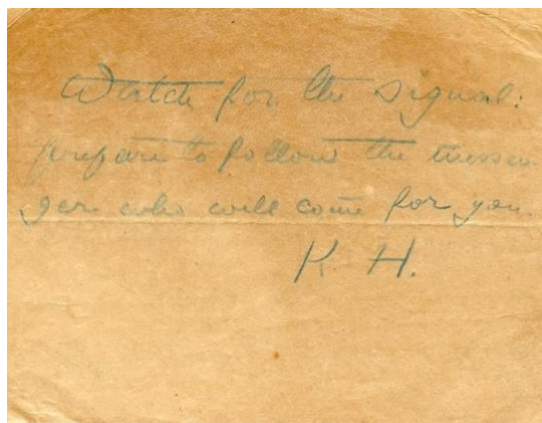


On Mahatma K.H.'s Retreat

Excerpts from *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*



Letter #17, *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, First Series*. Source: Theosophy Wiki

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, originally published in 1923, is one of the most unique documents in Theosophical literature. It consists of the correspondence between the Mahatmas, Madame Blavatsky's teachers, and two Englishmen living in India at that time: Alfred Percy Sinnett and Allan Octavian Hume. The correspondence with the latter was ceased as he was convinced the Mahatma's were wrong in their knowledge and also about the purpose of the Theosophical Society. In spite of the fact that the Adepts saw themselves as "the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers", a number of students, from the time of the publication of the book onwards, regarded them as ultimate authorities in Theosophy, and whatever did not conform to the teachings in the book would be regarded by them as 'pseudo-theosophy'. The following extracts are derived from the third and revised edition of the book, published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, India, 1962. (PO)

In answer to yours I will have to reply by a rather lengthy letter. To begin with I can say the following: Mr. Hume thinks and speaks of me in a way which need only be noticed so far as it affects the frame of mind in which he proposes to apply to me for philosophical instruction. For his respect I care as little as he for my displeasure. But passing over his superficial disagreeableness I recognize fully his goodness of motive, his abilities, his potential usefulness. We had better get to work again without further parley, and while he perseveres, he will find me ready to help — but not to flatter, nor to dispute.

So utterly has he misunderstood the spirit in which both the Memo and P.S. were written, that had he not placed me during the three last days under a debt of profound gratitude for what he is doing for my poor old chela, I would have never gone to the trouble of doing what might seem as an excuse, or an explanation, or both. However that may be, that debt of gratitude is so sacred, that I now do for her sake, what I might have refused doing even for the Society: I crave the Sahibs' permission to acquaint them with some facts. With our Indo-Tibetan ways the most sagacious English official is not yet acquainted. The information now offered may be found useful in our future transactions. I will have to be sincere and outspoken and Mr. Hume will have to excuse me. If I once am forced to speak I must say all, or say — nothing.

I am not a fine scholar, Sahibs, like my blessed Brother; but nevertheless, I believe, I understand the value of words. And if I do, then am I at a loss to understand, what in my P.S. could have so provoked the ironical displeasure against me of Mr. Hume? We of the Indo-Tibetan hovels never quarrel (this in answer to some expressed thoughts in relation to the subject). Quarrels and even discussions we leave to those, who unable to take in a situation at a glance are thereby forced before making up their final decision to anything to analyze and

