

THE MAHÂ CHOHAN'S
LETTER

1881

WITH A COMMENTARY BY
C. JINARÂJADÂSA

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
ADYAR, MADRAS 20, INDIA

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The Theosophical Press
Wheaton, Illinois

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To A. P. Sinnett from Mahâtma K.H.

An abridged version of the view of the Chohan on the T.S. from his own words as given last night. My own letter the answer to your last will shortly follow.

K. H.

The Mahâ Chohan's Letter

The doctrine we promulgate being the only true one, must, supported by such evidence as we are preparing to give, become ultimately triumphant as every other truth. Yet it is absolutely necessary to inculcate it gradually, enforcing its theories, unimpeachable facts for those who know, with direct inferences deduced from and corroborated by the evidence furnished by modern exact science. That is the reason why Col : H. S. O. who works but to revive

Buddhism may be regarded as one who labours in the true path of theosophy, far more than any other man who chooses as his goal the gratification of his own ardent aspirations for occult knowledge. Buddhism stripped of its superstitions is eternal truth, and he who strives for the latter is striving for theo-sophia, Divine Wisdom, which is a synonym of truth.

For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code, or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to preach and popularise a knowledge of theosophy. It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvana (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow-creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true *Theosophist*.

The intellectual portions of mankind seem to be fast dividing into two classes, the one unconsciously preparing for itself long periods of temporary annihilation or states of non-consciousness, owing to the deliberate surrender of their

intellect, its imprisonment in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition, a process which cannot fail to lead to the utter deformation of the intellectual principle ; the other unrestrainedly indulging its animal propensities with the deliberate intention of *submitting* to annihilation pure and simple, in cases of failure to millenniums of degradation after physical dissolution.

Those "intellectual classes" reacting upon the ignorant masses, which they attract and which look up to them as noble and fit examples to follow, degrade and morally ruin those they ought to protect and guide. Between degrading superstition, and still more degrading brutal materialism, the white dove of truth has hardly room where to rest her weary unwelcome foot.

It's time that theosophy should enter the arena. The sons of Theosophists are more likely to become in their turn Theosophists than anything else. No messenger of truth, no prophet has ever achieved during his lifetime a complete triumph, not even Buddha. The Theosophical Society was chosen as the corner-stone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity. To achieve the proposed object, a greater, wiser, and especially a more benevolent intermingling

of the high and the low, of the alpha and the omega of society, was determined upon. The white race must be the first to stretch out the hand of fellowship to the dark nations, to call the poor despised "nigger"—brother. This prospect may not smile to all. He is no Theosophist who objects to this principle.

In view of the ever-increasing triumph and at the same time misuse of free-thought and LIBERTY (the universal reign of Satan, Eliphas Levi would have called it), how is the combative *natural* instinct of man to be restrained from inflicting hitherto unheard-of cruelty and enormities, tyranny, injustice, etc., if not through the soothing influence of a brotherhood, and of the practical application of Buddha's esoteric doctrines?

For as everyone knows, total emancipation from authority of the one all-pervading power or law called God by the priests, Buddha, Divine Wisdom and enlightenment or Theosophy, by the philosophers of all ages, means also the emancipation from that of human law? Once unfettered, delivered from their dead-weight of dogmatic interpretations, personal names, anthropomorphic conceptions and salaried priests,

the fundamental doctrines of all religions will be proved identical in their esoteric meaning. Osiris, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, will be shown as different names for one and the same royal highway to final bliss : Nirvana.

Mystical Christianity, that is to say that Christianity which teaches *self*-redemption through our own seventh principle—the liberated Para-atma (Augoeides) called by the one Christ, by others Buddha, and equivalent to regeneration or re-birth in spirit—will be found just the same truth as the Nirvana of Buddhism. All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory apparent *self*, to recognise our true self in a transcendental divine life.

But if we would not be selfish we must strive to make other people see that truth, to recognise the reality of that transcendental self, the Buddh, the Christ or God of every preacher. This is why even exoteric Buddhism is the surest path to lead men towards the one esoteric truth.

