

*Lohans are the mellifluous
disciples of Tathagata*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Gelug-pa Order of Tibetan Buddhism, was an incarnation of Amita-Buddha Himself.

He was not, as is alleged by Parsi scholars, an incarnation of one of the celestial Dhyanis, or the five heavenly Buddhas, said to have been created by Shakyamuni after he had risen to Nirvana. 3

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Tsong-kha-pa gave the signs, whereby the presence of one of the twenty-five Bodhisattvas, or of the Celestial Buddhas in a human body, might be recognized. He also strictly forbade necromancy. This led to a split amongst the Lamas, and the malcontents allied themselves with the aboriginal Bönns against the reformed Lamaism. 3

It is curious to note the great importance given by European Orientalists to the Dalai Lamas of Lhasa, and their utter ignorance as to the Tda-shu (Teshu) Lamas, while it is the latter who began the hierarchical series of Buddha-incarnations, for they are the *de facto* “popes” in Tibet. 3

Lohans, the Solitary Adepts of China, are the mellifluous disciples of Tathagata.

The works of the Orientalists are full of the direct landmarks of Arhats, possessed of thaumaturgic powers — but these are spoken of with unconcealed scorn. 4

If, after the beginning of persecution against Buddhism, the Arhats were no more heard of in India, it was because, their vows prohibiting retaliation, they had to leave the country and seek solitude and security in China, Tibet, Japan, and elsewhere. It was a historical rehearsal of the dramas that were enacted centuries later in Christendom. 5

Whosoever among those Initiates of the Supreme Degree revealed to a profane a single one of the Truths, even the smallest of the secrets entrusted to him, had to die; and he who received the confidence, was also put to death. 5

Yet this secrecy and this profound mystery are indeed disheartening, since the Initiates of India and Tibet alone could thoroughly dissipate the thick mists hanging over the history of Occultism, and force its claims to be recognized. 6

Among the commandments of Tsong-kha-pa there is one that enjoins the Arhats to make an attempt to enlighten the world, including the “white barbarians,” every century, at a certain period of the cycle. Up to the present day none of these attempts has been very successful. Failure has followed failure. 6

¹ Frontispiece: Seated Lohan (Liao dynasty) from Yixian, Hebei province of China, now in the British Museum.

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From Blavatsky Collected Writings, (TSONG-KHA PA — LOHANS IN CHINA) XIV pp. 427-31.

In an article, “Reincarnations in Tibet,” everything that could be said about Tsong-kha-pa was published.¹ It was stated that this reformer was not, as is alleged by Parsī scholars, an incarnation of one of the celestial Dhyānis, or the five heavenly Buddhas, said to have been created by Śākyamuni after he had risen to Nirvāna, but that he was an incarnation of Amita-Buddha Himself. The records preserved in the Gon-pa, the chief Lamasery of Tashi-lhumpo, show that Sang-gyas left the regions of the “Western Paradise” to incarnate Himself in Tsong-kha-pa, in consequence of the great degradation into which His secret doctrines had fallen.

Whenever made too public, the Good Law of Cheu [magical powers] fell invariably into sorcery or “black magic.” The Dvijas, the Hoshang [Chinese monks] and the Lamas could alone be entrusted safely with the formulæ.

Until the Tsong-kha-pa period there had been no Sang-gyas (Buddha) incarnations in Tibet.

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It is curious to note the great importance given by European Orientalists to the Dalai Lamas of Lhasa, and their utter ignorance as to the Tda-shu (Teshu) Lamas, while it is the latter who began the hierarchical series of Buddha-incarnations, for they are the *de facto* “popes” in Tibet.

Tsong-kha-pa gave the signs whereby the presence of one of the twenty-five Bodhisattvas² or of the Celestial Buddhas (Dhyāni-Chohans) in a human body might be recognized, and He strictly forbade necromancy. This led to a split amongst the Lamas, and the malcontents allied themselves with the aboriginal Böns against the reformed Lamaism. Even now they form a powerful sect, practising the most disgusting rites all over Sikkim, Bhūtan, Nepal, and even on the borderlands of Tibet.

¹ See *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, March 1882, pp. 146-48; [in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV pp. 8-19. See also Philaletheians' edition, under the title “Blavatsky on divine reincarnations in Tibet,” in the same Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² The intimate relation of the twenty-five Buddhas (Bodhisattvas) with the twenty-five Tattvas (the Conditioned or Limited) of the Hindus is interesting.

