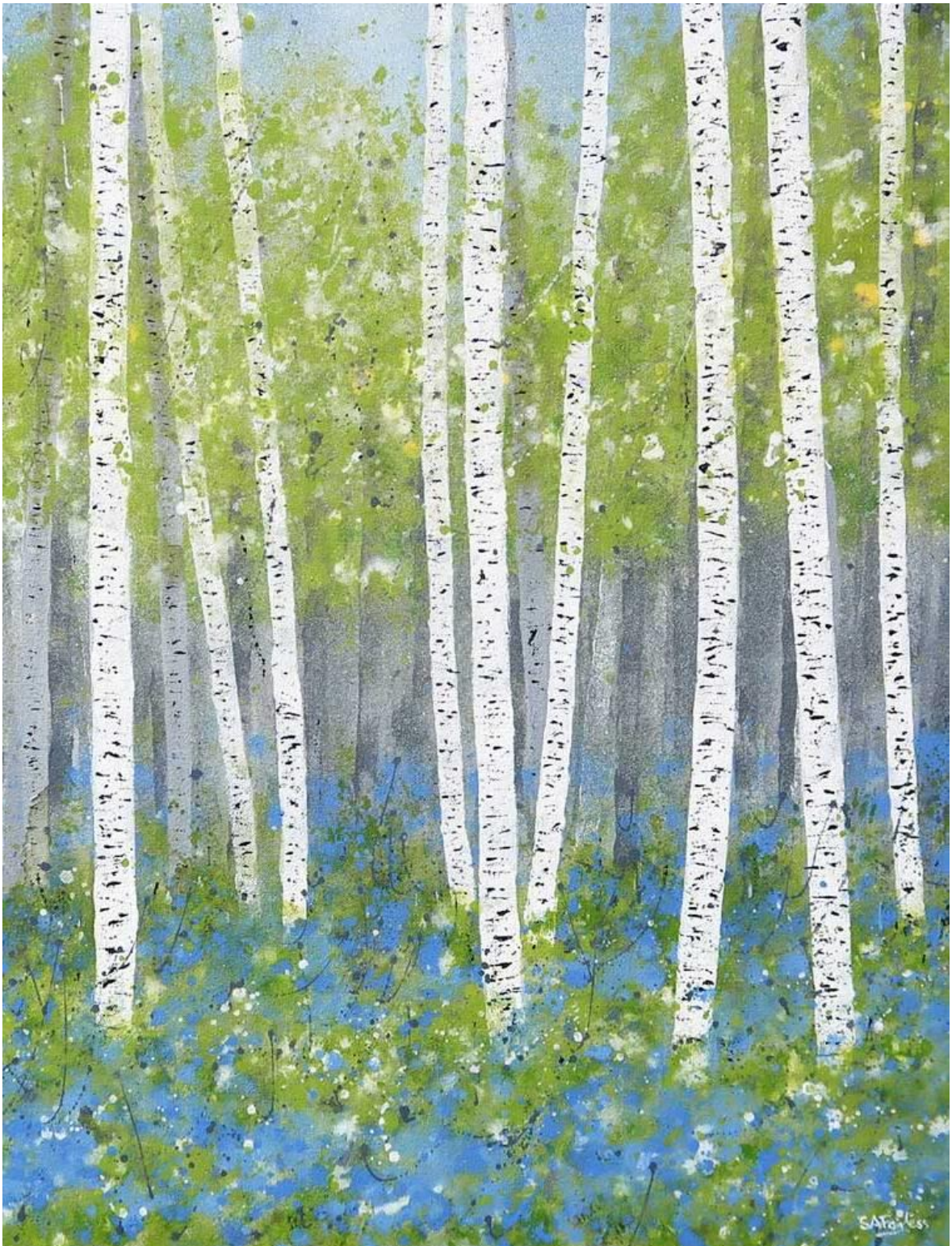


# *Mahatmas and Chelas*



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## Mahatmas and Chelas

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."*<sup>1</sup> London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 92-95. Also, in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, VI pp. 239-41.

**a** MAHATMA IS A PERSONAGE, who, by special training and education, has evolved those higher faculties and has attained that spiritual knowledge, which ordinary humanity will acquire after passing through numberless series of re-incarnations during the process of cosmic evolution, provided, of course, that they do not go, in the meanwhile, against the purposes of Nature and thus bring on their own annihilation. This process of the self-evolution of the MAHATMA extends over a number of "incarnations," although, comparatively speaking, they are very few. NOW, what is it that incarnates? The occult doctrine, so far as it is given out, shows that the first three principles die more or less with what is called the physical death. The fourth principle, together with the lower portions of the fifth, in which reside the animal propensities, has *Kama Loka* for its abode, where it suffers the throes of disintegration in proportion to the intensity of those lower desires; while it is the higher *Manas*, the pure man, which is associated with the sixth and the seventh principles, that goes into *Devachan* to enjoy there the effects of its good *Karma*, and then to be reincarnated as a higher individuality. Now, an entity, that is passing through the occult training in its successive births, gradually has less and less (in each incarnation) of that lower *Manas* until there arrives a time when its whole *Manas*, being of an entirely elevated character, is centred in the higher individuality, when such a person may be said to have become a MAHATMA. At the time of his physical death, all the lower four principles perish without any suffering, for these are, in fact, to him like a piece of wearing apparel which he puts on and off at will. The real MAHATMA is then not his physical body but that higher *Manas* which is inseparably linked to the *Atma* and its vehicle (the 6<sup>th</sup> principle) — a union effected by him in a comparatively very short period by passing through the process of self-evolution laid down by the Occult Philosophy. When, therefore, people express a desire to "see a MAHATMA," they really do not seem to understand what it is they ask for. How can they, by their physical eyes, hope to see that which *transcends* that sight? Is it the body — a mere shell or mask — they crave or hunt after? And supposing they see the body of a MAHATMA, how can they know that behind that mask is concealed an exalted entity? By what standard are they to judge whether the *Maya* before them reflects the image of a true MAHATMA or not? And who will say that the physical is not a *Maya*? Higher things can be perceived only by a sense pertaining to those higher things. And whoever therefore wants to see the real MAHATMA, must use his *intellectual* sight. He must so elevate his *Manas* that its perception will be clear and all mists created by *Maya* must be dispelled. His vision will then be bright and he will see the MAHATMA wherever he may be, for, being merged into the sixth and the seventh principles, which are ubiquitous and omnipresent, the MAHATMAS may be said to be everywhere. But, at the same time, just as we may be standing on a mountain top and have within our sight the whole plain, and yet not be cognisant of any par-

