

Why Madame Blavatsky Never Published the Masters' Pictures?

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira¹

*The verb to reify means “to consider or represent (something abstract) as a material or concrete thing”.
(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)*

*Reification means “mental act of materializing (a person or concept), objectivization,
the regarding or treating of an idea as a thing”.*

(Online Etymological Dictionary)



HPB in London, 1884

[The online world displays many pictures of the “Masters”. For some, they are definitive. Yet, they are a process of reification — turning a sublime reality into a thing that feeds curiosity, comparison and self-gratulation.

Although Madame Blavatsky was in London, in 1884, when Herman Schmiechen painted the portraits of the two Masters who were associated with the founding of the Theosophical Society, in 1875, she never published them. Neither did Col. Olcott. This paper includes passages on her attitude to the Masters, as well as Colonel Olcott’s and a testimony from an advanced Chela.

The Masters referred to HPB as ‘an initiated Chela’, someone who was chosen by them, trained by them, and who had developed, under their guidance, a number of the deific powers hidden in human consciousness. Her relationship with them was one of unbreakable loyalty, devotion, dedication and unending self-sacrifice. She never made them into things.]

G. Khool says — presenting his most humble salaams — that *you have “incorrectly described the course of events as regards the first portrait.”*

What he says is this: (1) “The day she came” she *did not* ask you “to give her a piece of” etc. (p. 300) but after you had begun speaking to her of my portrait, which she doubted much whether you could have. It is but after half-an-hour’s talk over it in the front drawing room — you two forming the two upper points of the triangle, near your office door, and your lady the lower one (he was there he says) that she told you she would try. It was then that she asked you for “a piece of *thick* white paper” and that you gave her a piece of a *thin* letter paper, which had been touched by some very anti-magnetic person. However he did, he says, the best he could. On the day following, as Mrs. S. had looked at it just 27 *minutes* before he did it, he accomplished his task. It was not “an hour or two before” as you say for he had told the “O.L.” to let her see it *just before breakfast*. After breakfast, she asked you for a piece of Bristol board, and you gave her *two* pieces, both marked and not one as you say. The first time she brought it out it was a *failure*, he says, “with the eyebrow like a leech”; and, it was finished only during the evening, while you were at the club, at a dinner at which the old *Upasika* would not go. And it was *he* again G.K. “great artist” who had to make away with the “leech,” and to correct *cap* and features, and who made it “look like *Master*” (he will insist giving me that name though he is no longer my chela in reality), since M.: after spoiling it would not go to the trouble of correcting it but preferred going to sleep instead. And finally, he tells me, my making fun of the portrait notwithstanding, the likeness is good but would have been better had M.: Sahib not interfered with it, and he, G.K. allowed to have his own “artistic” ways. Such is his tale, and, he, therefore, is not satisfied with your description and so he said to *Upasika* who told you something quite different.

(*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter 24b, pp. 181-82, Transcribed, Compiled, and with an Introduction by A. T. Barker, Theosophical University Press, second and revised edition, TUP Online.)

¹ Sources: *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, *Letters from H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, *Old Diary Leaves* and *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*.

Do I often laugh at “the helpless way in which you grope in the dark?” Most decidedly not. That would be as unkind and about as foolish for me to do as for you to laugh at a Hindu for his pidgin English, in a district, where your Govt. *will not* teach people English. Whence such a thought? And whence that other to have my portrait? Never had but one taken, in my whole life; a poor ferrotype produced in the days of the “Gaudeamus” by a travelling female artist — (some relative, I suppose, of the Munich Beer-Hall beauties that you have interviewed of late) — and from whose hands I had to rescue it. The ferrotype is there, but the image itself has vanished: the nose peeled off and one of the eyes gone. No other to offer. I dare not promise for I never break my word. Yet — I may try — some day to get you one. (ML 49, 281)