It was worse then. With the permission of the Tda-shu or Teshu Lama,¹ some hundred Lohans (Arhats), to avert strife, went to [428] settle in China in the famous monastery near Tien-t'ai, where they soon became subjects for legendary lore, and continue to be so to this day. They had been already preceded by other Lohans,

The world-famous disciples of Tathāgata, called the “sweet-voiced” on account of their ability to chant the Mantras with magical effect.²

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The first ones came from Kashmir in the year 3,000 of Kali-Yuga (about a century before the Christian era),³ while the last ones arrived at the end of the fourteenth century, 1,500 years later; and, finding no room for themselves at the lamasery of Yihigching, they built for their own use the largest monastery of all on the sacred island of Pu-to (Buddha, or Put, in Chinese), in the province of Chusan. There the Good Law, the [429] “Doctrine of the Heart,” flourished for several centuries. But when the island was desecrated by a mass of Western foreigners, the chief Lohans left for the mountains of * * *. In the Pagoda of Pi-yün-si, near Peking, one can still see the “Hall of the Five-hundred Lohans.” There the statues of the first-comers are arranged below, while one solitary Lohan is placed quite under the roof of the building, which seems to have been built in commemoration of their visit.

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The works of the Orientalists are full of the direct landmarks of Arhats (Adepts), possessed of thaumaturgic powers, but these are spoken of — whenever the subject cannot be avoided — with unconcealed scorn. Whether innocently ignorant of, or purposely ignoring, the importance of the Occult element and symbology in the vari-

¹ It is curious to note the great importance given by European Orientalists to the Dalai Lamas of Lhasa, and their utter ignorance as to the Tda-shu (or Teshu) Lamas, while it is the latter who began the hierarchical series of Buddha-incarnations, and are *de facto* the “popes” in Tibet: the Dalai Lamas are the creations of Nabang-lob-Sang, the Tda-shu Lama, who was Himself the sixth incarnation of Amita, through Tsong-kha-pa, though very few seem to be aware of that fact. [Actually, the fifth Dalai Lama installed his Guru as the first Tashi lama about 1640. This is explained further in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, p. 12 *fn.* — *Dara Eklund.*]

² The chanting of a Mantra is not a prayer, but rather a magical sentence in which the law of Occult causation connects itself with, and depends on, the will and acts of its singer. It is a succession of Sanskrit sounds, and when its string of words and sentences is pronounced according to the magical formulæ in the *Atharva-Veda*, but understood by the few, some Mantras produce an instantaneous and very wonderful effect. In its esoteric sense it contains the Vāch (the “mystic speech”), which resides in the Mantra, or rather in its sounds, since it is according to the vibrations, one way or the other, of ether that the effect is produced. The “sweet singers” were called by that name because they were experts in Mantras. Hence the legend in China that the singing and melody of the Lohans are heard at dawn by the priests from their cells in the monastery of Fang-Kwang. (See *Biography of Chi-Kai* in Tien-tai-nan-tchi) [Also see *Chih-i* (538–597): *An Introduction to the Life and Ideas of a Chinese Buddhist Monk*, by Leon Hurvitz, Bruxelles: Juillet 1962]

³ The celebrated Lohan, Mādhyantika, who converted the king and whole country of Kashmir to Buddhism, sent a body of Lohans to preach the Good Law. He was the sculptor who raised to Buddha the famous statue one hundred feet high, which Hiuen-Tsang saw at Dardu, to the north of the Punjab. As the same Chinese traveller mentions a temple ten Li from Peshawar — 350 feet round and 850 feet high which was at his time (A.D. 650) already 850 years old, Koeppen thinks that so far back as 292 B.C. Buddhism was the prevalent religion in the Punjab.

ous Religions they undertake to explain, short work is generally made of such passages, and they are left untranslated. In simple justice, however, it should be allowed that much as all such miracles may have been exaggerated by popular reverence and fancy, they are neither less credible nor less attested in “heathen” annals than are those of the numerous Christian Saints in the church chronicles. Both have an equal right to a place in their respective histories.

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If, after the beginning of persecution against Buddhism, the Arhats were no more heard of in India, it was because, their vows prohibiting retaliation, they had to leave the country and seek solitude and security in China, Tibet, Japan, and elsewhere. The sacerdotal powers of the Brahmans being at that time unlimited, the Simons and Apolloniuses of Buddhism had as much chance of recognition and appreciation by the Brāhmanical Irenaeuses and Tertullians as had their successors in the Judæan and Roman worlds. It was a historical rehearsal of the dramas that were enacted centuries later in Christendom. As in the case of the so-called “Heresiarchs” of Christianity, it was not for rejecting the *Vedas* or the sacred Syllable that the Buddhist Arhats were persecuted, but for understanding too well the secret meaning of both. It was simply because their knowledge was regarded as dangerous and their presence in India unwelcome, that they had to emigrate.

