

Madame Blavatsky and C. W. Leadbeater: A Timeline

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira



Madame Blavatsky in London, 1884

H. P. Blavatsky was regarded by the Mahatmas as ‘an *initiated Chela*’, their ‘*direct agent*’ and someone whom they had looked for over one hundred years in order to present the Occult doctrine to the world. She received special training from them in Tibet in order to prepare herself for such a task and, together with Col. Henry Steel Olcott, William Q. Judge and others, formed the Theosophical Society in 1875.

According to the received tradition about C. W. Leadbeater, Madame Blavatsky did not care for him, she ignored him, was indifferent to him and even hated him. The timeline presented below tells a different history: one of encouragement, support and inspiration.

1st November 1884

On 31st October 1884, CWL received, by post, a letter from Mahatma K.H. in reply to his letter to Mahatma which he had tried to send in March 1884, through the agency of the English medium William Eglinton. Upon receiving it he returned to London from Bramshott, late at night, in order to show the Master’s letter to Madame Blavatsky and ask her to forward his reply to the Mahatma’s letter. He had suggested that CWL should spend a few months at Adyar. What follows is CWL’s account of what happened next. (From How Theosophy Came to Me by C. W. Leadbeater)

Even at that hour a number of devoted friends were gathered in Mrs. Oakley’s drawing-room to say farewell to Madame Blavatsky, who seated herself in an easy-chair by the fireside. She was talking brilliantly to those who were present, and rolling one of her eternal cigarettes, when suddenly her right hand was jerked out towards the fire in a very peculiar fashion, and lay palm upwards. She looked down at it in surprise, as I did myself, for I was standing close to her, leaning with an elbow on the mantel-piece: and several of us saw quite clearly a sort of whitish mist form in the palm of her hand and then condense into a piece of folded paper, which she at once handed to me, saying: “There is your answer.” Every one in

the room crowded round, of course, but she sent me away outside to read it, saying that I must not let anyone see its contents. It was a very short note and ran as follows:

Since your intuition led you in the right direction and made you understand that it was *my desire* you should go to Adyar *immediately*, I may say more. The sooner you go the better. Do not lose one day more than you can help. Sail on the 5th, if possible. Join Upasika at Alexandria. 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.

Greeting to you, *my new chela*.

December 1884

Following the receipt of this letter CWL made arrangements to travel and joined HPB in Egypt, on her way to India, after resigning from his position in the Anglican Church. He sailed on the 4th November. After an eventful sea trip they arrived in Colombo, where CWL, at the suggestion of HPB, became a Buddhist.

On an earlier visit to the lovely island of Ceylon, both Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky had made public profession of the Buddhist faith and been formally received into that religion; and now Madame Blavatsky asked me whether I was willing to follow their example in that respect. She strongly impressed upon me that if I took that step it must be entirely of my own motion and on my own responsibility, and that she had no wish to persuade me in the matter; but she thought that, as I was a Christian Priest, the open acceptance of a great Oriental religion would go far to convince both Hindus and Buddhists of my *bona fides*, and would enable me to be far more useful in working among them for our Masters.

I replied that I felt the very greatest reverence for the Lord Buddha and whole-heartedly accepted His teaching, and that I should feel it a great honour to enroll myself among His followers if I could do so without abjuring the Christian faith into which I had been baptized. She assured me that no such repudiation would be asked of me, and that there was no incompatibility between Buddhism and *true* Christianity, though no enlightened Buddhist would be likely to credit the crude theological dogmas which were usually preached by the missionaries. Buddhism, she said, was not a question of creed, but of life; I was not asked to accept any article of faith, but to try to live according to the precepts of the Lord.

(How Theosophy Came to Me)

Early 1885



A Young CWL at Adyar, 1885

Our Founder [HPB was at Adyar at that time] herself lay in bed inside in a condition of extreme weakness, but she had just sunk to sleep, so that the lady who was nursing her had thought it safe to steal a few moments of respite, and had come out to sit with us. She was describing to us tearfully Madame's exceeding weakness when she suddenly checked herself to say: "Who can that be?" for we all heard a firm quick step approaching along what was then the open roof, beyond the bedroom. The footsteps came down from that higher level and passed quickly before the window which faced us as we sat, and then—the Master Morya entered the room; but the lady did not see

Him, for as He entered the startled look left her face, and she sank back upon her cushion as though in sleep. The Indian and I sprang to our feet and prostrated ourselves; but the Master Morya walked quickly past us with a bright smile and a benedictory wave of His hand turned in to Madame Blavatsky's bedroom.

