

"A Jew Living in an Ashram:" The Spiritual Itinerary of S. S. Cohen

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In the July 1952 issue of the journal *India and Israel*, a letter to the editor was published under the title "Hindu View on Dignity of Labour: A Jew Living in an Ashram Replies."¹ The letter, signed by S. S. Cohen, from Ramanashram, Tirunvannamalai, is a response to discussions concerning Jewish and Hindu views of the dignity of labor, which had been published in previous issues of *India and Israel*.² In the letter, Cohen cites Hindu texts regarding the importance of manual labor, and exalts the heroism of the young state of Israel. Cohen says that he considers Israel a second India, and that he loves India "as the tenderest of mothers, who treasures in her immortal soul the most precious spiritual gems." He argues that there are great affinities between Hindu and Jewish traditions and religious concepts, as well as their "inherent dynamism and practical mysticism."³

Cohen was born in Basra, in the modern day Iraq, and buried in Ramanashram, in Tirunvannamalai, in southern India. Prior to becoming a follower of Sri, Cohen had joined the Theosophical Society, lived for five years at the Society's headquarters in Adyar, and was one of the founders of the Association of Hebrew Theosophists.

This paper will describe the life of S. S. Cohen, his activities as a Theosophist and follower of Sri Ramana, and his ideas concerning Judaism and the state of Israel. The paper also looks at several other early-twentieth century followers of Indian gurus, who were of Jewish origin, and compare their attitudes to their Jewish origins with that of Cohen. Finally, I will suggest that we may understand the attraction of spiritual seekers of Jewish origin towards Hindu spirituality, and their different attitudes to the question of their Jewish identity, in the context of Jewish Orientalism.

Sulman Samuel Cohen was born in Basra, Iraq, in 1895. He came from a very poor Jewish family, and was the eldest of eleven children. As a young man, he arrived in Mumbai, where he worked as a shop assistant and was trained as an accountant.⁴ In Mumbai, Cohen joined the Theosophical Society, and met with its president, Annie Besant (1847-1933). At her request, he moved to the headquarters of the Society in Adyar. Cohen lived there for over five years during the 1920s, and studied at the Theosophical Brahmavidya Ashram. He became acquainted with the other leaders of the Society, including Charles Webster Leadbeater and J. Krishnamurti.⁵

Cohen was one of the founders of the Association of Hebrew Theosophists, established at Adyar during the jubilee congress of the Theosophical Society, in December 1925. Cohen was active in the Association during the following years, which saw the opening of several branches in India, Iraq, Europe, and the United States of America.⁶ He served as secretary of the committee for building a synagogue at the Adyar compound.⁷

In 1931, Cohen was based in Kandy, Ceylon.⁸ He was still active in the Theosophical Society and the Association of Hebrew Theosophists, and got involved in a controversy concerning the excommunication of a Jewish Theosophical group in Basra. In 1927, a Theosophical lodge had been founded in Basra by Kaduri Ani, a local Jewish businessman (whose brother, Reuben Ani, was active in the Theosophical Society in India). In 1931, following a controversy that involved Rabbi Leo Jung, a leading orthodox Rabbi from New York, and Rabbi Joseph Herz, the chief Rabbi of the British Empire, the Iraqi rabbinical authorities excommunicated the Jewish Theosophists in Basra, because they claimed that Theosophy was incompatible with Judaism. Following the excommunication, the Jewish Theosophists and their supporters established a separate Jewish community, which had its own religious institutes, and provided its own kosher meat. The community, named "The Sincere Jews," functioned independently and successfully until 1936, when a truce between both sides was achieved, and the excommunication annulled.⁹

Cohen, who originally came from Basra, and knew the parties involved in the controversy, defended the Jewish Theosophists, and vehemently criticized the rabbinical authorities that opposed them. On June 5, 1931, he sent an open letter to Chaim Weitzman, the head of the World Zionist Organization. The letter, entitled, "Excommunication in a Modern Synagogue" was printed in *The Jewish Advocate*, a Zionist journal published from Bombay. In it, Cohen described the rabbis of Basra as "primitive, uneducated, half literate, religious autocrats," and called on Weitzman to act in order to annul the excommunication:

The Jewish Theosophists in Basra who have lived all these years in peace and in perfect harmony with their co-religionists and within the fold of the Jewish Congregation as true worshippers of the God of Abraham, are now excommunicated to die of starvation and in disgrace. It is up to you then and other influential co-religionists to save them, and in saving them, to save the Jewish race from the opprobrium brought down on it by the discreditable activities of the Rabbis of Iraq in mischievous collaboration with Dr. Jung of America. Will you not rise to the occasion and cause the Excommunication to be withdrawn?¹⁰

Between 1932 and 1933, Cohen continued his attacks on the rabbis of Basra, and his defense of the Jewish Theosophists. In a letter published in October 1932 in *Israel Messenger* (a Jewish journal published in Shanghai) he wrote:

Let us by all means be frank over the poisonous germs that are feeding on the heart – the purity, the spiritual beauty and the fundamental truths – of our religion. Let us confess that our orthodoxy is moving in a dreamland of its own making blissfully ignorant of the passages of time over its cherished traditions and obsolete dogmas.¹¹ In another letter, published in the same journal in January 1933, he wrote:

We have, therefore, reached the breaking point, and it is high time for the Rabbis to call off this dirty game, and to begin to think of reforming themselves before they can hope to succeed in reforming us whose sole guilt is reading books which they do not comprehend and joining a Society which they know nothing about.¹²

In 1933, there were exchanges in a theosophical journal, in which Cohen is visibly angry over the stance of a German academic. The matter was the persecution of Jews in Germany, and these views were expressed in the main journal of the Society, *The Theosophist*. In June 1933, C. Jinarajadasa, the editor of *The Theosophist* (who later became the president of the Society) published a condemnation of the persecution of the Jews in Germany in the editorial column, entitled "On the Watch Tower." He wrote:

Persecution anywhere and in any form is an outrage on Universal Brotherhood, and the campaign of persecution launched vigorously against the Jews by official Germany has sent a thrill of horror throughout the world.¹³

Prof. Johannes Maria Verweyen (1883-1945), the former general secretary of the Theosophical Society in Germany,¹⁴ responded in a letter defending Hitler and the Nazi regime and its persecution of the Jews:

The so-called persecution of the Jews in Germany had not been a primary act, but in answer to the persecution of non-Jew by Jews, that means their predomination in theaters, literature, commerce, and so on.¹⁵

In the October 1933 volume of *The Theosophist*, Cohen responded to Verweyen's letter:

It is beyond the comprehension of any right-thinking man, let alone a Theosophist, to read Professor Verweyen appealing for 'Wisdom, Brotherhood and Justice' in *The Theosophist* for September ... it beats my "wisdom" to understand how predominance in theaters and literature can be called persecution – jealousy-provoking should be the appropriate term – and how can the one persecute the ninety-nine? I hope, in conclusion, that there will come about a change of attitude on the part of the Professor and his sympathizers, if any, to help the German nation to rise from its present perilous moral situation and to return to prosperity through the spiritual path of real "Wisdom, Brotherhood and Justice."¹⁶

Following the death of Annie Besant in September 1933, Cohen was involved in the elections for the new president of the Theosophical Society. He published a letter in *The Theosophist* in which he raised objections to the decision of the editor not to publish the manifesto of Earnest Wood, who had campaigned for the office of president against George Arundale.¹⁷ It appears that after the election of George Arundale as the new president, Cohen became less active in the Theosophical Society.

During the same period, Cohen read Paul Brunton's, *In Search of Secret India* (1934).¹⁸ In the book, which describes his voyages in India in 1931, Brunton describes his enthusiastic impressions of Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), an Indian saint who resided near the sacred mountain Arunachalla, in Tiruvannamalai, in southern India. Cohen, like many others, was very much impressed by Brunton's book, and decided to travel to Tiruvannamalai and meet the Indian teacher.

On February 3, 1936, Cohen arrived at Ramanashram. In his memoirs, he recounts his first encounter with Ramana:

I was led to a small dining room, at the door of which I was asked to remove my shoes. He was the Maharshi himself... I was alone in the Hall with him. Joy and peace suffused my being – never before, had I such a delightful feeling of purity and well-being at the mere proximity of a man. My mind was already in deep contemplation of him – him not as flesh, although that was exquisitely formed and featured – but as an unsubstantial principle which could make itself so profoundly felt despite the handicap of a heavy material vehicle ... It is needless to say that from that day Ramanashram became my permanent home.¹⁹