weigh one by one, and over and over again every detail. Whenever we — at least those of us who are *dikshita* — seem, therefore to an European not “quite sure of our facts” it may be often due to the following peculiarity. That which is regarded by most men as a “fact” to us may seem but a simple RESULT, an after thought unworthy of our attention, generally attracted but to *primary facts*. Life, esteemed Sahibs, when even indefinitely prolonged, is too short to burden our brains with flitting details — mere shadows. When watching the progress of a storm we fix our gaze upon the producing Cause and leave the clouds to the whims of the breeze which shapes them. Having always the means on hand — whenever absolutely needed — of bringing to our knowledge minor details we concern ourselves but with the main facts. Hence we can hardly be *absolutely wrong* — as we are often accused by you, for our conclusions are never drawn from secondary data but from the situation as a whole. On the other hand, the average man — even among the most intellectual — giving all their attention to the testimony of appearance and outward form, and disabled as they are from penetrating *a priori* to the core of things are but too apt to misjudge of the whole situation left to find out their mistake but when too late. Owing to complicated politics, to debates and what you term, if I mistake not, — social talk and drawing-room controversies and discussions, sophistry has now become in Europe (hence among the Anglo-Indians) “the logical exercise of the intellectual faculties,” while with us it has never outgrown its pristine stage of “fallacious reasoning,” the shaky, insecure premises from which most of the conclusions and opinions are drawn, formed and forthwith jumped at. Again, we ignorant Asiatics of Tibet, accustomed to rather follow the thought of our interlocutor or correspondent than the words he clothes it in — concern ourselves generally but little with the accuracy of his expressions. Now this preface will seem as unintelligible as useless to you and, you may well ask: What is he driving at. Patience, pray, for I have something more to say before our final explanation.

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

Two days later when his “retreat” was decided upon in parting he asked me: “Will you watch over my work, will you see it falls not into ruins?” I promised. What is there I would not have promised him at that hour! At a certain spot not to be mentioned to outsiders, there is a chasm spanned by a frail bridge of woven grasses and with a raging torrent beneath. The bravest member of your Alpine clubs would scarcely dare to venture the passage, for it hangs like a spider’s web and *seems* to be rotten and impassable. Yet it is not; and he who dares the trial and succeeds — as he will if it is right that he should be permitted — comes into a gorge of surpassing beauty of scenery — to one of *our* places and to some of *our* people, of which and whom there is no note or minute among European geographers. At a stone’s throw from the old Lamasery stands the old tower, within whose bosom have gestated generations of

Bodhisatwas. It is there, where now rests your lifeless friend — my brother, the light of my soul, to whom I made a faithful promise to watch during his absence over *his* work. And is it likely, I ask you, that but two days after his retirement I, his faithful friend and brother would have gratuitously shown disrespect to his European friends? What reason was there, and what could have caused such an idea in Mr. Hume's and even in your mind? Why a word or two entirely misunderstood and misapplied by him. I'll prove it. ... (Letter #29)

... Having a right — he thinks — to regard himself as slighted and wronged, in consequence of such an “ungenerous,” “selfish” refusal to work under his [Mr Hume's] guidance, he cannot help thinking himself at the bottom of his heart, as a most forgiving, generous man, who, instead of resenting our refusal is nevertheless “willing to go on in their (our) way.” And this irreverence of ours for his opinions cannot be pleasing to him; and thus the feeling of this great wrong we do him rises, and becomes proportional to the magnitude of our “selfishness” and “huffishness.” Hence his disenchantment, and the sincere pain he feels at finding the Lodge and all of us so much below the mark of his ideal. He laughs, for my defending HPB; and giving way to a feeling unworthy of his nature, very unfortunately forgets that his is just the disposition to warrant friends and foes at calling him “protector of the poor” and like names, and that his enemies among others, never fail to apply such epithets to himself. Yet, far from falling upon him as an insult, that chivalrous feeling which has ever prompted him to take the defence of the weak and the oppressed and to redress the wrongs done by his colleagues — as in the last instance of the Simla municipality row — it covers him with a garment of undying glory spun out of the gratitude and affection for him of the people he so fearlessly defends. Both of you labour under the strange impression that *we can*, and even *do* care for anything that may be said or thought of us. Disabuse your minds, and remember that the first requisite in even a simple fakir, is that he should have trained himself to remain as indifferent to moral pain as to physical suffering. Nothing can give us *personal* pain or pleasure. And what I now say is, rather to bring you to understand us than *yourselves* which is the most difficult science to learn. That Mr. Hume's intention — prompted by a feeling as transient as it was hasty, and due to a sense of growing irritation against me whom he accused of a desire “to sit upon him” — was to revenge himself by an ironical, hence (to the European mind) an insulting fling at me — is as certain as that he missed the mark. Ignorant, or rather forgetful of the fact that we Asiatics, are utterly devoid of that sense of the ridiculous which prompts the Western mind to caricature the best, the noblest aspirations of mankind — could I yet feel offended or flattered by the world's opinion I would have felt rather complimented than otherwise. My Rajput blood will never permit me to see a woman hurt in her feelings — though she be a “visionary,” and the now called “imaginary” wrong but another of her “fancies” — without defending her; and Mr. Hume knows enough of our traditions and customs to be sufficiently aware of that remnant of chivalrous feeling for our women in our otherwise degenerated race. Therefore do I say, that whether hoping that the satirical epithets would reach and hurt me, or aware of the fact that he was apostrophizing a granite pillar — the feeling that prompted him was unworthy of his nobler and better nature, as in the first case it was to be regarded as a petty feeling of revenge, and in the second as *childishness*. (Letter #29)

