From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan: Spiritual India as Blavatsky saw it.

“The Path that leadeth on is lighted by one fire - the light of daring burning in the heart. The more one dares, the more he shall obtain.”

-Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

Helena Blavatsky was a Jew by birth and she later became interested in Buddhism and Hinduism. The Theosophical Society founded by her with the help of an English gentleman called Olcott was a reputed society next to the Arya Samaj. The society did not intervene with the religious beliefs of its members but strived to promote universal brotherhood and to investigate the powers of the universe latent in man. This was the main reason that they undertook a journey to India as seekers of occult wisdom. The declared objectives of the Theosophical Society became the following:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.

2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, and Science.

3. To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

The Society was organized as a non-proselytizing, non-sectarian entity. Blavatsky and Olcott (the first President of the Society) moved from New York to Bombay, India in 1878. The International Headquarters of the Society was eventually established in Adyar, a suburb of Madras.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky undertook a journey into India as a theosophist. She, along with a group of friends travelled to India to explore its rich heritage. They also explored various caves and jungles located in the remote locations of India which had a rich past,
under the guidance of a Maratha Brahmin, Thakur Gulab- Lal- Singh whom she later mentions as her master.

The India of the nineteenth century was largely under colonial rule. Indians therefore did not entertain foreign travellers with trust. The European was regarded as an infidel by orthodox Brahmins and in turn the superstitious vigour of the Brahmanical practices baffled the European scientific mind. The Theosophical society however was founded on the basis of the teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism. Thus the group of travellers with Blavatsky did not undergo many difficulties. On the evening of the sixteenth of February, 1879, the voyage of the theosophists ended on the shores of Ceylon.

Blavatsky’s first description is of the caves of Elephanta as viewed from the Bay. She describes their beauty and history as follows:

On the right was a group of islands with Gharipuri or Elephanta, with its ancient temple, at their head. Gharipuri translated means “the town of caves” according to the orientalists, and “the town of purification” according to the native Sanskrit scholars. This temple cut out by an unknown hand in the very heart of a rock resembling porphyry, is a true apple of discord amongst the archaeologists, of whom none can as yet fix, even approximately, its antiquity.¹

The book, *From the caves and jungles of Hindostan* is written in narrative style by the author. Being a travelogue it is autobiographical and describes the experiences of the author in the mysterious country of India. The book is divided into various sections where each section talks about a different place and its impact on the group of European travellers accompanying Blavatsky.

The first section is dedicated to the cave temples of Elephanta and also the Parsee population of Bombay and their peculiar rituals. The Parsee fire temple is the first one to catch the attention of the travellers. Madame Blavatsky describes it as:

“At its altar burns an unquenchable fire, which daily consumes hundred weights of sandal wood and aromatic herbs. Lit three hundred years ago, the sacred fire has never been extinguished notwithstanding many disorders, sectarian discords, and even wars. The Parsees are very proud of this temple of Zarathustra, as they call Zoroaster.”

The very first thing described by Blavatsky on entering India is the originality and the strangeness of the place, the diversity in the tribes and the flora and fauna. The remarkable and obvious difference observed by the foreigner is the attire of the Indian.

Blavatsky contradicts the previous descriptions of the Indians as an uncivilized country whose subjects roamed about naked. She clarifies that the poorest of the poor classes are semi naked and the women of respected ranks were wrapped in traditional sarees which were at least ten yards long. The only disagreeable thing according to the foreign eye was that both men and women did not cover their heads in public.

The main purpose of Blavatsky on visiting India is revealed in the first section itself. Blavatsky journeyed from America to study under the guidance of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the ancient country of the Aryas, the Vedas and their difficult language.

Blavatsky further proceeds to clarify that the Theosophical society and the Arya Samaj founded by swami Dayanand were on friendly terms while this book was written. But later on, the collaboration was expected to become an amalgamation of both the societies by

---

Swami Dayanand with the supremacy of the Swami. This notion was unacceptable to the theosophists as their principles did not interfere with the religious beliefs of their followers.

