

# **The Existence Of The Masters**

(From The Masters and the Path by Charles W. Leadbeater)

## **General Considerations**

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

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

The historical records of every nation are full of the doings of man of genius in all different departments of human activity, men who in their special lines of work and ability have stood far above the rest--indeed, so far that at times (and probably more often than we know) their ideals were utterly beyond the comprehension of the people so that not only the work that they may have done has been lost to mankind, but their names even have not been preserved. It has been said that the history of every nation could be written in the biography of a few individuals, and that is always the few, towering above the rest, who initiate the great fourth steps in art, music, literature, science, philosophy, philanthropy, statecraft and religion. They stand high sometimes in love of God and their fellowmen, as great saints and philanthropists, sages and scientists; sometimes, in work for humanity, as great liberators and reformers. Looking at these men, and realizing how high they stand among humanity, how far they have gone in human evolution, is it not logical to say that we cannot see the bounds of human attainment, and that there may well have been, and even now maybe, men far further developed even than day, men great in spirituality as well as knowledge or artistic power, men complete as regards human perfections--men precisely such as the Adepts or Supermen whom some of us have had the inestimable privilege to encounter?

This galaxy of human genius that enriches and beautifies the pages of history is at the same time the glory and the hope of all mankind, for we know that these Greater Ones are the forerunners of the rest, and that they flashed out as beacons, as veritable light bearers to show us the path which we must tread if we wish to reach the glory which are presently be revealed. We have long accepted the doctrine of the evolution of the forms in which dwells the Divine Life; here is the complementary and far greater idea of the evolution of that life itself, showing that the very recent for that wondrous development of higher and higher forms is that the ever-swelling life needs them in order to express itself. Forms are born and die, forms grow, decay and break; but the spirit grows on eternally, ensouling those forms, and developing by means of experience gained in and through them; and as each form has served its turn and is outgrown, it is cast aside that another and better form we take its place.

Behind the evolving form burgeons out ever the Life Eternal, the Life Divine. That Life of God permeates the whole of nature, which is but the many-colored cloak which He has donned; it is He who lives in the beauty of the flower, in the strength of the tree, in the swiftness and grace of the animal, as well as in the heart and soul of man. It is because his will is evolution that all life everywhere is pressing onward and upward; and is therefore that the existence of Perfected Man at the end of this long line of ever-unfolding power and wisdom and love is the most natural thing in the world. Even beyond them--beyond our sight and our comprehension--stretches a vista of still greater glory; some hint of that we may endeavor to give later, but it is useless to speak of it now.

The logical consequence of all this is that there must be Perfected Man, and there are not wanting signs of the existence of such men in all ages who, instead of leaving the world entirely to pursue a life of their own in the divine or superhuman kingdoms, have remained in touch with humanity, through love it, to assist its evolution in beauty and love and truth, to help, as it were, to cultivate the Perfect Man--just as here and there we find a botanist who has special love for plants, and glories in the production of a perfect orange or perfect rose.

## **The Testimony of the Religions**

The records of every great religion show the presence of such Supermen, so full of the Divine Life that again and again they have been taken as the very representatives of God himself. In every religion, especially at its founding, has such an One appeared, and in many cases more than one. The Hindus have their great Avatars or Divine Incarnations, such Shri Krishna, Shri Shankaracharya, and the Lord Gautama Buddha, whose religion is spread over the far East, and a great galaxy of Rishis, of saints, of Teachers; and these Great Ones took interest not only in awakening men's spiritual natures, but also in the affairs that made for their well-being on earth. All belong to the Christian world know, or ought to know, much about the great succession of prophets and teachers and Saints in their own dispensation, and that in some way (perhaps not clearly understood) there supreme teacher, the Christ himself, was and is man as well as God. And all the earlier Religions (decadent as some of them may be amid the decay of nations), down even to those of primitive tribes of men, show as outstanding features of the

existence of Supermen, Helpers in every way of the childlike people among whom they dwelt. An enumeration of these, interesting and valuable as it is, would take us too far aside from our present purpose.

## **Recent Evidence**

There is much direct and recent evidence for the existence of these Great Ones. In my earlier days I never needed any such evidence, because I was fully persuaded as a result of my studies that there must be such people. To believe that there were such glorified men seemed perfectly natural, and my only desire was to meet them face-to-face. Yet there are many who, reasonably enough, want to know what evidence there is. There is a considerable amount of personal testimony. Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, the co-founders of the Theosophical Society, Dr. Annie Besant and I myself—all of us have seen some of these Great Ones, and many other members of the Society have also been privileged to see one or two of them, and there is ample testimony in what all these people have written.

