

## Appendix I

T. Velayuda Mudaliar vs. N. Chidambaram Iyer on the  
message of Ramalinga Adigal  
(From: *The Theosophist* 4 [1882/1883] 61–64)

### *THE UTTERANCES OF RAMALINGAM PILLAI*

The communication from an esteemed brother, Mr. Velayudam Mudaliar, F. T. S., Tamil Pandit in the Madras Presidency College, which appeared in the THEOSOPHIST for July last, has been excepted to by Mr. N. Chidambaram Iyer, of Trivadi, Madras Presidency, who sends us his criticisms thereupon, together with a joint reply to certain questions of his addressed to a well-known *Chela*, or pupil, of the late Ramalingam Swami. The gentleman says, in a private note to us, that he has "the greatest respect for the Adept Brothers, for the Founders of the Theosophical Society, and for Ramalingam himself, who was no doubt a great man in his own way." He fully believes in the existence of the Brothers, and appreciates the work done by our Society "in so far as it tends to awaken in the minds of the Hindus a respect for the wisdom and learnings of their eminent ancestors." So far, well; but having thus wreathed his rapier with flowers he then makes a lunge with it at the Founders' ribs. "But, I do not at all approve," says he, "either their *indirect attempts* to spread Buddhism in the land of the Hindus, or the apathy with which the elite of the Hindu community view the evil that threatens to seriously injure the religion of their forefathers." This – if we may be pardoned the liberty of saying so – is rhetorical nonsense. The public discourses and private conversations of Colonel Olcott in India will be scrutinised in vain for the slightest evidence upon which the charge of Buddhistic propagandism could be based. That work is confined to Ceylon. His addresses to Hindus have so faithfully mirrored the religious and moral sentiments and aspirations of the people, that they have been voluntarily translated by Hindus into various Indian vernaculars, published by them at their own cost, and circulated all over the Peninsula. They have – as abundant published native testimony proves – stimulated a fervid love for India and her glorious Aryan past, and begun to revive the taste for Sanskrit literature. As for the tone of this magazine, it speaks for itself. Take the thirty-nine numbers thus far issued, and count the articles upon Buddhism in comparison with those upon Hinduism, and it will be found that while confessedly an esoteric

Buddhist, yet the Editor has taken great pains to avoid anything which might look like an Indian propagandism of that philosophy. For two years our Colombo Branch has been publishing a weekly paper – the *Sarasavi Sandaresa* – in advocacy of Buddhism, yet we have carefully abstained from quoting its articles lest we might depart from our rule, of strict impartiality. No, this charge must be ascribed to that orthodox prejudice which, under every phase of religion, begets intolerance and runs into persecution. It may amuse our critic to learn that some narrow-minded Buddhist bigots in Ceylon regard Colonel Olcott as scheming to break down orthodox Buddhism by gradually introducing Hindu ideas about the Soul, and he was publicly called to account because we use the mystic syllable OM on our Society documents and call ourselves *Theo*-sophists! So, too, an eminent Mussalman gentleman among our Fellows was soundly rated by his still more distinguished brother, because he had joined a body of persons banded together to Aryanise Islam!

Following is the correspondence sent us by Mr. Chidambaram; together with the rejoinder of Mr. Velayudham, to whom we submitted it for comment. It scarcely proves the former's case, but still, despite its length, we make place for it to give both sides the chance to be heard. – ED.

## THE CORRESPONDENCE

TRIVADI, July 27, 1882.

"My dear friend,

A certain gentleman has recently published certain statements about your celebrated Guru Ramalingam Pillai which I am slow to believe as being wholly correct, and which I know is not the whole truth about the man. Of the numerous disciples of the man there is none who has made such fearful sacrifices in every way as you have done and none so faithful as you are to his cause. For you are I think the only one perhaps that even now declines to quit the very quarters that once witnessed the fame of this remarkable man. Having spent besides, the whole of your time, both day and night, by the side of the man, no one appears in my eyes better fitted than yourself to give a correct account of that man's views and aims.

I therefore wish to draw your attention to the following points, and I have too great confidence in your strict adherence to the cause of truth to doubt for a moment that you will write anything but what is wholly true."