Her Master had asked her whether she would pass away then—she was very near to passing away, and she had had terrible suffering—or whether she would keep her physical body for some years longer, in order to write that great book *The Secret Doctrine*. She choose to stay. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that from that time onward she had scarcely an hour free from pain, but she fought it down splendidly. She wrote the book, and there it remains, as a monument which will stand all through the ages. She can never, I think, be forgotten while that and her other books remain to speak of her and for her.

(How Theosophy Came to Me by C. W. Leadbeater)

The letters of Madame Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett are a clear evidence of her attitude towards him. In one of them she says:

It is not to Leadbeater, dear Mr. Sinnett, that you ought to have written about the suppression of everything in *The Theosophist* relating to me and my defence, but to the Executive Council at Adyar.

(The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett, letter LIII)

Its members were Norendro Nath Sen, A.J. Cooper-Oakley, Franz Hartmann, S. Ramaswamier, Naoroji Dorabji Khandalavala, H.R. Morgan, Gyanendranath Chakravarti, Nobin K. Bannerji, T. Subba Row, P. Sreenivasrow, P. Iyaloo Naidu, Rudolph Gebhard, R. Raghoonath Row and S. Subramania Iyer. This Committee met in December, 1884, during the TS Convention at Adyar. (Source: *Old Diary Leaves*, Third Series, p.192)

In another letter she says:

See how those Theosophists love each other! Now Leadbeater is accused of having turned from a thoroughly good man into a bad Anglo-Indian, under the influence of Cooper-Oakley! He is accused of saying bad things of me, and what not!

(LBS, letter L)

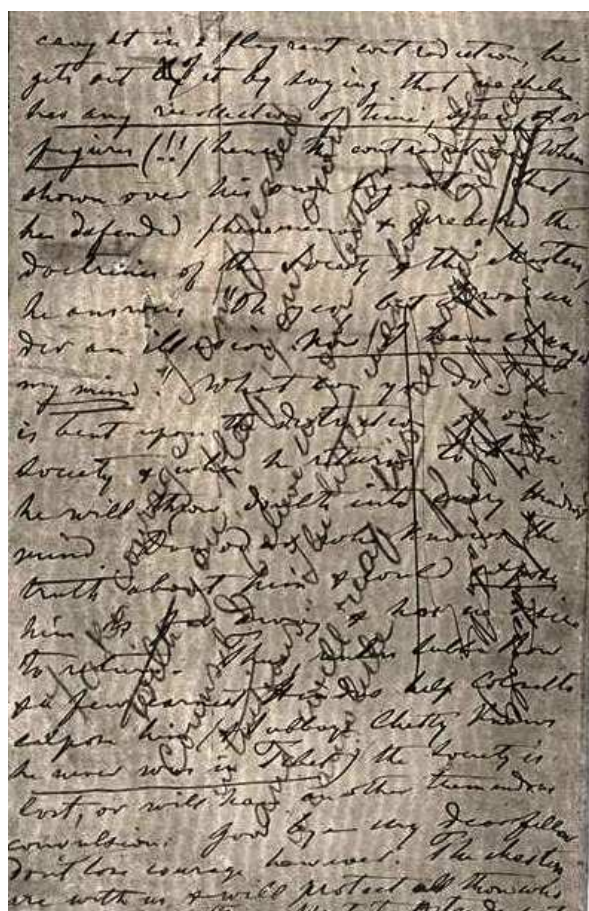
June 1886

But it is in a letter of 1886 to CWL (who was in Ceylon at that time, helping with the educational work Col. Olcott had started there), published in the HPB Centenary Issue of The Theosophist (August 1931), with editorial comments by C. Jinarajadasa, that she makes two direct references of CWL as a chela (disciple) of the Masters. The subject of this letter is "Bawajee" (Dharbagiri Nath), an Indian chela who had been sent to Europe to help in the TS work there but who later turned against both HPB and the Society. Some letters by both HPB and Countess Wachtmeister, in Letters from Blavatsky to Sinnett, also deal with the "Bawajee" (sometimes referred to as "Bawaji") crisis. I quote relevant portions of the letter:

23 June 1886

My dearest Leadbeater,

I was glad – sincerely – to receive your welcome letter. As to the enclosure I really do not take upon myself to send it. I cannot do it, my dear friend; I swore not to deliver any more letters and Master has given me the right and privilege to refuse it. So that I have put it aside and send it to you back as I received it. If Mahatma K.H. had accepted or wanted to read the letter he would have taken it away from my box, and it remaining in its place shows me that he refuses it. Now learn new developments. Bawajee is entirely against us and bent on the ruin of the T.S. A month ago he was in London and ready to sail back to India. Now, he is



Source: *The Theosophist*, February 1927

here - heaven knows when he will go away for he lives with Franz Gebhard (the elder son who sides with him and whom he has utterly psychologized) and he has sown dissension and strife in Gebhard family, the mother, father, and two sons Arthur and Rudolph remaining true to the teachings of Masters and me and F. siding with him. ... Moreover, he has slandered persistently Subba Row, Damodar, Olcott and everyone at Adyar. He made many Europeans lose confidence in them. Subba Row, he says, never said a truth in his life to a European; he bamboozles them always and is a liar; Damodar is a great liar also; he alone (Bawajee) knows the Masters, and what They are. In short, he makes of our Mahatmas inaccessible, impersonal Beings, so far away that no one can reach Them!!! At the same time he contradicts himself: to one he says he was 10 y. [years] with Mahatma K.H.; to another 3 years, again he went several times to Tibet and saw the Master only from afar when he entered and came out of the temple. He lies most awfully. The truth is the he (B.) has never been to Tibet and has never seen his Master 100 miles off. NOW, I have the assurance of it from my Master Himself.

He was a chela on probation. When he came to Bombay to the Headquarters, your Master ordered me to tell all He accepted Krishnaswami, and had sent him to live with us and work for the T.S.

He was sent to Simla to Mr. S. [Sinnett] that is to say, *gave up his personality* to a *real chela*, Dharbagiri Nath, and assumed his name since then. As I was under pledge of silence I could not contradict him when I heard him bragging that *he* had lived with his Master in Tibet and was an *accepted* regular chela. But now when, he failed as a “probationary” owing to personal ambition, jealousy of Mohini and a suddenly developed rage and envy even to hatred of Colonel Olcott and myself – now Master ordered me to say the truth. What do you think he did? Why, he looked me in the face and asked me what I knew of his past life? That

certainly he did not go to Master during the five years he was with us, but that he knew Mahatma K.H. 12 years before he had heard of the T.S.!!! When I showed him Master's writing in which your Mahatma corroborated my statement and affirmed that he (Bawajee) "had never seen HIM or go to Tibet" – Mr B. coolly said it was a *spook* letter, for the Mahatma could neither write letters, nor would He ever say anything about his chelas."

She concludes the letter thus:

"Good bye, my dear fellow, don't lose courage however. The Masters *are* with us and will protect all those who stand firm by Them. Write to Ostende, *poste restante* to me, I will be there tomorrow.

Yours ever faithfully and fraternally,

H. P. Blavatsky"

The following message appeared written on the back of the above-mentioned letter from Madame Blavatsky to CWL, while she was in Germany, and he was in Colombo, Sri Lanka:

TAKE courage. I am pleased with you. Keep your own counsel, and believe in your better intuitions. The little man has *failed* and will reap his reward. Silence meanwhile.

K.H.

(Source: *Letters of the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, letter #50)

February 1887

Below are the transcription and facsimiles of H. P. Blavatsky's letter to CWL, dated 22 February 1887. The name 'Bowaji' mentioned in the second part of the letter is sometimes spelled 'Bawajee' and refers to a probationary chela sent to Europe to help HPB in her work. He later on turned against her and the TS. The initials 'P.G.' at the end of the letter may indicate the expression 'Personal God' as the Vishishtadvaita school admits that notion. The transcription of the letter is given below.

Ostende Feb 22 1887

My dear Mr Leadbeater

I send this article to your care lest Mr C. Oakley should not be at home. Please show it to Subba Row before it goes into print. I would not publish any thing that would displease him. But there is a *row*, already in London and sure to be one in America. I have two letters already, when hardly three days ago the *Theosophist* came in. They write to me "Subba R. has then gone against you? He is rejecting the old doctrine? Is he still a Theosophist this, that, and the other. The fact is that his Lecture which is admirable is spoiled with these unnecessary remarks. He had a perfect right to *say* so. But why print it and create new complications? I know he believes as we do, but he has always objected against the form and

I say so. I would not for the world have it said as they do that he contradicts himself and is inconsistent etc etc. for he is the Indian and Western glory of the Society.

