

**Theosophical Manual No. XIII**

# **Mahâtmans and Chelas**

**By**

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It should never be forgotten that Occultism is concerned with the *inner man*, who must be strengthened and freed from the dominion of the physical body and its surroundings, which must become his servants. Hence the *first* and chief necessity of Chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. These are all-important; while outward observance of fixed rules is a matter of secondary moment.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY: *Lucifer*, Vol. IV, p. 348, note

# I

## WHO AND WHAT ARE THE MAHÂTMANS?

**T**HE teaching about Mahâtman is one of the most important in the whole range of Theosophical study. The reason for this lies in the fact that to attain the state of Mahâtman is the object of human evolution and its culmination. Understanding something of what a Mahâtman is will show what we are going to be in the future ourselves. For the aim of man's evolution is to transform the ordinary human being into a perfected spiritual man, a Mahâtman. The word is a combination of two Sanskrit words: *Mahâ*, great; and *Âtman*, soul. Thus the word Mahâtman means literally 'a Great Soul.'

If we look around us even in ordinary life we see that men are everywhere unequally developed. There are always the leaders in every department of human activity. In the business world there are those who are sometimes called 'captains of industry,' men who are the leaders in the development of industrial and economic life. The same is true of the world of politics, of art and religion, in the field of education and in the realm of science. It is a universal law that the organization of the lesser elements in any field under enlightened and active leadership is the basis of success in that field. Even among poets and painters, whose work depends upon individual freedom of expression, we find that they have their associations to promote their common objects and authority. How much, too, we owe to the great geniuses of the human race, such characters as Columbus and Galileo, Shakespeare and Florence Nightingale, and many

others whose phenomenal vision and power stand out above the common level of humanity as dazzling examples of what man may accomplish by leadership in the pursuit of truth.

The same basic law holds good of course in the field of human evolution. Even the elder Huxley, one of the pronounced materialists of the last century, admitted that there must be in the universe beings as much higher than man as man is higher than the black beetle. Such a belief springs logically and inescapably from the facts of evolution. But Theosophy offers the first teaching given to the modern world to show that such perfected men are actually living now on this earth and that they can be known and sometimes contacted. ↘

Questions that spring at once to the mind of the inquirer will naturally be: What are such men like? What are they doing and where do they live? To the first question

we answer in the words of G. de Purucker:

The Mahâtman is highly evolved man, controlling powers over Nature's forces which they have gained through self-directed evolution during many, many lives in the near and distant past. Now they are become Masters of life; in former ages they were men like you and me.

— *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, p. 9

In this short passage a number of important expressions are used. We may note that Dr. de Purucker calls the Mahâtman 'Masters of Life.' For that is what a Mahâtman is — a Master of Life. He is a graduate in Nature's great University of evolutionary development with its immense ranges of knowledge — knowledge which is founded upon experience and "self-directed evolution," to use another of the expressions quoted above. The Mahâtman is the perfect flower of human evolution.

It is the existence and nature of the Mahâtman that show how and why our evo-



lution is worth while. To become Mahâtman is our definite goal, and the scientific path to achieve this goal is clearly indicated by Theosophy. This goal is the result and the sublime reward for that student who will practise the lofty ethics and develop the rounded and perfect character which are necessary to attain it.

One of the first things a student is led to associate with the nature of a Mahâtman is the possession of great spiritual powers. If we are to answer our first question about the work of the Mahâtman we must know at least a little about what these powers are. And in order to do that — to understand what they are like and how he has acquired them — we must examine for a moment more closely the real nature of man and of the Universe which surrounds us.

We have referred already to our Cosmos as a great University of evolutionary experience. But most of us have a very limited

idea of what the Universe consists of. We think of it generally in the terms of physical things. For us it means the rocks and the ocean, the trees and mountains, the stars, the solar system and the galaxies, merely as physical phenomena.

But if we turn to something closer to ourselves we get a different picture. Consider for a moment some friend we love. What is the real friend? His body and physical appearance? No, for he may be quite plain, even unprepossessing. Nor is it these outer things that remain in the heart when death comes, as we think, to take him from us. What remains with us to cherish, what we love in him, are his qualities — his power to love and give, his intelligence and originality, his goodness or charm. These are all intangible things. They cannot be seen or weighed or measured. We can only feel them and love them by means of our own intangible perceptions and sympathy. After

he is dead the picture in our minds of his physical appearance may grow dim with the lapse of time. Not so with his character. The real man never fades away from our hearts.

So we see how it is that the physical is not the real. Man's body is governed by physical laws, but his mind and soul are governed by psychological and spiritual laws. How then can it be different with the Universe of which we are a part? Can the part be greater than the whole? Can there be something in the flower which was not latent in the seed? Can the seed of a thistle produce a fig tree? And can the Universe produce a soul if it is itself soulless?

From this point of view we realize that the most important parts of the Universe around us are the invisible ones. These more important parts cannot be contacted by our physical senses. The Universe, as said, is like a man. For man is a miniature uni-

verse, a Microcosm of the Macrocosm. In both there are ranges or levels or planes of being which we can only know by the faculties within ourselves, the perceptions which belong to those various ranges of being.

Like man the Universe has first and outermost a physical aspect with which we are familiar. Then, just within this, and blending with it in its lowest levels, is the astral or ethereal world. Above and within this again are the finer and still more ethereal worlds. Here the psychological energies which embody the laws and activities corresponding to our mental and emotional life have their activity and sway. Beyond and within the psychological realm is the spiritual plane where dwells and is active our own Âtma-Buddhi. Here on this immensely high and powerful plane of the Universe dwell all the celestial Beings whose unseen energies and activities govern all the planes and worlds below them.

It can now be perceived how undeveloped we are. For all that we know of ourselves and the Universe around us is just a limited knowledge of the physical world of our senses plus a still more limited and ineffectual perception of our mental and emotional life. But of our own astral, ethereal or spiritual ranges of inner being we know practically nothing, while to the average man, and even to the greatest of our scientists, the invisible and higher realms of the Universe are a sealed book at present.

With the Mahâtms it is far different. Theosophy tells us that within all men lie sleeping organs of perception which belong to all these unknown planes of their being. Through these now latent perceptions, if they were developed, we might become conscious of these inner worlds of the Universe where we might be as much at home as we are here on this physical plane.

The Mahâtman is a man who has awak-

ened and developed these sleeping faculties. And it is from his training of these faculties that he derives his transcendent powers. As we cannot truly conceive of the work done by the Mahâtmans without some understanding of what their powers are, we will next devote a few pages to the subject.

## II

# THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF A MAHÂTMAN

A Mahatma endowed with power over space, time, mind, and matter, is a possibility just because he is a perfected man. Every human being has the germ of all the powers attributed to these great Initiates, the difference lying solely in the fact that we have in general not developed what we possess the germ of, while the Mahatma has gone through the training and experience which have caused all the unseen human powers to develop in him, and conferred gifts that look god-like to his struggling brother below. — W. Q. JUDGE: *The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 11-12, orig. ed.

**T**WO things are involved in the development of great spiritual powers. First, a man must understand himself. Then he will be able, in the second place, to comprehend the Universe of which he is a part. It is the

same with any student. He who would do research work in a scientific laboratory must begin by learning the theory and then how to use the equipment with which he must conduct his experiments.

No door can be opened without the right key. Man's knowledge of his own constitution, of his own capacities and powers, is the key which will unlock the door to the inner worlds of being which lie within and behind and beyond the physical world. Here we find the meaning of an expression of G. de Purucker's from the passage quoted in Chapter I, "self-directed evolution." The world lags in its evolution, suffering and confusion prevail, because we have for so long been taught to look outside of ourselves for strength and spiritual wisdom. Religion tells us to rely on a vague and distant God. Science gives us the barren idea of a ruthless Nature as the great evolutionary force.

But Theosophy says: Man, know thy-



self, for within thee lie all the wisdom and potencies of the Universe. The urge to evolution through self-expression and experience does not come from blind physical nature. It comes from your own Higher Spiritual Self. And only within ourselves can we find the knowledge and the power to achieve the aims of evolution. Without our own vision and will-power and courage we could never get anywhere. The child can be helped and guided by parents and teachers. But it can only itself make itself walk, or eat, or study, or make itself use its own physical and mental faculties. When the child is totally unable thus to direct and control its own faculties we call it an idiot.