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<sup>1</sup> July 1884, Vol. V, p. 233



particular tree or spot, because from that elevated position all below is nearly identical, and as our attention may be drawn to something which may be dissimilar to its surroundings — so in the same manner, although the whole of humanity is within the mental vision of the MAHATMAS, they cannot be expected to take special note of every human being, unless that being by his special acts draws their particular attention to himself. The highest interest of humanity, as a whole, is their special concern, for they have identified themselves with that Universal Soul which runs through Humanity, and he, who would draw their attention, must do so through that Soul which pervades everywhere. This perception of the *Manas* may be called “faith” which should not be confounded with *blind belief*. “Blind faith” is an expression sometimes used to indicate belief without perception or understanding; while the true perception of the *Manas* is that enlightened belief, which is the real meaning of the word “faith.” This belief should at the same time be accompanied by *knowledge*, *i.e.*, experience, for “true *knowledge* brings with it faith.” Faith is the perception of the *Manas* (the 5<sup>th</sup> principle), while knowledge, in the true sense of the term, is the capacity of the Intellect, *i.e.*, it is spiritual perception. In short, the higher individuality of man, composed of his higher *Manas*, the sixth and the seventh principles, should work as a unity, and then only can it obtain “divine wisdom,” for divine things can be sensed only by divine faculties. Thus the desire, which should prompt one to apply for *chelas*hip, is to so far understand the operations of the Law of Cosmic Evolution as will enable him to work in harmonious accord with Nature, instead of going against its purposes through ignorance.

ANON.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unsigned, by H.P. Blavatsky

## How a Chela found his Guru

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."*<sup>1</sup> London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 443-54. [Extracts from a private letter to Dāmodar K. Māvalankar, Joint Recording Secretary of the Theosophical Society.]

**W**HEN WE MET LAST AT BOMBAY I told you what had happened to me at Tinnevely. My health having been disturbed by official work and worry, I applied for leave on medical certificate and it was duly granted. One day in September last, while I was reading in my room, I was ordered by the audible voice of my blessed *Guru*, M \* \* \* Maharsi, to leave all and proceed immediately to Bombay, whence I was to go in search of Madame Blavatsky wherever I could find her and follow her wherever she went. Without losing a moment, I closed up all my affairs and left the station. For the tones of that voice are to me the divinest sound in Nature, its commands imperative. I travelled in my ascetic robes. Arrived at Bombay, I found Madame Blavatsky gone, and learned through you that she had left a few days before; that she was very ill; and that, beyond the fact that she had left the place very suddenly with a *Chela*, you knew nothing of her whereabouts. And now, I must tell you what happened to me after I had left you.

Really not knowing whither I had best go, I took a through ticket to Calcutta; but, on reaching Allahabad, I heard the same well-known voice directing me to go to Berhampore. At Azimgunge, in the train, I met, most *providentially* I may say, with some Bengali gentlemen (I did not then know they were also Theosophists, since I had never seen any of them), who were also in search of Madame Blavatsky. Some had traced her to Dinapore, but lost her track and went back to Berhampore. They knew, they said, she was going to Tibet and wanted to throw themselves at the feet of the Mahatmas to Permit them to accompany her. At last, as I was told, they received from her a note, permitting them to come if they so desired it, but saying that she herself was prohibited from going to Tibet just now. She was to remain, she said, in the vicinity of Darjeeling and would see the Mahatma on the Sikkhim Territory, where they would not be allowed to follow her . . . Brother Nobin K. Bannerji, the President of the Adhi Bhoutic Bhratru Theosophical Society, would not tell me where Madame Blavatsky was, or perhaps did not then know himself. Yet he and others had risked all in the hope of seeing the Mahatmas. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, at last he brought me from Calcutta to Chandernagore, where I found Madame Blavatsky, ready to start by train in five minutes. A tall, dark-looking hairy *Chela* (not Chunder Cusho), but a Tibetan I suppose by his dress, whom I met after I had crossed the river Hugli with her in a boat, told me that I had come too late, that Madame Blavatsky had already seen the Mahatmas and that he had brought her back. He would not listen to my supplications to take me with him, saying he had no other orders than what he had already executed — namely, to take her about twenty-five miles beyond a certain place he named to me, and that he was now going to see her safe to the station and return. The Bengali brother Theosophists had also traced and followed her, arriving at the station half an hour later. They crossed the river from Chandernagore to a

