

Appendix IV

WAS KOOT HOOMI A SIKH?

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Jean Overton Fuller (hereafter referred to as J.O.F.) claims¹ that Koot Hoomi was a "Sikh".² J.O.F. writes:

"On the strength of the name Kuthumi, Mohini Chatterjee...tells us his Master was 'a Kashmiri Brahmin'. This overlooks certain considerations. Olcott says that...Madame Blavatsky and he went again to the Golden Temple...." (p. 84)

At this point J.O.F. quotes from Colonel Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, Volume II, pp. 254-255:

"at the shrine where the swords, sharp steel disks, coats of mail and other warlike weapons of the Sikh warrior-priests are exposed to view in charge of akalis, I was greeted to my surprise and joy with a loving smile by one of the Masters, who for the moment was figuring as one of the guardians, and who gave each of us a fresh rose, with a blessing in his eyes."

J.O.F. then comments on Olcott's text:

"Olcott has too much respect ever to name a Master in print, but this sounds like Koot Hoomi, who was in Amritsar at that time and went to the Golden Temple. A Brahmin could not have been officiating at the Sikhs' most sacred temple." (p. 84)

The following observations indicate serious flaws in J.O.F.'s "hypothesis"³ that Koot Hoomi was a Sikh:

(a) J.O.F. discounts Mohini's description of Koot Hoomi as "a Kashmiri Brahmin", but Madame Blavatsky herself refers to "our Mahatma of that name [Koot Hoomi]" as a "Northern Brahman..."⁴ Was H.P.B. mistaken, too?⁵

¹See Chapter 36, "The Sikhs: Morya and Koot Hoomi," pp. 83-85 in J.O.F.'s biography *Blavatsky and Her Teachers*, London, 1988.

²Paul Johnson also states that Koot Hoomi was "a Punjabi or Kashmiri Sikh whom Olcott observes acting in a priestly capacity in the Golden Temple in Amritsar". See p. 6 of Johnson's pamphlet *Madame Blavatsky: The Veiled Years*, London, 1987.

³J.O.F. gives several other arguments for Koot Hoomi being a Sikh on pp. 83-84 of her work. Since these arguments are not germane to the points I am now making, I will not consider them in this paper.

⁴H.P. Blavatsky's *Collected Writings*, Volume VI, p. 41.

⁵Charles Johnston reports that H.P. Blavatsky told him that Koot Hoomi was "a Kashmiri Brahman by birth...." (H.P. Blavatsky's *Collected Writings*, Volume VIII, p. 399.) Elsewhere, Madame Blavatsky describes Koot Hoomi as "a Punjabi whose family was settled for years in Kashmir". (H.P. Blavatsky's *Collected Writings*, Volume VI, p. 277.)

(b) J.O.F. misquotes Colonel Olcott. The Colonel's words⁶ are "...one of the masters...for the moment was figuring among the guardians..." But J.O.F.'s rendering of this passage reads "...one of the masters...for the moment was figuring as one of the guardians..." A significant change! What is the explanation for J.O.F.'s "version" of Olcott's text?

(c) J.O.F. believes that this "master" was "officiating at the Sikhs' most sacred temple". This is one possible interpretation, but is it the only viable interpretation of Colonel Olcott's words?

(d) J.O.F. speculates that this "master" "...sounds like Koot Hoomi." But was it Koot Hoomi? Is there any evidence that would tip the balance one way or the other? See (f) below.

(e) J.O.F. assures the reader that "Olcott has too much respect ever to name a Master in print....". But is this statement true? Doesn't Colonel Olcott mention "K.H." by name elsewhere in *Old Diary Leaves*?⁷

(f) J.O.F. asserts that "Koot Hoomi...was in Amritsar at that time". According to Colonel Olcott's handwritten diary, the date for Colonel Olcott's encounter with this "master" at the Golden Temple was October 26, 1880. The relevant part of the diary entry for that date reads:

"...In the afternoon we went to the Golden Temple again & found it as lovely as before. Saw some hundreds of fakirs & gossains more or less ill-favored. A Brother there saluted H.P.B. and me & gave us each a rose."

Therefore, was Koot Hoomi in Amritsar on Oct. 26th? I would say: No. Why? Consider the following "chronology" of Koot Hoomi's travels for this time-period:

On a journey from the Karakorum mountains, Koot Hoomi decides to emerge from the seclusion of years and to travel to Amritsar to see Madame Blavatsky.⁸ Then on October 27, 2:05 pm, we find Koot Hoomi "thirty miles beyond Rawalpindi". "Hardly two hours" later Koot Hoomi sends a telegram from Jhelum.⁹ Then K.H. goes on to Amritsar where he

⁶*Old Diary Leaves*, Volume II, p. 255. Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1974 (4th printing of the original 1900 edition).

⁷Olcott names "K.H.", "Mahatma K.H.", and "Master K.H." many places in *Old Diary Leaves*. For example, see Volume II, (1974 printing), pp. 245, 292, 394; Volume III, (1972 printing), pp. 28, 31, 37, 38, 43; etc.

⁸K.H. writes: "...the other day ...I was coming down the defiles of Kouenlun---Karakorum you call them---and saw an avalanche tumble. I...was crossing over to Ladakh on my way home....I was rudely recalled to my senses. A familiar voice [H.P.B.'s]...shouted along the currents'...Koot Hoomi, come quicker and help me!...What could I do but come?...So I determined to emerge from the seclusion of many years and spend some time with her [H.P.B.]..." *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd edition, p. 12.