Cohen became one of Sri Ramana's devoted disciples. Yet, he did not completely cut off his contacts with the Theosophical Society, nor did he abandon his Jewish identity, and his interest in Jewish affairs. In August 1942, he sent a letter to the editor of *The Theosophist*, entitled "The Jews and Poland."²⁰ The letter was written in response to the journal's previous issue, which had been dedicated to Poland. Cohen criticized *The Theosophist* for ignoring Polish cooperation with the Nazi regime and its persecution of the Jews: "No amount of whitening Poland's sepulcher abroad can whiten her deeds against her 3,300,000 Jewish nationals," stated Cohen, and called on Polish Theosophists to make amends for the persecution of the Jews. He wrote further, "Perhaps it will help them, after the war clouds have rolled back from their Motherland, to use their talents among their compatriots to make amends for all this."²¹

Cohen's identification with Judaism and his sympathy for the recently-established State of Israel come to the fore in a letter – which he published about a decade later, in 1951, in the journal *India and Israel* – entitled, "Backing the Wrong Horse."²² In the letter he attacks Pakistan and the Arab countries and speaks of the "the recent inhuman treatment meted out by Iraq to her 120,000 law abiding, helpless Jewish citizens – a blot which will forever blacken the history of that country." Cohen continued, extolling "the tiny but valiant Israel," which "routed seven Arab armies, and sent them licking their smarting wounds to this day."²³

Cohen's identification with both Hinduism and Judaism comes to the fore in a letter he published a year later – mentioned at the beginning of this paper – which was titled "Hindu View on Dignity of Labour: A Jew Living in an Ashram Replies."²⁴ In the letter, which was sent from Ramanasharam, Cohen offered proof for the importance of manual labor in Hindu sources, and related this to the current situation of the State of Israel. Cohen referred to the *Brahmasutras*, the *Viveka Chudamani*, the *Kaivalyam*, the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the *Mahabharata*, and the "Blessed Gita," in which: "physical labor is being enjoined and appreciated even better than *tapas* (religious practices) because the times called for it." He emphasized that he was not preaching a gospel of the extremely active mind: "I am a pure Advaitan ... and would be extremely happy if every human being, while working, would take to repeating a thousand times a day the great Mahakavya "Tatwamasi" (That thou Art)." Yet, he said, one must distinguish between times of great national stress and those of peace and normalcy when one can repose and brood: "Did not the Lord of Creation, the teachers of teachers, Sri Krishna himself become a charioteer to drive Arjuna's Chariot on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, because of the national crisis of the time?" Cohen uses the allegory of Mahabharata to fathom the affairs at Israel:

Israel needs hands and more hands, and still more hands and muscles to build, to produce wealth for the enormous human influx driven out from their hearths by persecution and barbarous laws from Arab countries in particular without money and clothes and for the security of the state of Israel.²⁵

Cohen contended that the highest Indian military honor, the Param Vir Chakara, should be conferred on "every one of these heroes who shouldered the gigantic burden and performed the miraculous transformation of the Holy Land, for their heroism unprecedented and unparalleled in the history of mankind."²⁶

Cohen affirmed his Jewish identity, his connection to Israel, and his love for India: Some Jews take India as a second Israel, some others, like my humble self are keener still, and take Israel as second India. These love India as the tenderest of mothers, who treasures in her immortal soul the most precious spiritual gems which lighten "cruel" life's heavy burden, sweeten it, and give it a meaning and a goal.²⁷

After the passing of Sri Ramana, Cohen stayed at the ashram for a couple of years and then left for Vellore, where he worked as a homeopath.²⁸ In 1952, he published a book based on the notes he had taken during conversations between Sri Ramana and his devotees, *Guru Ramana: Memories and Notes* (Madras: S. Viswanathan, 1952).²⁹ The book was published for the second time in 1962, and has been republished many times since. In 1965, Cohen published a condensed translation of *Srimad Bhagavata* (Madras: Chinmaya Publications Trust, 1965). Cohen's other published works include: *Advaitic sādhanā: or The Yoga of Direct Liberation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1975); *Residual Reminiscences of Ramana* (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1975); *Ulladu Narpadu (forty verses on reality)*, by *Ramana Maharshi: Translation and Commentary* (London: Watkins, 1978) and *Reflections on Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Tiruvannamalai: T.N Venkataraman, 1979). He also wrote the epilogue to B. V. Narasimha Swamy's *Self-Realisation: or Life and Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Tiruvannamalai, Sri Ramanasramam, 1976).