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<sup>1</sup> December 1882, Vol. IV, p. 67

small railway station on the opposite side. When the train arrived, she got into the carriage, upon entering which I found the *Chela!* And, before even her own things could be placed in the van, the train, against all regulations and before the bell was rung, started off, leaving the Bengali gentlemen and her servant behind, only one of them and the wife and daughter of another — all Theosophists and candidates for *Chelaship* — *having* had time to get in. I myself had barely the time to jump into the last carriage. All her things, with the exception of her box containing Theosophical correspondence, were left behind with her servant. Yet, even the persons that went by the same train with her did not reach Darjeeling. Babu Nobin Banerjee, with the servant, arrived five days later; and those who had time to take their seats, were left five or six stations behind, owing to another unforeseen accident (?), reaching Darjeeling also a few days later. It required no great stretch of imagination to conclude that Madame Blavatsky was, perhaps, being again taken to the Mahatmas, who, for some good reasons best known to them, did not want us to be following and watching her. Two of the Mahatmas, I had learned for a certainty, were in the neighbourhood of British territory; and one of them was seen and recognized, by a person I need not name here, as a high *Chutukla* of Tibet.

The first days of her arrival Madame Blavatsky was living at the house of a Bengali gentleman, a Theosophist, refusing to see any one, and preparing, as I thought, to go again somewhere on the borders of Tibet. To all our importunities we could get only this answer from her: that we had no business *to stick to and follow her*, that she did not want us, and that she had no right to disturb the Mahatmas with all sorts of questions that concerned only the questioners, for they knew their own business best. In despair, *I determined, come what might*, to cross the frontier, which is about a dozen miles from here, and find the Mahatmas or — DIE. I never stopped to think that what I was going to undertake would be regarded as the rash act of a lunatic. I had no permission, no “pass” from the Sikkhim Rajah, and was yet decided to penetrate into the heart of a semi-independent State where, if anything happened, the Anglo-Indian officials would not — if even they could — protect me, since I should have crossed over without their permission. But I never even gave that a thought, but was bent upon one engrossing *idea* — to find and see my *Guru*. Without breathing a word of my intentions to any one, one morning, namely, October 5, I set out in search of the Mahatma. I had an umbrella and a pilgrim’s staff for sole weapons, with a few rupees in my purse. I wore the yellow garb and cap. Whenever I was tired on the road, my costume easily procured for me for a small sum a pony to ride. The same afternoon I reached the banks of the Rungit River, which forms the boundary between British and Sikkhimese territories. I tried to cross it by the aerial suspension bridge constructed of canes, but it swayed to and fro to such an extent that I, who have never known in my life what hardship was, could not stand it. I crossed the river by the ferry-boat, and this even not without much danger and difficulty. That whole afternoon I travelled on foot, penetrating further and further into the heart of Sikkhim, along a narrow footpath. I cannot now say how many miles I travelled before dusk, but I am sure it was not less than twenty or twenty-five miles. Throughout, I saw nothing but impenetrable jungles and forests on all sides of me, relieved at very long intervals by solitary huts belonging to the mountain population. At dusk I began to search around me for a place to rest in at night. I met on the road,

in the afternoon, a leopard and a wild cat; and I am astonished now to think how I should have felt no fear then nor tried to run away. Throughout, some secret influence supported me. Fear or anxiety never once entered my mind. Perhaps in my heart there was room for no other feeling but an intense anxiety to find my *Guru*. When it was just getting dark, I espied a solitary hut a few yards from the roadside. To it I directed my steps in the hope of finding a lodging. The rude door was locked. The cabin was untenanted at the time. I examined it on all sides and found an aperture on the western side. It was small indeed, but sufficient for me to jump through. It had a small shutter and a wooden bolt. By a strange coincidence of circumstances the hillman had forgotten to fasten it on the inside when he locked the door. Of course, after what has subsequently transpired, I now, through the eye of faith, see the protecting hand of my *Guru* everywhere around me. Upon getting inside I found the room communicated, by a small doorway, with another apartment, the two occupying the whole space of this sylvan mansion. I laid down, concentrating every thought upon my *Guru* as usual, and soon fell into a profound sleep. Before I went to rest, I had secured the door of the other room and the single window. It may have been between ten and eleven, or perhaps a little later, that I awoke and heard sounds of footsteps in the adjoining room. I could plainly distinguish two or three people talking together in a dialect unknown to me. Now, I cannot recall the same without a shudder. At any moment they might have entered from the other room and murdered me for my money. Had they mistaken me for a burglar the same fate awaited me. These and similar thoughts crowded into my brain in an inconceivably short period. But my heart did not palpitate with fear, nor did I for one moment think of the possibly tragical chances of the moment. I know not what secret influence held me fast, but nothing could put me out or make me fear; I was perfectly calm. Although I lay awake staring into the darkness for upwards of two hours, and even paced the room softly and slowly without making any noise, to see if I could make my escape, in case of need, back to the forest by the same way I had effected my entrance into the hut — no fear, I repeat, or any such feeling ever entered my heart. I recomposed myself to rest. After a sound sleep, undisturbed by any dream, I awoke at daybreak. Then I hastily put on my boots, and cautiously got out of the hut through the same window. I could hear the snoring of the owners of the hut in the other room. But I lost no time, and gained the path to Sikkhim (the city) and held on my way with unflagging zeal. From the inmost recesses of my heart I thanked my revered *Guru* for the protection he had vouchsafed me during the night. What prevented the owners of the hut from penetrating to the second room? What kept me in the same serene and calm spirit, as if I were in a room of my own house? What could possibly make me sleep so soundly under such circumstances — enormous, dark forests on all sides abounding in wild beasts, and a party of cut-throats — as most of the Sikkhimese are said to be — in the next room, with an easy and rude door between them and me?