As we find the world now, whether Christian, Mussalman or Pagan, justice is disregarded and honour and mercy both flung to the winds. In a word, how, seeing that the main objects of the T.S. are misinterpreted by those who are

most willing to serve us *personally*, are we to deal with the rest of mankind, with that curse known as the "struggle for life" which is the real and most prolific parent of most woes and sorrows and all crimes? Why has that struggle become the almost universal scheme of the universe? We answer, because no religion, with the exception of Buddhism, has hitherto taught a practical contempt for this earthly life, while each of them, always with that one solitary exception, has through its hells and damnations inculcated the greatest dread of death. Therefore do we find that struggle for life raging most fiercely in Christian countries, most prevalent in Europe and America. It weakens in the Pagan lands, and is nearly unknown among Buddhist populations. (In China during famine and where the masses are most ignorant of their own or any religion, it was remarked that those mothers who devoured their children belonged to localities where there were the most of Christian missionaries to be found; where there were none, and the Bonzes alone had the field, the population died with the utmost indifference). Teach the people to see that life on this earth even the

happiest is but a burden and an illusion, that it is but our own *karma*, the cause producing the effect, that is our own judge, our Saviour in future lives, and the great struggle for life will soon lose its intensity. There are no penitentiaries in Buddhist lands, and crime is nearly unknown among the Buddhist Thibetans. (The above is not addressed to you, *i.e.*, A.P.S., and has naught to do with the work of the Simla Eclectic Society. It is meant only as an answer to the erroneous impression in Mr. Hume's mind of the "Ceylon work" as no *theosophy*).

The world in general and Christendom especially, left for two thousand years to the regime of a personal God, as well as its political and social systems based on that idea, has now proved a failure. If the Theosophists say: We have nothing to do with all this; the lower classes and the inferior races (those of India for instance in the conception of the British) cannot concern us and must manage as they can—what becomes of our fine professions of benevolence, philanthropy, reform, etc.? Are these professions a mockery? And if a mockery, can ours be the true path? Should we devote ourselves to teaching a few Europeans, fed on the

fat of the land, many of them loaded with the gifts of blind fortune, the rationale of bell-ringing, cup-growing, of the spiritual telephone and astral body formations, and leave the teeming millions of the ignorant, of the poor and despised, the lowly and the oppressed, to take care of themselves and of their hereafter as best they know how? Never. Rather perish the Theosophical Society with both its hapless founders than that we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic, a hall of occultism. That *we*, the devoted followers of that spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy, and divine kindness, as of all the highest virtues attainable on this earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama Buddha, should ever allow the Theosophical Society to represent the *embodiment of selfishness*, the refuge of the few with no thought in them for the many, is a strange idea, my brothers.

Among the few glimpses obtained by Europeans of Thibet and its mystical hierarchy of "perfect Lamas," there is one which was correctly understood and described. "The incarnations of the Bodhisattva, Padma Pani, or Avalokitesvara and of Tsong-ka-pa and that of Amitabha, relinquish at their death the

attainment of Buddhahood, *i.e.*, the *summum bonum* of bliss and of individual personal felicity, that they might be born again and again for the benefit of mankind" (R.D.).¹ In other words, that they might be again and again subjected to misery, imprisonment in the flesh, and all the sorrows of life, provided that by such a self-sacrifice repeated throughout long and dreary centuries, they might become the means of securing salvation and bliss in the hereafter for a handful of men chosen among but one of the many races of mankind. And it is we, the humble disciples of these perfect Lamas, who are expected to allow the T.S. to drop its noble title, that of the Brotherhood of Humanity, to become a simple school of psychology? No, no, good brothers, you have been labouring under the mistake too long already. Let us understand each other. He who does not feel competent enough to grasp the noble idea sufficiently, to work for it, need not undertake a task too heavy for him. But there is hardly a Theosophist in the whole Society unable to effectually help it by correcting the erroneous impressions of the outsiders, if not by actually propagating himself

¹ Rhys Davids.

this idea. Oh for the noble and unselfish man to help us *effectually* in India in that divine task. All our knowledge, past and present, would not be sufficient to repay him. Having explained our views and aspirations. I have but a few words more to add.

To be *true*, religion and philosophy must offer the solution of every problem. That the world is in such a bad condition morally is a conclusive evidence that none of its religions and philosophies, those of the *civilised* races less than any other, have ever possessed the TRUTH. The right and logical explanations on the subject of the problems of the great dual principles, right and wrong, good and evil, liberty and despotism, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism, are as impossible to them now as they were 1881 years ago. They are as far from the solution as they ever were,—but to these there *must* be somewhere a consistent solution, and if our doctrines prove their competence to offer it, then the world will be the first one to confess *that* must be the true philosophy, the true religion, the true light, which gives *truth* and nothing but the *truth*.