I believe you are now satisfied with my portrait made by Herr Schmiechen and as dissatisfied with the one you have? Yet all are like in their way. Only while the others are the productions of chelas, the last one was painted with M.:’s hand on the artist’s head, and often on his arm. (ML 60, 343-44)

Now for Col. Chesney. Since he really and sincerely was kind enough, it appears, to discern *something* in the outlines of your poor, humble friend’s face; an impression drawn, most probably, from the depths of his imagination rather than from any real presence of such an expression as you say, in Dj. Khool’s or M.:’s production — the former felt quite proud and begged my permission to *precipitate* another such likeness, for Col. Chesney. Of course, the permission was granted, though I laughed at the idea, and M.: told D.K. that the Col. would also laugh at what he will suspect as my conceit. But D.K. *would* try and then went and begged permission to present it himself to Col. Chesney; a permission which was, as a matter of course, refused by the Chohan and he himself reprimanded. But the picture was ready three minutes after I had consented to it, and D.K. seemed enormously proud of it. He says — and he is right, I think, that this likeness is the best of the three. (ML 53, 295)

She can and did produce phenomena, owing to her natural powers combined with several long years of regular training and her phenomena are sometimes better, more wonderful and far more perfect than those of some high, initiated chelas, whom she surpasses in artistic taste and purely Western appreciation of art — as for instance in the instantaneous production of pictures: witness — her portrait of the “fakir” Tiravalla mentioned in *Hints*, and compared with my portrait by Gjual Khool. Notwithstanding all the superiority of his powers, as compared to hers; his youth as contrasted with her old age; and the undeniable and important advantage he possesses of having never brought his pure unalloyed magnetism in direct contact with the great impurity of your world and Society — yet do what he may, he will never be able to produce *such* a picture, simply because he is unable to conceive it in his mind and Tibetan thought. (ML 54, 307-08)

You bet my father’s daughter is right, and that the Chohan will snuff them nicely some day for all this. Now what do you want with his portrait? And it does not look at all like him, since he never wears now his white *puggery*, but simply sticks a yellow saucer on the top of his head like K.H. All this is vexation of spirit and vanity and nothing else. You better ask the Chohan to favour you with *his* picture, and then see how amiable he looks every Sunday morning.

(*Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, Transcribed, Compiled, and with an Introduction by A. T. Barker, Theosophical University Press, TUP Online, Chapter VI, 8.)

Collect your memory, my son, and try to remember that the details of K.H.’s portrait painting were quite different from what you give. We were sitting — Mrs. S. you and I in the drawing-room when I said something about K.H.’s portrait but added I did not think you would get it. Right away you teased me to try. I told you all right but that I doubted. You gave me first a sheet of note or letter paper and it was left in the scrap book. Nothing happened before lunch, but something happened *during* lunch on the *same day* and no “that day nor that night” passed between. I was dissatisfied with the portrait and paper and asked you to give me two Bristol boards marked and took it into my room. After it’s all right. But you see if you can forget

with your young memory the fact that both were asked for by you and produced *on the same day* — why should not *I*, with my old and impaired brain forget often things and — like Paul — be “held as a sinner” when I do not lie like him even for the glory of God! All of you are backbiters and calumniators. (LBS XIV, 27)

The contempt and scorn I feel for your *free* country with its boasted justice and equity, is unutterable and beyond words. I feel like asking the Russian Govt. to permit me to return to die in some corner where I will be left quiet. The sense of my duty to the Masters is the only thing that prevents me from doing it. (LBS LX, 147)