So one of the great pass-words of Theosophy is *self-directed evolution*. Theosophy puts into our hands the science of self-knowledge. It teaches us what the seven basic elements of our constitution are.\* It gives

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\*See Manual No. IV of this Series.

us the spiritual laws by which we can most quickly and completely understand, control, and direct these elements. But only we ourselves can apply this knowledge in our daily lives to bring about a higher and quicker evolution of our own natures. Therefore a Theosophist no longer looks outside of himself for the strength to accomplish this. He becomes at last his own savior, powerful to make of himself a god in human form.

Did not Jesus tell us, in those instructions which have been so neglected by theological Christianity: "Know ye not that ye are gods?"; "Greater things than these shall ye do"; and "the kingdom of God is within you," — thus pointing the way to the spiritual basis of self-directed evolution?

It is this kind of self-directed evolution that a Mahâtman has been practising for many lives here on earth. And when we too grasp the importance of the teaching and

start to apply it practically to ourselves we shall then be putting our own feet on the path that leads to the goal of human evolution, Mahâtmanship.

Some of the highest forms of the great Mahâtmic powers exist even now in all of us. There is first of all the creative imagination. This is the power to visualize what we want or need or wish to do, and give it form and direction in our minds. Men who are successful in business inevitably possess this power. Artists and scientists are all highly gifted with creative imagination. Yet everyone has it in some degree. And it is one of the first lessons in the occult life to recognise and develop it in ourselves. Katherine Tingley wrote:

Visualize! Visualize! You touch a mystic law when you create in imagination the picture of mighty things, for you open a door to new powers within yourself. . . . If you aspire, visualize your aspirations. Make a mind-picture of your spiritual ideals,

a picture of the spiritual life as you know it to be, and carry that picture with you day by day.

— *Theosophy: The Path of the Mystic*, p. 49

The next great power which most men possess is will-power. Without a strong and active will the creative imagination is useless. There are people of talent everywhere who are yet so irresolute and procrastinating that they go through life without accomplishing anything. But there are also those like Beethoven. With his terrible handicap of total deafness he yet had the courage and indomitable will which enabled him to bring into being those superb masterpieces which in his later life he could not even hear.

In a Mahâtman the creative imagination and the *spiritual will* have been raised to their ultimate power in human development. The words *spiritual will* are emphasized here. For the personal will, actuated as it generally is by selfish desires and narrow personal interest will not get us far. It too often re-

sults in a form of mere wilfulness that may injure others and make bad karman for the man himself. The personal will cannot serve us in the inner spiritual realms of Nature where the Mahâtman works. The will must first be purified and made impersonal. Then it becomes a *spiritual* power. It must be trained and actuated by impersonal love.

One of the first things a student of Occultism has to learn is the meaning and the might of impersonal love. And it should also be explained just here that Occultism is practical or applied Theosophy. One may be a student of Theosophy without becoming an Occultist. For example, one man may be convinced that Karman and Reincarnation as theories offer a completely satisfactory explanation of life — and let it go at that. Another, once he is convinced of the truth of these teachings, will use this belief to change his thoughts and actions. He will be using his creative imagination.

No longer will he do anything that can make for himself unfavorable karman in later incarnations. Such a man as this latter has begun to be an Occultist. He is making practical use of Theosophy.

But any intelligent student will see that such an attitude is still inadequate *spiritually*. This motive of taking care of his own karman is still personal. No matter how justly it leads him to deal with others he is still doing it for himself. He has not a spiritual but a personal motive.

The spiritual nature in man is Âtma-Buddhi-Manas. Âtman is the spiritual essence at the center of us, the root of being which is the same in every creature. It is therefore universal, common to all things. Buddhi is the spiritual vesture, the highest aspect of Soul. Through Buddhi, Âtman is stepped down to the individual man, Manas the Thinker. Âtman, clothed or ensouled by the Buddhic vesture, is a pure ray of the Cosmic

Self. It is an emanation of the Great Self of the Universe. Until a man has visualized his Âtma-Buddhi and aspired to it — until he has in some measure felt the throb and thrill of the Universal Âtmic spirit in his own heart — not till then can he understand and practise impersonal love.

It is not enough to love our children and our parents and our friends, to be willing to sacrifice our interest to theirs. This is fine, and of course it is the first beautiful step upon the Path of Occultism. It is a step which all students must take before they go farther. But to reach the higher levels in Occultism one must go farther still. It is comparatively easy to love our own children and to sacrifice for them. What is more difficult is so to work that the good of other people's children may not be endangered for the well-being or happiness of our own.

This is the beginning of impersonal love.

And when we have expanded our love and sense of responsibility to the whole world we live in, then we are beginning to be true Occultists. We are then sacrificing the personal to the spiritual will. We become gradually incapable of using even our own intellectual powers in any way that might harm any living creature.

The thoughtful seeker will admit that such genuinely practised thought and action demands an intense, continuous, and arduous self-training. But its rewards are beyond price. We lose all fear for ourselves, all worry over our own success. And we are able to train our children to a higher level of service and happiness, and to save them from many of the mistakes and sufferings caused by selfishness. We acquire a broader wisdom in all the relationships and circumstances of life. That is because we are bringing the Cosmic Universal Light of Âtma-Buddhi to illumine our minds and



hearts. It was this that Jesus meant when he told us to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and "all these things" should be added unto us.

The Mahâtman has been training himself along these lines for ages. And he has at last so changed and developed and transfigured the very atoms of his whole being that he is in complete response to the Divine Intelligence and the Will of the Cosmic Universal Self. He no longer lives for himself in any way. This would not only no longer be possible for his changed nature; for him it would be returning from the range and freedom, the peace and bliss of Cosmic harmony and power, to the heavy fevers and petty rivalries, the limited and ignoble aims of personal life. One who has even in the slightest degree experienced the wondrous happiness of impersonal living can understand this. And he will soon bend his spiritual will towards attaining such freedom and peace.

We now can get a better idea of the spiritual powers of a Mahâtman. Having finally allied himself with the Universal Soul of Nature, all its many realms, spiritual, psychological, psychic, astral, and physical lie before him like an open book. Perhaps we may make a picture that will give us a clearer idea of his state of being. Think of one who for a lifetime has lived in a narrow shut-in valley. And then as old age approaches he gets the idea that he would like to see what the world is really like. He determines to climb the mountains that hem his valley in. So after great labor he reaches the almost inaccessible peaks. For the first time he sees the earth spread before his gaze — its plains and valleys, the rivers and forests, its mighty cities. Over his head stretches the immensity of the sky where at night he can see a whole Universe of wheeling suns and the far scattered constellations of the Milky Way. It is a magni-

ificent revelation to his dazzled eyes and to his mind that had never been able to think beyond the narrow valley where he lived so long. For the first time he begins to understand the nature of the world at large.

So with the human soul. Dwelling for long in the dark and narrow limitations of the personality, but at last aspiring through awakened imagination, he turns to the mountain-peaks of the Mystic East. And calling upon all his powers of strength and endurance he toils long and often painfully upward. Then at last he can stand upon the inner heights of his own spiritual nature, seeing and understanding what a different Universe it is from the one seen from his dark and narrow valley.

So the Mahâtmán too stands at last at the summit of his own Universe, where he has brought himself by the use of his creative imagination and his spiritual will. The forces of Occult Nature are now his to use.

And it is through the powers he has attained by this slow upward progress that he can employ these forces of Occult Nature to produce phenomena that seem to the ignorant like miracles. But they are in fact only an enlightened and impersonally directed use of these powerful and hidden energies of Nature.