⁹K.H. writes: "Received [by H.P.B.] at Amritsar on the 27th [Oct.]...at 2 p.m., I got your [Sinnett's] letter about thirty miles beyond Rawalpindi, five minutes later, and had an acknowledgment wired to you from Jhelum at 4 p.m. on the same afternoon." *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd edition, p. 13. See also p. 19 for K.H.'s additional comments on "the Jhelum dispatch". For a facsimile of this telegram, see Geoffrey A. Barborka's *The Mahatmas and Their Letters* (1973), see facsimile No. 8 facing p. 213.

writes a letter to A.P. Sinnett dated "Oct. 29"¹⁰. [See the map at the end of this article.]

But according to J.O.F.'s "sequence of events", Koot Hoomi would be traveling to Amritsar where he would be present at the Golden Temple on the afternoon of Oct. 26. Yet the next afternoon (2:05 pm) K.H. is "thirty miles beyond Rawalpindi"¹¹. Then he backtracks to Jhelum¹²...and by Oct. 29 (if not before) K.H. is back at Amritsar!! Why all this crisscrossing?.....[See the map at the end of this article.]

(g) The following two sources may also help answer the question as to whether or not Colonel Olcott met Koot Hoomi at the Golden Temple in 1880.

In a letter (dated Sept. 27, 1883), H.P. Blavatsky writes:

"Olcott is gone day before yesterday on this northern tour....K.H. ordered him [Olcott] to go to a certain pass....I am only glad that Olcott will see and converse with him [K.H.]. He is in raptures with the expectation. It appears that it is Maha Sahib (the big one) who insisted with the Chohan that Olcott should be allowed to meet personally two or three of the adepts besides his guru M. So much the better. I will not be called perhaps, the only liar, when asserting their actual existence...."¹³

In a letter (dated Nov. 20, 1883), Koot Hoomi writes to Colonel Olcott:

"...by your own canons of evidence you have not until now been a thoroughly qualified witness, since we have never previously---to your knowledge---met in the flesh. But at last you are, and our object in view in my making the journey from the Ashrum to Lahore was to give you this last substantial proof. You have not only seen and conversed with, but touched me, my hand has pressed yours, and the K.H. of fancy becomes the K Δ of fact."¹⁴

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In summary, J.O.F.'s "hypothesis" that Koot Hoomi was a Sikh is not supported by a detailed analysis of the evidence adduced by her. This "evidence" is flawed and, therefore, worthless as such. This conclusion also applies to J.O.F.'s other statements on pp. 83-84 of

¹⁰K.H. writes: "Amrita Saras, Oct. 29....I had come for a few days, but now find that I myself cannot endure for any length of time the stifling magnetism even of my own countrymen. I have seen some of our proud old Sikhs drunk and staggering over the marble pavement of their sacred Temple...." *The Mahatma Letters*, 3rd edition, p. 12.

¹¹As the crow flies, Rawalpindi is located approximately 180 statute miles northwest of Amritsar.

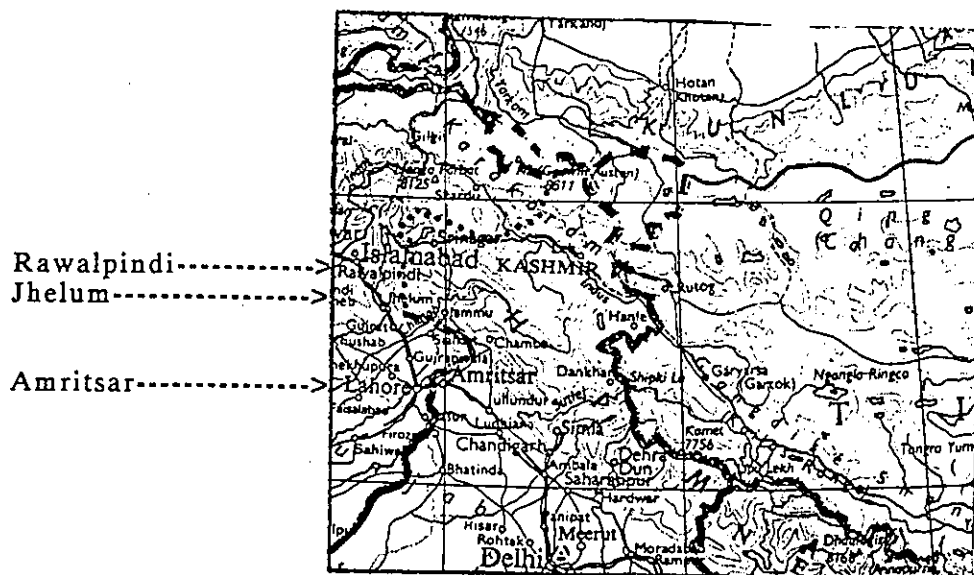
¹²Jhelum is approximately 120 statute miles northwest of Amritsar.

¹³*The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁴*Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, 1870-1900, First Series*, 1973 printing, p. 40.

her book. Therefore, I see no reason to doubt H.P. Blavatsky's statement that Koot Hoomi was "a Northern Brahman" or "a Kashmiri Brahman by birth".¹⁵

Map of E. Pakistan, NW. India and W. Tibet¹⁶



¹⁵Some readers may feel that all of this is somewhat "trivial", if not downright "picky". But as Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff point out (*The Modern Researcher*, 4th ed., 1985, p. 127) in dealing with the subject of dating and editing letters:

"Each such correction may be small in itself, but the cumulative effect...may be very great. Moreover,...[one] never knows when the rectification of a single date or name, unimportant from...[your] point of view, may not resolve the difficulty of someone else who is searching for the verification of other uncertain data."

¹⁶Reproduced from *The Times Atlas of the World*, Comprehensive Edition, New York, 1983, a portion of plate 27 [Scale 1 : 15 000 000; 1" equals approximately 240 statute miles].