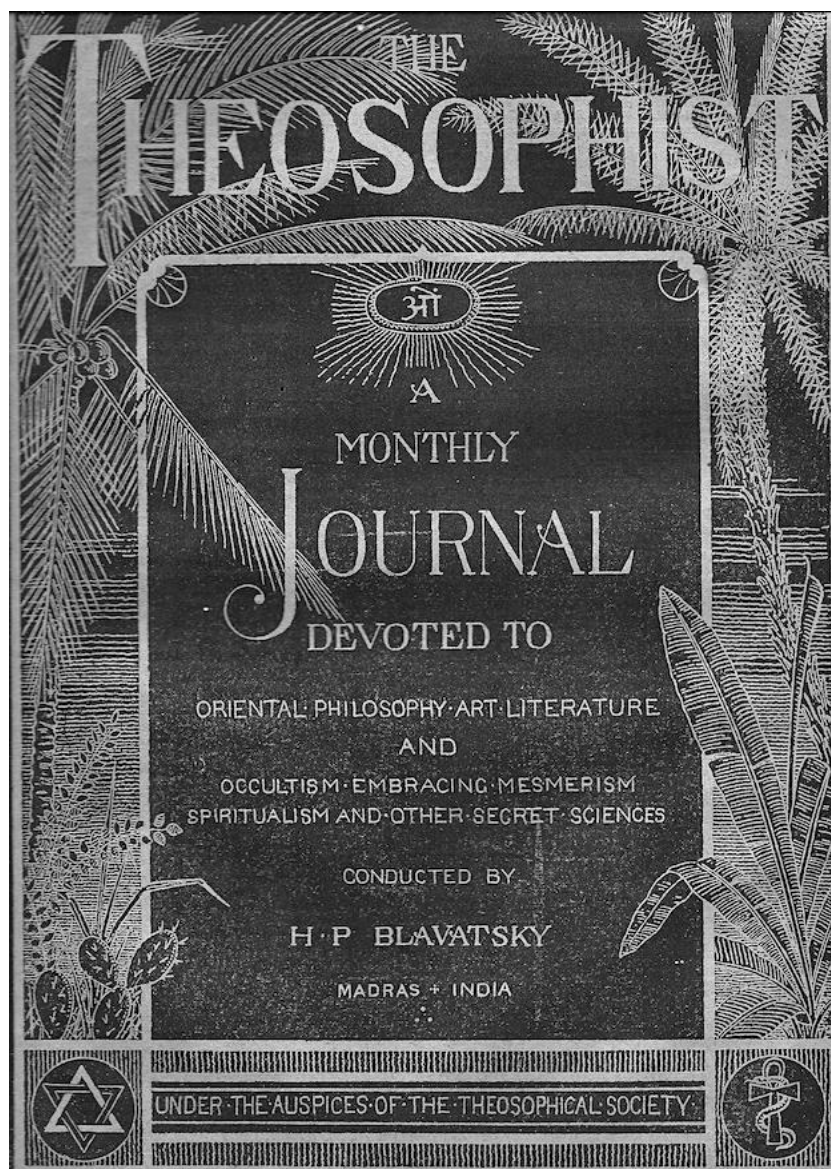
Ah, my poor Boss, you are young, VERY VERY young in *matters occult*; and very apt to judge everything and everyone on the wrong rub, according to your own worldly notions. That’s the trouble. Judge *me* as much as you like; only do not judge others, those one thousand times greater than I ever will be in ten Manwantaras, from the same standpoint; for the year 1887 would then be worse than the dear departed one, 1886. (LBS CIV, 227)

One of the chief factors in the reawakening of Âryâvarta which has been part of the work of the Theosophical Society, was the ideal of the Masters. But owing to want of judgment, discretion, and discrimination, and the liberties taken with Their names and *Personalities*, great misconception arose concerning Them. I was under the most solemn oath and pledge never to reveal the whole truth to anyone, excepting to those who, like Dâmodar, had been finally selected and called by Them. All that I was then permitted to reveal was, that there existed somewhere such great men; that some of Them were Hindus; that They were learned as none others in all the ancient wisdom of Gupta-Vidyâ, and had acquired all the Siddhis, not as these are represented in tradition and the “blinds” of ancient writings, but as they are in fact and nature; and also that I was a Chela of one of them. However, in the fancy of some Hindus, the most wild and ridiculous fancies soon grew up concerning Them. They were referred to as “Mahâtmas” and still some too enthusiastic friends belittled Them with their strange fancy pictures; our opponents, describing a Mahâtma as a full Jîvanmukta, urged that, as such, He was debarred from holding any communications whatever with persons living in the world. They also maintained that as this is the Kali Yuga, it was impossible that there could be any Mahâtmas at all in our age.