Cohen resided for several years in Vellore. When his physical and mental health deteriorated, his friends took him back to Tiruvannamalai.³⁰ During the last years of his life, he resided again in the ashram.³¹ In May 1980, he passed away. According to his request, he was buried in the ashram's compound.³²

Cohen was probably one of the first Jewish followers of Advaita Vedanta. Yet he was not the only Jew who resided for a long period in an Indian ashram during the early twentieth century. Interestingly, many of the early non-Indian devotees of Sri Ramana were of Jewish origin.

One of the first followers of Ramana, who contributed much to his fame in the west, was Paul Brunton (1898-1981), mentioned earlier in this paper as the author of *In Search of Secret India* (1934). Brunton was born as Raphael Hurst in London, to Jewish parents who had immigrated to England from Eastern Europe. He joined the Theosophical Society in the 1920s and later, in the early 1930s he traveled to India. In 1931, Brunton arrived at Ramanashram and became an enthusiastic admirer of Sri Ramana.³³ His description of his visit in the Ashram in his *In Search of Secret India* made a great impression, and contributed much to the popularity of Sri Ramana in the west. As mentioned above, Cohen, upon reading Brunton's book, got curious about Sri Ramana, and decided to visit the Ashram.

Another disciple of Ramana was Maurice Frydman (1901-1976), who was born in Poland in a Jewish family, and later lived in France, where he worked as an electrical engineer. He became interested in Theosophy in an early age, and in time, got acquainted with Annie Besant and Krishnamurti. In 1935, he moved to Bangalore in India. He traveled to Tiruvannamalai, and became an ardent admirer of Sri Ramana. Later, he also studied with other Indian Gurus, continued his relations with Krishnamurti, and went on to become a disciple of Gandhi and a close friend of Nehru.³⁴

Another disciple of Ramana of Jewish origins was Lucia Osborne, originally Ludka Lipszyc³⁵, from Katowice, Poland. Lucia and her husband, Arthur Osborne (1906-1970), were followers of René Guénon. They visited India in 1941. Because of the war, Lucia traveled to Tiruvannamalai with her three children, to stay at Ramanashram, while her husband returned to Bangkok where he was had a teaching job. Arthur was interned by the Japanese, and was able to join his family only four years later, upon his release. He later became the editor of the ashram's journal, *The Mountain Path*.³⁶

It is noteworthy to mention another person of Jewish origin, who resided in an Indian ashram (although not Ramana's), and who played an important role in the early twentieth-century spiritual culture of India – Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), who became known as The Mother, was born in a Sephardic Jewish family in Paris in 1878. She became interested in the occult, and joined the Cosmic Movement, headed by the Jewish occultist, Max Theon. She arrived at Pondicherry, then a French Colony in southern India in 1914, with her husband, Paul Richard (who was also a member of the Cosmic Movement). There, they both became close to the Indian political activist and spiritual leader, Aurobindo Ghose. In 1920, after a few years in Japan, Mirra returned to Pondicherry. She was recognized by Aurobindo as the cosmic, divine Mother, and together, they founded Sri Aurobindo's ashram in Pondicherry.³⁷

As mentioned previously, S. S. Cohen became a follower of Sri Ramana following his activities at the Theosophical Society. His interest in Indian spirituality and subsequently, his becoming a disciple of Sri Ramana and a resident of Ramanashram, were undoubtedly stimulated by the interest of the Theosophists in Hinduism. Other disciples of Ramana of Jewish origin were also followers of the Theosophical Society, or other western esoteric movements, before their reaching Tiruvannamalai in pursuit of enlightenment under the guidance of this renowned holy man. Undoubtedly, their interest in Hindu spirituality was also stimulated by the fascination with the "Mystical East" that was prevalent at the time in western esoteric movements.

