

Lesson 6

THE EXISTENCE OF THE MASTERS

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Condensed from *The Masters and the Path*

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE existence of Perfected Men is one of the most important of the many new facts which Theosophy puts before us. It follows logically from the other great Theosophical teachings of karma and evolution by reincarnation. As we look round us we see men obviously at all stages of their evolution — many far below ourselves in development, and others who in one way or another are distinctly in advance of us. Since that is so, there may well be others who are very much further advanced; indeed, if men are steadily growing better and better through a long series of successive lives, tending towards a definite goal, there should certainly be some who have already reached that goal. Some of us in the process of that development have already succeeded in unfolding some of those higher senses which are latent in every man, and will be the heritage of all in the future; and by means of those senses we are enabled to see the ladder of evolution extending far above us as well as far below us, and we can also see that there are men standing upon every rung of that ladder.

There is a considerable amount of direct testimony to the existence of these Perfected Men whom we call Masters, but I think that the first step which each one of us should take is to make certain that there *must* be such men; only as a later step will it follow that those with whom we have come into contact belong to that class.

The historical records of every nation are full of the doings of men of genius in all the different

departments of human activity, men who in their special lines of work and ability have stood far above the rest — indeed, so far that at times (and probably more often than we know) their ideals were utterly beyond the comprehension of the people, so that not only the work

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that they may have done has been lost to mankind, but their very names even have not been preserved. It has been said that the history of every nation could be written in the biography of a few individuals, and that it is always the few, towering above the rest, who initiate the great forward steps in art, music, literature, science, philosophy, philanthropy, statecraft, and religion. They stand high sometimes in love of God and their fellow-men, as great saints and philanthropists; sometimes in understanding of man and Nature, as great philosophers, sages and scientists; sometimes in work for humanity, as great liberators and reformers. Looking at these men, and realizing how high they stand among humanity, how far they have gone in human evolution, is it not

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A facsimile of one of the letters of the Mahatma Morya to A. P. Sinnett.

logical to say that we cannot see the bounds of human attainment, and that there may well have been, and even now may be, men far further developed even than they, men great in spirituality as well as knowledge or artistic power, men complete as regards human perfections — men precisely such as the Adepts or Supermen whom some of us have had the inestimable privilege to encounter?

This galaxy of human genius that enriches and beautifies the pages of history is at the same time the glory and the hope of all mankind, for we

know that these Greater Ones are the forerunners of the rest, and that They flash out as beacons, as veritable light-bearers to show us the path which we must tread if we wish to reach the glory which shall presently be revealed. We have long accepted the doctrine of the evolution of the forms in which dwells the

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Divine Life; here is the complementary and far greater idea of the evolution of that Life itself, showing that the very reason for that wondrous development of higher and higher forms is that the ever-swelling Life needs them in order to express itself. Forms are born and die, forms grow, decay and break; but the Spirit grows on eternally, ensouling those forms, and developing by means of experience gained in and through them, and as each form has served its turn and is outgrown, it is cast aside that another and better form may take its place.

The existence of Perfected Men at the end of this long line of ever-unfolding power and wisdom and love is the most natural thing in the world. Even beyond Them — beyond our sight and our comprehension — stretches a vista of still greater glory; some hint of that we may endeavor to give later, but it is useless to speak of it now.

The logical consequence of all this is that there must be Perfected Men, and there are not wanting signs of the existence of such Men in all ages who, instead of leaving the world entirely, to pursue a life of their own in the divine or superhuman kingdoms, have remained in

touch with humanity, through love of it, to assist its evolution in beauty and love and truth, to help, as it were, to cultivate the Perfect Man — just as here and there we find a botanist who has special love for plants, and glories in the production of a perfect orange or a perfect rose.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE RELIGIONS