Commentary by C. Jinarâjadâsa

This is certainly the most important Letter ever received from the Adept Teachers, as it is a communication from the Mahâ Chohan ("to whose insight the future lies like an open page"—K. H., Letter 16, *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series), one of the three great Adepts who form the "Triangle" of the Great Hierarchy. As the introductory note from the Master K.H. to Mr. Sinnett says, the communication is not a *letter* written by the Mahâ Chohan Himself, but the report of an interview. To understand its full significance, we must enter into the Theosophical situation in India in 1881.

Communications by way of precipitated Letters had begun to come to Mr. A. P. Sinnett in October 1881 at Allahabad; he had joined the Theosophical Society in 1879. The next principal person to receive Letters was Mr. A. O. Hume in Simla; he joined the Society in 1881. The former was editor of *The Pioneer*, the English daily which was practically the mouthpiece of the British Government; the latter was a high official in its service.

Both these Englishmen were in close touch with the scientific ideas then prevalent in England ; neither was religious or had any leaning towards mysticism. Both were "very British", with a veiled antipathy towards the darker-skinned Aryans among whom their lot was temporarily cast. Mr. Sinnett was proud by race, but Mr. Hume was proud with the overweening pride of a fancied superior intellect. The former had not the faintest idea of what is meant by metaphysics or philosophy ; he was intensely objective and fascinated by all scientific experiments ; the latter was an ornithologist and had as a hobby the collecting of the skins of rare birds, and some knowledge of metaphysical thought. Both these Englishmen were drawn to Theosophy ; but what characterized Mr. Sinnett was a steadily growing attachment to the Master K. H.—whom he presently termed his "Guardian"—evidently an attachment brought from past lives. But neither at the time realized who or what the Adepts were, nor did the Adepts reveal Themselves in Their true natures and powers, but merely as philosophical instructors, who could on occasion perform certain "phenomena". Some of these

are related in Mr. Sinnett's work, *The Occult World*.

But above all things, what characterized these two Englishmen, neither of them of the highest scientific or philosophical attainments, was the profound conviction that they knew the Western world far better than the Adepts. When the Adepts proclaimed the true significance of Their attempt to influence the world through the Theosophical Society, which was to mould the world towards a larger and truer sense of Brotherhood than the religions had so far accomplished, these two plainly informed the Adepts that there was no future at all for the Theosophical Movement in the West along that line. The only way to convince the thoughtful minds of the West, that the ideas of the Adepts were worth examination, was *first* to perform certain phenomena under perfect "test conditions". European scientists of the type of Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin and others would then be ready to examine the Theosophical thesis concerning life and evolution. As to the Society's first Object of establishing a Universal Brotherhood, Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Hume said that Christianity had been trying to proclaim Brotherhood for 1880 years,

with no success whatsoever ; why dissipate the energy of Theosophists, who desired to serve the Adepts, along that futile line ? The only effective way to convince the West that the Adepts had something to teach was by performing, for instance, such a phenomenon as that of bringing the *London Times* of a particular date to Simla on the same day, a journey which usually took twenty-one days by steamer and rail.

Again and again Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Hume harped on this thesis. In spite of all the teachings received by him, Mr. Sinnett never to the end of his life changed from his standpoint, for thus he wrote, long years after all communication ceased between the Master K.H. and himself :

“The true work of a Theosophist is to promote spiritual progress. This is a higher task than even the promoting of Brotherhood—which is, after all, the elementary teaching both of Theosophy and Christianity.”

Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Hume again and again insisted that they knew the world (meaning England) better than the Adepts, and continued to attempt to instruct the Adepts as to what They should do, if They desired the Theosophical Movement to become a success. So

tiresome were they in their insistence, that on a certain occasion the Master M. wrote to Mr. Sinnett as follows :

“ A few days before leaving us, Koot Hoomi speaking of you said to me as follows, ‘ I feel tired and weary of these never ending disputations. The more I try to explain to both of them the cricumstances that control us and that interpose between us so many obstacles to free intercourse, the less they understand me ! Under the most favourable aspect this correspondence must always be unsatisfactory, even exasperatingly so, at times ; for nothing short of personal interviews, at which there could be discussion and the instant solution of intellectual difficulties as they arise, would satisfy them fully. It is as though we were halloing to each other across an impassable ravine and only one of us seeing his interlocutor. In point of fact, there is nowhere in physical nature a mountain abyss so hopelessly impassable and obstructive to the traveller as that spiritual one, which keeps them back from me.’ ” (*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter XXIX.)