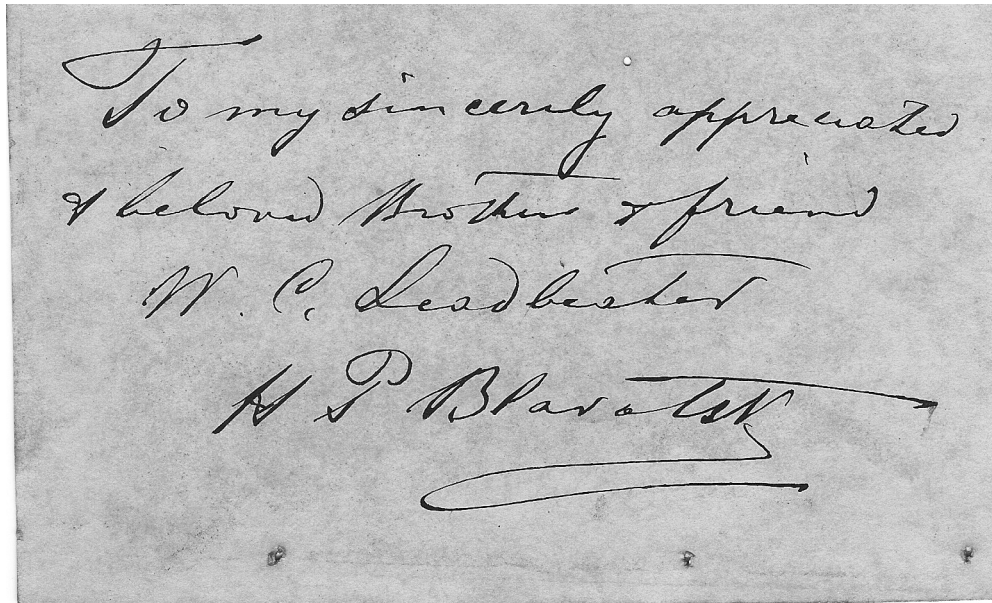
Bowaji when he read the Lecture is said to have *jumped for joy* and exclaimed Ah thanks to goodness! There's Subba Row at last coming against the [undecipherable words] He hates me bitterly and so does Mohini, it appears tho heaven knows I have never done anything to deserve their ingratitude not only hatred.

Ah my dear friend, it is hard times all round. The Society will have its *pralaya* one day through these two Hindus. I hear Mohini preaching *Visishtadwaitism* in America; a P. G. and trying to enroll Judge!!!

14.4.44. V. 1
Oshunda Feb. 22 1887
My dear Mr Leavelle
I send this article to your care. I trust Mr C. Oakley should not be at home. Please show it to Subba Row before it goes into print for I would not publish any thing that would displease him. But there is a row, already in London & sure to be in America. I have been ^{already} asked when hardly three days ago the Theravada came. They write to me "Subba Row has gone against you! He is rejecting the old doctrine. Is he still a Theravada then, that, & the other. The point is that his lecture which is admirable is spoiled with the unnecessary remarks. He had a perfect right to say so but why print it & create new complications? I know his views as we do, but he has always objected against the

form. I say so. I would not for the world have it said as they do. That he contradicts himself & is inconsistent etc etc. for he is the Indian & Western glory of the Society.
Bowaji when he read the lecture is said to have jumped for joy & exclaimed Ah thanks to goodness! There's Subba Row at last coming against the old doctrine. He hates me bitterly & so does Mohini, it appears. Tho heaven knows I have never done anything to deserve their ingratitude not only hatred.
Ah my dear friend, it is hard times all round. The Society will have its pralaya one day through these two Hindus. I hear Mohini preaching *Visishtadwaitism* in America; a P. G. & trying to enroll Judge!!!

1889



To my sincerely appreciated
& beloved Brother & friend
W. C. Leadbeater
H. P. Blavatsky

Above is the dedication written by HPB on the copy of *The Voice of the Silence* she presented to CWL in London, after his arrival from Ceylon in December 1889.