(*H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, USA, Compiled by Boris De Zirkoff, volume XII, p. 158.)

So long as the thousand and one false charges, one more absurd than the other, were brought against us, we could afford to despise and even laugh at them. But since we feel that the reproofs poured on us by brother-chelas are neither unjust nor unmerited, we have but to bow our head and receive the castigation with unfeigned humility. *Mea culpa!* is what we shall have to repeat, we fear, to the end of our life-journey. We have sinned heavily, and we now reap the fruits of our well-meant and kindly-intentioned but still a grievous indiscretion. Some of our theosophists, the most prominent, will have to share with us the just reproaches. May they feel as much and as sincerely as we do that they deserve them, and that they were the first to have a hand in, and to profit by, the desecration we now stand accused of! (BCW, VI, 5)

[In speaking of strictures and protests received from brother-chelas, H.P.B. means among others, an Open Letter addressed to herself by Rama Sourindro Gargya Deva, one of the high probationary chelas, and published in the same December, 1883, issue of *The Theosophist*, pp. 80-81, under the title of “Himalayan and Other Mahatmas.” It was written from Darjeeling in November, 1883. This Open Letter shows by its forceful and direct language the uncompromising attitude of some, if not of all, Chelas of the time, in regard to what appeared to them to be an unforgivable desecration of the names and characters of their Teachers, by those who, according to their views, were constitutionally unable to understand true occultism.—Compiler (Boris De Zirkoff).]



The Theosophist's original cover

HIMALAYAN AND OTHER MAHATMAS.

(An Open letter to Madame Blavatsky.)

By RAMA SOURINDRO GARGYA DEVA.

BEFORE I come to the subject-matter of the present communication, namely, the existence of the Himalayan Mahatmas as living persons, I beg to be indulged with a few remarks suggested by their present position with regard to the world at large—a position into which they have been brought chiefly through the instrumentality of you, Mad : Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott, Mr. Sinnett and a few others, and one which, with the latest developments in London, is being bitterly resented by all Hindu students of Occultism.

As time rolls on, I hope the above named Theosophical leaders will see how unjust and unjustifiable were their reproaches on the Hindus, for looking from the beginning on the Founders and their mission with a certain amount of distrust and want of cordiality. Those who did not believe in the science of Occultism and its great Masters naturally opposed them; those who believed in both or were students of occultism themselves opposed them still more strongly. They shrunk from them as desecrators of the Holy Name of Rishis and our modern Mahatmas. They have talked of the Masters before an irreverent and unsympathising world, and thereby rendered our Lares and Penates the plaything of the sceptical mob of nominal Christians, Spiritualists and Materialists. In their defence the Founders might urge that their endeavours have not been unproductive of good to our country, and have brought over a few Europeans to the right path. But surely they do not believe that the gain of a few Europeans is at all counter-balanced by such acts, as for example, the profaning the name of my most beloved and venerated Chohan. ! To find how sadly every idea of real respect is misunderstood by the Occidental, one has but to turn to Mr. Sinnett's *Occult World* and glance at the dedication disfigured by grotesque additions to my Master's *one* name—however flattering they might seem to the profane eye.

Addressing my grievance to the two chief Theosophists personally, I may be permitted to state the following :—

If you had any good hopes as to the issue at the beginning, I suppose you have learned better from what we painfully look upon as the gross blasphemy of the Spiritualists in England and America. They know not what they do, but you knew only too well how much it would grieve us all the same. I suppose you will readily admit that the blame is more on you than on the ignorant Spiritualists. For they can plead their ignorance which you cannot, and you know that it is no defence that your acts are sanctioned by the Mahatmas. The Great Ones who have conquered the hideous monster of Ahankāra will look with an equal eye on abuse or adulation. But we Hindus, who reckon it a sin to help a Brahman in his

(from *The Theosophist*, December 1883)

acts of self-abasement and sacrifice, however meritorious their object, can hardly be made to forget your indiscretions.