Better still, he can now see clearly the causes of human misery, and has the ability to help. He has reached wisdom and has the power which enables him to send currents of spiritual energy into the thought atmosphere of mankind. Many of the most beneficent movements in history are the result of these spiritual thought currents broadcast by the Mahâtmans amongst men. These currents touch here and there men and women who are ripe for spiritual activity, and great ameliorations for humanity are the result. For example, some of the most beneficial and far-reaching discoveries of

modern science are said to have been due to the help given to their discoveries by the Mahâtman who started the Theosophical Movement. We quote here a reference to this matter from Charles J. Ryan's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*, page 163:

Professor Crookes, the chemist to whom science owes the great discovery of 'radiant matter' as he called it (now known as 'ionized' matter), which led directly in his and other hands to the modern atomic theories and the 'New Physics,' became a councillor of the London Lodge, and, it is said, received communications from the Master Morya, who took great interest in his work. The Master's attention was attracted to him by the moral courage he showed in daring to investigate psychic phenomena [which at that time were ridiculed by materialistic science and those who 'dabbled' in them ostracized], and in publicly declaring that they were facts, scientifically demonstrable, whatever their interpretation might be. Crookes suffered bitter persecution from many of his scientific colleagues, but even under the strongest pressure he never modified his statements or withdrew his records.

The student of the history of our own times and the events of past centuries will be interested in tracing where the influences of the spiritual thought currents broadcast by the Mahâtmans may have been at work. The influence of the writings of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite is a case in point. He was a mysterious writer who lived in the third century A. D. His ideas had a remarkable influence in shaping the thought of early medieval Christianity, preserving much of Neo-Platonic thought in Christian theology which would otherwise have been forgotten. No one knows who he actually was, but his writing molded Christian thinking into a far more spiritual form than it would otherwise have taken. He has been called the founder of Christian mysticism.

The thinkers and philanthropists and scientists influenced by the Mahâtmans are not of course used by them like puppets — not at all. That would be an utterly unjustifi-

able forcing of the free will of men and women, something which is entirely contrary to every teaching and law of Occultism. It is only that some people, and especially searchers for truth and a way to help the world, have made themselves ready to be touched and inspired by these spiritual light-waves, sent out constantly from the heights where the Mahâtman watch over and encourage and inspire all who are advanced enough to feel them.

### III

## THE ELDER BROTHERS OF HUMANITY

**W**E have now partially answered the second question as put by the inquirer, "What are the Mahâtmanas doing?" The answer to this question is further implied in the above heading. The Mahâtmanas are our Elder Brothers in point of evolution and spiritual relationship. Therefore a great part of their work consists in watching over and stimulating spiritually the life of the human race. In *The Ocean of Theosophy* by William Quan Judge we are told that man has never been without a friend. For he has always had

. . . a line of elder brothers who continually watch over the progress of the less progressed, preserve the knowledge gained through aeons of trial and ex-



perience, and continually seek for opportunities of drawing the developing intelligence of the race . . . to consider the great truths concerning the destiny of the soul. These elder brothers also keep the knowledge they have gained of the laws of nature in all departments, and are ready when cyclic law permits to use it for the benefit of mankind. They have always existed as a body, all knowing each other, no matter in what part of the world they may be, and all working for the race in many different ways. — ch. i, p. 3

The nature of their work may be better understood if we take the expression above quoted, “they have always existed as a body, all knowing each other,” etc., and consider all that the words imply. The ‘body’ referred to is what is known in Theosophy as ‘The Brotherhood of Compassion,’ or more familiarly among Theosophical students as ‘The Lodge.’ Theosophy tells us that there has always existed, from the very earliest ages of humanity on this earth, an organization or Brotherhood of advanced souls.

These advanced souls, the Mahâtmans, had become perfected men in former periods of evolution. As told in other Manuals of this series, this Earth and everything connected with it is a rebirth from a former and less developed world.\* In that world we who are now men were passing through lower stages of evolution than the human. But there lived then — as there live now and always will — those who were further along on the course of evolution. They had already reached perfection as men when our earth and everything on it came to be re-imbodied in this present globe which we call Earth. That reimbodiment was the beginning of the immense period of evolution through which everything is now passing.

At the beginning of this present period of evolution the human race was but an infant humanity. Like all infants it needed con-

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\*See Manual No. VII, *Rounds and Races: Man's Divine Parentage and Destiny*, by G. van Pelt.

stant care, help, and guidance. And this help and care came from these advanced souls, the Mahâtmanas who had become perfected human beings in that former world. So they were ready to act as Teachers of humanity; just as our teachers in ordinary life are men and women who have completed their education in periods of schooling preceding our own.

In those early ages the Mahâtmanas lived among men. They guided and helped them openly. But the life of the race is very much like that of every child. The time comes when youth must begin to think and act for itself, use its own initiative, cultivate its own will power, and make its own mistakes. When that time comes young people generally rebel against the council of their elders. And as they lack experience, self-knowledge, and wisdom, they go wrong in ways that they often find it impossible in one life to remedy.

It happened very much like this with early man. At that time humanity was far more ignorant than the peoples of today. This was only to be expected. For man was then but just beginning to learn the moral lessons that many of us today find are instinctive in our characters at birth. Present day men and women have been learning through the experience and suffering of many incarnations. But in those early times the great majority were still undeveloped as human beings. They were inconceivably blind and greedy and wilful. So great wrongs were committed. War, and what we call 'sin' appeared, and if you will read what H. P. Blavatsky tells us in *The Secret Doctrine* about the Atlanteans you will get a picture of how dark and wicked were the early civilizations which man developed in those forgotten, prehistoric times. And at last people grew so selfish and material that the Mahâtman were no longer sought as

Guides and Teachers by the great mass of humanity.

It was then that the Brotherhood of Compassion, to which all these Great Sages and Seers whom we call the Mahâtmans belonged, retreated into the background and began their occult or hidden work for the race — work which up to that unhappy time they had been able to do openly, moving more or less freely among men. The chief reason for their withdrawal lies of course in the danger of entrusting their great knowledge to people who would selfishly misuse it and so bring disasters upon themselves and others. And the same restriction still unfortunately prevails. For though men have progressed enormously they have not yet learned the folly and the dangers of selfishness.

The Mahâtmans, then, in those far-off times, began special work with individuals here and there who were more promising

than humanity in its unevolved masses. For of course at that time too there was the same inequality of development among men that prevails everywhere today. Some egos are older than others and therefore more advanced in character and intelligence. It was these advanced egos that the Mahât-mans singled out and gathered into schools or colleges in different parts of the earth. Every great country in antiquity had one or more of these occult schools for the study of the Spiritual Sciences. These colleges have always been called in Theosophical teachings the Mystery-Schools.\*

Two important points should be brought out here. One is that even among the Mahât-mans themselves there are many grades of development. Some of them of course — just as in every other phase of evolution,

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\*For a fuller treatment of Mystery-Schools see Manual No. XIV of this series and *The Esoteric Tradition* by G. de Purucker.

spiritual or otherwise — are of higher degree than others. The Brotherhood of Compassion is a hierarchy. We quote here a passage in explanation of this hierarchical principle of being:

Thus it is that the Great Sages, the Mahâtmans or Masters, form one stage or degree on the evolutionary scale or Ladder of Life, and just above or superior to us men of average evolutionary development. There are other still greater and more evolved beings on the Ladder of Life, who are very properly to be called the Teachers of these Great Sages or Seers themselves, and who are also Superior, or still more highly evolved, Men than the Great Sages themselves are. Higher even than these Superiors just spoken of there are yet others still more fully evolved, who may with propriety be called Human Gods; they are Nature's Controllers, Governors, of our own planet, Earth. — G. DE PURUCKER: *The Esoteric Tradition*, II, 942-3

It will readily be seen that many of these godlike celestial beings above mentioned are too far beyond our plane of consciousness even to be conceivable to us. And being

so, they cannot directly influence us. This brings us to another of the services by our Elder Brothers, the Mahâtmans, performed for humanity. That service consists in 'stepping down' or transforming the vitalizing energies of these Celestial Beings so that they can be assimilated by man's nature.

Probably most of us know what the work of a transformer is in the use of electricity. For those who do not it may be explained that a transformer is an apparatus, a special coil, for reducing or stepping down a high voltage current to a lower pressure when that higher voltage might be too great for the small apparatus we have to use. It is like this with the gods and humanity. To be brought into direct contact with the energies of the gods would burn us up, so to speak — as in the mythological tale of the youth who ventured to raise the veil of Isis in order to look directly upon the face of the goddess, and was slain by a vision he had not power



to sustain. So our Elder Brothers act for us in the nature of benign transformers and step down for us the vitalizing currents of the Celestial Beings who, in the background of visible creation, govern and sustain our Universe.

