

Theosophy and Buddhism

Theosophy is the modern name given by H. P. Blavatsky to what is described by her as the once universal but now hidden Wisdom-Religion, the parent source of all known religions. This original Wisdom-Religion had been preserved intact out of the reach of the many conflicting sects, who each thought that their piece of it was the only truth. Blavatsky was now entrusted by its custodians with the task of making publicly known its existence and bringing out some of its teachings. She presented it to the modern world as Theosophy. In her early writings she referred to this Wisdom-Religion as pre-Vedic Buddhism.

We can assert, with entire plausibility, that there is not one of all these sects—Kabalism, Judaism, and our present Christianity included—but sprang from the two main branches of that one mother-trunk, the once universal religion, which antedated the Vedic ages—we speak of that prehistoric Buddhism which merged later into Brahmanism.¹

We repeat again, *Buddhism is but the primitive source of Brahmanism.*²

Pre-Vedic Brahmanism and Buddhism are the double source from which all religions sprang; . . .³

When the Theosophical Society was founded by Blavatsky and others in 1875, she was asked about this Wisdom-Religion by William Q. Judge, one of the co-founders. He in his question referred to the custodians of the Wisdom-Religion as Masters, as did Blavatsky, since they were her teachers. Her reply indicates that while pre-Vedic Buddhism is a correct designation for the Wisdom-Religion, she considered that it might best be thought of as esoteric Buddhism. As reported by Judge:

... on my asking her [Blavatsky] in 1875 what could the Masters' belief be called she told me they might be designated "pre-Vedic Buddhists," but that no one would now admit there was any Buddhism before the Vedas, so I had best think of them as Esoteric Buddhists.⁴

The title chosen for the first book to attempt an outline of the tenets of Theosophy or the Wisdom-Religion was *Esoteric Buddhism*. Its author, A. P. Sinnett, obviously also felt that this was an accurate designation. This book was written on the basis of correspondence with two of the custodians of the Wisdom-Religion living in Tibet. These, Blavatsky's Masters or teachers, also came to be called by the name used in India (where Sinnett and Blavatsky were then living), Mahatmas. Their letters, later published and now preserved in the British Library, became known as the Mahatma letters. However, as made clear in them, the term Mahatma is not used in Tibet. Instead, the Tibetan term *byang chub* is used, whose Sanskrit equivalent is Bodhisattva rather than Mahatma. Sinnett's book based on these Mahatma letters was responsible for establishing the idea among the Western public that Theosophy is esoteric Buddhism. But the public did not correctly apprehend what was meant by esoteric Buddhism, as the Mahatma K.H. commented several months after the book of that name was published:

... that public having never heard of the Tibetan, and entertaining very perverted notions of the Esoteric Buddhist System. . . . the Tibetan School will ever be regarded by those who know little, if anything of it, as coloured more or less with sectarianism.⁵

Thus arose the misconception that Theosophy is derived from one religion among others, namely that known in the world as Buddhism, rather than from the Wisdom-Religion which was the source of all religions.

In order to counter this misconception, and to stress the universality of Theosophy, Blavatsky opened her greatest work, *The Secret Doctrine*, with a refutation of the idea that Theosophy is esoteric Buddhism. She said that Sinnett's book should have

been titled, *Esoteric Buddhism*, spelled with one “d,” to distinguish the Wisdom-Religion, or Budhism, from the exoteric religion known as Buddhism. She repeated this in Section I of *The Key to Theosophy*. We can certainly understand the need to correct the misconception that had arisen in people’s minds; but was the problem really with the book title, or was it with people being too ready to jump to unwarranted conclusions? We may recall that at the time the book was being written, the Mahatma K.H. thought *Esoteric Buddhism* was “an excellent title.”⁶ One must wonder if this distancing of Theosophy from esoteric Buddhism has not produced its own misconceptions; e.g., the idea that the Mahatmas lived in Tibet among Buddhists, but were not themselves Buddhists as such. The literary evidence from Blavatsky’s Mahatma teachers indicates that they were in fact Buddhists.

Starting with the first known Mahatma letter, written to Blavatsky’s aunt in 1870 in the Mahatma K.H. handwriting, we find the following (translated from the original French):

She [Blavatsky] has been very ill, but is so no longer; for under the protection of the Lord Sang-gyas she has found devoted friends who guard her physically and spiritually.⁷

The word “Sang-gyas” (*sangs rgyas*) is the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit word “Buddha.”