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

Many of us habitually and constantly see them during our sleep. We go of our astral bodies (or in the mental body, according toward development) and we visit them and see them in their physical bodies; but we are not at that time in hours, and that is why on the physical plane people tend to be skeptical about such experiences. Men object: "But in these cases either you who saw them were out of the physical body, and may have been dreaming or deluded, or those who appear to you came phenomenally and then disappeared again; so how do you know that they were what you suppose them to be? "

There are few cases in which both the Adept and a person who saw him were in the physical body. It happened with Madame Blavatsky; I've heard testified that she lived for some time in a monastery in Nepal, where she saw three of our Masters constantly in their physical vehicles. Some of them have come down more than once from their mountain retreats into India in their physical bodies. Colonel Olcott spoke of having seen two of them on these occasions; he had met the Master Morya and also the Master Kuthumi. Damodar K. Mavlankar, whom I knew in 1884, had encountered the Master Kuthumi in his physical body. There was a case of S.

Ramaswami Iyer, a gentleman whom I knew well in those days, who had the experience of meeting the Master Morya physically, and has written an account of that meeting which I shall quote later; and there was a case of Mr. W. T. Brown of the London Lodge, who also was privileged to meet one of the Great Ones under similar conditions. There is also a vast amount of Indian testimony which is never been collected and sifted, mainly because those to whom these experiences came were so thoroughly persuaded of the existence of Supermen and of the possibility of meeting them that they did not regard any individual case as worthy of record.

## Personal Experience

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

Other members of the Brotherhood I have seen under varying circumstances. My first to encounter with one of them was in a hotel in Cairo; I was on my way out to India with Madame Blavatsky and some others, and we stayed in that city for a time. We all used to gather in Madame Blavatsky's room for work, and I was sitting on the floor, cutting out and arranging for her a quantity of newspaper articles which she wanted. She sat at a table close by; indeed my left arm was actually touching her dress. The door of the room was in full sight, and it certainly did not open; but quite suddenly, without any preparation, there was a man standing almost between me and Madame Blavatsky, within touch of both of us. It gave me a great start, and I jumped up in some confusion; Madame Blavatsky was much amused and said: "If you do not know enough not to be startled as such a trifle is that, you will not get far in this occult work." I was introduced to the visitor, who was not then an Adept, but an Arhat, which is one grade below that state; he has since become the Master Djwal Khul.

Some months after that the Master Morya came to us Monday, looking exactly as though in the physical body; he walked through the room where I was in order to communicate with Madame Blavatsky, who was in her bedroom inside. That was the first time I had seen him plainly and clearly, for I had not then developed my latent senses sufficiently to remember what I saw in the subtle body. I saw the Master Kuthumi under similar conditions on the roof of our headquarters at Adyar; he was stepping over a balustrade as though he had just materialized from the empty air on the other side of it. I have also many times seen the Master Djwal Khul on that roof in the same way.

This would, I suppose, be considered less certain evidence, since the Adepts' came as apparitions do; but, as I have since learned to use my Higher Vehicles freely, and to visit these Great Ones in that way, I can testify that those who in the early years of the Society came and materialized for us are the same men who I have often since seen living in their own homes. People have suggested that I and others who have the same experience may be but dreaming, since it these visits take place during the sleep of the body; I can only reply that it is of remarkably consistent dream, extending in my own case over forty years, and that it has been dreamt simultaneously by a large number of people.

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

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

## **The Evolution Of Life**

Since in the course of our development we have become able to communicate with the Adepts, we have naturally ask them with all reverence how they have attained that level. They tell us with one accord that no long time ago they stood where we stand now. They have risen out of the ranks of ordinary humanity, and they have told us that we in time to come shall be as they are now, and that the whole system is a graded evolution of life extending up and up, further than we can follow it, even until the Godhead itself.

We find that as there are definite stages in their earlier evolution-the vegetable above the mineral, the animal above the vegetable and the human above the animal-so in the same way the human kingdom has a definite end, a boundary at which it passes into kingdom distinctly higher than itself, that beyond men there are the Supermen.

In the study of the system of evolution, we have learnt that there are in every man three great divisions-body, soul and spirit; and each of these is capable of further subdivision. That is the definition which was given by St. Paul two thousand years ago. The spirit or Monad is the breath of God (for the word spirit means Breath, from the Latin Spiro), the divine spark which is truly the man, though it may more accurately be described as hovering over man as we know him. The scheme of its evolution is that it should descend into matter, and through its descent obtain definiteness and accuracy in material detail.