The records of every great religion show the presence of such Supermen, so full of the Divine Life that again and again they have been taken as the very representatives of God Himself. In every religion, especially at its founding, has such an One appeared, and in many cases more than one. The Hindus have their great Avatars or divine incarnations, such as Shri Krishna, Shri Shankaracharya, and the Lord Gautama Buddha, whose religion has spread over the Far East, and a great galaxy of Rishis, of Saints, of Teachers; and these Great Ones took interest not only in awakening men's spiritual natures, but also in all affairs that made for their well-being on earth. All who belong to the Christian world know, or ought to know, much about the great succession of prophets and teachers and saints in their own dispensation, and that in some way (perhaps not clearly understood) their Supreme Teacher, the Christ Himself, was and is Man as well as God. And all the earlier religions (decadent as some of them may be amid the decay of nations), down even to those of primitive tribes of men, show as outstanding features the existence of Supermen, helpers in every way of the childlike people among whom They dwelt. An enumeration of these, interesting and valuable as it is, would take us too far aside from our present purpose, so I will refer the reader for it to Mr. W. Williamson's excellent book *The Great Law*.

RECENT EVIDENCE

There is much direct and recent evidence for the existence of these Great Ones. In my earlier days I never needed any such evidence, because I was fully persuaded as a result of my studies that there *must* be such people. To believe that there were such glorified Men seemed per-

fectly natural, and my only desire was to meet Them face to face. Yet there are many among the newer members of the Society who, reasonably enough, want to know what evidence there is. There is a considerable amount of personal testimony. Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, the co-founders of The Theosophical Society, Dr. Annie Besant, our present President, and I myself — all of us have seen some of

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these Great Ones, and many other members of the Society have also been privileged to see one or two of Them, and there is ample testimony in what all these people have written.

It is sometimes objected that those who saw Them, or fancied that they did so, may have been dreaming or perhaps deluded. The chief reason, I think, for the possibility of such a suggestion is that we have very rarely seen the Adepts at a time when both They and we were in our physical bodies. In the early days of the Society, when only Madame Blavatsky had developed higher faculties, the Masters not infrequently materialized Themselves so that all could see Them, and showed Themselves thus physically on various occasions. You will find many records of such happenings in the earlier history of our Society, but of course the Great One so showing Himself was not in His physical body, but in a materialized form.

Many of us habitually and constantly see Them during our sleep. We go out in our astral

bodies (or in the mental body, according to our development) and we visit Them and see Them in Their physical bodies; but we are not at that time in ours, and that is why on the physical plane people tend to be sceptical about such experiences. Men object: "But in these cases either you who saw Them were out of the physical body, and may have been dreaming or deluded,

ileged to meet one of the Great Ones under similar conditions. There is also a vast amount of Indian testimony which has never been collected and sifted, mainly because those to whom these experiences came were so thoroughly persuaded of the existence of Supermen and of the possibility of meeting Them that they did not regard any individual case as worthy of record.

A s part of Their work, some of these great Brothers whom we call Masters of the Wisdom are willing to take pupil-apprentices and teach them; but They form only a small section of the mighty Body of Perfected Men.

or Those who appeared to you came phenomenally and then disappeared again; so how do you know that They were what you suppose Them to be?"

There are a few cases in which both the Adept and the person who saw Him were in the physical body. It happened with Madame Blavatsky; I have heard her testify that she lived for some time in a monastery in Nepal, where she saw three of our Masters constantly in Their physical vehicles. Some of Them have come down more than once from Their mountain retreats into India in Their physical bodies. Colonel Olcott spoke of having seen two of Them on those occasions; he had met the Master Morya and also the Master Kuthumi. Damodar K. Mavalankar, whom I knew in 1884, had encountered the Master Kuthumi in His physical body. There was the case of S. Ramaswami Iyer, a gentleman whom I knew well in those days, who had the experience of meeting the Master Morya physically, and has written an account of that meeting which I shall quote later; and there was the case of Mr. W. T. Brown of the London Lodge, who also was priv-