Then in letters from the Mahatma K.H. to A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume, written in the early 1880s, we find a number of references to Sang-gyas or Buddha as “our Lord:”

They *cannot* place—however much they would—the birth of our Lord Sangyas Buddha A.D. as they have contrived to place that of Chrishna.⁸

. . . the ecclesiastical system built upon the basic ideas of our Lord Gautama Buddha’s philosophy, . . .⁹

. . . for the information gathered as to what takes place beyond we are indebted to the Planetary Spirits, to our blessed Lord Buddha.¹⁰

... and necessity of the practical application of these sublime words of our Lord and Master:—"O ye Bhikkhus and Arhats— . . ." ¹¹

Our Lord Buddha—a sixth r. man—¹²

Plato and Confucius were fifth round men and our Lord a sixth round man . . . ¹³

. . . the old, very old fact distinctly taught by our Lord . . . ¹⁴

"The right in thee is base, the wrong a curse," was said by our Lord Buddha for such as she; . . . ¹⁵

The Devachan, or land of "Sukhavati," is *allegorically* described by our Lord Buddha himself. ¹⁶

In letters from the Mahatma Morya to S. Ramaswamier and from the Mahatma K.H. to C. W. Leadbeater, we find similar references to "our Lord," using the term "Tathāgata," another title of the Buddha:

. . . decide after counting the whole cost, and may the light of our Lord Tathagata's memory aid you to decide for the best. ¹⁷

So now choose and grasp your own destiny—and may our Lord's the Tathāgata's memory aid you to decide for the best. ¹⁸

Let no one know that you are going, and may the blessing of our Lord and my poor blessing shield you from every evil in your new life. ¹⁹

The letters from these Mahatmas also include other passages that specifically identify them as Buddhists:

. . . our lamas to honour the fraternity of the *Bhikkhus* [Buddhist monks] established by our blessed master himself, . . . ²⁰

"Real Adepts like Gautama Buddha or Jesus Christ did not shroud themselves in mystery, but came and talked openly,"

quoth our oracle. If they did it's news to us—the humble followers of the former.²¹

. . . he who reads our Buddhist scriptures . . .²²

Therefore, we deny God both as philosophers and as Buddhists.²³

If it is objected that we too have temples, we too have priests and that our lamas also live on charity . . . let them know that the objects above named have in common with their Western equivalents, but the name. Thus in our temples there is neither a god nor gods worshipped, only the thrice sacred memory of the greatest as the holiest man that ever lived.²⁴

They distinguish themselves from other creeds, including even Advaita Vedanta, which is said by Blavatsky to be, along with Buddhism, the closest to the Esoteric Philosophy:

We are not Adwaites . . . / . . . we never were Adwaites . . .²⁵

They retain this distinction, even though they accept the truths taught in Advaita Vedanta, and have Advaita Vedanta chelas or pupils:

It is an every day occurrence to find students belonging to different schools of occult thought sitting side by side at the feet of the same Guru. *Upasika* (Madam B[lavatsky]) and Subba Row, though pupils of the same Master, have not followed the same Philosophy—the one is Buddhist and the other an Adwaitee.²⁶

The Mahatma Morya wrote to Dr. Franz Hartmann that his becoming a Buddhist will make the path of knowledge easier of access. After H. P. Blavatsky and H. S. Olcott publicly took “Panchashila” at Galle, Ceylon, on May 25, 1880, to formally become Buddhists, the first Westerners known to do so, Hartmann followed suit and became a Buddhist on Dec. 26, 1883. The Mahatma Morya wrote in a letter to him on Feb. 5, 1884:

Let me give you an advice. Never offer yourself as a chela, but wait until chelaship descends by itself upon you. Above all, try to find yourself, and the path of knowledge will open itself before you, and this so much the easier as you have made a contact with the Light-ray of the Blessed one, whose name you have now taken as your spiritual lode-star. . . . Receive in advance my blessings and my thanks.²⁷

It would seem that not only were Blavatsky's Mahatma teachers Buddhists, but so was the trans-Himalayan school of adepts to which they belonged.

When our great Buddha—the patron of all the adepts, the reformer and the codifier of the occult system, reached first *Nirvana* on earth, . . .²⁸

. . . and philanthropy as preached by our Great Patron—"the Saviour of the World—the Teacher of Nirvana and the Law," . . .²⁹

In a letter to Mrs. Sinnett, Blavatsky refers to other Masters or Mahatmas of this school,

. . . who are pure blooded Mongolian Buddhists.³⁰

Indeed, some of the clearest references identifying this school of Mahatmas with Buddhism are found in the words of the Chohan, the teacher of Blavatsky's teachers:

That *we* the devoted followers of that spirit incarnate of absolute self sacrifice, of philanthropy, divine kindness, as of all the highest virtues attainable on this earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama Buddha, should ever allow the Theosophical Society to represent the *embodiment of selfishness*, the refuge of the few with no thought in them for the many, is a strange idea, my brothers.