On their visit to Bombay, the theosophists encountered the Parsee ritual of burying the dead. The peculiar ritual is described as disgusting and also unusual. The Parsee Death tower is called “The Tower of Silence” where the dead body is placed. Nassesalars or the corpse bearers are the only ones allowed to approach the tower and deposit the body on the tower which is then plucked by birds of prey like the Vultures, Ravens etc. According to the accounts of Blavatsky, the Parsees are much more tolerant towards the presence of Europeans during their religious rites than the Hindus.

The Hindu Brahmins are criticized by the Europeans for their caste divisions and discriminations. Even educated Brahmins follow the ancient rituals without question as preached by the corrupt family priests. Instances of foul play and the modification of the shastras according to the needs and selfish gains of the priests are mentioned in the book by Blavatsky.

The trip in Bombay, Blavatsky says ended with the staging of the Ramayana in the Elphinstone’s theatre in honour of the “American Mission” as they were known then. The experiences of Blavatsky in the city of Bombay paint a picture of the Indian traditions and customs as followed by its diverse populace.

This section is followed by the trip to Karli caves by Blavatsky and her companions. These caves are situated near Pune as it is known now. On this very trip, the Rajput, Thakur Gulab –Lal Singh known as Gulab Singh is first mentioned by Blavatsky as an addition to their group besides Mr Y, Miss X, the colonel and the Bengali babu, the companions in their further endeavours from Karli. On the whole it was a delegation of nine people, representing various nations American, Russian, Hindu, English, Italian, Parsee, Punjabi, Nepalese, and
Rajput, sent by nine societies. The group of pilgrims were all associated with the theosophical society. As Blavatsky opined,

India has become decrepit and fallen down, like a huge memorial of antiquity, prostrate and broken to pieces. But the most insignificant of these fragments will for ever remain a treasure for the archaeologist and the artist, and, in the course of time, may even afford a clue to the philosopher and the psychologist. “Ancient Hindus built like giants and finished their work like goldsmiths,” says Archbishop Heber describing his travels in India.3

Blavatsky mentions the uncanny incidents she encountered on her journey on the Mataran Ghats. The local rumours state that the highly dangerous roads often result in the death of the pedestrians. The interesting phenomenon is that there is no trace of the bodies. The locals argue that the monkeys carry away the remains and bury them without a trace. Blavatsky mentions that the account was confirmed by the policemen and bodies were found buried in the construction sites around the mountains. The book is filled with many such strange stories.

On the trip to Karli caves, the party encountered an unusual snake charmer who was a yogi. The brief incident which Blavatsky quotes is the technique of the snake charmer of controlling a cobra. Here Blavatsky brings to light the fact that the orient has concealed many secrets from the foreigner in order to preserve the knowledge from prying eyes. The snake is controlled by an instrument strangely which had an effect on the audience too. The Thakur is said to have come to the rescue of the group by restoring them with some strange herbs whose nature is again unknown or cleverly concealed from the inquisitive European eye. This technique of hypnotism was a common practice among the yogis who practised Tantra.

Many of these accounts involved the mysterious presence of the individual named Thakur Gulab Singh whom Blavatsky mentioned as her saviour and her Teacher. Blavatsky mentions the nature of her work in India in her letter to Prince Dondoukkoff-Korsakoff, Governor General of the City of Odessa. “… After 19 years of separation I saw once more my Hindu whom I found settled in a little palace, or country house, about three or four miles from Yokohama. I only stayed a week before he sent me back to New York, after having given me detailed instructions. As soon as I arrived, I set to work. To begin with he made me preach against Spiritualism.”

Blavatsky’s encounter with spiritualists all over India did not change her perception of things. Rational explanation eluded some of the most remarkable activities witnessed by the author and her friends. But her anti-spiritualist temperament was firm rooted.

Spiritualism is a religion postulating the belief that spirits of the dead residing in the spirit world have both the ability and the inclination to communicate with the living. Spiritism, a branch of Spiritualism developed by Allan Kardec today found mostly in continental Europe and Latin America, especially Brazil, has emphasised reincarnation.

Blavatsky’s attitude towards a particular aspect of spiritualism was negative. Mediumship, or channelling, is the practice of certain people known as mediums to purportedly mediate communication between spirits of the dead and other human beings. There are two main kinds of mediumship namely the mental and the physical.

