had been abandoned by the Masters, been disloyal to Them, done this or the other. None of it had the slightest truth or foundation in fact. Then I was accused of being, at best, a hallucinated medium, who had mistaken "spooks" for living Masters; while others declared that the real H. P. Blavatsky was dead—had died through the injudicious use of Kundalini—and that the form had been forthwith seized upon by a Dugpa Chela, who was the present H.P.B. Some again held me to be a witch, sorceress, who for purposes of her own played the part of a philanthropist and lover of India, while in reality bent upon the destruction of all those who had the misfortune to be psychologised by me. In fact, the powers of psychology attributed to me by my enemies, whenever a fact or a "phenomenon" could not be explained away, are so great that they alone would have made of me a most remarkable Adept—independent of any Masters or Mahâtmas.

In short, up to 1886, when the S. P. R. Report was published and this soap bubble burst over our heads, it was one long series of false charges, every mail bringing something new. I will name no one; nor does it matter who said a thing and who repeated it. One thing is certain; with the exception of Colonel Olcott, everyone seemed to banish the Masters from their thoughts and Their spirit from Adyar. Every imaginable incongruity was connected with these holy names, and I alone was held responsible for every disagreeable event that took place, every mistake made. In a letter received from Dâmodar in 1886, he notified me that the Masters' influence was becoming with every day weaker at Adyar; that They were daily represented as less than "second-rate Yogis," totally denied by some, while even those who believed in, and had remained loyal to them, feared even to pronounce Their names. Finally, he urged me very strongly to return, saying that of course the Masters would see that my health should not suffer from it.

I wrote to that effect to Colonel Olcott, imploring him to let me return, and promising that I would live at Pondicherry, if needed, should my presence not be desirable at Adyar. To this I received the ridiculous answer that no sooner should I return, that I should be sent to the Andaman Islands as a Russian spy, which of course Colonel Olcott subsequently found out to be absolutely untrue. The readiness with which such a futile pretext for keeping me from Adyar was seized upon, shows in clear colours the ingratitude of those to whom I had given my life and health. Nay, more, urged on, as I understood, by the Executive Council, under the entirely absurd pretext that, in case of my death, my heirs might claim a share in the Adyar property, the President sent me a legal paper to sign, by which I formally renounced any right to the Headquarters or even to live there without the Council's permission.

This, although I had spent several thousand rupees of my own private money, and had devoted my share of the profits of The Theosophist to the purchase of the house and its furniture. Nevertheless I signed the renunciation without one word of protest. I saw I was not wanted, and remained in Europe in spite of my ardent desire to return to India. How could I do otherwise than feel that all my labours had been rewarded with ingratitude, when my most urgent wishes to return were met with flimsy excuses and answers inspired by those who were hostile to me?

The result of this is too apparent. You know too well the state of affairs in India for me to dwell longer upon details. In a word, since my departure, not only has the activity of the movement there gradually slackened, but those for whom I had the deepest affections, regarding them as a mother would her own sons, have turned against me. While in the West, no sooner had I accepted the invitation to come to London, then I found people—the S. P. R. Report and wild suspicions and hypotheses rampant in every direction notwithstanding—to believe in the truth of the great Cause I have struggled for, and in my own bona fides.

Acting under the Master's orders, I began a new movement in the West on the original lines; I founded Lucifer, and the Lodge which bears my name. Recognizing the splendid work done at Adyar by Colonel Olcott and others to carry out the second of the three Objects of the T.S., viz., to promote the study of Oriental literature, I was determined to carry out here the two others. All know with what success this has been attended. Twice Colonel Olcott was asked to come over, and then I learned that I was once more wanted in India—at any rate by some. But the invitation came too late; neither would my doctor permit it, nor can I, if I would be true to my life-pledge and vows, now live at the Headquarters from which the Masters and Their spirit are virtually banished. The presence of Their portraits will not help; They are a dead letter. The truth is that I can never return to India in any other capacity than as Their faithful agent. And as, unless They appear among the Council in propria persona (which They will certainly never do now), no advice of mine on occult lines seems likely to be accepted, as the fact of my relations with the Masters is doubted, even totally denied by some; and I myself having no right to the Headquarters, what reason is there, therefore, for me to live at Adyar?

The fact is this. In my position, half-measures are worse than none. People have either to believe entirely in me, or to honestly disbelieve. No one, no Theosophist, is compelled to believe, but it is worse than useless for people to ask me to help them, if they do not believe in me. Here in Europe and America are many who have never flinched in their devotion to Theosophy; consequently the spread of Theosophy and the T.S., in the West, during the last three years, has been extraordinary. The chief reason for this is that I was enabled and encouraged by the devotion of an ever-increasing number of members to the Cause and to Those who guide it, to establish an Esoteric Section, in which I can teach something of what I have learned to those who have confidence in me, and who prove this confidence by their disinterested work for Theosophy and the T.S. For the future, then, it is my intention to devote my life and energy to the E. S., and to the teaching of those whose confidence I retain. It is useless I should use the little time I have before me to justify myself before those who do not feel sure about the real existence of the Masters, only because, misunderstanding me, it therefore suits them to suspect me.

And let me say at once, to avoid misconception, that my only reason for accepting the exoteric direction of European affairs, was to save those who really have Theosophy at heart and work for it and the Society, from being hampered by those who not only do not care for Theosophy, as laid out by the Masters, but are entirely working against both, endeavouring to undermine and counteract the influence of the good work done, both by open denial of the existence of the Masters, by declared and bitter hostility to myself, and also by joining forces with the most desperate enemies of our Society.

Half-measures, I repeat, are no longer possible. Either I have stated the truth as I know it about the Masters and teach what I have been taught by them, or I have invented both Them and the Esoteric Philosophy. There are those among the Esotericists of the inner group who say that if I have done the latter, then I must myself be a "Master." However it may be, there is no alternative to this dilemma.

The only claim, therefore, which India could ever have upon me would be strong only in proportion to the activity of the Fellows there for Theosophy and their loyalty to the Masters. You should not need my presence among you to convince you of the truth of Theosophy, any more than your American brothers need it. A conviction that wanes when any particular personality is absent is no conviction at all. Know, moreover, that any further proof and teaching I can give only to the Esoteric Section, and this for the following reason: its members are the only ones whom I have the right to expel for open disloyalty to their pledge (not to me, H.P.B., but to their Higher Self and the Mahâtmic aspect of the Masters), a privilege I cannot exercise with the F.T.S. at large, yet one which is the only means of cutting off a diseased limb from the healthy body of the tree, and thus save it from infection. I can care only for those who cannot be swayed by every breath of calumny, and every sneer, suspicion, or criticism, whoever it may emanate from.

Thenceforth let it be clearly understood that the rest of my life is devoted only to those who believe in the Masters, and are willing to work for Theosophy as they understand it, and for the T.S. on the lines upon which they originally established it.

If, then, my Hindu brothers really and earnestly desire to bring about the regeneration of India, if they wish to ever bring back the days when the Masters, in the ages of India's ancient glory, came freely among them, guiding and teaching the peoples; then let them cast aside all fear and hesitation, and turn a new leaf in the history of the Theosophical Movement. Let them bravely rally round the President-Founder, whether I am in India or not, as around those few true Theosophists who have remained loyal throughout, and bid defiance to all calumniators and ambitious malcontents—both without and within the Theosophical Society.