So long as the existence of the Mahatmas formed one branch of a dilemma, with your alleged "trickery" for the other branch, we were quite content to let you fight your own battle in the best way you could. But when the genuineness of the phenomena is admitted, and our venerated Masters, the Mahatmas, who produce them, are sought to be dragged down to the level of the *bhaktas* and *pisachas* of the Spiritualists, it becomes our unpleasant yet sacred duty to do what we can to lay facts before the public, such as might inspire fair and unprejudiced persons at any rate, with an assurance in the existence of the *BLESSED ONES*—however ludicrous in our sight such an attempt might appear.

That there are men in this country who constantly exercise powers resembling those of our *Guru devas*, under circumstances to render the suspicion of mediumship perfectly impossible, has been well established by the testimony of witnesses, whose judgment and veracity are beyond question, being natives and Europeans of education and high position. The limited time at my disposal renders it impossible to bring to a focus all the available evidence; it will be quite enough for my present purpose to cite Hurry Dass Sadhu, who visited the Court of Runjit Singh of the Punjab (see *Camp and Court of Runjit Singh*), and the Bhu Kailas Yogi who was seen by all Calcutta of the last generation, and among others, by the eminent scholar Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra, L. L. D., C. I. E. Let your spiritualistic friends, before they sit in the critic's chair again, acquaint themselves with these facts and examine their theories and hypotheses in the light we furnish them with.

Unless they first qualify themselves for their self-constituted censorship, their opinions will not be entitled to much consideration; so long as they do not first investigate the capacities of the living man, their explanations of, and belief in, the powers of the dead in the production of their phenomena cannot by any means get beyond half truths. We have no objection if they fondly hug the half as exceeding the whole. But when, intoxicated with their young discovery, they seek to conform everything to their procrastinated bed, the whole affair puts on an amusing but mischievous aspect. It has been admitted by some of the advanced thinkers of the spiritualist party that there is no *a priori* impossibility for living men to exercise the powers they claim for departed "spirits;" then does it not strike them that it is the reverse of wisdom to ignore this branch of the enquiry altogether, and bend everything to their hasty hypotheses, which have remained stagnant all these years? Surely Circe has cast her spells over the spiritualistic wise men! I shall take an instance. Mr. Harrison, on the strength of an alleged "plagiarism," in the *Medium and Day-break* comes to the conclusion that Madame Blavatsky must be a strong physical medium; that, therefore, she must be living a luxurious life, and therefore, again, she is guilty of affectation in directing aspirants for occult knowledge to lead an ascetic life...The whole thing has been thus crammed into the nutshell of an hypothesis.

This line of argument reminds one of the solemn wise-acres who launched into the ocean of speculation without waiting to see if the fish was really heavier when dead than when alive. The elaborate structure evolved from Mr. Harrison's brain will melt into thin air if submitted to a single ray of fact. Those who know Madame Blavatsky, know what a strictly simple life she has always lived while here, in India, and is now living the same life to the knowledge of all. I for one will unhesitatingly put my stone in the cairn of proof that may easily be raised in regard to that fact in answer to Mr. Harrison's funny syllogism. I will destroy it with another one, built on impregnable premises. Madame Blavatsky, I emphatically assert is not

living a luxurious life. She lives the most isolated and hardworking, as well as the simplest of lives; therefore she cannot be a physical medium; hence all the arguments of Mr. Harrison are completely demolished. The keystone of the arch being gone, the whole fabric necessarily crumbles down in hideous ruin. Having thus repulsed the charge of *Spiritual* Mr. Harrison I come to the consideration of positive proofs required by the Spiritualists from us to demonstrate to them the actual existence of our Masters. We can offer them no better one than the fact of some of us (the writer included) *having lived long years with them*.