Mental mediums allegedly "tune in" to the spirit world by listening, sensing, or seeing spirits or symbols.

---

Physical mediums are believed to produce materialization of spirits, apports of objects, and other effects such as knocking, rapping, bell-ringing, etc. by using "ectoplasm" created from the cells of their bodies.

Blavatsky did not believe in the Physical mediums and strongly denied of ever being a physical medium herself. After witnessing the performance of the devil worshippers who congregated at a den of a sorceress commonly known as Kangalim in the jungles surrounding the ruins of the dead city of Mandu, her disbelief in such activities is made strong. The devil worshippers are a hill tribe who do not believe in god but worship the devils and evil spirits.

The Kangalim was considered to be a hundreds of years old and an incarnation of an ascetic from the Mandu ruins who with the passage of time is famed to have turned into a woman.

Imagine a skeleton seven feet high, covered with brown leather, with a dead child’s tiny head stuck on its bony shoulders; the eyes set so deep and at the same time flashing such fiendish flames all through your body that you begin to feel your brain stop working, your thoughts become entangled and your blood freeze in your veins. I describe my personal impressions and no words of mine can do them justice. My description is too weak.  

The ceremony was the demonstration of the seven sister goddesses taking possession of the Kangalim which is described as hair rising and ferocious. The Kangalim bursts into a dance of frenzy all the seven times plunging into the nearby rivulet every time a sister goddess leaves her body. Her tone changes into a man’s voice when making the oracle. This is where an interesting development is supposed to have happened which shattered the demonstration. Narayan, one of the companions of Blavatsky’s group, upset the Siavtherium

---

on which the prophetess was standing cursing the presence of *bellatis* (Europeans). The result was

But alas! After the third second had passed, we all came to the conclusion that, judging from the loud clang of the door of the cave, the representative of the seven sisters had ignominiously fled. The moment she had disappeared from our inquisitive eyes to her subterranean domain, we all realized that the unearthly hollow voice we heard had nothing supernatural about it and belonged to the Brahman hidden under the *Siavtherium* to someone’s live uncle, as Mr Y__ had rightly supposed.⁶

Helena Blavatsky’s journey into India was to familiarize herself with the place as instructed by her teacher, Gulab Singh. He appears magically to the rescue of Blavatsky whenever in peril. The situations where her life is saved twice due to the presence of this remarkable man are illustrated further. The first incident involves the narrow escape from the tiger near the Karli caves.

Bearing witness to an incredible miracle where the tiger is directed to willingly jump into the abyss close to the resting place of the travellers by the Thakur, Helena Blavatsky is left wondering about the Hindu who is constantly her saviour. The second incident where the author once again is rescued from mortal peril is in the caves of The Bagh near Jubbulpore. The caves are underground structures built one on top of the other. These caves are famed to be homes for the brotherhood of Raj yogis who reside in them for the purpose of practising the ritual of Samadhi. The spiritual experience of Blavatsky in these caves is noteworthy.

This is how it is described to have taken place. The air of the caves being suffocating due to lack of space and them being underground structures, the party of climbers which

⁶Ibid. 194.
included a messenger from Swami Dayanand, An Akali, a God’s Warrior of the Sikh community and the group with Blavatsky, had some breathing difficulties. Narayan, a devout admirer of Gulab Singh, informed the travellers who discovered the secret paths leading into the caves, that the Raj-Yogis might still be present in the upper stories which were inaccessible to them. This information was met with astonishment. After a while, Helena Blavatsky describes being a part of extraordinary phenomenon.

At this very moment I felt a strange and unexpected sensation, and I sank heavily on the ground. In a second I felt an indescribably delicious, heavenly sense of rest, in spite of a dull pain beating in my temples. I vaguely realized that I had really fainted, and that I should die if not taken out into the open air. I could not lift my finger; I could not utter a sound; and, in spite of it, there was no fear in my soul—nothing but an apathetic, but indescribably sweet feeling of rest....then I experienced a new sensation: I rather knew than felt that I was lifted from the floor, and fell down and down some unknown precipice, amongst the hollow rollings of a distant thunder-storm. Suddenly a loud voice resounded near me. And this time I think I did not hear, but felt it...when I recovered completely the first thing I saw was a powerful figure clad in white, with a raven black Rajput beard, anxiously leaning over me…it was our friend Thakur Gukab-Lal-Singh, who having promised to join us in the North-West provinces, now appeared to us in the Bagh, as if falling from the sky or coming out of the ground.⁷