The second point to be marked by the student is the fact that we should not confuse the Brotherhood of Compassion with the Mystery-Schools. The latter are related to the Brotherhood of Compassion itself much as a preparatory school is related to a University. The Mystery-Schools are lower in grade, because composed of chelas or students in Occultism. The Teachers in a genuine Mystery-School must of course all have passed certain tests and undergone definite occult training, but in this day and age are not Mahâtman, though in the earliest prehistoric Mystery-Schools already referred to they often were conducted by the Mahâtman themselves. But the Mahât-

mans are today in the background and watch over this work. And it is the privilege of students in a Mystery-School to participate in spirit in the great initiatory periods which still take place during certain sacred seasons of the year at favored points somewhere on our earth.

All men are of course related through their spiritual principles to the Brotherhood of Compassion. For we derive our Âtma-Buddhi-Manas from a common divine source. But the chelas of a Mystery-School are still only in training under their adept Teachers. And this training will ultimately enable them to become consciously an active part of that Brotherhood as the Mahâtmans and their Agents already are.

In the Mystery-Schools, first founded as described in past ages, the Mahâtmans in those early days taught their pupils the truths of the Archaic Wisdom-Science called by such titles in history as the Secret Doc-

trine of the Ages, the Esoteric Tradition, and other such designations, which we today know under the name of Theosophy. This has been defined by Dr. de Purucker as follows:

It is, as a body of doctrines, the formulation in human language of the essential truths of the Universe. It comprises the facts regarding the nature of the Universe, visible and invisible, spiritual, intellectual, psychical, ethereal, astral, and physical. It comprises also the teachings regarding the structure and operations and laws of the Universe. It also includes teaching a man to find himself, i. e., to discover and uncover from its enshrouding veils, the god within him.

— *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, p. 39

The teaching and training of these pupils, however, was but one phase of their work. For they were also the Founders of the great world religions. From time to time they sent out from their midst some of the greatest among them. These Great Souls incarnated in the different races and the different

eras of history, when they taught anew the ethical laws upon which all life must be founded if it is to endure. It is characteristic of the human race to forget its divine origin. Men become so engrossed in the pursuit of personal and selfish ends and the treasures of this world that every religion grows dim as the centuries pass away. The purity of the Founder's teaching becomes clouded and fades in human memory. Then the religion deteriorates and becomes a vehicle for the ambitions and power of priests and theologians. This has always happened in the case of every religion in the history of man. So it becomes necessary again and again for these ethical fundamentals to be restated in a fresh form.

The earliest of these Teachers which history speaks of sent out by the Great Lodge of the Mahâtmans is Krishna in India. He struck anew for the world of his day the keynote of these same ethical teachings.

They are imbodyed in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* and the great scriptures of the Hindû religion. About 500 years later came Gau-tama the Buddha to correct the abuses which had crept into Hindûism and give to the ethics of life a simpler expression, one which the common people could easily understand. After him came Śankarâchârya. To Persia was sent Zoroaster, who did the same for Mid-Asia. To China were sent Lao-Tse and Confucius, and to the modern world Jesus the Christ. These Great Souls all taught the same fundamental ethical truths, but of course in each case these truths were adapted to the characteristics and the points of view of the people and the period they came to teach. But the basic doctrines of all world religions are identical. And this is because they are all but different expressions of the same great Wisdom-Religion of the ages.

Another aspect of their work as time

flowed on was the founding of ever more Mystery-Schools all over the world. Every large country had its own Mystery-School. The clearest historical picture we have of these Mystery-Schools of antiquity is in ancient Greece. Mithras was the traditional Savior or Great Teacher of the Mediterranean peoples. He appeared in archaic or prehistoric times and is credited with the foundation of the Mysteries of Eleusis near Athens. Another of the original Greek Mystery-Schools was the celebrated one at Crotona established by a Messenger from the Lodge, the Greek Pythagoras. Another was the Mystery-School at Samothrace. Like their parent-school, the Lodge of Mahâtman, these foundations sent out in turn their agents, men like Plato with his Academy at Athens in the fourth century B. C. Plato too was an Initiate and has had an immense spiritual influence upon ancient and modern thought, being almost as much ad-

mired and studied today as in his own times. Some of the greatest dramatists of Greece, such poets as Aeschylus and Sophocles, were also members of these Mystery-Schools. Their dramas are true mystery-plays depicting the trials of the human soul in its pilgrimage to perfection.

Similar Mystery-Schools are heard of in all the countries of antiquity. Plato, for example, is said to have visited and studied at the one in India, the members of which were called Gymnosophists, and Herodotus, the Greek historian and traveler, is said to have visited the one in Egypt.

The work of the Mahâtman is thus not only to watch over and inspire and stimulate the progress of humanity as our Elder Brothers, but to keep us in touch with the Divine energies of the Cosmos. They are also Teachers and personal guides to all who are ready for the intensive and arduous training in the occult life. But as the pro-

portion of such men who are ready bears a ratio of about one in ten million of ordinary men their actual pupils are very, very few. But sooner or later all pupils of a Mahâtman become teachers in their turn. Then they seek out others whose souls are awakened to listen and learn. Thus the work and influence of the Mahâtmans is not confined to the spiritual thought-currents above mentioned. It follows more individual and definite channels, reaching out in particular and special ways through the work of their agents to inspire and guide all who are looking to higher and better things for the world. For there are thousands and thousands of bewildered hearts who are now seeking for some way out of the sorrows and miseries which oppress all classes and peoples of this unhappy modern world.

Another side of the Mahâtmans' work consists in safeguarding Occult Truth from exploitation and misuse by the evil and igno-



rant. Only such portions of the Archaic Science are openly taught as will prove of benefit to mankind. Here is one great sign of their wise beneficence as our Elder Brothers. Today a few of our greatest scientists realize the mischief that can and has been unfortunately done by the use of scientific knowledge for destructive and cruel purposes. And at last scientific bodies are beginning to take belated steps towards arousing public conscience in this matter through the channels of education.

But the forces which physical science has put into our hands, powerful as they undoubtedly may be, are but feeble when compared to the powers and energies of Occult Nature. And the knowledge of these powers and energies must be guarded from the insatiable curiosity and selfish use of the undisciplined. Man must first learn, as scientists themselves now admit, to develop his ethical and social conscience, to become a

selfless power for good in the world, before he can be safely trusted with secrets of power. One has only to look into the subject of the use of Occult powers in the world today, to see what harm is being done by dabbling even in the lower psychic forces, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, mediumship and the like. H. P. Blavatsky's writings, and *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* contain material illustrating this point. When the student has thought seriously about the matter he will realize what the consequences would be to most of us if the control of the secret and mighty forces of Occult Nature were to become available to unscrupulous ambition.

All down the ages these great Seers and Sages, the Mahâtman, have protected mankind against itself, as far as that is possible without interfering with the freedom of the human will. And this is a phase of their work that can be done by no other agency.

So now we begin to see an outline of the picture of the great Spiritual Hierarchy of Beings who link the human race by graduated stages of consciousness to the Supreme Hierarch of our own solar Universe, the Cosmic God at the invisible spiritual heart of our Sun. Every planet has in its turn a Celestial Ruler or Hierarch who imbodyes the summit of consciousness and power on that planet. This is equally true of the Earth. The Ruler or Hierarch of our planet Terra is the Head and Heart of the Brotherhood of Compassion which as a body cares for and oversees the evolution and well being of all earth's creatures. The Mahâtmanas we are now thinking about are the perfected men who link the mass of humankind with the Brotherhood of Compassion. They do its beneficent work as the Elder Brothers and spiritual Teachers of the human race.

## IV

### THE MAHÂTMANS AND THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

**W**E come now to what is, for us, the most interesting and important and well known part of the work of the Mahât-mans. That is, the Theosophical Movement. The word 'Movement' is used here instead of the word 'Society.' And for the reason that the Society is only one phase of the immense and ancient Theosophical Movement itself. The Theosophical Society dates but from 1875. The Theosophical Movement extends backwards into prehistoric time (as already described in chapter III). The matter is explained by G. de Purucker in the following passage:

To put it briefly: there has always existed in the world for almost innumerable ages, a completely

coherent and fully comprehensive system of religious philosophy, or of philosophical, scientific religion, which from time to time has been given out to man when the world needed a fuller revealing of spiritual truth than it then at such time had. Further, this wonderful system has been for all those past ages in the safe guardianship of the relatively perfected men [the Mahâtman] . . .