The disinclination of the Mahatmas to convince the world of their existence, and the reasons for such disinclination have been sufficiently explained by Mr. Sinnett in his *Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*. Hence, all that *Okeles*, who know their Masters, and others, who know—but are forbidden to take the public into their confidence—can be expected to do is to declare what they know. In cases on the right decision of which human lives are at stake, no better evidence is ever obtained or required. But facts, though stubborn things, are also double-edged, and I shall not be surprised if some wise man of the West, eager to emulate the memorable feat of that French Abbé who conclusively disproved the historical existence of Napoleon I. and showed his history to be only a solar myth, should come forward and, shaking their logical kaleidoscope, rearrange the entire thing. But it is not to such superb geniuses that I address myself. The testimony I now put forward is intended for those whose spiritual faculties are sufficiently developed to allow their taking advantage of the well-proven existence of the Mahatmas. Yes; I most emphatically declare that the holy Sages of the snowy range—the Blessed Himalayan Mahatmas—do exist and *Guru deva* K. H., has this one point in common with his presumptuous critics of the West, that he is as much a living man as they. I have lived with Him and some of us, *Chelas*, whose names from time to time have appeared in your journal, still live under their protection and in their abodes. I, the writer, am one of the privileged. But when the time comes for me to have the right of imparting for the benefit of the world, a portion of what I shall have learned, I shall not forget the treatment of my beloved Master at the hands of your Occidental would-be Brahmins, the wise-acres who think they know so much when they know so little. Nor are the present events calculated to make any Hindu *Chela* anxious to share his knowledge with Europeans.

One word more. We, Hindus, who know why the injunction has been laid down in the *Bhagavat gita* against unsettling the faith of the multitude, have nevertheless been dragged into a declaration, before an unbelieving and unsympathetic world, of that which has hitherto been known only to a few unpretending Brahmins: and I, for one, felt compelled to publish this protest. But I cannot let this letter go without expressing my sincere pain in having to address it to you, for whom personally my feelings are too well-known.

DARJILING, November 1883.

As I was the first in the United States to bring the existence of our Masters into publicity; and, having exposed the holy names of two members of a Brotherhood hitherto unknown to Europe and America (save to a few mystics and Initiates of every age), yet sacred and revered throughout the East, and especially India, causing vulgar speculation and curiosity to grow around those blessed names, and finally leading to a public rebuke, I believe it my duty to contradict the fitness of the latter by explaining the whole situation, as I feel myself the chief culprit. It may do good to some, perchance, and will interest some others.

Let no one think withal, that I come out as a champion or a defender of those who most assuredly need no defence. What I intend, is to present simple *facts*, and let after this the situation be judged on its own merits. To the plain statement of our brothers and sisters that they have been “living on husks,” “hunting after strange gods” without receiving admittance, I would ask in my turn, as plainly: “Are you sure of having knocked at the right door? Do you feel certain that you have not lost your way by *stopping so often on your journey at strange doors, behind which lie in wait the fiercest enemies of those you were searching for?* Our MASTERS are not “a jealous god”; they are simply holy mortals, nevertheless, however, higher than any in this world, morally, intellectually and spiritually. However holy and advanced in the science of the Mysteries—they are still men, members of a Brotherhood, who are the first in it to show themselves subservient to its time-honoured laws and rules. And one of the first rules in it demands that those who start on the journey *Eastward*, as candidates to the notice and favors of those who are the custodians of those Mysteries, should proceed by the straight road, without stopping on every sideway and path seeking to join other “Masters” and professors often of the Left-Hand Science, that they should have confidence and show trust and patience, besides several other conditions to fulfill. Failing in all of this from first to last, what right has any man or woman to complain of the liability of the Masters to help them?

Truly “‘The Dwellers of the Threshold’ are within!”

Once that a theosophist would become a candidate for either *chelaship* or favours, he must be aware of the mutual pledge, tacitly, if not formally offered and accepted between the two parties, and, *that such a pledge is sacred*.