When it became quite light, I wended my way on through hills and dales. Riding or walking, the journey was not a pleasant one for any man not as deeply engrossed in thought as I was then myself, and quite oblivious to anything affecting the body. I have cultivated the power of mental concentration to such a degree of late that, on many an occasion, I have been able to make myself quite unconscious of anything

around me when my mind was wholly bent upon the one object of my life, as several of my friends will testify; but never to such an extent as in this instance.

It was, I think, between eight and nine A.M. I was following the road to the town of Sikkhim, whence, I was assured by the people I met on the road, I could cross over to Tibet easily in my pilgrim's garb, when I suddenly saw a solitary horseman galloping towards me from the opposite direction. From his tall stature and skill in horsemanship, I thought he was some military officer of the Sikkhim Rajah. Now, I thought, I am caught! He will ask me for my pass and what business I have in the independent territory of Sikkhim, and, perhaps, have me arrested and sent back, if not worse. But, as he approached me, he reined up. I looked at and recognized him instantly . . . I was in the awful presence of him, of the same Mahatma, my own revered *Guru*, whom I had seen before in his astral body on the balcony of the Theosophical Headquarters. It was he, the "Himalayan Brother" of the ever-memorable night of December last, who had so kindly dropped a letter in answer to one I had given but an hour or so before in a sealed envelope to Madame Blavatsky, whom I had never lost sight of for one moment during the interval. The very same instant saw me prostrated on the ground at his feet. I arose at his command, and, leisurely looking into his face, forgot myself entirely in the contemplation of the image I knew so well, having seen his portrait (the one in Colonel Olcott's possession) times out of number. I knew not what to say: joy and reverence tied my tongue. The majesty of his countenance, which seemed to me to be the *impersonation* of power and thought, held me rapt in awe. I was at last face to face with "the Mahatma of the Himavat," and he was no myth, no "creation of the imagination of a *medium*," as some sceptics had suggested. It was no dream of the night; it was between nine and ten o'clock of the forenoon. There was the sun shining and silently witnessing the scene from above. I see him before me in flesh and blood, and he speaks to me in accents of kindness and gentleness. What more could I want? My excess of happiness made me dumb. Nor was it until sometime had elapsed that I was able to utter a few words, encouraged by his gentle tone and speech. His complexion is not as fair as that of Mahatma Koothoomi; but never have I seen a countenance so handsome, a stature so tall and so majestic. As in his portrait, he wears a short black beard, and long black hair hanging down to his breast; only his dress was different: Instead of a white, loose robe he wore a yellow mantle lined with fur, and on his head, instead of the turban, a yellow Tibetan felt cap, as I have seen some Bhootanese wear in this country. When the first moments of rapture and surprise were over, and I calmly comprehended the situation, I had a long talk with him. He told me to go no further, for I should come to grief. He said I should wait patiently if I wanted to become an accepted *Chela*; that many were those who offered themselves as candidates, but that only a very few were found worthy; none were rejected, but all of them tried, and most found to fail signally, as for example \* \* \* and \* \* \*. Some, instead of being accepted and pledged this year, were now thrown off for a year. The Mahatma, I found, speaks very little English — or at least it so seemed to me — and *spoke to me in my mother-tongue — Tamil*. He told me that if the *Chohan* permitted Madame Blavatsky to visit Parijong next year, then I could come with her. The Bengali Theosophists who followed the "Upasika" [Madame Blavatsky] would see that she was right in trying to dissuade them from following her now. I asked the blessed Mahatma whether I could tell what I saw and heard to oth-



ers. He replied in the affirmative, and that moreover I would do well to write to you and describe all.

I must impress upon your mind the whole situation, and ask you to keep well in view that what I *saw* was not the mere “appearance” only, the astral body of the Mahatma, as we saw him at Bombay, but the *living man, in his own physical body*. He was pleased to say when I offered my farewell *namaskarams* [prostration] that he approached the British territory to see the Upasika. Before he left me, two more men came on horseback, his attendants I suppose, probably *Chelas*, for they were dressed like *lama-gylungs*, and both, like himself, with long hair streaming down their backs. They followed the Mahatma, when he left, at a gentle trot. For over an hour I stood gazing at the place that he had just quitted, and then I slowly retraced my steps. Now it was that I found for the first time that my long boots had pinched my leg in several places, that I had eaten nothing since the day before, and that I was too weak to walk further. My whole body was aching in every limb. At a little distance I saw petty traders with country ponies, carrying burdens. I hired one of these animals. In the afternoon I came to the Rungit River and crossed it. A bath in its cool waters revived me. I purchased some fruit in the only bazaar there and ate heartily. I took another horse immediately and reached Darjeeling late in the evening. I could neither eat, nor sit, nor stand. Every part of my body was aching. My absence had seemingly alarmed Madame Blavatsky. She scolded me for my rash and mad attempt to try to go to Tibet after that fashion. When I entered the house I found with Madame Blavatsky, Bahu Parbati Churn Roy, Deputy Collector of Settlements and Superintendent of Dearah Survey, and his assistant, Babu Kanty Bhushan Sen, both members of our Society. At their prayer and Madame Blavatsky’s command, I recounted all that had happened to me, reserving of course my private conversation with the Mahatma. They were all, to say the least, astounded. After all, she will not go this year to Tibet; for which I am sure she does not care, since she has seen our Masters and thus gained her only object. But we, unfortunate people! We lose our only chance of going and offering our worship to the “Himalayan Brothers,” who, I *know*, will not soon cross over to British territory, if ever, again.