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I myself can report two occasions on which I have met a Master, both of us being in the physical vehicle. One of Them was the Adept to whom the name of Jupiter was assigned in the book of *The Lives of Alcyone*, who greatly assisted in the writing of portions of Madame Blavatsky's famous work *Isis Unveiled*, when that was being done in Philadelphia and New York. When I was living at Adyar, He was so kind as to request my revered teacher, Swami T. Subba Row, to bring me to call upon Him. Obeying His summons we journeyed to His house, and were most graciously received by Him. After a long conversation of the deepest interest, we had the honor of dining with Him, Brahman though He be, and spent the night and part of the next day under His roof. In that case it will be admitted that there could be no question of illusion. The other Adept whom I had the privilege of encountering physically was the Master the Comte de St. Germain, called sometimes the Prince Rakoczy. I met Him under quite ordinary circumstances (without any previous appointment, and as though by chance) walking down the Corso in Rome, dressed just as any Italian gentleman might be. He took me up into the gardens on the Pincian hill, and we sat for more than an hour talking about the Society and its work; or perhaps I should rather say that He spoke and I listened, although when He asked questions I answered.

Other members of the Brotherhood I have seen under varying circumstances. My first encounter with one of them was in a hotel in

Cairo; I was on my way out to India with Madame Blavatsky and some others, and we stayed in that city for a time. We all used to gather in Madame Blavatsky's room for work, and I was sitting on the floor, cutting out and arranging for her a quantity of newspaper articles which she wanted. She sat at a table close by; indeed my left arm was actually touching her dress. The door of the room was in full sight, and it certainly did not open; but quite suddenly, without any preparation, there was a man standing al-

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most between me and Madame Blavatsky. Within touch of both of us. It gave me great start, and I jumped up in some confusion; Madame Blavatsky was much amused and said: "If you do not know enough not to be startled at such a trifle as that, you will not get far in this occult work." I was introduced to the visitor, who was not then an Adept, but an Arhat, which is one grade below that state; He has since become the Master Djwal Kul.

Some months after that the Master Morya came to us one day, looking exactly as though in a physical body; He walked through the room where I was in order to communicate with Madame Blavatsky, Who was in her bedroom inside. That was the first time I had seen him plainly and clearly, for I had not then developed my latent senses sufficiently to remember what I saw in the subtle body. I saw the Master Kuthumi under similar conditions on the roof of our Headquarters at Adyar; He was stepping

The Age of Adepts

In a conversation in 1887 with the author Charles Johnston (husband of H.P.B.'s niece, Vera), when Mr. Johnston asked H.P.B. something about her Master's age (the Mahatma Morya), she replied, "My dear, I cannot tell you exactly, for I do not know. But this I will tell you. I met him first when I was twenty. He was at the very prime of manhood then. I am an old woman now, but he has not aged a day. He is still in the prime of manhood. That is all I can say. You may draw your own conclusions." When Mr. Johnston persisted and asked whether the Mahatmas had discovered the elixir of life, she replied seriously: "That is no fable. It is only the veil hiding a real occult process, warding off age and dissolution for periods which would seem fabulous, so I will not mention them. The secret is this: for every man there is a climacteric, when he must draw near to death: if he has squandered his life-powers, there is no escape for him; but if he has lived according to the law, he may pass through and so continue in the same body almost indefinitely."

VIRGINIA HANSON

over a balustrade as though He had just materialized from the empty air on the other side of it. I have also many times seen the Master Djwal Kul on that roof in the same way.

This would, I suppose, be considered less certain evidence, since the Adepts came as apparitions do; but, as I have since learned to use my higher vehicles freely, and to visit these Great Ones in that way, I can testify that Those

An Encounter with the Mahatma Morya

Henry Steel Olcott

Our evening's work on Isis was finished, I had bade goodnight to HPB, retired to my own room, closed the door as usual, sat me down to read and smoke, and was soon absorbed in my book.

