

Chelaship

Rules from the Kiu-te



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A Correspondent from New York writes:

. . . The Editors of *Lucifer* would confer a great benefit on those who are attracted to the movement which they advocate, if they would state:

Whether a would-be-theosophist-occultist is required to abandon his worldly ties and duties such as family affection, love of parents, wife, children, friends, *etc.*?

I ask this question because it is rumoured here that some theosophical publications have so stated, and would wish to know whether such a *sine qua non* condition really exists in your *Rules*? The same, however, is found in the New Testament. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, *etc.*," is said in *Matthew* (x, 37). Do the MASTERS of Theosophy demand as much?

Yours in the Search of Light,

L. M. C.

This is an old, old question, and a still older charge against theosophy, started first by its enemies. We emphatically answer, NO; adding that no *theosophical* publication could have rendered itself guilty of such a FALSEHOOD and calumny. No follower of theosophy, least of all a disciple of the "Masters of Theosophy" (the *chela* of a *guru*), would ever be accepted on such conditions. Many were the candidates, but "few the chosen." Dozens were refused, simply because married and having a sacred duty to perform to wife and children.¹ None have ever been asked to forsake father or mother; for he who, being necessary to his parent for his support, leaves him or her to gratify his own selfish consideration or thirst for knowledge, however great and sincere, is "*unworthy*" of the Science of Sciences, "or ever to approach a holy MASTER."

Our correspondent must surely have confused in his mind Theosophy with Roman Catholicism, and Occultism with the dead-letter teachings of the Bible. For it is only in the Latin Church that it has become a meritorious action, which is called serving

¹ We know but two cases of *married* "chelas" being accepted; but both these were Brahmans and had *child-wives*, according to Hindu custom, and they were *Reformers* more than *chelas*, trying to abrogate child-marriage and slavery. Others had to obtain the consent of their wives before entering the "Path," as is usual in India since long ages.

God and Christ, to “abandon father and mother, wife and children,” and every duty of an honest man and citizen, in order to become a monk. And it is in St. *Luke’s Gospel* that one reads the terrible words, put in the mouth of Jesus: “If any *man* come to me, and *hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also*, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.”¹

Saint (?) Jerome teaches, in one of his writings,

If thy father lies down across thy threshold, if thy mother uncovers to thine eyes the bosom which suckled thee, *trample on thy father’s lifeless body*, TRAMPLE ON THY MOTHER’S BOSOM, and *with eyes unmoistened and dry, fly to the Lord, who calleth thee.*”

Surely then, it is not from any *theosophical* publication that our correspondent could have learnt such an infamous charge against theosophy and its MASTERS — but rather in some *anti-Christian*, or too dogmatically “Christian” paper.

Our society has never been “more Catholic than the Pope.” It has done its best to follow out the path prescribed by the Masters; and if it has failed in more than one respect to fulfil its arduous task, the blame is certainly not to be thrown on either Theosophy, or its Masters, but on the limitations of human nature. The *Rules*, however, of *chelaship*, or discipleship, are there, in many a Sanskrit and Tibetan volume. In Book IV of *Kiu-te*, in the chapter on “*the Laws of Upāsans*” (disciples), the qualifications expected in a “regular *chela*” are:

- 1 Perfect physical health.²
- 2 Absolute mental and physical purity.
- 3 Unselfishness of purpose; universal charity; pity for all animate beings.
- 4 Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the laws of Karma.
- 5 A courage undaunted in the support of truth, even in the face of peril to life.
- 6 An intuitive perception of one’s being the vehicle of the manifested divine *Ātman* (spirit).
- 7 Calm indifference for, but a just appreciation of, everything that constitutes the objective and transitory world.
- 8 Blessings of both parents³ and *their permission to become an Upāsana* (chela); and
- 9 Celibacy, and freedom from any obligatory duty.

The two last rules are most strictly enforced. No man *convicted of disrespect to his father or mother, or unjust abandonment of his wife*, can ever be accepted even as a lay chela.

¹ [xiv, 26]

² This rule I applies only to the “temple chelas,” who must be perfect.

³ Or one, if the other is dead.

This is sufficient, it is hoped. We have heard of chelas who, having *failed*, perhaps in consequence of the neglect of some such duty, for one or another reason, have invariably thrown the blame and responsibility for it on the teaching of the Masters. This is but natural in poor and weak human beings who have not even the courage to recognize their own mistakes, or the rare nobility of publicly confessing them, but are always trying to find a scapegoat. Such we pity, and leave to the Law of Retribution, or Karma. It is not these weak creatures, who can ever be expected to have the best of the enemy described by the wise *Kirātārjunīya* of *Bhāravi*:

The enemies which rise within the body,
Hard to be overcome — the evil passions —
Should manfully be fought, *who conquers these*
*Is equal to the conqueror of worlds.*¹

— ED.²



¹ xi, 32

² [Although Mabel Collins was Co-Editor of *Lucifer* with H.P. Blavatsky, it is most likely that “ED.” stands for Blavatsky herself, owing to the nature of this and the following answer (Vol. VIII, pp. 296-99). — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]