And now that I have seen the Mahatma in the flesh, and heard his living voice, let no one dare say to me that the Brothers *do not* exist. Come now whatever will, death has no fear for me, nor the vengeance of enemies; for what I know, I know!

S. RAMASWAMIER, F.T.S.

## The Sages of Himavat

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."* London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 455-58.

**W**HILE ON MY TOUR with Col. Olcott several phenomena occurred, in his presence as well as in his absence, such as immediate answers to questions in my Master's handwriting, and over his signature, put by a number of our Fellows. These occurrences took place before we reached Lahore, where we expected to meet in the body my Master. *There I was visited by him in the body, for three nights consecutively, for about three hours every time, while I myself retained full consciousness, and, in one case, even went to meet him outside the house.* To my knowledge there is no case on the Spiritualist records of a medium remaining perfectly conscious, and meeting, by previous arrangement, his spirit-visitor in the compound, re-entering the house with him, offering him a seat, and then holding a long converse with the "disembodied spirit" in a way to give him the impression that he is in personal contact with an embodied entity. Moreover, him whom I saw in person at Lahore was the same I had seen in astral form at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, and again, the same whom I had seen in visions and trances at his house, thousands of miles off, which I reached in my astral Ego by his direct help and protection. In those instances, with my psychic powers hardly yet developed, I had always seen him as a rather hazy form, although his features were perfectly distinct and their remembrance was profoundly graven on my soul's eye and memory, while now at Lahore, Jummoo, and elsewhere, the impression was utterly different. In the former cases, when making *Pranam* [salutation] my hands passed through his form, while on the latter occasions they met solid garments and flesh. Here I saw a *living man* before me, the original of the portraits in Madame Blavatsky's possession and in Mr. Sinnett's, though far more imposing in his general appearance and bearing. I shall not here dwell upon the fact of his having been corporeally seen by both Col. Olcott and Mr. Brown separately for two nights at Lahore, as they can do so better, each for himself, if they so choose. At Jummoo again, where we proceeded from Lahore, Mr. Brown saw him on the evening of the third day of our arrival there, and from him received a letter in his familiar handwriting, not to speak of his visits to me almost every day. And what happened the next morning almost everyone in Jummoo is aware of. The fact is, that I had the good fortune of being sent for, and permitted to visit a sacred *Ashrum*, where I remained for a few days in the blessed company of several of the Mahatmas of Himavat and their disciples. There I met not only my beloved Gurudeva and Col. Olcott's master, but several others of the fraternity, including one of the highest. I regret the extremely personal nature of my visit to those thrice blessed regions prevents my saying more about it. Suffice it that the place I was permitted to visit is in the Himalayas, not in any fanciful Summer Land, and that I saw him in my own *sthūla śarīra* [physical body] and found my Master identical with the form I had seen in the earlier days of my Chelaship. Thus, I saw my beloved *Guru* not only as a *living man*, but actually as a young one in comparison with some other Sadhus of the blessed company, only far kinder, and not above a merry remark and conversation at times. Thus on the second day of my arrival, after the meal hour, I was permitted to hold an intercourse for over an hour with my Master.

Asked by him smilingly what it was that made me look at him so perplexed, I asked in my turn: — “How is it, Master, that some of the members of our Society have taken into their heads a notion that you were ‘an elderly man,’ and that they have even seen you clairvoyantly looking an old man past sixty?” To which he pleasantly smiled and said that this latest misconception was due to the reports of a certain Brahmachari, a pupil of a Vedāntic Swami in the Punjab,<sup>1</sup> who had met last year in Tibet the chief of a sect, an elderly Lama, who was his (my Master’s) travelling companion at that time. The said Brahmachari, having spoken of the encounter in India, had led several persons to mistake the Lama for himself. As to his being perceived clairvoyantly as an “elderly man,” that could never be, he added, as *real* clairvoyance could lead no one into such mistaken notions; and then he kindly reprimanded me for giving any importance to the age of a *Guru*, adding that appearances were often false, &c., and explaining other points.

These are all stern facts, and no third course is open to the reader. What I assert is either true or false. In the former case, no Spiritualistic hypothesis can hold good, and it will have to be admitted that the Himalayan Brothers are living men, and neither disembodied spirits nor creations of the over-heated imagination of fanatics. Of course I am fully aware that many will discredit my account; but I write only for the benefit of those few who know me well enough to see in me neither a hallucinated medium, nor attribute to me any bad motive, and who have ever been true and loyal to their convictions and to the cause they have so nobly espoused. As for the majority who laugh at and ridicule what they have neither the inclination nor the capacity to understand, I hold them in very small account. If these few lines will help to stimulate even one of my brother-Fellows in the Society, or one right-thinking man outside of it, to promote the cause of Truth and Humanity, I shall consider that I have properly performed my duty.

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR

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<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, Rajani Kanta Brahmachari’s “Interview with a Mahatma.”

## The Himalayan Brothers — do they exist?

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."*<sup>1</sup> London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 459-69.