All at once, as I read with my shoulder a little turned from the door, there came a gleam of something white in the right-hand corner of my right eye; I turned my head, dropped my book in astonishment, and saw towering above me in his great stature an Oriental clad in white garments, and wearing a head cloth or turban of amber-striped fabric, hand-embroidered in yellow floss silk. Long raven hair hung from under his turban to the shoulders; his black beard, parted vertically on the chin in the Rajput fashion, was twisted up at the ends and carried over the ears; his eyes were alive with soul fire, eyes which were at once benignant and piercing in glance.

He was so grand a man, so imbued with the majesty of moral strength, so luminously spiritual, so evidently above average humanity, that I felt abashed in his presence, and bowed my head and bent my knee as one does before a god or a godlike personage. A hand was lightly laid on my head, a sweet though strong voice bade me be seated, and when I raised my eyes, the Presence was seated in the other chair beyond the table.

He told me he had come at the crisis when I needed him, that my actions had brought me to this point, that it lay with me alone whether he and I should meet often in this life as co-workers for the good of mankind, that a great work was to be done for human-

ity, and I had the right to share in it if I wished, that a mysterious tie, not now to be explained to me, had drawn my colleague [HPB] and myself together, a tie which could not be broken, however strained it might be at times. He told me things about HPB that I may not repeat, as well as things about myself, that do not concern third parties.

At last he rose, I wondering at his great height and observing the sort of splendor in his countenance — not an external shining, but the soft gleam, as it were, of an inner light — that of the spirit.

Suddenly the thought came into my mind: "What if this be but hallucination; what if HPB has cast a hypnotic glamour over me? I wish I had some tangible object to prove to me that he has really been here, something that I might handle after he is gone!"

The Master smiled kindly as if reading my thought, untwisted the fehta [turban] from his head, benignantly saluted me in farewell and was gone: his chair was empty; I was alone with my emotions! Not quite alone, though, for on the table lay the embroidered head cloth, a tangible and enduring proof that I had not been "overlooked," or psychically befooled, but had been face to face with one of the Elder Brothers of Humanity.

To run and beat at HPB's door and tell her my experience was the first natural impulse, and she was as glad to hear my story as I was to tell it. I returned to my room to think, and the gray morning found me still thinking and resolving. I have been blessed with meetings with this Master and others since then.

who in the early years of the Society came and materialized for us are the same Men whom I have often since seen living in Their own homes. People have suggested that I and others who have the same experience may be but dreaming, since these visits take place during the sleep of the body; I can only reply that it is a remarkably consistent dream, extending in my own case over forty years, and that it has been dreamt simultaneously by a large number of people.

Those who wish to collect evidence about these matters (and it is quite reasonable that they should wish to do so) should turn to the earlier literature of the Society. If they meet our President, they can hear from her how many of the Great Ones she has seen on different occasions; and there are many of our members who will bear witness without hesitation that they have seen a Master. It may be that in meditation they have seen His face, and later have had definite proof that He is a real being. Much evidence may be found in Colonel Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, and there is an interesting treatise called *Do the Brothers Exist?* written by Mr. A. O. Hume, a man who stood high in the Civil Service in India, and worked much with our late Vice-President, Mr. A. P. Sinnett. It was published in a book entitled *Hints on Esoteric Theosophy*. Mr. Hume, who was a sceptical Anglo-Indian with a legal mind, went into the question of the existence of the Brothers (as the Masters are also called, because They belong to a great Brotherhood, and also because they are the Elder Brothers of humanity) and even at that early date decided that he had overwhelming testimony that They did exist; and very much more evidence has accumulated since that book was published.

The possession of extended vision and other faculties resulting from the unfolding of our latent powers has also brought within our constant experience the fact that there are other orders of beings than the human, some of whom rank alongside the Adepts in a grade of existence higher than our own. We meet with some whom we call Devas or Angels, and with others whom

we see to be far beyond ourselves in every respect.