It is not desirable that anything which is not wholly true, and which is not the whole truth, should be published touching the memory of a great man.

Yours sincerely,

N. CHIDAMBARAM IYER.

To Venkatesa Iyer, Vadalur, S. Arcot District.

GREAT LIGHT OF MERCY.

*Questions asked by N. Chidambaram Iyer, and replies thereto by the Members of the Shadhantha Samarasa Sudha Sanmarga Satya Dharma Sabha of Uttaragnanasittipuram, otherwise known as Vadalur or Parvatheepuram, in the District of South Arcot in the Madras Presidency.*

Q. 1. Did your Guru say that before long the esoteric meaning of the Vedas and Shastras would be revealed by Mahatmas in the North to foreigners?

A. Our Guru said that people in the North were more orthodox than those in the South, and therefore more corrigible, and that he had been sent down by God for the purpose of evangelizing men possessing a black (ignorant) mind with a white (clean) body. *Vide* note (a.)

Q. 2. Did he say that the fatal influences of the Kaliyug would be neutralized in about 10 years?

A. He said that the time was close at hand when God would appear on earth and play on it; that as men had ceased to love virtue, they, as well as animals, would suffer innumerable miseries which, however, would soon be removed by God, by whose power all men would be brought under the sway of his blessed reign. (b.)

Q. 3. Did he not believe in a personal God, especially in Siva, and does he not refer in his works to God as having appeared before him in a physical shape?

A. He never said there was no personal God.<sup>1</sup> He said there was but one God; that that God possessed all the attributes ever assigned to him by man in word or thought, and many other attributes; that the world was governed by persons chosen by Him for the purpose, and that he was one of the chosen few. (c.)

Q. 4. After he had gone into Samadhi and the doors of the room were closed by his orders, was the room opened and the place examined a year

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<sup>1</sup> If he had believed in a personal God would he not have so declared? Since the above article was put in type Mr. Chindambaram has kindly sent us for inspection an original copy of a Tamil handbill (Notice) issued by Ramalingam about 10 years ago, together with his (Mr. C's) English rendering of the same. We find upon a careful examination of the Tamil what seems unquestionable evidence that the famous Sadhu believed in the God of the Adwaites, i. e., a non-personal Universal Essence; and that the wonders he promised to his followers were only to be enjoyed by Siddhas, or Yogis. — ED. T.

later? You told me that the Collector of South Arcot and a member of the Madras Revenue Board at one time asked permission of yourself and others in charge of the room to open it, and that permission was refused. When was this? Was it before or after the expiration of a year from the 30th January, 1874, when your Guru entered on his Samadhi?

A. He said that if his followers should at any time find him apparently lifeless, they should not, thinking him to be dead, either burn or bury him. One day in the month of January, 1874, we found that the breathing had stopped, and for four days we continued to pay our customary respects to him. We then found it necessary to close the doors owing to some disturbance set on foot by some of his followers. Then followed some further disturbance by the police. Some three months after, on the receipt of the police occurrence report, Mr. J. H. Garstin, the then Collector of South Arcot, and Mr. George Banbury, the then Member of the Revenue Board, visited the spot and asked for permission to open the doors, which was, however, refused, and the gentlemen went away evidently satisfied with our conduct. On the 30th month we found the lock opened. A certain bold man entered the room and reported that he found the body of our Guru. *We were not prepared to credit his word.* He subsequently died after suffering many miseries. (d.)

Q. 5. Did he say that after going into Samadhi he would go to Europe or America in his physical or astral body and work there? Did he say that persons from Russia and America would come and preach in India the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood which he was forced to give up for want of support?

A. He said that Europeans would try to take possession of the Vadalur Dharmasala, but will not eventually do so; *that God meant to take him to countries where white men live, as Europe and America; that rumours would reach us that he was seen in those countries; that though this will certainly be true, no attempt should be made to find him out, and that it was his wish that his followers should not quit the Dharmasala at Vadalur.*

He also said that before the advent of God there would be witnessed certain miracles on earth and that all should not be surprised at or deceived by them. (e.)