Among the few glimpses obtained by Europeans of Tibet and its mystical hierarchy of "perfect lamas," there is one which was correctly understood and described. "The incarnations of the Boddhisatwa Padma Pani or Avalo-Kiteswara and of Tsong Kapa,

that of Amitabha, relinquish at their death the attainment of Buddhahood—*i.e.* the summum bonum of bliss, and of individual *personal* felicity—that they might be born again and again for the benefit of mankind.” (Rhys Davids). In other words, that they might be again and again subjected to misery, imprisonment in flesh and all the sorrows of life, provided that by such a self sacrifice repeated throughout long and dreary centuries they might become the means of securing salvation and bliss in the hereafter for a handful of men chosen among but one of the many races of mankind. And it is we, the humble disciples of these perfect lamas, who are expected to allow the T.S. to drop its noblest title, that of the Brotherhood of Humanity to become a simple school of psychology? No, no, good brothers, you have been labouring under the mistake too long already.³¹

As clear as these references are to the Mahatmas of this school being the devoted followers of Gautama Buddha, and “humble disciples of these perfect lamas,” there yet exists an even more direct statement. This came through unfiltered in a response from the Mahatma Morya to a request from a certain Hindu Theosophist to open up new correspondence. He and other Hindu Theosophists, however, were not prepared to give up caste and their “old superstitions” such as faith in the Gods and God, as had the Hindu Theosophist Damodar Mavalankar. The Mahatma Morya says in his characteristic blunt manner:

What have we, the disciples of the true *Arhats*, of esoteric Buddhism and of Sang-gyas [Buddha] to do with the *Shastras* and Orthodox Brahmanism? There are 100 of thousands of Fakirs, Sannyasis and Sadhus leading the most pure lives, and yet being as they are, on the path of *error*, never having had an opportunity to meet, see or even hear of us. Their forefathers have driven away the followers of the only true philosophy upon earth from India and now it is not for the latter to come to them but for them to come to us if they want us. Which of them is ready to become a Buddhist, a *Nastika* [one who does not believe in God or Gods] as they call us? None. Those who have believed and followed us have had their reward.³²

These quotations given above leave little doubt that the Mahatmas behind the Theosophical movement, Blavatsky's teachers, considered themselves to be Buddhists as such, and not only esoteric Buddhists.

The obvious question that now arises is this: Why don't the teachings given out by the Theosophical Mahatmas agree with the known teachings of Buddhism? To merely say that the Mahatmas are esoteric Buddhists does not entirely answer the question. It does not explain the Buddhist part. What makes them esoteric Buddhists rather than esoteric Hindus or esoteric Christians or esoteric anything else? Why should there have ever been any talk of pre-Vedic Buddhism or esoteric Buddhism unless known Buddhism has some direct connection with their teachings? Having investigated this question for many years, my own conclusion is simply and in brief as follows.

Buddhism is the most direct descendant of the Wisdom-Religion now in existence, and in the Buddhist scriptures are preserved more of the Wisdom-Religion's teachings than in any other texts now extant. Thus Blavatsky's Mahatma teachers are even exoterically Buddhists. But, as often repeated by Blavatsky, the commentaries which give the true meanings of the known texts have been withdrawn and are no longer accessible. Thus the teachings of the Mahatmas differ significantly from those of exoteric or known Buddhism. In other words, the texts of the Wisdom-Religion are best preserved in Buddhism, while the true teachings of these texts, long preserved in secret by the Mahatmas, began to be given out to the world as Theosophy.

We may recall that when the Theosophical Society was started, the scriptures of Northern Buddhism were almost all unavailable and untranslated, unlike those of Hinduism that Blavatsky cited frequently. The books on Buddhism that then existed were criticized by the Mahatma K.H. Yet he indicates that even the exoteric Buddhism portrayed in them "is full of the sparkle of our most important esotericism," likening it to diamond mines:

The more one reads such speculations as those of Messrs. Rhys Davids, Lillie, etc.—the less can one bring himself to believe that

the unregenerate Western mind can ever get at the core of our abstruse doctrines. . . . Mr. Rhys Davids' *Buddhism* is full of the sparkle of our most important esotericism; but always, as it would seem, beyond not only his reach but apparently even his powers of intellectual perception. . . . He is like the Cape Settlers who lived over diamond mines without suspecting it.³³

To show this, the Mahatma K.H. then provides Sinnett with the esoteric explanation of an exoteric Buddhist doctrine given in Rhys Davids' book.