Having finished with human life, the Perfected Man usually drops His various material bodies, but He retains the power to take up any of them if ever He should need them in course of His work. In the majority of cases, one who gains that level no longer needs a physical body. He no longer retains an astral, a mental or even a causal body, but lives permanently at His highest level. Whenever for any purpose He needs to

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deal with a lower plane, He must take a temporary vehicle belonging to that plane, because only through the medium of its matter can He come into contact with those who live therein. If He wishes to talk to men physically, He must take a physical body; He must have at least a partial materialization, or He cannot speak. In the same way, if He wishes to impress our minds, He must draw round himself a mental body. Whenever He needs in His work to take a lower vehicle, He has the power to do so; but He holds it only temporarily. There are seven lines of still further progress along which the Perfected Man can go, a list of which we shall give in a later chapter.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ADEPTS

The world is guided and directed to a large extent by a Brotherhood of Adepts to which

our Masters belong. Theosophical students make all sorts of mistakes about Them. They often regard Them as a great monastic community, all living together in some secret place. They suppose Them sometimes to be Angels, and many of our students have thought that They were all Indian, or that They all resided in the Himalayas. None of these hypotheses is true. There is a great Brotherhood, and its Members are in

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constant communication with one another; but Their communication is on higher planes and They do not necessarily live together. As part of Their work, some of these great Brothers whom we call Masters of the Wisdom are willing to take pupil-apprentices and teach them; but They form only a small section of the mighty Body of Perfected Men.

There are seven types of men, for every one belongs to one of the seven Rays into which the great wave of evolving life is distinctly divided. It would seem that one Adept on each of the Rays is appointed to attend to the training of beginners, and all those who are coming along His particular Ray of evolution pass through His hands.

No one below the rank of Adept is permitted to assume full responsibility for a novice, though those who have been chelas for a number of years are often employed as deputies, and receive the privilege of helping and advising promising young aspirants. These older pupils are gradually being trained for their future work when they in turn shall become Adepts, and they

are learning to take more and more of the routine work off the hands of their Masters, so that the latter may be set free for higher labors which only They can undertake. The preliminary selection of candidates for discipleship is now left to a large extent in the hands of these older workers, and the candidates are temporarily linked with such representatives rather than directly with the great Adepts. But the pupils and the Master are so wonderfully one that perhaps this is almost "a distinction without a difference."

THE POWERS OF THE ADEPT

The powers of the Adept are indeed many and wonderful, but they all follow in natural sequence from faculties which we ourselves possess. It is only that They have these faculties in a very much greater degree. I think that the outstanding characteristic of the Adept, as compared with ourselves, is that He looks upon everything from an absolutely different point of view; for there is in Him nothing whatever of the thought of self which is so prominent in the majority of men. The Adept has eliminated the lower self, and is living not for self but for all, and yet, in a way that only He can really understand, that *all* is truly Himself also. He has reached that stage in which there is no flaw in His character, nothing of a thought or feeling for a personal, separated self, and His only motive is that of helping forward evolution, of working in harmony with the Logos who directs it.

Perhaps the next most prominent characteristic is His all-round development. We are all of us imperfect; none has attained the highest level in any line, and even the great scientist or the great saint has usually reached high excellence in one thing only, and there remain other sides of his nature not yet unfolded. All of us possess some germ of all the different characteristics, but always they are but partially awakened, and one much more than another.

An Adept, however, is an all-round Man, a Man whose devotion and love and sympathy and compassion are perfect, while at the same time His intellect is something far grander than we can as yet realize, and His spirituality is wonder-

ful and divine. He stands out above and beyond all men whom we know, because of the fact that He is fully developed.

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Questions for Review:

1. What are the reasons for the belief in the existence of perfected human beings or Adepts?
2. Describe the nature of Adepts or Masters. Do they have physical bodies? If yes, why? Are they immortal? Where do they live?
3. What is the Brotherhood of Adepts?
4. What are some of the qualities and powers of Adepts?
5. If there are Adepts, what is the significance of such a fact on your life?