So far as we are able to see, this Monad, which is a spark of the Divine Fire, cannot descend as far as our present level, cannot directly reached this physical plane in which we are now thinking and working-probably because the rates of its vibration and those of physical matter differ too widely, so that there must be intermediate states and conditions. On what plane of nature that divine spark originally exists we do not know, for it is far above, out of our reach. The lowest manifestation of it, which might be called a reflection of it, descends into the lower most of the Cosmic Planes, as described in *a Textbook of Theosophy*.

We speak commonly of seven planes of existence, which subdivisions or sub Planes of the lowest cosmic plane, called in our books the Prakritic, meeting the physical plane of the Cosmos. The Monad can descend to the second of the sub Planes (which we consequently call the monadic plane) but it does not seem able to penetrate lower than this. In order to obtain the necessary contact with still denser matter, it puts down part of itself to hold planes, and that fragment is what we call the Ego or Soul.

The divine spirit above us merely hovers over a; the soul, which is a small and partial representation of it (it is as though the Monad puts down a finger Fire, and the end of that figure is the soul) cannot descend below the higher part of the mental plane (which is the fifth plane counting downwards, the physical being the seventh and lowest); and, in order that it may reach a still lower level, it must in turn put down a small portion of itself, which becomes the personality that we know. So this personality, which each person commonly thinks to be himself, is in truth but the fragment of fragment.

All the evolution through the lower kingdoms is preparatory to the development of this human constitution. An animal during its life on the physical plane (and for some time after that in the astral world) has soul just as individual and separate as man's; but when the animal comes to the end of its astral life, that soul does not reincarnate again in a single body, but returns to kind of reservoir of soul-matter, called in our books a group-soul. It is as though the group-soul were a bucket of water, supplying the needs of several animals of the same kind-say, for example, twenty horses. When a horse is to be born from that group-soul, it is as though one dipped a vessel into that bucket and brought it out full of water. During the life of that horse all kinds of experiences come to him which modify his soul, from which he learns lessons, and these may be compared to various kinds of coloring matter cast into the vessel of water. When a horse dies, the water in the vessel is emptied back into the bucket, and the coloring matter which it has acquired spreads all through the whole bucket. When another horse is born from the same group-soul, another vessel of water is filled from the bucket; but it will be obvious that it is impossible to take out in it exactly the same drops of water which constituted the soul of the previous horse.

When an animal has developed far enough to become human, that means that at the end of his life his soul is not poured back again into the group-soul, but remains as a separate entity. And now a very curious but very beautiful fate befalls him. The soul-matter, the water in the vessel, becomes itself of vehicle for something much higher, and instead of acting as a soul, it is itself ensouled. We have no exact analogy on the physical plane, unless we think of pumping air into water and high pressure, and thereby making it aerated water. If we accept that symbolism, the water which was previously the animal soul has now become the causal body of a man; and the air pumped into it is the ego of which I have spoken-that soul of man which is but a partial manifestation of the divine spirit. This descent of the ego is symbolized in ancient mythology by the Greek idea of the krater or the cup, and by the medieval story of the Holy Grail, for the Grail or the cup is the perfected result of all that lower evolution, into which is poured the wine of the Divine Life, so that the soul of man may be born. So, as we have said, this which has previously been the animal soul becomes in the case of man what is called the causal body, which exists in the higher part of the mental plane as the permanent vehicle occupied by the ego or human soul; and all that has been learnt in its evolution is transferred to this new center of life.

The evolution of this soul consists in its gradual return to the higher level on the plane next below the monadic, carrying with it the result of its descent in the shape of experiences gained and qualities of acquired. The physical body in all of us is fully developed, and because that is so, we are supposed to have conquered it; but it should be fully under the control of the soul. Among the more developed men at the present day it usually is so, though it may break away and run wild for a little at times. The astral body is also fully developed, but it is not yet by any means under perfect control; even among the races to which we belong, there are many people who are the victims of their own emotions. Instead of being able to govern them perfectly, they too often allow themselves to be governed by them. They let their emotions run away with

them, just as a wild horse may run away with its rider, and take him into many places where to he does not wish to go.