Whosoever among those Initiates of the Supreme Degree revealed to a profane a single one of the Truths, even the smallest of the secrets entrusted to him, had to die; and he who received the confidence, was also put to death.

Nor were there a smaller number of Initiates among the Brahmans themselves. Even today one meets most wonderfully-gifted Sādhus and Yogīns, obliged to keep themselves unnoticed [430] and in the shadow, not only owing to the absolute secrecy imposed upon them at their Initiation but also for fear of the Anglo-Indian tribunals and courts of law, wherein judges are determined to regard as charlatanry, imposition, and fraud the exhibition of, or claim to, any abnormal powers, and one may judge of the past by the present. Centuries after our era the Initiates of the inner temples and the Mathams (monastic communities) chose a superior council, presided over by an all-powerful Brahm-Ātman, the Supreme Chief of all those Mahātmas. This pontificate could be exercised only by a Brāhman who had reached a certain age, and he it was who was the sole guardian of the mystic formula, and he was the Hierophant who created great Adepts. He alone could explain the meaning of the sacred word, AUM, and of all the religious symbols and rites. And whosoever among those Initiates of the Supreme Degree revealed to a profane a single one of the truths, even the smallest of the secrets entrusted to him, had to die; and he who received the confidence was put to death.

But there existed, and still exists to this day, a Word far surpassing the mysterious monosyllable, and which renders him who comes into possession of its key nearly the equal of Brahman. The Brahmātma alone possess this key, and we know that to this day there are two great Initiates in Southern India who possess it. It can be passed only at death, for it is the “Lost Word.” No torture, no human power, could force its disclosure by a Brāhman who knows it; and it is well guarded in Tibet.

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Yet this secrecy and this profound mystery are indeed disheartening, since they alone — the Initiates of India and Tibet — could thoroughly dissipate the thick mists hanging over the history of Occultism, and force its claims to be recognized. The Delphic injunction, “*Know thyself*,” seems for the few in this age. But the fault ought not to be laid at the door of the Adepts, who have done all that could be done, and have gone as far as Their rules permitted, to open the eyes of the world. Only, while the European shrinks from public obloquy and the ridicule unsparingly thrown on Occultists, the Asiatic is being discouraged by his own Pandits. These profess to labour under the gloomy impression that no Bija Vidyā, no Arhatship (Adeptship), is possible during the Kali-Yuga (the “Black Age”) [431] we are now passing through. Even the Buddhists are taught that the Lord Buddha is alleged to have prophesied that the power would die out in “one millennium after His death.” But this is an entire mistake. In the *Dīgha-Nikāya* the Buddha says:

Hear, Subhadra! The world will never be without Rahats, if the ascetics in my congregations well and truly keep my precepts.

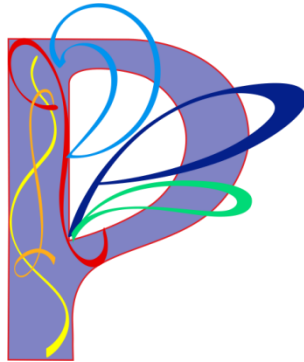
Among the commandments of Tsong-kha-pa there is one that enjoins the Arhats to make an attempt to enlighten the world, including the “white barbarians,” every century, at a certain period of the cycle. Up to the present day none of these attempts has been very successful. Failure has followed failure.

A similar contradiction of the view brought forward by the Brahmans is made by Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and there is further the actual appearance of many Sādhus and miracle-workers in the past, and even in the present age. The same holds good for China and Tibet. Among the commandments of Tsong-kha-pa there is one that enjoins the Rahats (Arhats) to make an attempt to enlighten the world, including the “white barbarians,” every century, at a certain specified period of the cycle. Up to the present day none of these attempts has been very successful. Failure has followed failure. Have we to explain the fact by the light of a certain prophecy? It is said that up to the time when Pan-chhen-rin-po-chhe (the Great Jewel of Wisdom)¹ condescends to be reborn in the land of the Pelings (Westerners), and appearing as the Spiritual Conqueror (Chom-den-da), destroys the errors and ignorance of

¹ A title of the Tashi-lhunpo Lama.

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the ages, it will be of little use to try to uproot the misconceptions of Peling-pa (Europe): her sons will listen to no one. Another prophecy declares that the Secret Doctrine shall remain in all its purity in Bod-yul (Tibet), only to the day that it is kept free from foreign invasion. The very visits of Western natives, however friendly, would be baneful to the Tibetan populations. This is the true key to Tibetan exclusiveness.¹



¹ [See *Lucifer*, Vol. XV, pp. 97-98; in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VI p. 105]