... I, am as I was; and, as I was and am, so am I likely always to be — the slave of my duty to the Lodge and mankind; not only taught, but desirous to subordinate every preference for

individuals to a love for the human race. It is gratuitous, therefore, to accuse me or any one of us of selfishness, and desire to regard or treat you as “poultry Pelingis” and to “ride donkeys,” only because we are unable to find convenient horses. Neither the Chohan, nor K.H., nor myself ever under valued Mr. Hume’s worth. He has done invaluable service to the Th. Soc. and to H.P.B. and is alone capable of making the Society an efficient agent for good. When the spiritual soul is left to guide him, no purer, no better, nor kinder man can be found. But, when his fifth principle rises in irrepressible pride, we will always confront and challenge it. Unmoved by his excellent worldly counsel as to how you should be armed with proofs of our reality, or how you should set about the joint work in the way that seems the best to him, I will remain so unmoved, till I receive contrary orders. Referring to your last letter (Mr. Sinnett’s) clothe your ideas as you may, in the pleasantest of phrases, you are nevertheless surprised and as regards Mr. Sinnett disappointed, that I should neither accord permission for phenomena nor yet any of us make one step towards you. I cannot help it, and whatever the consequences there will be no change in my attitude until my Brother’s return among the living. You know both of us love our country and our race; that we regard the Theos. Society as a great potentiality for their good in proper hands; that he has joyfully welcomed Mr. Hume's identification with the cause and that I have placed a high — but only a proper — value upon it. And so you ought to realize that whatever we could do to bind you and him closer to us we would do with all our heart. But still if the choice lies between our disobeying the lightest injunction of our Chohan as to when we may see either of you, or what we may write, or how or where, and the loss of your good opinion, even the feeling of your strong animosity and the disruption of the Society, we should not hesitate a single instant. (Letter #29)

It is from the depths of an unknown valley, amid the steep crags and glaciers of *Terich-Mir* — a vale never trodden by European foot since the day its parent mount was itself breathed out from within our Mother Earth's bosom — that your friend sends you these lines. For, it is there K.H. received your “Affectionate homages,” and there he intends passing his “summer vacations.” A letter “from the abodes of eternal snow and purity” sent to and received — “At the abodes of vice”! . . . Queer, *n'est-ce pas?* Would, or rather could I be with you at those “abodes”? No; but I was at several different times, elsewhere, though neither in “astral” nor in any other tangible form, but simply in thought. Does not satisfy you? Well, well, you know the limitations I am subjected to in your case, and you must have patience.

Your future book¹ is a little jewel; and, small and tiny as it is, it may, one day, be found to soar as high as Mount Everest over your Simla hills. Among all other works of that class, in the wild jungle of Spiritualistic literature, it shall undoubtedly prove the Redeemer, offered as a sacrifice for the sin of the world of Spiritualists. They will begin by rejecting — nay — vilifying it; but, it will find its faithful twelve and — the seed thrown by your hand into the soil of speculation will not grow up as a weed. So far may be promised. You are oft too cautious. You remind too often the reader of your ignorance; and presenting but as a modest theory, that, which at the bottom of your heart you know and feel to be an axiom, a primary *truth* — instead of helping, you but perplex him and — create doubt. But it is a spirited and discriminative little memoir, and, as a critical estimate of the phenomena witnessed by you personally far more useful than Mr. Wallace’s work. It is at this sort of