Q. 6. Did not your Guru predict, as certain Astronomers have since done, that in the course of some 20 years, the greater part of mankind would be carried away by death, and that actuated by a desire to avert this calamity he was endeavouring hard to soothe the wrath of the Almighty? In fact was not this the main aim of his life and of the Sabha started by him?

A. The main object of our Guru was, that all men should enjoy the blessings he himself enjoyed. We find that his prayer to the Almighty was to the effect that he should be the means of imparting such blessings to the world at large. The aim of the Sabha is that every one should try his best to find out truth and act accordingly. (f.)

Q. 7. What was his object in advising his followers to bury the dead bodies of their relations?

A. It should not be supposed that to one that had the power to raise the dead burning would make the task more difficult than burying. It is a sin in us to destroy the body created by God. Learned men say that even where life is extinct the life principle never leaves the body, and that therefore to burn such body would be murder. Besides, as the natural wish is that the dead should return to life in their identical bodies, it is not proper to destroy such bodies. Besides, we know that certain great men, after they enter on their Samadhi, remain with their bodies for a long time. We have seen that the bodies of persons who were considered to be ordinary men, remained free from decay after burial; and as it is difficult to find out the real excellence and virtue of certain persons, it is always safe and advisable to bury the dead as a general rule. (g.)

Q. 8. Was not your Guru serious when he said in the Notice circulated by him that those that frequent his Sabha would witness the phenomena of the dead returning to life and of the old becoming young? You will remember having given me a Tamil copy of the Notice for translation into English.

A. To *witness* the phenomena mentioned in the Notice at the time of their actual occurrence, two things are necessary – 1st, Body (or long life); 2nd, Certain powers. To possess these it is necessary to pray to the Almighty. The Notice in question was issued for the purpose of awakening in men a *desire to acquire* the said requisites. (h.)

Q. 9. Was your Guru a believer in a future birth? Was it not the opinion of your Guru that when a man dies everything in him dies with him, and that Nirvana or Moksha consists in the preservation of this physical body from dissolution?

A. There *is* a future birth. To one that has learned to preserve his body from dissolution there is no future birth. The truth of this will become apparent when the matter is fully analyzed and examined. (i.)

Q. 10. With what object was that huge building erected at a cost of over half a lakh of rupees? With what object was that huge blank book got up which is still preserved under lock and key? (j.)

A. As the building is of service in the elucidation of those principles that throw light on the Nature of God, the obstacles in the way of seeing Him and the means of overcoming these, it resembles a map or plan.

Again, our Guru told us that one day we should find the blank book fully written up, that the writing should be viewed as the Samarasa Veda of the Sabha, and that the Summum Bonum of life and the means of attaining it would be mentioned in it.

*The above, we have to remark, will not be clear and satisfactory to those that do not deeply go into the subject.*

VENKATESA IYER.

A. SABAPATHI, GURUKKAL.

S. NAYANA REDDIAR.

20th Avani, Chithrabanu.

#### Notes by N. Chidambaram

(a) Question No. 1 is plain enough. From the reply it does not appear that Ramalingam Pillai ever said that "the esoteric meaning of the Vedas and other sacred books of the East would be revealed by the Mahatmas in the North to foreigners," as stated by Pandit Velayudum Mudalliar. – (Vide pages 243 and 244 of the last July issue of the THEOSOPHIST.)

(b) This sounds not unlike the expected advent of Christ by the Christians. I doubt whether the Founders of the Theosophical Society or the Adept Brothers themselves at all share in some such expectation. It is not improbable that the Pandit himself, judging from the signs of the time, was led to the opinion which he ascribes to his Guru. [Here follow some irrelevant remarks by the writer which, being based upon flagrant misinformation as to our Society and, moreover, couched in objectionable language, are omitted. – ED. T.]

(c) This and reply to question No. 2 do not seem to indicate that in Ramalingam Pillai's opinion, "what men call God is in fact the principle of Universal love which produces and sustains perfect harmony and equilibrium throughout all Nature," as stated by the Tamil Pandit.