It is a bond of *seven* years of probation. If during that time, notwithstanding the many human shortcomings and mistakes of the candidate (save two which it is needless to specify in print) he remains throughout every temptation *true to the chosen Master*, or Masters (in the case of *lay* candidates), and as faithful to the Society founded at their wish and under their orders, then the theosophist will be initiated into — thenceforward allowed to communicate with his *guru* unreservedly, all his failings, save this one, as specified, may be overlooked: they belong to his future *Karma*, but are left for the present, to the discretion and judgment of the Master. He alone has the power of judging whether even during those long seven years the *chela* will be favoured regardless of his mistakes and sins, with occasional communications with, and from the guru. The latter thoroughly posted as to the causes and motives that led the candidate into sins of omission and commission is the only one to judge of the advisability or inadvisability of bestowing encouragement; as he alone is entitled to it, seeing that he is himself under the inexorable law of Karma, which no one from the Zulu savage up to the highest archangel can avoid—and that he has to assume the great responsibility of the causes created by himself.

Thus, the chief and the only indispensable condition required in the candidate or chela on probation, is simply unswerving fidelity to the chosen Master and his purposes. This is a condition *sine qua non*; not as I have said, on account of any jealous feeling, but simply because *the magnetic rapport between the two once broken, it becomes at each time doubly difficult to re-establish it again*; and that it is neither just nor fair, that the Masters should strain their powers for those whose future course and final desertion they very often can plainly foresee. Yet, how many of those, who, expecting as I would call it “favours by anticipation,” and being disappointed, instead of humbly repeating *mea culpa*, tax the Masters with selfishness and injustice.

They will deliberately break the thread of connection ten times in one year, and yet expect each time to be taken back on the old lines! I know of one theosophist—let him be nameless though it is hoped he will recognize himself—a quiet, intelligent young gentleman, a mystic by nature, who, in his ill-advised enthusiasm and impatience, changed *Masters* and his ideas about half a dozen times in less than three years. First he offered himself, was accepted on probation and took the vow of chelaship; about a year later, he suddenly got the idea of getting married, though he had several proofs of the corporeal presence of his Master, and had several favours bestowed upon him. Projects of marriage failing, he sought “Masters” under other climes, and became an enthusiastic Rosicrucian; then he returned to theosophy as a Christian mystic; then again sought to enliven his austerities with a wife; then gave up the idea and turned a spiritualist. And now having applied once more “to be taken back as a chela” (I have his letter) and his Master remaining silent—he renounced him altogether, to seek in the words of the above manifesto—his old “Essenian Master and to test the spirits in his name”. (BCW VII, 241-243)

“ . . . Since 1885 I have not written, nor caused to be written, save through her agency, direct or remote, a letter or a line to anybody in Europe or America, nor communicated orally *with* or through any third party. Theosophists should learn it. You will understand later the significance of this declaration, so keep it in mind. . . . Her fidelity to our work being constant, and her sufferings having come upon her through it, neither I nor either of my Brother Associates will desert or supplant her. As I once before remarked, *ingratitude* is not among our vices. . . . To help you in your present perplexity, H.P.B. has next to no concern with administrative details, and should be kept clear of them so far as her strong nature can be controlled. But this *you must tell to all; with occult matters she has everything to do.* . . . We have *not* abandoned her; she is *not* ‘given over to chelas.’ She is *our direct agent*. I warn you against permitting your suspicions and resentment against ‘her many follies’ to bias your intuitive loyalty to her. In the adjustment of this European business, you will have two things to consider—the external and administrative, and the internal and psychical. Keep the former under your control and that of your most prudent associates, jointly; *leave the latter to her.* You are left to devise the practical details with your usual ingenuity. Only be careful, I say, to discriminate when some emergent interference of hers in practical affairs is referred to you on appeal, between that which is merely exoteric in origin and effects, and that which, beginning on the practical, tends to beget consequences on the spiritual plane. As to the former, you are the best judge; as to the latter, she. . . . (BCW X, 139)

There are a few articles of belief among the best theosophists, the bare mention of which produces upon certain persons and classes of society the effect of a red rag on an infuriated bull. One of these is our belief—very harmless and innocent *per se*—in the existence of very wise and holy personages, whom some call their MASTERS, while others refer to them as “Mahatmas.”