The attraction of spiritual seekers of Jewish origin toward Hindu spirituality in the early twentieth century can be understood through the framework of Jewish Orientalism and its complexities. As David Biale observes, "Jewish orientalism involved a complex dialectic of projection and displacement of oneself onto an object that was never really other."³⁸ Jews and Judaism were perceived in the Christian West as having essentially Asian and Oriental characteristics. Some Jews, especially in Western Europe, embraced a negative perspective on the 'Orient,' and tried to purge Judaism of its perceived Oriental elements. They thus

attempted to construct a new, Western, "enlightened" Jewish identity.³⁹ On the other hand, from the late nineteenth century, many Western acculturated Jews adopted a positive neo-Romantic image of the Orient and embraced their perceived Oriental identity. In this framework, Jews promoted and valorized the perceived Eastern, Oriental and Semitic elements of their culture, and called for a return of the Jews to their homeland, in the East. Yet European Jews who embraced their supposed Eastern origins often expressed an ambivalent stance towards this new assumed oriental identity.⁴⁰ The Zionist movement regarded East-European Jewish culture as degraded, and aspired to create a modern western nation in the East.⁴¹ As Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin suggested, the emigration of the Jews to the East was perceived "as the transformation and regeneration of the Jew; that is, the overcoming of oriental elements."⁴²

Most of the above mentioned "Jews in ashrams" were ambivalent towards their Jewish origins, and distanced themselves from the Jewish community. Brunton changed his original Jewish-sounding name, had a cosmetic surgery performed on his nose, and advised his Jewish followers to do the same.⁴³ Frydman and Lucia Osborne did not relate to their Jewish origins. Alfassa did not identify herself as Jewish and most of her followers were not aware of her Jewish origins.

Travel to Indian ashrams can be seen as another way of grappling with and negating Jewish-Oriental identity. By embracing Oriental spirituality and relocating to the East, Jewish followers of Indian gurus could distance themselves from their Jewish origins and enhance the perception of them as Westerners. Jews of Middle-Eastern and East-European origins who were perceived in Europe as "Orientals" were transformed, in India, into "Westerners" (including Cohen, who arrived in India from Iraq). Brunton, Cohen, Osborne and Frydman were described as Western followers of Ramana,⁴⁴ and Mirra Alfassa as "the first Westerner to become an Indian Guru."⁴⁵

Interestingly, in comparison to the Jews who arrived in India from Europe, and who distanced themselves from Judaism, Cohen spoke openly about his Jewish origins and had an active interest in Jewish topics, including the State of Israel. As has already been mentioned, before he joined Ramanashram, Cohen was one of the founders of the Association of Hebrew Theosophists, and raised funds for the building of a Jewish synagogue at Adyar. After the rise of Nazism and the Second World War, he expressed his sympathies for the Jews of Europe, and later, his admiration for the State of Israel.

The fact that Cohen was more openly interested in Judaism and the State of Israel, and that he was vocal about this interest⁴⁶ may be related to the fact that he did not arrive in India from Europe. As a member of the Iraqi Jewish community, he was less susceptible to the ambivalence of acculturated European Jews with regard to their Jewish "Oriental" origins and was less estranged from Jewish tradition. In contrast to the others mentioned above, Cohen regarded his Jewish identity as compatible with Hindu spirituality. In a letter that he published in *India and Israel*, he emphasized upon "the great affinities that exist between the Hindu and Jewish traditions and religious concepts ... their inherent dynamism and practical Mysticism."⁴⁷ It was because of his belief in the fundamental spiritual and mystical affinity between Jewish and Hindu mysticism that Cohen was able to be a Jewish "pure Advaitan," and present himself as "a Jew living in an ashram."

Notes

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¹ S.S. Cohen, "Hindu view on Dignity of Labour, A Jew in an Ashram Replies", *India and Israel* 4, No. 13 (1952): 37. I am grateful to Shimon Lev, who found this letter and brought it to my attention.

² "Jewish Views on Dignity of Labour", *India and Israel* 4, No. 11 (1952): 25; J.C. Khanna, "Hindu View on Dignity of Labour," *India and Israel* 4, No. 12 (1952): 25.

³ Cohen, "Hindu View," 37.

⁴ V. Ganesan, *The Human Gospel of Ramana Maharshi*, (PDF file for personal sharing via eBook readers): 459-460.

David Godman "Talks on Sri Ramana Maharshi: Narrated by David Godman - Tales from Palakottu (Part I)", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxCuGtCvkcg>.

Cohen relates that he was born in Basra in a letter he published in *Israel Messenger* (January 1 1933): 21.

⁵ See Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 461; Godman, "Talks on Sri Ramana Maharshi"; S. S. Cohen, "Letter to the Editor," *Israel Messenger* (January 1 1933): 21.