— *The Esoteric Tradition*, I, 33-4

To this statement the words of H. P. Blavatsky should be added:

. . . I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those "Masters," of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality — or call it mysticism if you prefer — has taken place. Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge and teaching has been given out. If you care to do so, you can trace these movements back, century by century, as far as our detailed historical records extend. — *The Key to Theosophy* p. 306 orig. ed.

Some indication of these different aspects of the Theosophical Movement in each century has already been given in Part III. To us, of course, the most interesting of these chapters in mystical history began in the Egyptian city of Alexandria in the third century A. D. with Ammonius Saccas and the Neo-Platonists. For it was then that the word 'Theosophy' was first applied to the teachings of the immemorial Secret Doctrine or Wisdom-Religion. H. P. Blavatsky calls Ammonius Saccas "a saintly adept." He seems to have been the first of the public agents of the Mahâtman to what we know as modern civilization.\*

We must remember that in every one of the ancient civilizations the work of the Great Teachers of the Brotherhood of Compassion was well understood. For all of

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\*See the opening chapters of *The Key to Theosophy* for an interesting account of this era and its great Theosophists.

them had their Mystery-Schools. And the teachers connected with these had been Initiates of the Brotherhood and taught its age-old system of ethics and spiritual science. But in the early years of our Christian Era the Mystery-Schools in Greece which had been the chief source of all spiritual Light in the antique world around the Mediterranean had been gradually deteriorating. Their teachers had lapsed from their high calling. They became faithless to the Teachings and were no longer true Initiates into the Secret Doctrine. Among them spiritual self-discipline and selfless devotion to Truth and impersonal love had been gradually replaced by love of power and privilege. He who would know the doctrine must first live the life — this is a fundamental principle of Occultism. The influence of these Schools was therefore waning. And a little later in the sixth century A. D. the last of them was closed in Athens at the request of their

own teachers, by the Emperor Justinian.

An interesting point may here be touched upon. This is, that after the termination of the Mystery-Schools the Theosophical Movement was obliged, because of the prevailing religious bigotry of the times, to follow more or less hidden channels. It became almost completely hidden, or occult. From the sixth century to the nineteenth, there was a period of thirteen hundred years during which only a few teachers and some secret societies, such as the true Rosicrucian Order, could be used by the Lodge of Mahâtman as their agents to keep the Secret Doctrine alive in the Western world. The last of these secret agents we know of were Count Saint-Germain and the celebrated Cagliostro near the close of the eighteenth century. The latter, who was called by H. P. Blavatsky the "last of the Rosicrucians," made an attempt to found a Mystery-School through his work with Occult Masonry. But he



was more or less defeated by the bigotry of his day.

We come now to the founding of the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875. Ostensibly it was started by H. P. Blavatsky herself assisted by a group of students whom she drew around her, including Henry Steel Olcott and William Q. Judge. But she has often told us how she was sent to New York by her Teachers a little in advance of the opening years of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. She was told by them to start an organization through which could be restated in a form suited to the type of intelligence and to the needs of our modern world the ancient truths of the Wisdom-Religion. Let us see what the Mahâtman himself has to say about this:

One or two of us [The Brotherhood or Lodge of Mahâtman] hoped that the world had so far advanced intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the

Occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research. . . . We sent her [H. P. Blavatsky] to America . . . and the trial began. — The Mahâtman M. in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 263

And H. P. Blavatsky herself tells us:

*Orders* received from India direct to establish a philosophico-religious Society and choose a name for it — also to choose Olcott. July 1875. — From one of her Scrapbooks as quoted in *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society*, page 19

“From India direct” meant in her case but one thing — from the Mahâtmans.

The evidence showing their work in connection with the founding and progress of the young Theosophical Society can be read in their own letters as published in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. Here the student can find a complete and detailed picture. And also, scattered here and there among these interesting records of their activities will be found hints on other lines of work — what we may perhaps call their

more esoteric lines of spiritual activity behind the scenes of human affairs.

As time went on and H. P. Blavatsky established in 1888–9 with the active help of W. Q. Judge her Esoteric Section, the first step was taken towards the revival of the Mystery-Schools. As exoteric Theosophy for the public brought back to humanity the long forgotten Wisdom-Religion of the Ages, so the renewal of the ancient Mystery-Schools restored the ethical-scientific study of Occultism, and established that study as a living force in the modern world. The old sacred relationship of spiritual Teacher and his disciples pledged to live and work for the spiritual welfare of humanity — in other words, of Mahâtman and Chelas — became once more a vital factor in man's spiritual education.

Evidence that the Mahâtman were behind H. P. Blavatsky's work in establishing the Esoteric Section can also be found in

abundance in the book just quoted from. A brief, comprehensive and interesting account of the history of the modern Theosophical Movement where the above mentioned facts are more fully described can be found in Charles J. Ryan's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*.\*

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\*Published by Theosophical University Press, Point Loma, California.

## CHELAS AND THE CHELA-LIFE

**P**ERHAPS enough has already been said about the Mahâtmans and their disciples to give some idea of what Chelaship means. The Hindû word *chela* is used in Occultism because it has a more specific significance than the words 'pupil' or 'disciple' as understood today. To be a chela implies a peculiar degree of loyalty to one's chosen Teacher and to the principles underlying his teachings. It also, and more particularly, implies a realization of the sacredness of the bond between the chela and his Spiritual Teacher, or to use again the Eastern word, his *guru*. We might helpfully quote a few passages in this connexion:

*To the earnest Disciple his Teacher takes the place of Father and Mother, for, whereas they gave*

*him his body and his faculties, its life and casual form, the Teacher shows him how to develop the inner faculties for the acquisition of the Eternal Wisdom.* — From the *Book of Discipline* in the Schools of 'Dzyan'

Now this relation is an extremely sacred one, because . . . the Teacher, the Guru, the Master . . . acts as the midwife, bringing to birth, helping to bring into the active life of the disciple, the hid part of the disciple, the soul of the man. — G. DE PURUCKER: *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 527-8

Even a teacher of ordinary subjects has a responsibility to his pupils in his influence upon their developments and ideals. And the pupils have an obligation of gratitude to a teacher who has been an inspiration and perhaps opened to him doors of vision and resolve. But how much deeper is this bond of responsibility and gratitude between pupil and *spiritual* Teacher — one who can show us how to solve all our apparently unsolvable problems and

how to recreate ourselves and our lives.

But such a spiritual relationship goes deeper even than this. For a genuine Occult Teacher is one who can open for us the inner realms of being. It is not so-called religious instruction that he gives, though ethics and morals, as already said, are the foundation of all genuine spiritual teaching. He does what religion as we moderns know it can never do. He not only gives knowledge but he actually quickens the human soul, much as the flame of Manas was quickened in the early races of mankind by the Mânasapûtras.\* A real Spiritual Teacher literally raises his chela from the dead. For unless a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. And as Jesus said, the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.

There are two broad divisions in chela-

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\*See Manual No. VII of this series.

ship. There are, first, lay or probationary chelas. Second, there are those chelas who through long self-discipline, perhaps in many former incarnations as well as in this one, have proved themselves worthy. They are then accepted by the Mahâtman himself for intensive occult training. Lay chelas, or probationers, train themselves. They are given the fundamental doctrines of the Wisdom-Religion, particularly those which explain the scientific basis of ethics. The degree of earnestness and devotion with which they study and apply these teachings constitutes the first test on the Chela-path. To the extent that the student sincerely applies himself to determined self-training and self-discipline in the practice of ethics and brotherhood will the period be longer or shorter which leads to his being accepted by the Mahâtman as a chela pledged irrevocably to the service of humanity.

Every sincere and devoted F. T. S. is in



this sense a probationary chela. He may not be conscious of it, but his real progress in impersonal devotion to his family and friends, to his fellow Theosophists, and to the work of the Theosophical Movement for humanity will be registered karmically. And as this good karman accumulates he will be led ever nearer to the presence of the Mahâtman.