En passant, to show to you that not only were not the "races" *invented* by us, but that they are a cardinal dogma with the Lama Buddhists and with all who study our esoteric doctrine, I send you an explanation on a page or two in Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*,—otherwise incomprehensible, meaningless and absurd. It is written with the special permission of the Chohan (*my* Master) and—for your benefit. No Orientalist has ever suspected the truths contained in it, and—you are the first Western man (outside Tibet) to whom it is now explained.³⁴

As far as I know, this explanation has not come down to us, as it is not among the Mahatma papers now preserved in the British Library. From a perusal of Rhys Davids' book, we may assume that this explanation was "on a page or two" of his chapter 8, "Northern Buddhism." Specifically, it likely refers to the listing he gives of the five Dhyāni Buddhas, their five Bodhisattvas, and the five corresponding Mānushi (human) Buddhas.³⁵ K.H. had also in a previous letter spoken of sending an explanation of this material; but if there included, it too has not come down to us. In this letter he appeared anxious that the theosophists give out the right explanation of this seemingly fantastic Buddhist teaching.

Only, to prove *to you*, if not to him, that we have not *invented* those races, I will give out for your benefit that which has never been given out before. I will explain to you a whole chapter out of Rhys Davids work on Buddhism, or rather on Lamaism, which,

in his natural ignorance he regards as a *corruption* of Buddhism! Since those gentlemen—the Orientalists—presume to give to the world their *soi-disant* translations and commentaries on our sacred books, let the theosophists show the great ignorance of those “world” pundits, by giving the public the right doctrines and explanations of what they would regard as an absurd, fancy theory.³⁶

Fortunately, Sinnett did give out in his *Esoteric Buddhism* what is apparently this right explanation. In chapter 9, entitled “Buddha,” Sinnett explains that the five human Buddhas given by Rhys Davids relate to the five races taught by Theosophy. He introduces this topic thus:

The explanation of this branch of the subject, in plain terms, will not alone be important for its own sake, but will be interesting to all students of exoteric Buddhism, as elucidating some of the puzzling complications of the more abstruse “Northern doctrine.”³⁷

The listing of the human Buddhas in the Rhys Davids book gives three Buddhas of the remote past, then Gautama the historical Buddha as fourth, and Maitreya the coming Buddha as fifth. Sinnett explains why it is that the fourth Buddha belongs to our fifth race; namely, that at the beginning of the first race appears a teacher he refers to as a Dhyān Chohan, and who is therefore not in this list of five Buddhas. His explanation of this, however, was not altogether clear; and a correspondent questioned it in *The Theosophist* for August, 1884. The editor, H. P. Blavatsky, clarified that:

. . . *Gautama* was the *fourth Buddha*, i.e., “enlightened,” while he was the *fifth spiritual teacher*. The first “teacher” of this “Round” on this planet was a *Dhyān Chohan*. As a *Dhyān Chohan*, he belonged to another System, and was thus far higher than a *Buddha*. As, however, in ordinary language, all spiritual teachers are called “*Buddhas*,” Mr. Sinnett speaks of Gautama as the *fifth Buddha*. To be more accurate, it must be said that Gautama was

the fifth spiritual teacher in this “Round” on this planet, while he was the *fourth* who became a *Buddha*.³⁸

With this one example the Mahatma K.H. showed that the hitherto esoteric teachings now given out as Theosophy could explain the known teachings of Buddhism that were otherwise considered fantastic, and at the same time the known teachings of Buddhism could support the newly given out Theosophical teachings that were otherwise considered fantastic.

The many schools of Buddhism, each with its own varying interpretations, all claim to have preserved intact the original teachings, and to have transmitted their correct explanations in an unbroken line. Theosophy, too, makes this claim. As Blavatsky describes to a correspondent:

But what I do believe in is: (1), the unbroken oral teachings revealed by living *divine* men during the infancy of mankind to the elect among men; (2), that it has reached us *unaltered*; and (3), that the MASTERS are thoroughly versed in the science based on such uninterrupted teaching.³⁹

Both Buddhism and Theosophy teach that each person should determine for his or her own self what is true through proper reasoning. If the example given by the Mahatma K.H. be taken as representative, we may reasonably conclude that Buddhism does in fact preserve original teachings of the Wisdom-Religion, and that the correct explanations have indeed been transmitted in an unbroken line to the esoteric school of the Mahatmas, and partially given out to the world as Theosophy.