⁶ See Boaz Huss, "'The Sufi Society from America': Theosophy and Kabbalah in Poona in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Kabbalah and Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), eds. Boaz Huss et al, 187-188; Boaz Huss, "'Qabbalah, the Theos-Sophia of the Jews': Jewish Theosophists and their perceptions of Kabbalah" in *Theosophical Appropriations*, eds. Julie Chajes and Boaz Huss (forthcoming). On Gandhi's Jewish associates in South Africa, who were affiliated with the Theosophical Society, see: Shimon Lev, "Gandhi and his Jewish Theosophists Supporters in South Africa," in *Theosophical Appropriations*, eds. Julie Chajes and Boaz Huss (forthcoming).

⁷ The president of the committee was Gaston Polak and its chairman, A. B. Salem. A. Schwartz, the treasurer of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, served as the treasurer of the committee. See Leonard Bosman, *A Plea for Judaism* (Adyar: Association of Hebrew Theosophists, 1926), 22-23. Cohen published appeals for donations for the Adyar Synagogue in *The Jewish Theosophist* 1, No.1 (1926): 5; 1, No. 2 (1926): 10-11; 1, No. 3 (1927): 26-27; 1, No. 4 (1927): 13; 1, No. 5 (1927): 7. Cohen wrote the report on the activities of the A. H. T. for the annual report of the Theosophical Society. See *The General Report of the Fifty Second Anniversary and Convention of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1928), 260.

⁸ Letters by Cohen, sent from Kandy, were published in *The Jewish Advocate* (June 1931): 184, and in *Israel Messenger* (1 October 1932): 18-19; (1 January 1933): 21-22. According to an interview with Dorab Framji (February 5, 2012), Cohen was working as an inspector of Arabic studies in Kandy.

⁹ Hayim Cohen, "Jewish Theosophists in Basra, a Symptom of the Struggle of the Generation of Enlightenment," *Ha-Mizrah ha-Hadash* 15 (1965): 401-407 [Hebrew]; David Sagiv, *The Jewish Community in Basrah 1914-1952*, (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2004), 73-88 [Hebrew].

¹⁰ *The Jewish Advocate*, (June 1931): 184.

¹¹ *Israel Messenger* (1 October 1932): 19.

¹² *Israel Messenger* (1 January 1933): 22.

¹³ *The Theosophist* (June 1933): 257. Interestingly, Jinarajadasa writes that Theosophists removed the Swastika from their seal at this period, because of its association with anti-Semitism and Hitlerism.

¹⁴ On Verweyen and his relations with the T. S., see Helmut Zander, "Johannes Maria Verweyen (1883-1945) als Theosoph," in *Gaesoncker Blätter* 7 (2005): 37-70; and Peter Staudenmaier, *Between Occultism and Nazism* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 226-227.

Notwithstanding his initial support of the Nazi regime, Verweyn was later arrested by the Nazis and died in Bergen-Belzen concentration camp.

¹⁵ *The Theosophist*, (September 1933): 724. This journal also contains another response to Jinarajadasa, by Jutta Todenhaupt, denying the persecution of the Jews and defending the Nazi regime, *ibid*, 727-728. It also contains an unsigned letter, which admitted the persecution of Jews (It nonetheless objected to some of Jinarajadasa's observations), *ibid*, 726.

¹⁶ *The Theosophist* (October 1933): 110. Following Cohen's letter, another prominent German Theosophist, Hugo Vollrath (1877-1943), from Leipzig, published a letter. Vollrath criticized the Indian Theosophical Society for its stand against the Nazi regime, and defended the latter's acts against the Jews, claiming that: "In the interests of racial hygiene also, great care is being taken that this strange race may no longer hold a position, which does not belong to her, in a country not her own." C. Jinarajadasa published a response to Vollrath, in which he wrote: "What is one a Theosophist for, except to denounce such crimes against the root principles of humanity? I for one am not disposed to keep my Wisdom in one pocket and my Brotherhood in another," *The Theosophist* (October 1933): 111.

¹⁷ *The Theosophist* (April 1934): 113-114.

¹⁸ Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 461.

¹⁹ S. S. Cohen, *Guru Ramana, Memoires and Notes* (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 2003) (8th edition): 4-5.

²⁰ Cohen, "The Jews and Poland," in *The Theosophist* 64 (1942): 263.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² *India and Israel*, 4, no. 4 (1951): 37.

²³ *India and Israel*, 4, no. 4 (1951): 37.