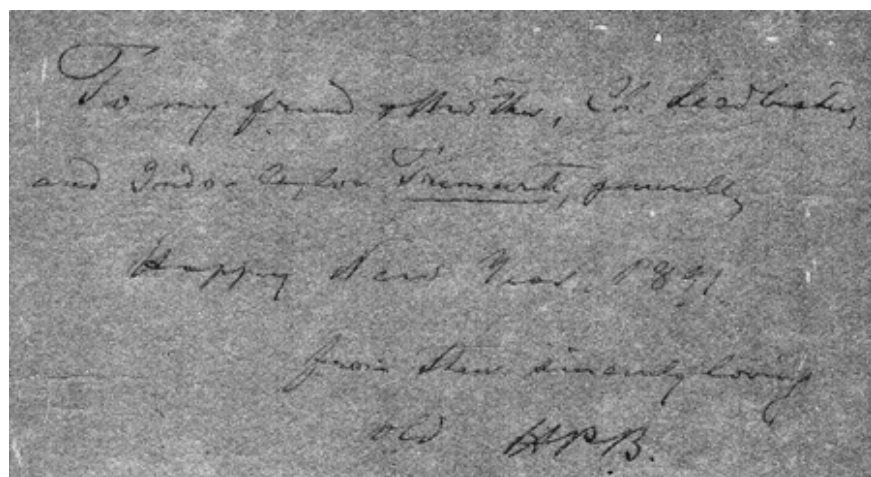
CWL's critics have said, repeatedly, that by reversing his initials (C. W.) to 'W.C' she showed her poor opinion of him. However, in view of her overall communications with and encouragement to him, over a period of almost seven years, could not be that the above-depicted dedication assumes the form of a test to the future critics and detractors of C. W. Leadbeater?

Why would she continue to write to him in affectionate terms if she did not really care about him?

1890

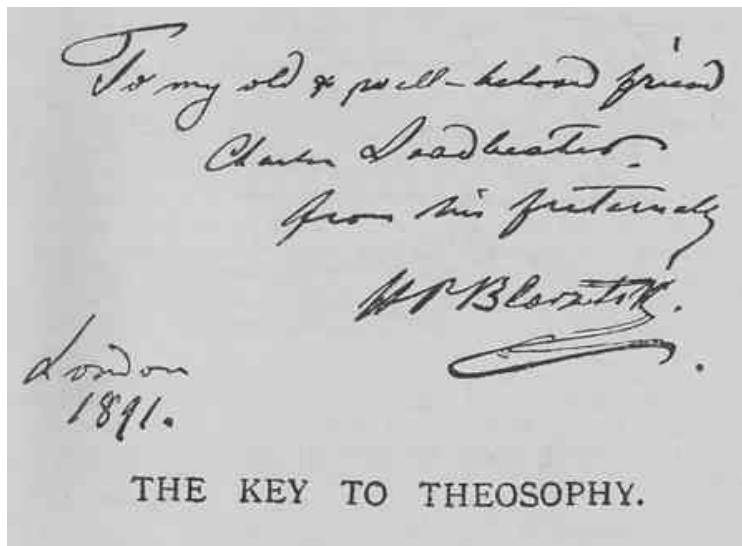
A New Year message from HPB:

To my friend and brother, Ch.
Leadbeater,
and Indo-Ceylon Trimurti, generally
Happy New Year 1891
from their sincerely loving
old H.P.B.



To my friend & brother, Ch. Leadbeater,
and Indo-Ceylon Trimurti, generally,
Happy New Year 1891
from their sincerely loving
old H.P.B.

1891



‘To my old and well-beloved friend
Charles Leadbeater
From his fraternally
H. P. Blavatsky.

London
1891.’

Above is the dedication written by HPB on the copy of *The Key to Theosophy* which she presented to him in London, 1891, the year she died.

It would be next to impossible for an advanced Occultist like HPB to maintain such a communication with – and such level of encouragement and support towards – C. W. Leadbeater had he been guilty of the sinister intentions and attitudes towards children, as his accusers claim to be the case even before the formal charges against him of 1906 in America.

Why, after all, would HPB refer to him as ‘my old and well-beloved friend’ in the very year she died (1891)? Her written dedication is an enduring testimony to someone who remained loyal to the cause of Theosophy throughout his life, enduring abuse, vilification and injustice with uttermost equanimity.

Such a life was his testimony to that unique woman, HPB, who showed him the way to the Masters’ work in 1884, when they met in London.