There is an ancient saying that discipline precedes the Mysteries. And when we consider the real nature and objects of a Mystery-School we understand why this must be so. For the teachings in a Mystery-School comprise a knowledge of the actual and tremendously powerful laws upon which the Universe and life are built. To be able to smash the atom and release titanic forces, with all the dangers which attend such power, will give but a faint picture of the potencies and possibilities for either good or evil which a knowledge of Occult Nature

bestows. So, necessarily, moral and spiritual discipline of a most serious kind must precede the student's admission into this sacred arcana. Besides, unlike what is popularly known as Science, the Occult teachings are not experimental. They do not veer and change from guess to guess, and from theory to theory.

Why is this? From whence do the Mystery-Schools derive their certain knowledge about these hidden things? The following passage gives the answer:

Great intellects, titanic spiritual Seers, have sent their consciousness behind the veils of the outward seeming deep into the womb of invisible Nature, and have brought back what they have seen, and have formulated their knowledge into a grand system of thought. This system of thought we today call Theosophy. It is the Mother of all the great religions and great philosophies of the past time, and will be so of those of the future; for this reason: that every one of these other great systems of

thought has been founded upon the teaching of some great spiritual Seer and Sage. — G. DE PURUCKER: *The Masters and the Path of Occultism*, p. 19

What are some of these deeper teachings which are revealed to chelas in the Mystery-Schools? For a detailed description the student is recommended to read *The Esoteric Tradition* by G. de Purucker. But a brief outline of a few of them may here be given. He is taught among other things the real origin of his spiritual nature, his spiritual heredity, so to speak. He learns how and why he is actually a child of the Cosmic Gods. The door to the inner worlds of being is opened for him and he is gradually introduced to a knowledge of the Circulations of the Cosmos and the journeys of the Spiritual Monad along those cosmic highways into the “vast and inner and invisible Worlds and Spheres,” to quote from the above mentioned book. Indeed *The Esoteric Tradition* is so full of passages packed

with occult hints and information that one or two paragraphs which illustrate the foregoing and suggest the basic lines of chela training are quoted here:

One of the main objectives in such training is the arousing and stimulation of the moral sense to become so strong in the life of the disciple that the voice of conscience thus highly developed and trained becomes the instant and relatively unerring monitor indicating which path at any moment the disciple should follow. . . . Coincident with this is the training of the mind and of the intellect to become keen, polished, instant in action, and, under the guidance of the moral sense, virtually unerring in judgment. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, II, 1056

The whole attempt of inner training is to attain self-identification in progressive and ever enlarging stages with the great Spiritual Powers on which the Universe itself is constructed and with which it is molded — strange as this manner of phrasing the wonderful truth may seem to the Western mind, untrained in matters of esoteric philosophy and its deep science. — *Op. cit.*, p. 1055

This expression about the “Spiritual Pow-

ers" etc., refers to the Cosmic and Solar gods from which man's Âtma-Buddhi-Manas is radiated or, more correctly, emanated. Chela-training under a Mahâtman opens to the chela the path to self-conscious union with his spiritual parent, his own inner god. And when the pledged chela has been well prepared by his guru or Spiritual Teacher and is ready for the supreme trial he then embarks upon the sacred and wonderful adventure of initiation.

## VI

# INITIATION — THE GOAL OF EVOLUTION

There is a road, steep and thorny, and beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the heart of the Universe. I can tell you how to find Those who will show you the secret gateway that leads inward only, and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore. There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onward, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and serve humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come. — Editorial in *Lucifer*, Vol. IX

The purpose of all initiatory ceremonies — . . . the aim of all initiatory teachings of the ancient Mystery-Schools was . . . *the evocation of the higher self, of this inner being*; and it is possible to do it. A strong and indomitable will is the first requisite. Purity of life is the second, mental purity

above everything else. And absolute loyalty and devotion to the teachings of the Esoteric Wisdom and to the Teacher, is the third. — G. DE PURUCKER: *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 361

**P**ERHAPS the greatest boon that Theosophy bestows on us is the conviction that at last we actually know where we are going. Unlike the unhappy, drifting, bewildered mass of human beings the earnest and sincere student of Occultism has a definite objective. No matter how far in the future it may be, he knows that sometime, as surely as the sun rises every day, the privilege of trying for Initiation into the mysteries of Occult Nature will be his. And so he moves confidently forward to the radiant moment of reunion with his Higher Self. Never again will he be really uncertain, or lazy, or morally incompetent. He has something absorbingly interesting and worthwhile to work for. And his is the opportunity to press joyfully onward, serving with those noble Helpers

who are in advance of the race, towards that spiritual perfection which shall enable him to draw the whole of humanity itself with him a fraction farther onward along our difficult evolutionary way. The Sun, moving ever forward through its steadfast orbit draws all its planets year by year into new spaces of the Universe. So does a man, steadfastly following the path of occult progress, draw forward with himself all those who are united to him in the bonds of spiritual brotherhood. Every human problem and every human sorrow will be just that much clearer and lighter because he as an individual has been able to make the goal.

Furthermore, in following the Path of Initiation the chela, either lay or accepted, is embarking upon a splendid adventure. Life for the average man is so dull. There is hardly one man or woman in a million who is not more or less a slave to some crippling limitation of environment. Aldous Huxley



says somewhere that modern man is everywhere intensely bored with life. And does it not seem logical to conclude that the prevalence of crime amongst the young is largely due to these crippling environments which offer no scope for individual initiative, and which surround the effervescing energies of the young with little but the intensely commonplace?

Now, in exchange for all this drabness, what does initiation offer us? To reiterate the words of a Teacher, it shows us how to invoke the peace and power and guidance of the Higher Self. It changes us "into becoming the bird of eternity." In other words, it sets us free. It opens the doors out of the cage of our personality. It shows us how then to spread our spiritual wings — which now lie so feeble and closely folded from disuse — and, escaping from our physical and psychological limitations, to fare forth upon the Highways of the Cosmos.

To the highest Initiate there are no closed doors in his Universe. The inner worlds, with all their strange and fresh and wondrous realms, lie open before him. For his training has developed in him that piercing spiritual vision to which G. de Purucker so often refers. His are the strong faculties and the mighty spiritual pinions that can carry him to the very innermost portals of the Spiritual Sun.

A further passage may here be quoted to show in slightly more detail what Initiation implies. The writer begins by describing the greatest event in the history of our Globe — the awakening in man of self-conscious humanhood in the Third Root-Race by the Mânasaputras:

This our “awakening” was called by H. P. Blavatsky, the *incarnation of the Mânasaputras*, or the Sons of Mind, or Light. Had that incarnation not taken place, we indeed should have continued our evolution by merely “natural” causes, but it would

have been slow almost beyond comprehension, almost interminable; but that act of self-sacrifice, through their immense pity, their immense love, though, indeed, acting under Karmic impulse, awakened the divine fire in our own selves, gave us light and comprehension and understanding; so from that time we ourselves became the "Sons of the Gods"; the faculty of self-consciousness in us was awakened, our eyes were opened, responsibility became ours; and our feet were then set definitely upon the path . . . leading inwards back to our spiritual home.

. . . initiation is in fact a quickening process, but it is also something else; it is a copy, an endeavor to copy, what was done by the incarnation of those Lords of Understanding, Sons of Light. It is an attempt to stimulate, to awaken into activity, the inner spiritual Self, to enliven us more quickly, to enable us to see and understand, saving those who successfully pass through the tests aeons and aeons of suffering and strife, and, noblest of all, enabling those whose minds have become enlightened, themselves to do the same for their brothers who are less progressed than they. — G. DE PURUCKER: *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, pp. 258-9

Moreover, in following the Path of Initiation under a spiritual Teacher who is himself a part of the Brotherhood of Compassion we knit ourselves into the Great White Lodge and its work. To the extent that we then become chelas in spirit and try sincerely to live the chela-life we become a vital part of that Brotherhood. We have ceased to be wanderers. We have found our true place in the universal plan. We learn who we are, where we came from, whither we are bound and the best and quickest way to get there. Suffering no longer daunts us, for it becomes a gateway to freedom.