We may take it, then, that in all the best men of the more advanced races at the present day the physical body is fully developed, and fairly under control; the astral body is also fully developed, but not by any means under perfect control; the mental body is in process of unfoldment, but its growth is yet very far from complete. When these three bodies, the physical, the astral and the mental, are entirely subordinate to the soul, the lower self will have been absorbed into the higher self, and the ego, the soul, will have dominated the man. Though demand is not yet perfect, the different vehicles are so far harmonized that they have but one aim.

Up to this time the soul has been slowly controlling the personal vehicles until they become one with it, but now the Monad in its turn begins to dominate the soul; and there will presently come a time when, just as the personality and the soul have become one, the spirit and the soul will become one in their turn. This is the unification of the eagle with the Monad; and when that is achieved the man has attained the object of his descent into matter—he has become the Supermen or Adept.

## **Superhuman Life**

Now only, for the first time, does he entered upon his real life, for the whole of this stupendous process of evolution (through all the lower kingdoms and then through the human kingdom up to the attainment of Adeptship) is but a preparation for the true life of this. Which begins only when man becomes more than man. Humanity is the final class of the world-school; and when a man has been trained therein he passes out into the real life, the life of a glorified Spirit, the life of the Christ. What that is we know but little as yet, though we see some of those who are sharing it. It has a glory and splendor which is beyond all comparison, beyond our comprehension; and yet it is a vivid and living fact, and the attainment of it by it every one of us is an absolute certainty from which we cannot escape even if we would. If we act selfishly, if set ourselves against the current of evolution, we can delay our progress; but we cannot finally prevent it

Having finished with human life, the perfected man usually drops his various material bodies, but it retains the power to take up any of them if he should need them in the course of his work. In the majority of cases one who gains that level no longer needs the physical body. He no longer retains an astral, or mental or even a causal body, but lives permanently at his higher level. Whenever for any purpose he needs to deal with a lower plane, he must take a temporary vehicle belonging to that plane, because only through the medium of its matter can he come into contact with those who live therein if he wishes to talk to men physically, he must take a physical body; he must have at least a partial materialization, or he cannot speak. In the same way, if he wishes to impress our minds, he must draw round himself a mental body. Whenever he needs in his work to take a lower vehicle, he has the power to do so; but he holds it only temporarily. There are seven lines of still further progress along which the Perfect Man can go, a list of which we shall give in a later chapter.

## **The Brotherhood Of Adepts**

The world is guided and directed to a large extent by a Brotherhood of Adepts to which our Masters belong. Theosophical students make all sorts of mistakes about them. They often regard them as a great monastic community, all living together in some secret place. They suppose them sometimes to be angels, and many of our students have thought that they were all Indian, or that they all resided in the Himalayas. None of these hypotheses is true. There is a great Brotherhood, and its members are in constant communication with one another; but there communication is on higher planes and they do not necessarily live together. As part of their work, some of these great Brothers whom we call Masters of the Wisdom are willing to take pupil-apprentices and teach them; but this form only a small section of a mighty body of Perfected Man.

As will be explained later on, there are seven types of men, for everyone belongs to one of the seven rays into which the great wave of the evolving life is distinctly divided. It would seem that one Adept on each of the race is appointed to attend to the training of beginners, and all those who are coming along this particular ray of evolution pass through his hands.

No one below the rank of Adept is permitted to assume full responsibility for a novice, though those who have been chelas (disciples) for a number of years are often employed as deputies, and receive the privilege of helping and advising promising young aspirants. These older pupils are gradually being trained for their future work when they in turn shall become adepts, and they are learning to take more and more of the routine work off the hands of their Masters, so that the latter may be set free for higher labors which only they can undertake. The preliminary selection of candidates for discipleship is now left to a large extent in the hands of those older workers, and the candidates are temporarily linked with such representatives rather than directly with the great Adepts. But the pupils and Master are so wonderfully one that perhaps this is almost "a distinction without a difference".

## **The Powers Of The Adept**

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

self, and his only motive is that of helping forward evolution, of working in harmony with Logos who directs it.

Perhaps the next most prominent characteristic is his all-round development. We are all of us in perfect; none has attained the highest level in any line, and even the great scientist or the great saint has usually reached his excellence in one thing only, and there remain other sides of this nature not yet unfolded. All this possess some germ of all the different characteristics, but always they are but partially awakened, and one much more than another. An Adept, however, is an all-round man, a man whose devotion and love and sympathy and compassion are perfect, while at the same time his intellect is something far grander than we can as yet realize, and his spirituality is wonderful and divine. He stands out above and beyond all men whom we know, because of the fact that he is fully developed.