(d) From this it is evident that it is not true that the "door was locked by his orders," as stated by the Pandit, nor "the only opening walled up." It is also clear that the place was not "opened and examined a year later," but fully 30 months later, nor is it true that "there was nothing to be seen but a vacant room," for there was the body of Ramalingam Pillai as reported by the only eye-witness that had the courage to enter the room and examine it, though this is discredited by those that chose to remain without.

(e) Question No. 5 is plain enough. It does not appear from the reply to it that Ramalingam Pillai ever "exclaimed that the time is not far off when persons from Russia and America will come to India and preach the

doctrine of Universal Brotherhood." Nay, more; the last sentence of the reply, if it means anything at all, would seem to show that the Sabha is not prepared to "appreciate the grand truths" preached by foreigners, nor are they inclined to attach any importance, agreeably to the instructions of their Guru, to the "many wonders worked by the Brothers who live in the North."

(f) Questions No. 6 to No. 10 were suggested to me by various discussions which I had with Venkatesa Iyer, the most important Chela of Ramalingam Pillai, in fact one of the very few that even now strictly adhere to the instruction of the Guru, and who, unlike the Tamil Pandit, gave up years ago his lucrative profession as a practitioner at a mofussil bar and now resides at Vadalur. Question No. 6 is plain enough; still a direct reply to it has not been vouchsafed. The reply, however, shows that Ramalingam was a firm believer in a personal God and that he wanted to assume the position of a Saviour of mankind.

(g) Here is a clear hint that Ramalingam Pillai entertained the Christian notion of the possibility of the resurrection of the dead. While Ramalingam was for burial, the members of the Theosophical Society are, I believe, in favour of cremation.

(h) There is a clear mention made here of that one thing with which Ramalingam Pillai's memory is inseparably connected in the eyes of those that know anything of him, viz., his promise to raise the dead. To speak of Ramalingam and to omit his avowed powers to raise the dead, is to describe the figure of "Polyphemus with his eye out."

I am prompted to remark that of all the Pandit's omissions in publishing a true version of Ramalingam Pillai's life this seems to be the most serious and objectionable.

(i) I cannot suppose for a moment that the Theosophical Society at all entertain the opinion that one can wholly escape paying the final debt to Nature.

(j) As the 13th sentence is not clear I may be allowed to state here what the popular notion is on the subject, viz., that the building was erected for the purpose of receiving God when he makes his advent.

You will thus note that there are several important points in connection with the life of Ramalingam Pillai, of which not the least mention is made by the Pandit in his account of the same. Far from the views of Ramalingam Pillai being "identically those of the Theosophical Society," you will observe that there is not one important point about which both parties would mutually shake hands; or one common ground except perhaps as to the obnoxious distinctions of caste in which Ramalingam Pillai was naturally much interested for this plain reason, viz., that he occupied, though by the accident of birth, the lowest round of the ladder, or, in other

words, he was a Sudra. In conclusion, I shall also leave the readers "to draw their own inferences from the facts" as you have done.<sup>2</sup>

N. CHIDAMBARAM IYER

Trivadi, September 24, 1882.

### Rejoinder of Pandit Velayudam.<sup>3</sup>

The Iyer says that there were numerous errors and omissions in the life of Ramalingam Pillai as sketched by the Tamil Pandit. Nowhere does the author of the criticism, N. Chidambaram Iyer, say what the error is. The criticism, seems to be full of irrelevant questions and answers.

Supposing that he means the passage "I need hardly remark that these principles are identically those of the Theosophical Society" to be an error, the meaning of the phrase "Samarasa Veda Sanmarga Sangam," as understood from the works of Ramalingam Pillai, and the primary objects of the Theosophical Society, as given in the rule book of the Society (on page 5), show to any man of ordinary common sense, how the principles of both the Societies may be considered identical.

Samarasa Veda Sanmarga Sangam is a society formed to propagate a feeling of Brotherhood and social unity among all mankind without distinction of caste or creed, as enjoined in the Vedas and Agamams, and to look after the well being and happiness of all living objects, without doing the slightest harm; knowing that the nature of the Supreme Power is to pervade all life and to inseparably connect itself with the Soul.

What N. Chidambaram Iyer means by the Question 1 cannot easily be seen.