“**a**SK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU; knock and it shall be opened,” this is an accurate representation of the position of the earnest inquirer as to the existence of the Mahatmas. I know of none who took up this inquiry in right earnest and were not rewarded for their labours with knowledge, certainty. In spite of all this there are plenty of people who carp and cavil but will not take the trouble of proving the thing for themselves. Both by Europeans and a section of our own countrymen — the too Europeanized graduates of Universities — the existence of the Mahatmas is looked upon with incredulity and distrust, to give it no harder name. The position of the Europeans is easily intelligible, for these things are so far removed from their intellectual horizon, and their self-sufficiency is so great, that they are almost impervious to these new ideas. But it is much more difficult to conceive why the people of India, who are born and brought up in an atmosphere redolent with the traditions of these things, should affect such scepticism. It would have been more natural for them, on the other hand, to hail such proofs as those I am now laying before the public with the same satisfaction as an astronomer feels when a new star, whose elements he has calculated, swims within his ken. I myself was a thorough-going disbeliever only two years back. In the first place I had never witnessed any occult phenomena myself, nor did I find anyone who had done so in that small ring of our countrymen for whom only I was taught to have any respect — the “educated classes.” It was only in the month of October, 1882, that I really devoted any time and attention to this matter, and the result is that I have as little doubt with respect to the existence of the Mahatmas as of mine own. I now *know* that they exist. But for a long time the proofs that I had received were not all of an objective character. Many things which are very satisfactory proofs to me would not be so to the reader. On the other hand, I have no right to speak of the unimpeachable evidence I *now* possess. Therefore I must do the best I can with the little I am permitted to give. In the present paper I have brought forward such evidence as would be perfectly satisfactory to all capable of measuring its probative force.

The evidence now laid before the public was collected by me during the months of October and November, 1882, and was at the time placed before some of the leading members of the Theosophical Society, Mr. Sinnett among others. The account of Bro. Ramaswamier’s interview with his *Guru* in Sikkhim being then ready for publication, there was no necessity, in their opinion, for the present paper being brought to light. But since an attempt has been made in some quarters to minimize the effect of Mr. Ramaswamier’s evidence by calling it most absurdly “the hallucinations of a half-frozen strolling Registrar,” I think something might be gained by the publication of perfectly independent testimony of, perhaps, equal, if not greater, value, though of quite a different character. With these words of explanation as to the delay in its publication, I resign this paper to the criticism of our sceptical friends. Let them calmly consider and pronounce upon the evidence of the Tibetan pedlar at Darjee-

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<sup>1</sup> 1883, Vol. V, p. 83



ling, supported and strengthened by the independent testimony of the young Brahmachari at Dehradun. Those who were present when the statements of these persons were taken, all occupy very respectable positions in life — some in fact belonging to the front ranks of Hindu Society, and several in no way connected with the Theosophical movement, but, on the contrary, quite unfriendly to it. In those days I again say I was rather sceptical myself. It is only since I collected the following evidence and received more than one proof of the actual existence of my venerated master, Mahatma Koothoomi, whose presence — quite independently of Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott or any “alleged” *Chela* — was made evident to me in a variety of ways, that I have given up the folly of doubting any longer. Now I believe no more — I KNOW; and knowing, I would help others to obtain the same knowledge.

During my visit to Darjeeling I lived in the same house with several Theosophists, all as ardent aspirants for the higher life, and most of them as doubtful with regard to the Himalayan Mahatmas as I was myself at that time. I met at Darjeeling persons who claimed to be *Chelas* of the Himalayan Brothers and to have seen and lived with them for years. They laughed at our perplexity. One of them showed us an admirably executed portrait of a man who appeared to be an eminently holy person, and who, I was told, was the Mahatma Koothoomi (now my revered master), to whom Mr. Sinnett’s “Occult World” is dedicated. A few days after my arrival, a Tibetan pedlar of the name of Sundook accidentally came to our house to sell his things. Sundook was for years well-known in Darjeeling and the neighbourhood as an itinerant trader in Tibetan knick-knacks, who visited the country every year in the exercise of his profession. He came to the house several times during our stay there, and seemed to us, from his simplicity, dignity of bearing and pleasant manners, to be one of Nature’s own gentlemen. No man could discover in him any trait of character even remotely allied to the uncivilized savages, as the Tibetans are held in the estimation of Europeans. He might very well have passed for a trained courtier, only that he was too good to be one. He came to the house while I was there. On the first occasion he was accompanied by a Goorkha youth, named Sundar Lall, an *employé* in the *Darjeeling News* office, who acted as interpreter. But we soon found out that the peculiar dialect of Hindi which he spoke was intelligible to some of us without any interpreter, and so there was none needed on subsequent occasions. On the first day we put him some general questions about Tibet and the Gelugpa sect, to which he said he belonged, and his answers corroborated the statements of Bogle, Turnour and other travellers. On the second day we asked him if he had heard of any persons in Tibet who possessed extraordinary powers besides the great lamas. He said there were such men; that they were not regular lamas, but far higher than they, and generally lived in the mountains beyond Tchigatze and also near the city of Lhasa. These men, he said, produce many and very wonderful phenomena or “miracles,” and some of their *Chelas*, or *Lotoos*, as they are called in Tibet, cure the sick by giving them to eat the rice which they crush out of the paddy with their hands, &c. Then one of us had a glorious idea. Without saying one word, the above-mentioned portrait of the Mahatma Koothoomi was shown to him. He looked at it for a few seconds, and then, as though suddenly recognizing it, he made a profound reverence to the portrait, and said it was the likeness of a *Chohan* [Mahatma] whom he had seen. Then he began rapidly to describe the Mahatma’s dress and naked arms; then suiting the action to

the word, he took off his outer cloak, and baring his arms to the shoulder, made the nearest approach to the figure in the portrait, in the adjustment of his dress.