The experiences of Helena Blavatsky and her letters to the Prince in Russia, confirm the fact that her journey into the sub-continent of India was a result of an instruction from the Thakur on fulfilling a very important mission in her life. The mission was to preach universal brotherhood while engaging in spiritual development and self-improvement. The other

adventures had by Blavatsky and her companions include the enhancing delight attained from the music of the hundreds of bamboo plants on the tiny islet on their way to Jubbulpore as described in the chapter titled “An Isle of Mystery”.

Thakur Gulab Singh calls it a concert of natural phenomenon. Before the concert, Mr.Y__ is provided with an unusual experience. While making a sketch of the island from the bank of the river, Mr.Y__ ‘s comments on the qualities of a Raj-Yogi are answered by the Thakur by creating an illusionary place in the exact location of which Mr.Y__ was making a sketch of. The result was the sketch was entirely different from the actual spectacle. This incident astounded all of those present including the artist. The reaction is described by Blavatsky in a beautiful way.

Who and what is this mysterious Hindu? I wondered in my uncertain thoughts. Who is this man, who unites in himself two such distinct personalities: the one exterior, kept up for strangers, for the world in general, the other interior, moral and spiritual, shown only to a few intimate friends? But even these intimate friends- do they know much beyond what is generally known? And what do they know? ...it is true, though, that I know a little more than the others; but I have promised silence, and silent I shall be. But the little I know is so strange, so unusual, that it is more like a dream than a reality.8

The colonel’s sketch of the lake was met with exclamations while Blavatsky was busy with her thoughts about Gulab Singh.

“Now what is this view sir?” wondered the colonel.as if it was worth your while to sit in the sun, and detain us all, to draw fancy pictures out of your own head!”

“What on earth are you talking about?” exclaimed Mr.Y__. “Do you mean to say you do not recognize the lake?”

“Listen to him- the lake! Where is the lake, if you please? Were you asleep, or what?”

By this time all our party gathered round the colonel, who held the drawing. Narayan uttered an exclamation, and stood still, the very image of bewilderment past description.

“I know this place!” said he, at last. “This is Dayri-Bol, the country house of the Thakur-Sahib. I know it. Last year during the famine I lived there for two months.”

The explanation given to this by the Thakur’s Disciple Narayan was that the scene was put forth before Mr.Y__ through the ancient method called the Yoga-Vidya. The experience left Mr.Y__ brooding about the possibilities of the existence of the practice of mesmerism and yogic powers in the Hindu community. The term Mesmérisme or mesmerism, for animal magnetism was first used in France. The principal meaning of mesmerise is now hypnotise. Animal magnetism was the name given by the German doctor Franz Mesmer in the 18th century to what he believed to be an invisible natural force exerted by animals. He believed that the force could have physical effects, including healing. The doubts raised about mesmerism were a result of an earlier incident where the Thakur managed to silently disperse a family of snakes approximately sixty in number.

The incident baffled the minds of the others but the secret knowledge shared by Blavatsky with the Thakur made her silent on the occurrence of the phenomenon and the reasons behind it. This silence of Blavatsky hints at the fact that she was familiar with the secret practices like mediumship and Spiritualism. Mr.Y__ however is said to have been

---

shaken with the occurrence of an unexpected event eluding his reasoning abilities with the lack of a logical explanation except for a spiritual and mysterious one.

Helena Blavatsky also paints a picture of the island as a beautiful one surrounded by scenic beauty. Previously an abode of fakirs (holy men), the island is home to a number of natural reeds and bamboos which have tiny holes as a result of the assault of insects. The night breezes flowing through them produce an orchestra of music which the party had the opportunity to perceive on the night as promised by Gulab Singh. Apart from these numerous adventures, the author and her companions also had the opportunity to form an impression of India through personal knowledge and first-hand experience of the various sects and religions and their rituals.