A quite characteristic example of the attitude of even Mr. Sinnett to the Adepts was a letter he wrote to the Master M. about *this very Letter*, No. XXIX, that the Master *should re-write it*, leaving out certain parts of it, since the Letter as it was would not at all have the effect on Mr. Hume which the Master desired.

As it was only with the permission of the Mahâ Chohan that communications to Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Hume, through Letters and phenomena, had begun, and as neither of these two seemed amenable to reason, that then at last the Master K. H. approached the Mahâ Chohan, and we have this communication which I have called "the Mahâ Chohan's Letter", for it contains practically the charter for the work and development of the Theosophical Society throughout the ages.

One of the strangest elements in this episode is that the original of this Letter to Mr. Sinnett from the Master K. H., recording the observations of the Mahâ Chohan, is nowhere to be found. It is not published in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. But fortunately for us, copies were made, under instructions from the two Masters, of such parts of Their

communications to Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Hume as were instructional in their nature, and gave an idea of the esoteric philosophy. This Letter of the Mahâ Chohan was copied and "cyclostyled" in London, and sent to certain selected persons. One such copy was found among the papers of C. W. Leadbeater, and I published it in my edition of 1919 of *The Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*. In 1945, when our archives, which had been evacuated out of Madras owing to the War, were back again at Adyar, I found a manuscript volume in the handwriting of Miss Francesca Arundale, which contained, among other extracts from the Letters, this Letter of the Mahâ Chohan. I have re-copied the Letter from these two manuscripts.

H. P. B. of course knew of this Letter and evidently had a copy, for she quotes extracts here and there from it (with slight changes, for publication to the public, I presume), with the following note :

"But another letter was written, also in 1880,¹ which is not only a direct reproof to the Theosophists who neglect the main idea

¹ H.P.B. has omitted to note that the Letter says in the last sentence but one "1881 years ago".

of Brotherhood, but also an anticipated answer to M. Emile Burnouf's chief argument. Here are a few extracts from it. It was addressed again to those who sought to make away with the 'sentimental title', and make of the Society but an arena for 'cup-growing and astral bell-ringing'." (*Lucifer*, Vol. II, August 1888, pp. 431-32.)

H. P. B. also quoted from this Letter in her first statement issued in 1888 to the members of the newly formed Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.

In Letter 33, in my compilation, the Master refers to this Letter when He says :

"Those greater than we have said that he who thinks the task of working for others too hard had better not undertake it."

In the issue for February, 1893, of *The Path*, edited by W. Q. Judge in New York, three paragraphs from this Letter are quoted ; as also Letters 32 and 33 in my book. The article in *The Path*, in which the three parts of this Letter of the Mahâ Chohan are quoted, is signed, "One of the Recipients". I can only presume that Mr. Judge did not know that the recipient was Mr. Sinnett, as the words of the Master

K. H. to Mr. Sinnett, "My own letter the answer to your last will shortly follow. K. H." are not in the cyclostyled copy, which I presume is what Mr. Judge had before him.

Dr. Besant, in September, 1907, in her first address to the Society as President, refers to the parts of this Letter quoted in *The Path* mentioned above.

In the Letter which Dr. Annie Besant received in 1900, Letter 46, nine years *after the death* of H. P. Blavatsky, the Master K. H. referring to the Mahâ Chohan's Letter says :

"The Theosophical Society was meant to be the corner stone of the future religions of humanity."

Mr. Sinnett worked for Theosophy to the end of his life with his many books and constant lectures ; he was twice Vice-President of the Society. But he held throughout that the work of Theosophists was directed to mistaken objectives by both Presidents, H. S. Olcott and Annie Besant, and he was critical of the activities of both. Mr. Hume left the Society in 1884. Nevertheless, so strong was the awakening Mr. Hume had undergone in his best nature under the influence of the Adepts, that he accomplished one of the

great objectives of the Adepts—the awakening of India from her position of servile acquiescence in the British administration. It was Mr. Hume, after he retired from Government service, who was the prime mover and inspirer in creating the now famous “Indian National Congress”, and he has rightly earned the name of “Father of the Congress”.

