

RE-CLASSIFICATION OF PRINCIPLES

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In the May *Theosophist* (1887) I find the first part of a long explanatory article, by Mr. Subba Row, in which the able author has gone to the trouble of dissecting almost everything I have written for the last ten years, upon the subject under review.

My first thought was, to leave his “answer” without reply. Upon reading it carefully over, however, I have come to the conclusion that perhaps it would not be safe to do so. The article in question is a manifesto. I am not allowed to labour any longer under the impression that it was only an apparent disagreement. Those members and ex-members of our Society who had *rejoiced* at Mr. Subba Row’s remarks were consequently right in their conclusions, and I—wrong. As I do not admit—in our case, at any rate—that “a house divided against itself” must fall, for the Theosophical Society can never fall so long as its foundation is very strong, I regard the disagreement, even if *real*, as of no great or vital importance. Yet, were I to fail to answer the strictures in question, it would be immediately inferred that I was silenced by the arguments; or, worse, that I had expounded a tenet which had no basis.

Before I say anything further upon the main subject, however, I must express my surprise at finding the learned author referring to me continually as his “critic.” I have never criticized him, nor his teachings, whether orally, or in print. I had simply expressed regret at finding in *The Theosophist* words calculated, as I then thought, to create false impressions. The position assumed by the lecturer on the Gita was as unexpected as it was new to me, and my remarks were meant to be as friendly as I could make them. Nor am I actuated even now by any other feelings. I can only regret, and nothing more, that such new developments of ideas should occur just now, after nearly seven years of *tacit*, if not actual, agreement.

Nor do I find on page 450 of the April *Theosophist* in my footnote anything that should imply, even remotely, least of all “probably,” that I endorse the views that “a slur was thrown on the original teachings.” I had said that “some (theosophists) argued that it looked like a slur.” As for myself, I have too much reverence for the “original” TEACHERS to ever admit that anything said or done, could ever be “a slur” upon their teachings. But if I, *personally*, am made out “the original expounder,” there can be no slur whatever. It is, at the worst, a disagreement in personal views. Everyone is free in the Theosophical Society to give full expression to his own ideas—I among the rest; especially when I know that those views are those of *Trans*-Himalayan esotericism, if not of *Cis*-Himalayan esoteric Brahmanism, as I am now told squarely—for the first time. The words written by me in the footnote, therefore—“Of course those who do not hold to the old school of Aryan and Arhat adepts are in no way bound to adopt the septenary classification”—were never meant for Mr. Subba Row. They applied most innocently, and as I thought liberally, to every and each member of our Association. Why my friend, Mr. T. Subba Row, should have applied them to himself is one of those mysterious combinations—evolved by my own *karma* no doubt—which pass *my* comprehension. To expect a Brahmin, a Vedantin (whether an occultist or otherwise) to accept *in their deadletter* the tenets of Buddhist (even if Aryan) adepts, is like expecting a western Kabbalist, an Israelite by birth and views, to adhere to our Lord Buddha instead of to Moses. To charge me on such grounds with dogmatism and a desire to evolve “an orthodox creed” out of tenets I have tried

to explain to those who are interested in Buddhistic occultism, is rather hard. All this compels me to explain my past as well as my present position. As the second portion of Mr. Subba Row's *reply* can hardly contain stronger charges than I find in the first, I ask permission to state that:—

- I. Neither the original "Fragments of Occult Truth" nor yet "Esoteric Buddhism," were ever meant to expound *Brahminical* philosophy, but that of the *trans-Himalayan* Arhats, as very correctly stated by Mr. Subba Row in his "Brahmanism on the Sevenfold Principle in Man"—"it is extremely difficult to show (to the profane H.P.B.!) whether the Tibetans derived their doctrine from the ancient Rishis of India, or the ancient Brahmans learned their occult science from the adepts of Tibet; or again, whether the adepts of both countries professed originally the same doctrine and derived it from a common source ... However, that may be, the knowledge of the *occult powers of nature* possessed by the inhabitants of the lost Atlantis was learnt by the ancient adepts of India and was appended by them to the esoteric doctrine taught by the residents of the sacred Island (Sham-bhala). The Tibetan adepts, however, have not accepted this addition to their esoteric doctrine... Thus, the readers of *The Theosophist* were told from the first (in 1882) that they "should expect to find a difference between the two doctrines." One of the said "differences" is found in the exoteric exposition, or form of presentation of the sevenfold principle in man.
- II. Though the *fundamental* doctrines of Occultism and Esoteric philosophy are one and the same the world over, and that is the secret meaning under the outward shell of every old religion—however much they may conflict in appearance—is the outcome of, and proceeds from, the universal WISDOM-RELIGION—the modes of thought and of its expression must necessarily differ. There are Sanskrit words used—"Jiva," for one—by *Trans-Himalayan* adepts, whose meaning differs greatly in verbal applications, from the meaning it has among Brahmans in India.
- III. I have never boasted of any knowledge of Sanskrit, and, when I came to India last, in 1879, knew very superficially the philosophies of the six schools of Brahmanism. I never pretended to teach Sanskrit or explain Occultism in that language. I claimed to know the esoteric philosophy of the *Trans-Himalayan* Occultists and no more. What I knew again, was that the philosophy of the ancient *Dwijas* and Initiates did not, nor could it, differ *essentially* from the esotericism of the "Wisdom-religion," any more than ancient Zoroastrianism, Hermetic philosophy, or Chaldean Kabbala could do so. I have tried to prove it by rendering the technical terms used by the Tibetan Arhats of things and principles, as adopted in *Trans-Himalayan* teaching (and which when given to Mr. Sinnett and others without their Sanskrit or European equivalents, remained to them unintelligible, as they would to all in India)—in terms used in Brahminical philosophy. I may have failed to do so correctly, very likely I have, and made mistakes—I never claimed infallibility—but this is no reason why the sevenfold division should be regarded as "unscientific." That it was *puzzling* I had already admitted, yet, once properly explained, it is the right one, though, in transcendental metaphysics, the quaternary may do as well. In my writings in *The Theosophist* I have always consulted learned and (even *not* very learned) Sanskrit-speaking Brahmans, giving credit to every one of them for knowing the value of Sanskrit terms better than I did. The question then is not, whether I may or may not have made use of wrong Sanskrit terms, but whether the occult tenets expounded through me are the right ones—at any rate those of the "Aryan-Chaldeo-Tibetan doctrine" as we call the "universal Wisdom-Religion." (See *Five Years of Theosophy*, 1st note, to Mr. Subba Row's "Brahmanism on the Sevenfold Principle in Man," pp. 177-79.)