The Mahatma K.H. had advised Sinnett that to properly study and correctly understand their teachings, a special group should be formed for the express purpose of seeking esoteric knowledge from the Northern Buddhist source:

It seems necessary for a proper study and correct understanding of our Philosophy and the benefit of those whose inclination leads them to seek esoteric knowledge from the Northern Buddhist Source, . . . that an exclusive group composed of those

members who desire to follow absolutely the teachings of the School to which we, of the Tibetan Brotherhood, belong, should be formed⁴⁰

However, the attempt made at that time soon proved abortive; and this remains unaccomplished and still a desideratum. Now that so many of the Northern Buddhist scriptures have become available, the opportunities to study and interpret them in light of Theosophy as sourcebooks of the Wisdom-Religion are very great indeed.

NOTES

1. *Isis Unveiled*, by H. P. Blavatsky, 1st ed., 1877; rev. ed. [by Boris de Zirkoff] (pagination unchanged), Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972, vol. 2, p. 123.

2. *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 2, p. 169.

3. *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 2, p. 639.

4. *The Path*, vol. 9, March 1895, p. 431; reprinted in *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*, vol. I, compiled by Dara Eklund, San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1975, p. 453. The word “Buddhists” in the phrase “pre-Vedic Buddhists” is spelled “Budhists” in these publications. I have used “Buddhists” because that is what Blavatsky used at that time, not changing this until years later.

5. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, compiled by A. T. Barker, 1st ed., 1923; 3rd rev. ed., Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1962, p. 392; arranged in chronological sequence by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., Quezon City, Metro Manila: Theosophical Publishing House, 1993, p. 410.

6. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 198; chron. ed., p. 363.

7. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, compiled by C. Jinarajadasa, First Series, letter no. 38, Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1st ed., 1919, p. 102; 5th ed., 1964, p. 85; Second Series, letter no. 1, Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925, p. 4; Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1926, p. 11. Both volumes include a transcription of the original French letter, and an English translation. The second volume also includes a facsimile of the original, allowing my corrected spelling “Sang-gyas,” rather than the printed “Sangyas.”

8. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 339; chron. ed., pp. 377-78.

9. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 393; chron. ed., p. 410.
10. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 134; chron. ed., p. 279.
11. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 381; chron. ed., p. 385.
12. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 94; chron. ed., p. 186.
13. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 83; chron. ed., p. 176.
14. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 108; chron. ed., p. 199.
15. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 354; chron. ed., p. 442.
16. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 97; chron. ed., p. 189.
17. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Second Series, letter no. 51, Morya to S. Ramaswamier, Adyar ed., 1925, p. 98; Chicago ed., 1926, p. 110.
18. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, letter no. 7, K.H. to C. W. Leadbeater, 1st ed., 1919, p. 35; 5th ed., 1964, p. 30. A facsimile of this letter was published in *The "K.H." Letters to C. W. Leadbeater*, by C. Jinarajadasa, Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1941, where this passage occurs on p. 11 (incidentally showing the circumflex mark in the word Tathâgata).
19. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, letter no. 8, K.H. to C. W. Leadbeater, 1st ed., 1919, p. 36; 5th ed., 1964, p. 30; facsimile in *The "K.H." Letters to C. W. Leadbeater*, pp. 50-51.
20. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 58; chron. ed., p. 275.
21. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 277; chron. ed., p. 71.
22. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 54; chron. ed., p. 271.
23. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 52; chron. ed., p. 270.
24. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 58; chron. ed., p. 275.
25. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., pp. 53, 284; chron. ed., pp. 271, 245.
26. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 393; chron. ed., p. 410.
27. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 8, Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1960, p. 446.
28. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 43; chron. ed., p. 62.
29. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd ed., p. 33; chron. ed., p. 49.
30. *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, compiled by A. T. Barker, 1st ed., 1925; facsimile edition, Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973, p. 85.
31. *Combined Chronology*, Margaret Conger, Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973, pp. 46-47; *The Mahatma Letters*, chron. ed., appendix II, pp. 479-80; with minor variants, *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, letter no. 1. The reference attributed to Rhys Davids is actually from Clements R. Markham, ed., *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, 1st ed., 1876; 2nd ed., London, 1879, p. xlvii. The reference to

securing salvation for a handful of men from but one of the many races of mankind is further explained in an excerpt from a secret book, given by H. P. Blavatsky in “Reincarnations’ of Buddha,” *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 14, Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1985, p. 405:

The Seven Ways and the Four Truths were once more hidden out of sight. The Merciful One [Buddha] confined since then his attention and fatherly care to the heart of Bodyul [Tibet], the nursery grounds of the seeds of truth. The blessed “remains” since then have overshadowed and rested in many a holy body of human Bodhisattvas.

32. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd. ed., p. 455; chron. ed., p. 95.

33. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd. ed., p. 337; chron. ed., p. 376.

34. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd. ed., p. 154; chron. ed., p. 315.

35. *Buddhism: Being a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha*, by T. W. Rhys Davids, 1st ed., 1877; rev. ed., London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1886, p. 205; taken from Eugène Burnouf, *Introduction à l’histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Paris, 1844, p. 117.

36. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd. ed., p. 182; chron. ed., p. 261.

37. *Esoteric Buddhism*, by A. P. Sinnett, 1st ed., 1883; 5th annotated ed. 1885, reprint, Minneapolis: Wizards Bookshelf, 1973, p. 171.

38. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 6, 1st ed., 1954; 2nd ed., Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975, p. 267. The Buddhist texts (e.g., the *Bhadra-kalpika Sūtra*) speak of many more than five Buddhas, but only four have so far appeared in our *kalpa*, or eon; with the fifth, Maitreya, next to come in our kalpa. Buddhist texts (e.g., the *Abhidharma-kośa*) describe several kinds of kalpas. One kind of kalpa is, in the Theosophical terminology coined by A. P. Sinnett, a “round.” A round is the time period during which seven sequential races or humanities evolve on our planet. The equivalence of this kalpa and “round” is shown in a quotation from a commentary given in *The Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky, 1st ed., 1888; rev. ed. [by Boris de Zirkoff] (pagination unchanged), Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978, vol. 1, p. 184:

The human foetus follows now in its transformations all the forms that the physical frame of man had assumed throughout the three Kalpas (Rounds) during the tentative efforts at plastic formation around the monad by senseless, because imperfect, matter, in her blind wanderings. In the present age, . . .

39. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 11, Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973, pp. 466-67. Contrast this statement with the popular view repeated again and again by ill-informed writers that Blavatsky's source was psychic communications from "Ascended Masters."

40. *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd. ed., p. 394; chron. ed., p. 411.

Later addition:

The important series of articles titled, "Some Inquiries Suggested by Mr. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*," is believed to have been written by three Mahatmas (see: *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 5, pp. 135, 136, quoted below in notes 5-6 on pp. 63-64). In two of these articles the Mahatma writer again leaves no doubt that he considers himself to be a Buddhist, by his references to "our Lord," etc. These occur, in the *Blavatsky Collected Writings* reprint (vol. 5), as follows:

"Philological and Archaeological 'Difficulties':"

p. 229: ". . . as to the date of our Lord's birth, . . ."

p. 232: ". . . the date of our Lord and Glorified Deliverer . . ."

p. 232: ". . . the date of our Lord Sanggyas' birth, . . ."

p. 240: ". . . Buddhism . . . our religion . . ."

p. 240: ". . . our Lord Gautama . . ."

"Sakya Muni's Place in History":

p. 244: ". . . the prophecy of our Lord that 'a thousand years after he had reached Nirvana, his doctrines would reach the north' . . ."

p. 245: ". . . the great Sramanāchāryas who preceded Him, and were His teachers, their humble successors trying to this day to perpetuate their and His doctrines."

p. 245: ". . . in consequence of a vision of our Lord, . . ."

p. 246 fn.: "When our Lord first sat in it for *Dhyana*, . . ."

p. 247 fn.: ". . . while teaching the mendicants outside, our Lord . . ."

p. 248: ". . . the Buddhist Sacred Annals record certain words of our Lord . . ."

p. 249: ". . . as prophesied by Lokanātha, our Buddha."

p. 250: ". . . prophecy by our Lord; . . ."

p. 250: ". . . our Sakyasinha's prophecies . . ."

In another article, "Was Writing Known before Pānini?" by a Chela:

p. 304: ". . . our Lord Buddha . . ."

[The foregoing article was written by David Reigle, and published in *Fohat*, A Quarterly Publication of Edmonton Theosophical Society, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 14-17, 22-23. This online edition is published by Eastern Tradition Research Institute, copyright 2004.]