The journey of the group ended in Jubbulpore where the Technique of the Hatha Yoga is adopted by various ascetics and fakirs who congregate at a place called the “Fakir’s Avenue.” Admittance was difficult but the Thakur’s presence gained them the permission. The contorted positions of the fakirs who were reputed to have been catatonic for a long period of time were puzzlement to the scientific reasoning of the Europeans. Apart from this marvel, the travellers met a group of Kali worshippers, a sect of Thugs who had their own rituals and rites akin to the freemasons. The Thugs had a specific initiation ceremony into which only robbers and thieves were allowed. The similarities between the thugs and freemasons were that both used symbols and codes which were inaccessible to any outsider. But the difference lied in the fact that the thugs were statistically proved to be dangerous while the freemasons were a harmless sect.

The journey and the book end with Blavatsky’s reflections on the Mysterious qualities of India as a land of natural and picturesque beauty with dense jungles, ancient caves, and the originalities of every sect or religious community. Particularly Hinduism fascinated
Blavatsky as she says “the Hindus are strange and original, but their religion is still more original. It has its dark points, of course. The rites of some sects are truly repulsive; the officiating Brahmans are far from reproach. But these are only superficialities. In spite of them the Hindu religion possesses something so deeply and mysteriously irresistible that it attracts and subdues even unimaginative Englishmen.”

The book *The Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* has fascinating tales and also a fair amount of historical information not only about the various religious sects established in India but also about the historical significance of the various places and states visited by the author like the history of the city of the Nawabs, i.e. Hyderabad, the majestic glory of the Char Minar, etc. The book also touches the subject of the Hindu marriage and its customs. The concept of marrying the children early and the treatment of women and widows is also a topic discussed with vigour by Blavatsky.

Apart from Spiritualism, Blavatsky’s account have the constant mocking tones of her fellow companions on the subject of superstitious and blind repetition of certain rituals which do not have a rational foundation. The experience of the travelling group near the banks of a river where they bore witness to the burning of the dead bodies on the basis of superstitious beliefs, serves as a good example.

Occasionally some half-stripped skeleton is caught by the reeds, and stranded there helplessly for weeks, until an outcast, whose sad duty it is to busy himself all his life long with such unclean work, takes notice of it, and catching it by the ribs with his long

---

hook, restores it to its highway towards the ocean... disgusting and heart rending are such sights in the eyes of the European!\textsuperscript{11}

Another instance which exposes victimization of the educated classes of the Brahmins out of fear of being excommunicated is elucidated when the travellers seeking a place to spend the night, reach the house of a revered and educated Brahmin named Sham Rao Bahunathji who belonged to the caste of Patarah Prabhus which descends from the Kshatriyas. The Brahmins usually did not mix with their European friends as they would be “polluting” the atmosphere. The rituals involving consumption of food were performed with vigour which involved Puja or prayer to the family deity. The dining hall was divided into two parts to avoid contact with the Europeans. After the meal, which was a real Hindu meal, the guests retired for the night.

Blavatsky here exposes the corrupt practices of the family priest of Sham Rao with the help of a humorous event. The Colonel and Mr Y\textsubscript{__}, who accompanied the group of explorers to the “City of the dead” of which Blavatsky was a part of, were provided with a place in the ancient tower or pagoda of the house. A bat which was repeatedly disrupting their attempts to sleep was killed by Mr Y\textsubscript{__}. This incident when came to light created pandemonium in the household with the old mother of the host tearing her hair and crying out loud that her eldest son dead nine years, was existing in this new form, carrying out the laws of metempsychosis as told by the family Guru.

The family priest settles the matter for a bribe from the Bengali babu who gave an account of the settlement as “Let the guru announce, under the influence of Samadhi, that the freed spirit intends to inhabit the body of the future baby-buffalo and the old lady will buy the

new incarnation of her first-born as sure as the sun is bright. This announcement will be followed by rejoicings and by new rites. And who will profit by all this if not the family priest?"\(^{12}\)

Helena Blavatsky was a seeker of occult wisdom which was the main reason that she traced her steps towards India which is considered as the land of Occult sciences. To the occultist, occultism is conceived of as the study of the inner nature of things, as opposed to the outer characteristics that are studied by science.