²⁴ *India and Israel* 4, no. 13 (1952): 37.

²⁵ *India and Israel* 1 (July 1952): 37.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 469-470.

²⁹ Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 468-469, 474.

³⁰ Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 470.

³¹ Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 470-472.

³² Cohen was first buried in the public graveyard outside Ramanasramam. About a year later, it was decided to move his remains to the ashram, as he had requested. I am grateful to David Godman for this information. See also Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 472-473.

³³ Annie Cahn Fung, *Paul Brunton: A Bridge Between India and the West*. Accessed 24th April, 2015, <http://www.paulbrunton.org/files/PBThesisPt1.pdf>, 13-51. See also Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 400-418.

³⁴ Pant, Apa B., "Maurice Frydman," in *The Mountain Path*, Vol 28, no. 1-2 (1991): 31-37; N.K. Srinivasan, N.K., "Maurice Frydman – Jnani and a Karma Yogi: A Biography," Accessed 24th April, 2015, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/97304328/3/Chapter-3-The-Karma-Yogi>.

According to Apa Pant, Frydman was born in Krakow, and became a Theosophist in 1926. David Godman kindly informed me (private e-mail, June 4, 2015) that he was able to ascertain that he was born in Warsaw, and that in a letter in his possession, Frydman relates that he had read a book by Krishnamurti already when he was 16 (1917). Pant tells that in the early 1920s Frydman converted to the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet, as Godman informed me, there is no other source for this.

³⁵ I am grateful to Chris Quilkey for this information.

³⁶ See:

Osborne, 25-89.

Malcolm Tillis, *New Lives: 54 Interviews with Westerners on Their Search for Spiritual Fulfilment in India* (pdf ebook, www.lulu.com, 2011), 275-279. Accessed 24th April, 2015.

Ganesan, 739-741.

³⁷ Kumari Jayawarden, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Woman and South Asia During British Colonial Rule* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 204-217; Peter Heehs, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2008), 250-257; 347-415; Idem, "The Kabbalah, the Philosophie Cosmique, and the Integral Yoga: A Study in Cross-Cultural Influence," *ARIES* 11, no. 2 (2011): 228-229.

³⁸ Beale, David "Shabbtai Zvi and the Seductions of Jewish Orientalism," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 16-17 (2001): 89.

³⁹ Paul Mende-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 82-83.

⁴⁰ Mende-Flohr, *Divided Passions*, 77-132; David Beale, "Shabbtai Zvi and the Seductions of Jewish Orientalism," 85-90; Khazzoom, Aziza "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (2003): 481-510. Ivan Davidsin Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar, "Orientalism and the Jews: An Introduction," in *Orientalism and the Jews* (Lebanon: NH, 2005): XIII-XL. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," *Ibid*, 163-181.

⁴¹ Khazzoom, "The Great Chain of Orientalism," 499-500.

⁴² Raz- Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West," 167.

⁴³ Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *My Father's Guru* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), XI.

⁴⁴ Ganesan, *The Human Gospel*, 21.

⁴⁵ Peter Stockinger, "Mirra Alfassa, The Mother," accessed 24th April 2015, <https://starsandstones.wordpress.com/2009/11/24/mirra-alfassa-the-mother/>

⁴⁶ It should be noted that Mirra Alfassa also showed some interest in Jewish themes (especially in connection to the teachings of her Jewish teacher, Max Theon), and in 1967, expressed her sympathy with the State of Israel, before the Six-Day War. See for instance, Sujata Nahar, *Mothers' Chronicles: Mirra the Occultist* (Paris: Institut de Recherches Évolutive, 1986), 45-46, 49.

Mother's Agenda 7, (May 18, 1966), accessed 24th April, 2015, http://www.aurobindo.ru/workings/ma/agenda_07/1966-05-18-01_e.htm.

It is also interesting to note that Arthur Osborne, Lucia Lipszyc's husband (who was not Jewish) had some interest in Jewish topics. In 1951, he published an article on "Kibbutz and Ashram," in the journal *India and Israel*. *India and Israel* 4, no. 5 (1951): 28. In 1964, he published a Poem, entitled "Ahad" (One in Hebrew) in the second issue of the Ashram's journal, *The Mountain Path*, which he edited. *The Mountain Path* 1, no. 2 (1964): 19.

⁴⁷ *India and Israel* 1 (July 1952): 37.