Even beyond all this, however, is the immediate power Initiation will give the aspirant to help and bless others. Not only will his mere presence spread protection and balm and inspiration. He will eventually become a part of the living Guardian-Wall which surrounds humanity. The significance of this statement will be clear from the following:

These Sages are sometimes called the 'Guardian-Wall,' for they form in fact a living, spiritual and intellectual 'wall' of protection around mankind, guarding men against whatever evils men themselves are unable, because of ignorance and stupidity, to ward off or neutralize. Yet such guarding is always in strict accordance with, and always has in view, the dominant karman of humanity; for against this, the humanly racial karman, even the great Sages can no more work than against any one or against all of the other 'laws' of Nature. They are what they are because they are in utter fidelity the Servants of the Universal Mother in her spiritual, causative functions. They help men, they inspire, they protect, they succor, whenever they can, and in such fashion as their profound knowledge of the karmic chain of cause and effect in which humanity is entangled permits them to do. Thus it is that they serve the humanity over which they stand as Elder Brothers and Guides. This is their Great Work; this is their sublime Duty.

—G. DE PURUCKER: *The Esoteric Tradition*, II, 914

From the foregoing pages it will easily be seen that for the various stages of initiatory training an Adept-Teacher is necessary.

Even the student of mere physical science must have long preparation, with help and guidance from an expert, if he aims to do serious research work in a well equipped laboratory. So likewise must the advanced chela, who aspires to the difficult and perilous occult highways which lead to initiation, have the guidance and help of a Spiritual expert or Adept to watch over and direct his progress. He must of course do the work himself. A child must learn to walk, and talk, and use its own faculties no matter how much help it may have. The chela must himself develop the higher spiritual and the lower psychic clairvoyance and the other inner senses and powers which enable him to adventure and learn in these new fields of life. But in order that he may not go astray and that his efforts may be of the highest efficiency he will naturally need the suggestions and guidance of a Master of Life.

All this may seem very remote to those

who, like you and me, regard ourselves as quite average and commonplace men and women. Yet does not our intense determination to find the meaning of things lift us out of the average? Most assuredly it does. It is because of that determination that we are members and workers in the Theosophical Movement. There has reached the inner ear of every sincere Theosophist a whisper from the Heart of the Universe. No one who has once heard that still, small voice — “the Voice of the Silence” — and known the divine nostalgia which it inspires in the soul, will ever again be content with the husks of material or merely intellectual satisfactions.

And one of the most beautiful things about a knowledge of these truths is that they exalt the commonplace of everyday. No matter how difficult or uninspiring may be the daily grind, when one thinks and lives and feels in the atmosphere of Occult Truth, every

form of drudgery will be suffused with the Buddhist splendor. No matter how tied down or weary the body, the man himself will be free. The very act of doing faithfully and impersonally each smallest duty will itself be a first step on the Pathway of Initiation. For all that a student of Occultism does will be self-consciously dedicated to impersonal service. In addition, he will know why he is doing it. And not having any egotistical demands as to the result, he will be able to do it a hundred per cent. better than formerly he could. Understanding Reincarnation and Karman; knowing that his feet are set irrevocably upon the Right Path; possessing in his mind and heart the esoteric keys to the Sanctuary — the man or woman so humbly and faithfully working is literally a companion and co-worker with the gods.



## VII

### HOW CAN WE REACH THE MAHÂTMANS?

**O**NE of the most frequent and the most natural questions of the inquirer is the one at the head of this page — “How can I meet a Mahâtman? How would I know one if I were to see him?” For the teaching about our Elder Brothers is so consoling, and holds so much inspiration and purely novel interest for a seeker that his first impulse is to reach out like doubting Thomas and assure himself by means of his senses that the Mahâtmans actually exist. He longs to meet them, to secure their attention and guidance. And of course it is right for anyone who has lived the life and complied with the conditions they set for

their chelas, to aspire and hope for such ultimate personal relationship with them. He naturally longs to find his Spiritual Teacher and devote his life to the service of humanity.

Yet the whole of this Manual, and indeed all of our more profound and detailed literature will have been written in vain if the student does not soon learn that he must first earn the right to come under their direct personal notice. As one of the Mahâtman wrote long ago, in the very beginning of the Theosophical Society, to an applicant for chelaship —

If you really want to be a *chela* i. e. to become the recipient of our mysteries, *you* have to adapt yourself to *our* ways, not we to *yours*. Until you do so, it is useless for you to expect any more than we can give under ordinary circumstances.

— *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 235

And it is of course not only a question of having the right. It is more than all a ques-

tion of individual development. If any one of us were to pass a Mahâtman on the street the chances are 1000 to 1 that we would not recognise him as such, unless the Master chose to reveal his presence to us. The reason for this lies in our own undeveloped spirituality. It is rare almost to the point of impossibility to find anyone in whom the inner spiritual sense necessary to detect the presence of a Mahâtman is yet unfolded. For his mere physical appearance will not necessarily proclaim the inner man. It is the developed spiritual nature, not the body, which makes the Master of Life.

“But,” you may reply, “if the Mahâtman is so far ahead of us, why is his body too not different from ours?” It is different, certainly. But in what way is it different? Simply in the *quality* of the atoms and molecules and cells which build it. The material of our bodies, soaked as most of them are with fatigue poisons, and often with the

germs of disease, or disturbed by nervous and emotional instability, could not be used by a pure and exalted being such as a Mahâtman. He has long, long ago so refined and transmuted his physical atoms that his body is built only of the finest and purest materials. The essence and vibration of all his atoms and molecules are of an inconceivably higher order than ours. He could no more live and breathe in such a body as ours than a bird could live under water, or a butterfly exist in its discarded chrysalis. And this very unlikeness in essence and vibration would make it extremely unlikely that we could sense his physical presence. The same thing of course is true of his psychological apparatus — his mind and human feelings. They are all so entirely different from ours. And that difference is as invisible to our mental apprehension as the ultra-violet ray is to our eyesight. And of course the higher we go in

thinking of his constitution the more remote is the possibility that there could be any casual *rapport* between an ordinary man and a Mahâtman.

Just here we may answer the third question asked in Chapter 1: Where do the Mahâtmans live? The inner and highest Lodge of the Mahâtmans is situated in regions untrodden by the mass of men. It is in the still inaccessible heights of the Himâlayas of Tibet. Here they may live in an atmosphere, physical and spiritual, that makes their work possible. Moreover, here they can be uninterrupted. Even casual thought will show that if they lived where they could be easily reached their work would suffer, as much from their friends as their enemies. Even physical science has had its enemies. Think what a long struggle Science has had through three hundred years to earn its freedom for untrammelled investigation and research. And today we

see that freedom again menaced. This will easily suggest why the Mahâtmans find it expedient to isolate themselves. They are of course powerful enough to neutralize the enemy attacks of bigotry, curiosity, and all other kinds of investigation and opposition and interruption. But they are too wise to waste their energies in this way. Why spend all the energy necessary to protect their work against the hordes of human passion when by just withdrawing to the solitudes they can live and work at their easiest and best? And this is another reason why it is almost impossible for an ordinary, spiritually undeveloped man or woman to meet a Mahâtman.

These facts have their parallel of course within the world at large. Remember how the high executives of great commercial enterprises are protected against intrusion. It is almost impossible for anyone but important and favored individuals to work

through the cordon of office employees, secretaries, and contact men who surround and cut off an 'industrial magnate' from the public. The same is true of all important and highly placed workers — college presidents, scientific researchers, and statesmen. These people have such responsibilities and such important work to do under so much intensity and strain that they have to be protected against useless and wasteful contacts. So we see that the Mahâtms are not so different in their need for quiet and seclusion in their spiritual retreats. But there is of course with them the all important difference that they are always in *inner* and sympathetic and ministering touch with all humanity and its problems.

With a Messenger of the Lodge it is of course different. They are necessarily more like ourselves, at least in their physical bodies. So that if we will, we can recognise the agents of the Lodge by our own intuitive

vision. Yet — how many are there who can do even this much? Thousands of people contacted H. P. Blavatsky, who was one of the greatest of their agents. How many of these thousands recognised her for what she was? If one cannot discover behind the personality of a man or woman the presence of a real spiritual Teacher and a chela of the Mahâtman, how then shall he be able to recognise a Master and Teacher-Adept?