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer designates this "inner nature" with the term *Will*, and suggests that science and mathematics are unable to penetrate beyond the relationship between one thing and another in order to explain the "inner nature" of the thing itself, independent of any external causal relationships with other "things". The occult (from the Latin word *occultus* "clandestine, hidden, secret") is "knowledge of the hidden". In common English usage, *occult* refers to "knowledge of the paranormal", as opposed to "knowledge of the measurable", usually referred to as science.

Helena Blavatsky wrote the book during her leisure time as a mere account of her travels to India. It was not written with any serious purpose other than for Entertainment. Her travels talk about the mysterious unexplored places, the disputes among the different sects, the Indo-European disagreement, and etc. most importantly it talks about the spiritual encounters, occult experiences, unusual natural phenomenon, inner inspiration and lifesaving powers of the mysterious universe.

The narrative style of Blavatsky is autobiographical and written in the first person narrative. The author’s experiences are elucidated and explained. The type of travel writing

into which the book *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* falls is Inspirational travel writing. This type leaves a spiritual message in the end. The entire book talks about the various adventures had by the theosophists on their journey into India. Every chapter has a particular description of the place visited and hence, it can also be categorized under the adventure type of travel writing.

As a seeker, Blavatsky had a purpose to visit India. She was directed to the subcontinent by a strange Hindu whom she mentions in her book. According to the descriptions in the book, he is a mysterious yogi who like Blavatsky was familiar with the occult sciences and the ancient yogic treatises of Hinduism taught to every Brahmin. He himself admits that the sciences of mesmerism and spiritualism are taught to every member of his caste as a mandatory course of initiation. The book hints that he is a Raj Yogi possessing remarkable qualities. However he denies any kind of reverence or worship which illustrates his humility, a quality attributed to great souls.

Helena Blavatsky was herself revered as a god mother and a saint by the Theosophists. She however denies of having any followers or of establishing any “religion.” In one of her letters to the Prince, she says

> I believe only in the infinite, the unconditional and the Absolute, but I do not preach my ideas. In our society, composed of all races, of all religions, of all conceptions, nobody, from the president to the last of the members has the right to propagate his ideas, and must respect the beliefs and convictions of his brother, however absurd they may appear to him.¹³

The people around her claimed that she was a woman who possessed great powers and a magnetic personality. Her company was said to be spiritually enhancing and

---

inspiring article about Helena Blavatsky written by William. T. Brown presents the following observation.

It was claimed for Madame Blavatsky that she had phenomenal powers, that she was clairvoyant and clairaudient, that wonderful things took place in her presence, such as the tinkling of bells and the sound of tapping upon objects without physical (i.e., ordinary physical) contact, that letters were formed in the air "out of nothing" and that she was in communication, by occult or psychic methods, with the living representatives of the ancient Magi.\textsuperscript{14}

Blavatsky had a great sense of humour as is evident from her travel narratives and her letters. She includes a humorous anecdote or a situation to make the narrative interesting. Her book From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan, is written systematically and divided into chapters each of which deals with the journey and experiences of a different place. The travels are chronologically interconnected and the narrative flows in the form of a story. Blavatsky herself made it clear in the prologue that the book was written for the sake of amusement but the facts and people mentioned were real.

The search of Blavatsky for the sacred and the enlightened started with her meeting of a Hindu on 12\textsuperscript{th} August, 1851 in Hyde Park in London. He, later is described as her constant friend and teacher under whose guidance she directed her travels and missions to Tibet, which was the residence of her teacher, Egypt, Nepal, Bhutan and other countries including New York and London. She was described as being a gifted child since her birth. The interest of Blavatsky for the unusual brought her to India twice in her life, the first time being

1852, whence she stayed for two years and received money from a stranger, and the next time being from 1879 to 1885.

Blavatsky, mentions Thakur Gulab Singh as a Maratha Brahmin who had a significant amount of wealth but didn’t care for worldly possessions a quality which she herself possessed. Her reverence of the Thakur is explicit in the book and apart from the various other spiritualists and sacred places which stirred her heart and soul, the presence of this individual is prominent in the book, thus raising the curiosity of the reader.

The travels of Blavatsky are controlled and manoeuvred by the Thakur who appears as if by premonition at the places of the incidents and miraculously, her life is saved twice from mortal peril. The account to support this view is rendered by Helena Blavatsky herself on the “Isle of Mystery.”

