

## The Orthography and Pronunciation of “Koot Hoomi”

In a short article in the Theosophist (Vol. V No. 3 (December 1883), p. 99<sup>1</sup>) by Mr. R. Ragoonath Row entitled “The Puranas on the Dynasties of the Moryas and the Koothoomi” we find an interesting reference about a Ṛṣi named “Kuthumi”. In an editorial comment, HPB indicates that there may or may not be a connection between the theosophical Mahātmā and this Ṛṣi “of that name”. From this last phrase we might derive that if we know the correct Sanskrit spelling of the name of this Ṛṣi, we also know the correct Sanskrit spelling (and therefore pronunciation) of the name of the theosophical Mahātmā.

The article further relates that the Ṛṣi is mentioned in Viṣṇupurāṇa III.6.<sup>2</sup> In H.H. Wilson’s 1840 translation (which was known to HPB), the location is easily found, on p. 282:

*Lokakshi, Kuthumi, Kushidi, and Langali were the pupils of Paushyinji; and by them and their disciples many other branches were formed.*

In the critical edition of the Viṣṇupurāṇa by M.M. Pathak (of 1997-1999), we find the passage in line III.6.6 (here from GRETIL):

*lokākṣiḥ kuthumiś caiva kuṣīdī lāṅgalis tathā /  
pauṣpiñjīśiṣyās tadbhedaiḥ saṃhitā bahulīkṛtāḥ // ViP\_3,6.6 //*

The IAST transliteration used here is “kuthumi”, spelled कुथुमि in devanāgarī. Moreover, in the 1866 edition of Wilson’s translation (Vol. III p. 60) a note is added by Fitzedward Hall, mentioning that the name is alternatively spelled “kuśumi”.

The pronunciation of the name naturally varies in different theosophical and other circles, but the most generally used English spelling “Koot Hoomi” wrongly suggests that it is pronounced with a pause between kut and humi, as does the common abbreviation “K.H.”. Also, it is generally pronounced with the accent on “hu”, which would be incorrect. The syllables would be “ku”, “thu” and “mi”, the accent being on the first syllable. For correct hyphenation (in some languages) this will also make a difference. The spelling with “oo” also suggests that the “u” vowels are long, while in fact they are short, as is the “i” at the end.

Knowing the Sanskrit orthography, we have a starting point to find out more about the etymology of the name. Obviously, a reference to the “koothoompa’s”, supposedly a Tibetan group of followers of Koot Hoomi, should not be taken as a clue to a possible Sino-Tibetan origin. Further, the probable spelling of the name in Tibetan (Wiley transliteration) would be “ku thu mi”, from which “kut hum pa” or “ku thum pa” would be incorrect derivations.

Looking up “kuthumi” some of the available Sanskrit dictionaries (Monier-Williams, Böhtlink & Roth), we find that the word is a proper name which is identical to “kuthumin” and that a variant would be “kuṭhumi”. Some other places are mentioned where the name is used. Also the alternative spelling “kuśumi” indicated by Fitzedward Hall may be a clue as to the origin. Perhaps we might think of a Dravidian origin of the word. However, following up on this is beyond the scope of this short note.

## **Notes**

1. Two years later (1885), this article was published in “Five Years of Theosophy” p. 482-484, and in 1954 in CW VI, 40-42.
2. See also the Theosophy Wiki: [https://theosophy.wiki/en/Koot\\_Hoomi](https://theosophy.wiki/en/Koot_Hoomi)