It was written that Ramalingam Pillai said that those who are capable of being members of the Sangam exist in the North. That this statement is true, Venkatesa Iyer (the so-called chief Chela, by the critic) and the rest admit. Is it a mistake to say that Mahatmas are the only fit persons to explain and reveal the Vedas and Shastras, when once their existence is admitted?

It is nowhere pointed out in the Pandit's sketch that Ramalingam Pillai ever said that there is not a Personal God. Here may be adduced in favour of the statement "That what men call 'God' is, in fact, the principle of Universal Love," a stanza from "Thirumanthiram" by "Thirumular" one of the Sivemata Acharyas, and who lived for 3,000 years.

<sup>2</sup> Certainly they will, and perhaps some may fail to agree with our correspondent. We should say this was more than probable. — ED. T.

<sup>3</sup> Freely rendered into English by G Subbiah Chetty Garu, F. T. S., who speaks in the third person. — ED. T.



"The ignorant say that Love and Brahman are different. None know how love becomes Brahman. After knowing that love is Brahman one becomes absorbed in love and Brahman."

This is also shown in Ramalingam Pillai's works, viz., "Arulperumjothi Akaval," &c Nothingmore is said in the sketch about a personal God.

Question 5 – "You are not fit to become ... upon this country." (P. 224, THEOSOPHIST, July number.) N. C. might have meant to call an error. That this is a fact Venkatesa Iyer and others admit; though not in the very same words, yet in other words. Sabapathy Gurukul, who signs N. C.'s criticism also signs the certificate appended to the Tamil pamphlet published by the Pandit.

If the statement that the door was closed by the orders of Ramalingam Pillai be untrue, and that it was closed (4) four days after, without his orders, be true, could these (Venkata Iyer and others) the chief Chelas, do what was not ordered by their Guru? Let wise readers judge. If it be an error to have said that the door of the Samadhi room was opened 12 months after, when it was 30 months after, the Pandit need only remark that he was not present at Vadalur and that he only wrote what he had heard. That the remains of Ramalingam Pillai were found by the daring fellow who entered the Samadhi room, even Venkatesa Iyer himself does not believe.

It is said that the Pandit has made many omissions in his sketch of the life of Ramalingam Pillai which Chidambaram Iyer and Venkatesa Iyer hint at by a series of questions and answers. (Can omissions be considered as errors?)

As the lectures of Ramalingam Pillai were of a scientific nature, the Pandit interpreting their meaning in a scientific light, wrote his sketch. He does not, like others, give a fabulous meaning to what has been said. If this (the fabulous meaning) be the real meaning of the sayings we shall rejoice to see them fulfilled.

N. Chidambaram Iyer says, "I have the greatest respect for the Adept Brothers (Mahatmas), and for Ramalingam Pillai himself who was no doubt a great man in his own way." And yet further writes: there is not one point about which both parties could mutually shake hands as on common ground, except perhaps in the impropriety which both perceived "in the obnoxious distinction of caste in which Ramalingam Pillai was much interested for the plain reason, viz., that he occupied through the accident of birth the lowest round of the ladder or, in other words, he was a Sudra."

Not only Ramalingam Pillai and the Founders of the Theosophical Society, but also the Upanishads and the works of the Rishis named by

N. C., and those of Sankaracharya, the Guru of the present Brahmins, imply that the distinction of caste is nothing but trivial prejudice.

"O! Precious! He who has seen you is divine and finds divinity (Pasa Brahmemo) in everything he sees, such as grass, trees, &c."

Such is the meaning of a stanza of Ramalingam Pillai. But why should Venkatesa Iyer be called the Chief Chela? While there is no one to object to his being called even the Chiefest, the Pandit does not at all say, nor presume to say, that he is the only Chela of R. P.'s. It may here be asked how long it is since Venkatesa Iyer became a *Sanyasi*.

(for) T. VELAYUDAM MUDALLIAR, F. T. S.,  
Tamil Pandit of Presidency College.  
Madras, October 30, 1882.

EDITOR'S NOTE. – The matter must stop here; at least until we can see some better reasons than at present to continue it. The facts are all in and the reader can judge which party is nearest right.