Since 1919 when I first discovered this Letter of the Mahâ Chohan, I have had occasion to read it again and again, as also to quote from it constantly. On each occasion some special phrase or thought has shone out more brilliantly than the others. But just now, as I am correcting the proofs and read with intensity, I feel a dazzling and awe-inspiring sense of the vastness of outlook of the Great Adept who tells us what He sees of man's civilization and where the world stands today. The vision of men, events and things which characterizes every Adept—as revealed in the Letters received from a few of Them—is that of Beings who live in the Eternal, have before Them the Plan of Evolution:

as-it-shall-be, and so judge with a metron or measuring rod which not even the most advanced of men possess. But vaster, from a loftier plane, is the vision of the Mahâ Chohan. It is as if He were the great God of Olympus and from the summit of that mountain sees all mankind spread out before Him, and there is no secret hidden corner which is unrevealed. As no philosopher has ever dreamt of suggesting, with the single exception of Gautama Buddha, the Mahâ Chohan shows where is the diseased spot in civilization today, whence an infection has spread everywhere, causing untold suffering to mankind. This is the struggle for existence, which has steadily become sharper, more violent, with the onward sweep of modern civilization. Only in the progressive lessening of that struggle is the way of liberation for men from their self-created miseries. Like some great searchlight on a height moving its beam around, above and below, cleaving the dark, so the Mahâ Chohan's mind penetrates into our problems, and swiftly tells the truth about ourselves, our civilization, and how our efforts to gain happiness can never succeed, until we learn that Brotherhood is the law, the

only law on whose operations we can rely in perfect trust.

Then, for such of us as are pledged to the cause of the Theosophical Society, the Mahâ Chohan reveals what is our objective and what are the tasks which we are to achieve.

It is, to discover by constant searching of religion, science, philosophy, and of all men's works what are :

“the right and logical explanations on the subject of the problems of the great dual principles, right and wrong, good and evil, liberty and despotism, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism.”

Our task as Theosophists is intensely *ethical* ; not ours the goal to develop occult powers, nor gather more knowledge merely for the sake of knowledge, nor even to worship Divinity because that gives us supreme personal happiness. Ours the task to discover the solutions, not of our ills, but of the ills of mankind as a collectivity, and to reveal :

“the true philosophy, the true religion, the true light, which gives *truth* and nothing but the *truth*.”

All religion, all science, every philosophy, and all the arts are the field of our operations where we can find Truth ; but we must seek that Truth in order that by giving it we can make the Solidarity of Mankind the supreme, the over-mastering Fact of facts in all men's consciousness.

The Mahâ Chohan reveals our fundamental defect, even when we are seekers of truth and servers of mankind. There is an element of selfishness in our plans and actions, though we pride ourselves that we are utterly altruistic. But the Mahâ Chohan diagnoses our secret and inner failing when He says :

“ All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory apparent *self*, to recognise our true self in a transcendental divine life. But if we would not be selfish we must strive to make other people see that truth, to recognise the reality of that transcendental self, the Buddh, the Christ or God of every preacher.”

When the idea of the *self*—our self—has faded out of our dreams and our work (and that necessitates much suffering as our *self* is broken upon the wheel of our Karma) ; and

we serve the Great Self, whether we call it God, or Humanity, or the Saviour to whom we offer our devotion, with no thought of recognition or reward here upon earth or in a heaven to come ; when in our lofty contemplations of Service, we as the *self* disappear ; then we join the ranks of the “three” mentioned by the Mahâtma M. :

“So long as there are three men worthy of our Lord’s blessing in the Theosophical Society, it can never be destroyed.”

If the three are loyal to the teachings revealed to them by the Adept Brothers, then the destiny of the Theosophical Society, so decrees the Mahâ Chohan, is to be :

“the corner-stone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity.”

Could there be a nobler decree of Fate, that is, of our Karma, than to have the opportunity so to work that we lose our very selves by work in that Objective and Goal ?

C. JINARÂJADÂSA

Adyar, November 1, 1948