He said he had seen the Mahatma in question accompanied by a numerous body of *Gylungs*, about that time of the previous year (beginning of October 1881) at a place called Giansi, two days' journey southward of Tchigatze, whither the narrator had gone to make purchases for his trade. On being asked the name of the Mahatma, he said to our unbounded surprise, "*They* are called Koothum-pa." Being cross-examined and asked what he meant by "*they*," and whether he was naming one man or many, he replied that the Koothum-pas were many, but there was only one man or chief over them of that name; the disciples being always called after the names of their *guru*. Hence the name of the latter being Koot-hum, that of his disciples was "Koot-hum-pa." Light was shed upon this explanation by a Tibetan dictionary, where we found that the word "pa" means "man"; "Bod-pá" is a "man of Bod or Thibet," &c. Similarly Koothum-pa means man or disciple of Koothoom or Koothoomi. At Giansi, the pedlar said, the richest merchant of the place went to the Mahatma, who had stopped to rest in the midst of an extensive field, and asked him to bless him by coming to his house. The Mahatma replied, he was better where he was, as he had to bless the whole world, and not any particular man. The people, and among them our friend Sundook, took their offerings to the Mahatma, but he ordered them to be distributed among the poor. Sundook was exhorted by the Mahatma to pursue his trade in such a way as to injure no one, and warned that such was the only right way to prosperity. On being told that people in India refused to believe that there were such men as the Brothers in Tibet, Sundook offered to take any voluntary witness to that country, and convince us, through him, as to the genuineness of their existence, and remarked that if there were no such men in Tibet, he would like to know where they were to be found. It being suggested to him that some people refused to believe that such men existed at all, he got very angry. Tucking up the sleeve of his coat and shirt, and disclosing a strong muscular arm, he declared that he would fight any man who would suggest that he had said anything but the truth.

On being shown a peculiar rosary of beads belonging to Madame Blavatsky, the pedlar said that such things could only be got by those to whom the Teshu Lama presented them, as they could be got for no amount of money elsewhere. When the *Chela* who was with us put on his sleeveless coat and asked him whether he recognized the latter's profession by his dress, the pedlar answered that he was a *Gylung* and then bowing down to him took the whole thing as a matter of course. The witnesses in this case were Babu Nobin Krishna Bannerji, deputy magistrate, Berhampore, M. R. Ry. Ramaswamiyer Avergal, district registrar, Madura [Madras], the Goorkha gentleman spoken of before, all the family of the first-named gentleman, and the writer.

Now for the other piece of corroborative evidence. This time it came most accidentally into my possession. A young Bengali Brahmachari, who had only a short time previous to our meeting returned from Tibet and who was residing then at Dehradun, in the North-Western Provinces of India, at the house of my grandfather-in-law, the venerable Babu Devendra Nath Tagore of the Brahma Samaj, gave most unexpectedly, in the presence of a number of respectable witnesses, the following account: —

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Bengali month of Asar last (1882), being the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the waxing moon, he met some Tibetans, called the *Koothoompas*, and their *guru* in a field near Taklakhar, a place about a day's journey from the Lake of Mānasarovara. The *guru* and most of his disciples, who were called *gylungs*, wore sleeveless coats over undergarments of red. The complexion of the *guru* was very fair, and his hair, which was not parted but combed back, streamed down his shoulders. When the Brahmachari first saw the Mahatma he was reading in a book, which the Brahmachari was informed by one of the *gylungs* was the *Rig-Veda*.

The *guru* saluted him, and asked him where he was coming from. On finding the latter had not had anything to eat, the *guru* commanded that he should be given some ground gram (*Sattoo*) and tea. As the Brahmachari could not get any fire to cook food with, the *guru* asked for, and kindled a cake of dry cow-dung — the fuel used in that country as well as in this — by simply blowing upon it, and gave it to our Brahmachari. The latter assured us that he had often witnessed the same phenomenon, produced by another *guru* or *chohan*, as they are called in Tibet, at Gauri, a place about a day's journey from the cave of Tarchin, on the northern side of Mount Kailas. The keeper of a flock, who was suffering from rheumatic fever came to the *guru*, who gave him a few grains of rice, crushed out of paddy, which the *guru* had in his hand, and the sick man was cured then and there.

Before he parted company with the *Koothumpas* and their *guru*, the Brahmachari found that they were going to attend a festival held on the banks of the Lake of Mānasarovara, and that thence they intended to proceed to the Kailas mountains.

The above statement was on several occasions repeated by the Brahmachari in the presence (among others) of Babu Dwijender Nath Tagore of Jorasanko, Calcutta; Babu Cally Mohan Ghose of the Trigonometrical Survey of India, Dehradun; Babu Cally Cumar Chatterij of the same place; Babu Gopi Mohan Ghosh of Dacca; Babu Priya Nath Sastri, clerk to Babu Devender Nath Tagore, and the writer. Comments would here seem almost superfluous, and the facts might very well have been left to speak for themselves to a fair and intelligent jury. But the averseness of people to enlarge their field of experience and the wilful misrepresentation of designing persons know no bounds. The nature of the evidence here adduced is of an unexceptional character. Both witnesses were met quite accidentally. Even if it be granted, which we certainly do not for a moment grant, that the Tibetan pedlar, Sundook, had been interviewed by some interested person, and induced to tell an untruth, what can be conceived to have been the motive of the Brahmachari, one belonging to a religious body noted for their truthfulness, and having no idea as to the interest the writer took in such things, in inventing a romance, and how could he make it fit exactly with the statements of the Tibetan pedlar at the other end of the country? Uneducated persons are no doubt liable to deceive themselves in many matters, but these statements dealt only with such disunited facts as fell within the range of the narrator's eyes and ears, and had nothing to do with his judgment or opinion. Thus, when the pedlar's statement is coupled with that of the Dehradun Brahmachari, there is, indeed, no room left for any doubt as to the truthfulness of either. It may here be mentioned that the statement of the Brahmachari was not the result of a series of leading questions, but formed part of the account he voluntarily gave of his travels