¹ *The Occult World*. EDS.

springs that Spiritualists ought to be compelled to slake their thirst for phenomena and mystic knowledge instead of being left to swallow the idiotic gush they find in the *Banners of Light* and others. The world — meaning that of individual existences — is full of those latent meanings and deep purposes which underlie all the phenomena of the universe, and occult Sciences — i.e., *reason* elevated to super-sensuous Wisdom — can alone furnish the key wherewith to unlock them to the intellect. Believe me, there comes a moment in the life of an adept, when the hardships he has passed through are a thousandfold rewarded. In order to acquire further knowledge, he has no more to go through a minute and slow process of investigation and comparison of various objects, but is accorded an instantaneous, implicit insight into every first truth. Having passed that stage of philosophy which maintains that all fundamental truths have sprung from a blind impulse — it is the philosophy of your Sensationalists or Positivists; and left far behind him that other class of thinkers — the Intellectualists or Skeptics — who hold that fundamental truths are derived from the intellect alone, and that we, ourselves, are their only originating causes; the adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths — the universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, Shiva the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator. As Spiritualists of today have degraded "Spirit," so have the Hindus degraded Nature by their anthropomorphic conceptions of it. Nature alone can incarnate the Spirit of limitless contemplation. "Absorbed in the absolute self-unconsciousness of *physical Self*, plunged in the depths of true Being, which is no being but eternal, universal Life," his whole form as immoveable and white as the eternal summits of snow in Kailasa where he sits, above care, above sorrow, above sin and worldliness, a mendicant, a sage, a healer, the King of Kings, the Yogi of Yogis, such is the ideal Shiva of *Yoga Shastras* the culmination of *Spiritual Wisdom*. . . . Oh, ye Max Mullers and Monier Williamses, what have ye done with our Philosophy!

But you can hardly be expected to enjoy or even understand the above *phanerosis* of our teachings. Pardon me. I write but seldom letters; and whenever compelled to do so follow rather my own thoughts than strictly hold to the subject I ought to have in view. I have laboured for more than a quarter of a century night and day to keep my place within the ranks of that invisible but ever busy army which labors and prepares for a task which can bring no reward but the consciousness that we are doing our duty to humanity; and, meeting you on my way I have tried to — do not fear, — not to enroll you, for that would be impossible, but to simply draw your attention, excite your curiosity if not your better feelings to the one and only truth. You proved faithful and true, and have done your best. If your efforts will teach the world but one single letter from the alphabet of Truth — that Truth which once pervaded the whole world — your reward will not miss you. And now that you have met the "mystics" of Paris and London what do you think of them? . . .

(Letter #31)

Private

Honoured Sir — The Master has awaked and bids me write. To his great regret for certain reasons He will not be able until a fixed period has passed to expose Himself to the thought-currents inflowing so strongly from beyond the Himavat. I am therefore, commanded to be the hand to indite His message. I am to tell you that He is "quite as friendly to you as heretofore and well satisfied with both your good intentions and even their execution so far as it lay in your power. You have proved your affection and sincerity by your zeal. The impulse you have personally given to the Cause we love, will not be checked; Therefore the fruits of it (the word "reward" is avoided being used but for the "goody-goody") will not be withheld

when your balance of causes and effects — your *Karma* is adjusted. In unselfishly and at personal risk labouring for your neighbor, you have most effectually worked for yourself. One year has wrought a great change in your heart. The man of 1880 would scarcely recognize the man of 1881 were they confronted. Compare them, then, good friend and Brother, that you may fully realize what time has done, or rather what you have done with time. To do this meditate — alone, with the magic mirror of memory to gaze into. Thus shall you not only see the lights and shadows of the Past, but the possible brightness of the Future, as well. Thus, in time, will you come to see the Ego of aforesaid in its naked reality. And thus also you shall hear from me direct at the earliest, practicable opportunity, for we are not ungrateful and even Nirvana cannot obliterate GOOD.”