- IV. When saying that the seven-fold classification of principles is *absolutely* necessary to explain *post-mortem* phenomena, I repeat only that which I had always said and that which every mystic will understand. “Once we pass from the plane of pure subjective (or metaphysical, hence purely *theoretical*) reasoning on esoteric matters to that of practical demonstration in occultism, wherein each (lower) principle and attribute has to be analyzed and defined in its application... to *post-mortem* life (that of spooks and pisachas), the seven-fold classification is the right one.” These are my words, which every spiritualist will understand. Vedantin metaphysicians, denying as they do objective reality or importance even to our physical body, are not likely to lose their time in dividing the lower principles in man, the compound *aspects* and nature of the phantom of that body. *Practical* occultism does; and it is one of the duties of those Theosophists who study occultism to warn their brethren of the dangers incurred by those who know nothing of the real nature of those apparitions: to warn them that a *shell* is not “*spirit*.” This statement of mine I find qualified as “simply absurd.” Having never regarded as *absurd* anything said or written by Mr. Subba Row, I could not retaliate even if I would, I can only pronounce the epithet, let us say—*unkind*, and demur to the qualification. Had the author to face “practical demonstration” in spiritual phenomena and “*materializations* of spirits,” so called, he would soon find that his four principles could never cover the ground of this kind of phenomena. Even the *lower aspect* of the principle of *manas* (physical brain, or its *post-mortem* auric survival) and of *kama rupa* are hardly sufficient to explain the *seemingly* intelligent and spiritual principles (*bhut* or elements) that manifest through mediums.
- V. It is not consistent with fact and truth to charge me, “the original [?] exponent herself,” with changing my conceptions about the nature of principles. “I have never changed them, nor could I do so.” In this I claim my right too, as Mr. Subba Row does, to my evidence being “the best and most direct evidence available as regards *my own states of consciousness*.” I may have used wrong Sanskrit expressions (and even wrong and clumsily put English sentences, for the matter of that)—while trying to blend the Arhat with the Brahmanical occult tenets. As to those conceptions, my “four principles” have to disintegrate and vanish in the air, before any amount of criticism can make me regard my ten fingers as only four; although *metaphysically*, I am fully prepared to admit that they exist only in my own *mayavic* perceptions and states of consciousness.

Mr. Subba Row, taking hold of “Esoteric Buddhism”, “The Elixir of Life” and “Man,” is pleased to father all their sins of omission and commission on the “Original Expounder.” This is hardly fair. The first work was written absolutely without my knowledge, and as the author understood those teachings from letters he had received, what have I to do with them? “*The Elixir of Life*” was written by its author under direct dictation, or *inspection*, in his own house, in a faraway country, in which I had never been till two years later. Finally “Man” was *entirely rewritten* by one of the two “chelas” and from the same materials as those used by Mr. Sinnett for “Esoteric Buddhism;” the two having understood the teachings, each in his own way. What had I to do with the “states of consciousness” of the three authors, two of whom wrote in England while I was in India? He may attribute to the lack of *scientific* precision in the “original teachings,” there being “a jumble.” No one would accuse Mr. Subba Row’s *Bhagavad Gita* lectures of any such defects. Yet, I have already heard three or four intelligent persons among our members expounding the said three lectures (those which have already appeared)—*in three different and diametrically opposite ways*.

This will do, I believe. The *Secret Doctrine* will contain, no doubt, still more *heterodox* statements from the Brahminical view. No one is forced to accept my opinions or teachings in The Theosophical Society, one of the rules of which enforces only mutual tolerance for

religious views. Our body is entirely unsectarian and “only exacts from each member that toleration of the beliefs of others which he desires . . . in regard to his own faith.”

Most of us have been playing truants to this golden rule as to all others: more’s the pity.

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