during the year, and that he is almost entirely ignorant of the English language, and had, to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, never even so much as heard of the name of Theosophy. Now, if any one refuses to accept the mutually corroborative but independent testimonies of the Tibetan pedlar of Darjeeling and the Brahmachari of Dehradun on the ground that they support the genuineness of facts not ordinarily falling within the domain of one's experience, all I can say is that it is the very miracle of folly. It is, on the other hand, most unshakably established upon the evidence of several of his *chelas*, that the Mahatma Koothoomi is a living person like any of us, and that moreover he was seen by two persons on two different occasions. This will, it is to be hoped, settle for ever the doubts of those who believe in the genuineness of occult phenomena, but put them down to the agency of "spirits." Mark one circumstance. It may be argued that during the pedlar's stay at Darjeeling, Madame Blavatsky was also there, and, who knows, she might have bribed him (!! ) into saying what he said. But no such thing can be urged in the case of the Dehradun Brahmachari. He knew neither the pedlar nor Madame Blavatsky, had never heard of Colonel Olcott, having just returned from his prolonged journey, and had no idea that I was a Fellow of the Society. His testimony was entirely voluntary. Some others, who admit that Mahatmas exist, but that there is no proof of their connection with the Theosophical Society, will be pleased to see that there is no *a priori* impossibility in those great souls taking an interest in such a benevolent Society as ours. Consequently it is a gratuitous insult to a number of self-sacrificing men and women to reject their testimony without a fair hearing.

I purposely leave aside all proofs which are already before the public. Each set of proofs is conclusive in itself, and the cumulative effect of all is simply irresistible.

MOHINI M. CHATTERJI



## Interview with a Mahatma

From *Five Years of Theosophy: Mystical, Philosophical, Theosophical, Historical, and Scientific Essays selected from "The Theosophist."*<sup>1</sup> London: Reeves & Turner, 1885; pp. 470-72.

**A**T THE TIME I LEFT HOME FOR THE HIMALAYAS in search of the Supreme Being, having adopted Brahmacharyashrama [religious mendicancy], I was quite ignorant of the fact that there was any such philosophical sect as the Theosophists existing in India, who believed in the existence of the Mahatmas or "superior persons." This and other facts connected with my journey are perfectly correct as already published, and so need not be repeated or contradicted. Now I beg to give a fuller account of my interview with the Mahatmas.

Before and after I met the so-called Mahatma Koothum-pa, I had the good fortune of seeing in person several other Mahatmas of note, a detailed account of whom, I hope, should time allow, to write to you by-and-by. Here I wish to say something about Koothum-pa only.

When I was on my way to Almora from Mānasarovara and Kailas, one day I had nothing with me to eat. I was quite at a loss how to get on without food. There being no human habitation in that part of the country, I could expect no help, but pray to God, and take my way patiently on. Between Mānasarovara and Taklakhal, by the side of a road, I observed a tent pitched and several *Sadhus* [holy men], called *Chohans*, sitting outside it who numbered about seventeen in all. As to their dress, &c., what Babu M.M. Chatterji says is quite correct. When I went to them they entertained me very kindly, and saluted me by uttering, "Ram Ram." Returning their salutations, I sat down with them, and they entered upon conversation with me on different subjects, asking me first the place I was coming from and whither I was going. There was a chief of them sitting inside the tent, and engaged in reading a book. I inquired about his name and the book he was reading from, one of his *Chelas*, who answered me in rather a serious tone, saying that his name was Guru Koothum-pa, and the book he was reading was *Rig-Veda*. Long before, I had been told by some Pundits of Bengal that the Tibetan Lamas were well-acquainted with the *Rig-Veda*. This proved what they had told me. After a short time, when his reading was over, he called me in by one of his *Chelas*, and I went to him. He, also bidding me "Ram Ram," received me very gently and courteously, and began to talk with me mildly in pure Hindi. He addressed me in words such as follows: — "You should remain here for some time and see the fair at Mānasarovara, which is to come off shortly. Here you will have plenty of time and suitable retreats for meditation, &c. I will help you in whatever I can." He spoke as above for some time, and I replied that what he said was right, and that I would gladly have stayed, but there was some reason which prevented me. He understood my object immediately, and then, having given me some private advice as to my spiritual progress, bade me farewell. Before this he had come to know that I was hungry, and so wished me to take some food. He ordered one of his *Chelas* to supply me with food, which he did immediately. In order to get hot water ready for my ablutions, he prepared fire by blowing into a cow-dung cake,

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<sup>1</sup> August 1884, Vol. V, p. 270

which burst into flames at once. This is a common practice among the Himalayan Lamas. It is also fully explained by M.M. Chatterji, and so need not be repeated.

As long as I was there with the said Lama, he never persuaded me to accept Buddhism or any other religion, but only said, "Hinduism is the best religion; you should believe in the Lord Mahādeva — he will do good to you. You are still quite a young man — do not be enticed away by the necromancy of anybody." Having had a conversation with the Mahatma as described above for about three hours, I at last took leave and resumed my journey.

I am neither a Theosophist nor a sectarian, but am the worshipper of the only *Om*. As regards the Mahatma I personally saw, I dare say that he is a great Mahatma. By the fulfilment of certain of his prophecies, I am quite convinced of his excellence. Of all the Himalayan Mahatmas with whom I had an interview, I never met a better Hindi speaker than he. As to his birth-place and the place of his residence, I did not ask him any question. Neither can I say if he is the Mahatma of the Theosophists. As to the age of the Mahatma Koothum-pa, as I told Babu M.M. Chatterji and others, he was an elderly-looking man.

RAJANI KANT BRAHMACHARI