“I gazed at the remarkable face of Gulab-Lai-Singh with a mixed feeling of indescribable fear and enthusiastic admiration; recalling the mysterious death of the Karli tiger, my own miraculous escape a few hours ago in the Bagh, and many other incidents too many to relate. It was only a few hours since he appeared to us in the morning, and yet what a number of strange ideas, of puzzling occurrences, how many enigmas his presence stirred in our minds! The magic circle of my revolving thought grew too much for me.” This thought was reciprocated by the Thakur which startled Blavatsky even more as she did not express it externally. But the answer of the Thakur was “You already know every detail you ever will learn. So leave the rest to our respective fates.”

---

The writings of Blavatsky speak strongly of the existence of Spiritualism, (not to be confused with spirituality) occult sciences and also speak of the esoteric wisdom underlying this universe. Though she was not a believer in spiritualists who acted as physical mediums, Blavatsky herself excelled in the practice of mental mediumship. Spiritualism is widely used in many contexts. Spiritualism is used in English to mean either;

1) (Religion) – the beliefs that people can and do communicate with dead people and the practices and doctrines of people with this belief.

2) (Philosophy) – In a philosophical doctrine or religious beliefs emphasising that spirits and souls exist or that all reality is spiritual, not material.

3) (Metaphysics) – various doctrines maintaining that the ultimate reality is spirit or mind.

4) (Ethics) – the view that spiritual concerns are more important than this-worldly concerns (a kind of idealism or asceticism that is opposed to secularism).

For example, Madame Blavatsky (1831–91), the founder of the Theosophical Society, only practiced mediumship (Mediumship, or channelling, is the practice of certain people—known as mediums—to purportedly mediate communication between spirits of the dead and other human beings.), to contact powerful spirits capable of conferring esoteric knowledge. Blavatsky did not believe these spirits were deceased humans, and held beliefs in reincarnation different from the views of most Spiritualists. Spiritualists at that time viewed Theosophy as unscientific and both occultist and cult-like. Theosophists viewed Spiritualism as unsophisticated and uncosmopolitan.

She agreed to the fact that she was an occultist as it was the main part of the teachings of the theosophical society which mainly focused on the physical, intellectual and
spiritual aspects of the individual. The existence of a Higher and Absolute truth is asserted by the Theosophists and hence Helena Petrovna Blavatsky contradicted some of the idiosyncrasies of the Hindus. Her writings were based on the sacred texts of birth Hinduism and Buddhism.

The spiritual quest of Helena Blavatsky was directed towards self-improvement gained through her journey into sacred India. The travels though directed towards various destinations into the jungles and caves, had a deep spiritual impact on the soul of the author as she perceived not only the outer covering but also the hidden divinity in all forms of nature.

As Blavatsky says about the concept of true Spiritualism in the last chapter of *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* “the celebrated “spirits” would probably evaporate, but in their stead the living spirit, which “belongeth not to this world,” would become better known and better realized by humanity, because humanity will comprehend the harmony of the whole only after learning how closely the visible world is bound to the world invisible.”

Blavatsky is most well known for her promulgation of a theosophical system of thought, often referred to under various names, including: The Occult Science, The Esoteric Tradition, The Wisdom of the Ages, etc., or simply as Occultism or Theosophy.

Broadly, Theosophy attempts to reconcile humanity's scientific, philosophical, and religious disciplines. As it largely employs a synthesizing approach, it makes extensive use of the vocabulary and concepts of many philosophical and religious traditions. However these, along with all other fields of knowledge, are investigated, amended, and explained within an esoteric or occult framework.

---

According to Blavatsky, Theosophy is neither revelation nor speculation. It is portrayed as an attempt at gradual, faithful reintroduction of a hitherto hidden science, which is called in Theosophical literature *The Occult Science*. According to Blavatsky, this postulated science provides a description of Reality not only at a physical level, but also on a metaphysical one. India, being a land of many religious thoughts and philosophies, it became a centre for Blavatsky’s Theosophical society established in Adyar in Madras. And her journey to India helped her to incorporate the occult wisdom provided by various religious philosophies and practices prevalent during the time.