These are the Master’s words, as with His help I am enabled to frame them in your language, honoured Sir. I am personally permitted, at the same time to thank you very warmly for the genuine sympathy which you felt for me at the time when a slight accident due to my forgetfulness laid me on my bed of sickness.

Though you may have read in the modern works on mesmerism how, that which we call “Will-Essence” — and you “fluid” — is transmitted from the operator to his objective point, you perhaps scarcely realize how everyone is practically, albeit unconsciously, demonstrating this law every day and every moment. Nor, can you quite realize how the training for adeptship increases both one’s capacity to emit and to feel this form of force. I assure you that I, though but a humble chela as yet, felt your good wishes flowing to me as the convalescent in the cold mountains, feels from the gentle breeze that blows upon him from the plains below.

I am also to tell you that in a certain Mr. Bennett of America, who will shortly arrive at Bombay, you may recognize one, who, in spite of his national provincialism, that you so detest, and his too infidelistic bias, is one of our agents (unknown to himself) to carry out the scheme for the enfranchisement of western thoughts from superstitious creeds. If you can see your way towards giving him a correct idea of the actual present and potential future state of Asiatic but more particularly of Indian thought, it will be gratifying to my Master. He desires me to let you know, at the same time, that you should not feel such an exaggerated delicacy about taking out the work left undone from Mr. Hume’s hands. That gentleman chooses to do but what suits his personal fancy without any regard whatever to the feelings of other people. His present work also — a pyramid of intellectual energy misspent — his objections and reasons, are all calculated but to exonerate himself only. Master regrets to find in him the same spirit of utter unconscious selfishness with no view to the good of the Cause he represents. If he seems interested in it at all, it is because he is opposed and finds himself roused to combativeness. Thus the answer to Mr. Terry’s letter sent to him from Bombay ought to have been published in the January number. Will you kindly to see to it — Master asks? Master thinks you can do it as well as Mr. Hume if you but tried, as the metaphysical faculty in you, is only dormant but would fully develop were you but to awake it to its full action by constant use. As to our revered M.: he desires me to assure you that the secret of Mr. Hume’s professed love for Humanity lies in, and is based upon, the chance presence in that word of the first syllable; as for “mankind” — he has no sympathy for it.

Since Master will not be able to write to you himself for a month or two longer (though you will always hear of him) — He begs you to proceed for his sake with your metaphysical studies; and not to be giving up the task in despair whenever you meet with incomprehensible ideas in M.: Sahib’s notes, the more so, as M.: Sahib’s only hatred in his life, is for writing.

In conclusion Master sends you His best wishes and praying you may not forget Him, orders me to sign myself

Your obedient servant
the “Disinherited” [Djwal Khul]
(Letter #37)

My Brother — I have been on a long journey after supreme knowledge, I took a long time to rest. Then, upon coming back, I had to give all my time to duty, and all my thoughts to the great Problem. It is all over now: the New Year’s festivities are at an end and I am “Self” once more. But what is Self ? only a passing guest, whose concerns are all like a mirage of the great desert

Anyhow — this is my first moment of leisure. I offer it to you, whose inner Self reconciles me to the outer man who but too often forgets that great man is he who is strongest in the exercise of patience. Look around you, my friend: see the “three poisons” raging within the heart of men — anger, greed, delusion, and the five obscurities — envy, passion, vacillation, sloth, and unbelief — ever preventing them seeing truth. They will never get rid of the pollution of their vain, wicked hearts, nor perceive the spiritual portion of themselves. Will you not try — for the sake of shortening the distance between us — to disentangle yourself from the net of life and death in which they are all caught, to cherish less — lust and desire? Young Portman is seriously meditating to leave all, to come over to us, and “become a Tibetan monk” as he puts it. His ideas are singularly mixed upon the two entirely different characteristics and qualifications of the “Monk” or *Lama* and the living “Lha,” or *Brother*: but let him try by all means. (Letter #45)