But, happily, as just stated, the Masters can see *us*. For they have developed spiritual and psychic clairvoyance which enables them to overlook the whole world and particularly the Theosophical Movement. Every act on our part of genuine self-mastery and unselfish devotion to the interests of another brings us nearer to their recognition and help. The following passage will prove of interest here:

. . . yet constantly as the slow ages pass, one by one, individuals will be discovered by the Masters



showing unmistakable signs in their thoughts and feelings and in consequent action of the birth of the Buddhic Splendor in them; and such individuals then and there become objects of the personal attention of the Great Teachers who do what they can under karmic law to stimulate a greater growth of the inner light in such individuals, and gently to lead them on towards the moment when they may become self-conscious chelas or disciples preparing for initiation.

— G. DE PURUCKER, *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 1036

This then is the first step in reaching the Mahâtmans — so to live that the inner Light kindled in our hearts and minds will bring us to their attention. We may be sure that they are looking eagerly for disciples. From what has already been said we know that the salvation of humanity is dependent upon ever more and more of us becoming pupils in their great Brotherhood of Compassion. If humanity is to be saved from the lower forces of its own nature then this Brotherhood which we call the Lodge must gradu-

ally spread its wings to take in as many of the human race as can make the grade in this great period of evolution, called a Manvantara.

The Theosophical Society, with its inner School of study and development, was founded for that purpose. It was intended as a real nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. This means that its aim was not only to establish a knowledge of our spiritual brotherhood as a fact in Nature. It also means that the Theosophical Society is a training school in the *practice* of universal brotherhood. We must not only know that brotherhood is a fact. We must prove that fact by living it. We as Theosophists should set such an example of solidarity to the world that all will recognise that brotherhood can be demonstrated as not only abstractly true, but possible to be lived.

So one way of more closely approaching the Mahâtmans is to lend our help in the

work of demonstrating and establishing universal brotherhood. We can best do that by joining the Theosophical Society. That very step is the second one on the pathway to a meeting with them. If any inquirer should ask here: "But do you mean to say that only by joining your society can I reach the Masters? That looks to me very like dogmatism of a kind similar to all the others." Then we reply that this is not really the case. Certainly anyone can gradually and slowly work through the ages for the recognition of the Masters. Everyone has their help. If this were not so then the doctrine of brotherhood would be but an empty claim. All humanity is under their care and protection so far as individual and national karman permits. And in the course of evolution everyone can, if he try hard enough, reach the point in individual development where he may come into direct contact with them.

But we are talking here of a 'short cut' to their recognition. The eager and dauntless in their search for Truth will not be satisfied to drift with the general current of human evolution. The very fact that one is a seeker shows that he is looking for a way out. In the Theosophical Society, and the training which membership therein makes possible, this 'way out,' this short cut to knowledge and peace can be taken. This is all that is meant. No effort is ever made to argue or coerce the seeker into joining the Theosophical Society. Members introduced in that way would prove but weak links in an organization that must be united, solid enough to withstand the enemies of human progress wherever found.

It cannot be said too often that the Mahâtmans founded the Theosophical Society in order to bring about human solidarity. As they said themselves:

The *Chiefs* want a "Brotherhood of Humanity,"

a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds.

— *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 24

And again:

. . . the chief object of the T. S. is not so much to gratify individual aspirations as to serve our fellow men . . . . — *Op. cit.* p. 7-8

There is another reason — which may perhaps be regarded as more scientific — why joining the Theosophical Society may lead us more directly to the Mahâtman than any other course. That reason lies in the nature of the Brotherhood of Compassion. For this Brotherhood is not a mere association of congenially thinking people, like a club, or a church, or a political or social fraternity. One does not become a member of that Brotherhood by signing a printed form or receiving a diploma. To become incorporated in this Brotherhood means that one must have to some extent changed

one's nature into the same kind of psychological and spiritual *stuff*, so to speak. Only this can so change a man that he becomes an actual living cell in the tissue of this Brotherhood. It can almost be called a matter of alchemical or spiritual chemistry. You cannot combine into one substance two chemical elements which have no real vibrational affinity. You may bring them together under all sorts of conditions, but you cannot fool Nature. Utterly disparate elements will not combine under any conditions. And a man's mind and soul must be in harmony to some extent with the Nature of the Brotherhood of Compassion before he can, as a member of the T. S., be absorbed into its inner body.

Of course nearly every F. T. S. has already something in his nature of this spiritual affinity with the Mahâtmans. Otherwise he would not be attracted to Theosophy. Does not this very attraction show a

spiritually magnetic inner vibration which is in some degree in unison with the nature of the Brotherhood of Compassion? If he then goes on as a constantly more impersonal and selflessly devoted worker he will find the very atoms of his mind and body changing. And this change will still further knit him into its living organism.

This would seem to be one of the best of all reasons for joining the Theosophical Society and becoming a responsible worker in its ranks. Then one's personality no longer floats like a helpless insect caught in the web of his own and the world's karman. A man gradually disentangles himself from that web by uniting ever more closely his personality with its immortal Higher Self, Âtma-Buddhi-Manas. And then as he changes he becomes instead like a strand of light, an indestructible ray woven into that refulgent tissue of spiritual Light which surrounds and permeates and supports with

its love and succor the toiling world of men. For that tissue of Golden Light is the Brotherhood of Compassion.

There is yet one point more that may prove of real human interest. It has not always been the case that the Mahâtman have needed to live in strict seclusion. Nor will they need to do so in the future. There have always been epochs in the cyclic rise and fall of evolution when the level of spirituality of the race was high. At such times the Great Teachers can mingle with a certain amount of freedom in the outer world. And there have also been times of extreme crisis or spiritual emergency when they have felt compelled to appear in person to give counsel or aid. Yet such rare appearances have generally been *incognito*, so to say. There are many fascinating historical legends which have grown up around these appearances. W. Q. Judge, on page 31 of *Echoes from the Orient* reports one such incident



said to have happened to Napoleon before he began to degenerate through personal ambition. And there are many other such instances scattered through the pages of history.

The natural consequence of all this is to make us understand that if the Theosophical Society does its work well, if every member is faithful to its objects and to the work of true self-dedication and self-mastery, the time is not too far distant when the Mahâtman will find conditions in the world favorable to their occasional reappearance amongst us. And this again gives a concrete and satisfactory reason for the existence of the T. S. and our membership as active workers in its ranks.

As a final keynote to this whole subject of Mahâtman and Chelas we may quote the following from the Mahâtman Morya on page 252 of *The Mahatma Letters*:

How many times had we to repeat, that he who joins the Society with the sole object of coming

in contact with us and if not of acquiring at least of assuring himself of the reality of such powers and of our objective existence — was pursuing a mirage? I say again then. It is he alone who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of a regenerating practical Brotherhood who is entitled to the possession of our secrets. He alone, such a man — will never misuse his powers, as there will be no fear that he will turn them to selfish ends. A man who places not the good of mankind above his own good is not worthy of becoming our *chela* — he is not worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbour.

**Additional information may be obtained from:**

**THE MASTERS AND THE PATH OF OCCULTISM**, by  
G. de Purucker.

**THE OCEAN OF THEOSOPHY**, by Wm. Q. Judge:  
See Index under Elder Brothers, Masters, Ma-  
hatma.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY**, by  
G. de Purucker:  
See Index under Initiation and the Mysteries,  
Occultism; also Ch. xlvii, *Teacher and Pupil*.

**THE ESOTERIC TRADITION**, by G. de Purucker:  
See Index under Mahâtmans, Seers, Teachers, Oc-  
cultism, Initiation, Mysteries.

**THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY**, by H. P. Blavatsky:  
*Exoteric and Esoteric Theosophy*, Section II.  
*The "Theosophical Mahatmas,"* Section XIV.

**STUDIES IN OCCULTISM**, No. I, by H. P. Blavatsky.

**THE MAHATMA LETTERS TO A. P. SINNETT**, com-  
piled by A. Trevor Barker, especially the Section:  
*Probation and Chelaship*.



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