Now, these may or may not actually exist—(we say they do); they may or may not be as wise, or possess altogether the wonderful powers ascribed to, and claimed for them. All this is a question of *personal knowledge*—or, in some cases, faith. Yet, there are the 350,000,000 of India alone who believe since time immemorial in their great Yogis and Mahatmas, and who feel as certain of their existence in every age, from countless centuries back down to the present day, as they feel sure of their own lives. Are they to be treated for this as superstitious, self-deceived fools? Are they more entitled to this epithet than the Christians of every church who believe respectively in past and present Apostles, in Saints, Sages, Patriarchs and Prophets?

Let that be as it will; the reader must realize that the present writer entertains no desire to force such a belief on any one unwilling to accept it, let him be a layman or a theosophist. The attempt was foolishly made a few years back in all truth and sincerity, and—it has failed. More than this, the revered names were, from the first, so desecrated by friend and foe, that the once almost irresistible desire to bring the actual truth home to some who needed *living ideals* the most, has gradually weakened since then. It is now replaced by a

passionate regret for having ever exhumed them from the twilight of legendary lore, into that of broad daylight.

The wise warning: —

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,

Neither cast ye your pearls before swine . . . [*Matt.*, vii, 6]

is now impressed in letters of fire on the heart of those guilty of having made of the “Masters” public property. Thus the wisdom of the Hindu-Buddhist allegorical teaching which says, “There can be no Mahatmas, no Arhats, during the *Kali-yuga*,” is vindicated, That *which is not believed in, does not exist*. Arhats and Mahatmas having been declared by the majority of Western people as nonexistent, as a *fabrication*—do not exist for the unbelievers.

“The Great Pan is dead!” wailed the mysterious voice over the Ionian Sea, and forthwith plunged Tiberius and the pagan world into despair. The nascent Nazarenes rejoiced and attributed that death to the new “God.” Fools, both, who little suspected that *Pan*—the “All Nature”—could not die. That that which *had* died was only their fiction, the horned monster with the legs of a goat, the “god” of shepherds and of priests who lived upon the popular superstition, and made profit of the PAN of *their own making*. TRUTH can never die.

We greatly rejoice in thinking that the “Mahatmas” of those who sought to build their own ephemeral reputation upon them and tried to stick them as a peacock’s feather in their hats—are also dead. The “adepts” of wild hallucinations, and too wide-awake, ambitious purposes; the Hindu sages 1,000 years old; the “mysterious strangers,” and the *tutti quanti* transformed into convenient pegs whereon to hang—one, “orders” inspired by his own nauseous vices; another, his own selfish purposes; a third, a mocking image from the astral light—are now as dead as the “god Pan,” or the proverbial door-nail. They have vanished into thin air as all *unclean* “hoaxes” must. Those who invented the “Mahatmas” 1,000 years old, seeing the *hoax* will not pay, may well say they “have recovered from the fascination and taken their proper stand.” And these are *welcome* and *sure* “to come out and turn upon all *their dupes* the vials of *their sarcasm*,” though *it will never be the last act of their* “life’s drama.” For the *true*, the *genuine* “Masters,” whose real names have, fortunately, never been given out, cannot be created and killed at the beck and call of the sweet will of any “opportunist,” whether inside or outside of the T.S. It is only the *Pans* of the modern nymphs and the *Luperci*, the greedy priests of the Arcadian god, who are, let us hope—dead and buried.
(BCW XI 291-293)

They have *desecrated* the name (and names) of the “Genius of the Spheres,” and the Genii descend no more. The present trouble has arisen in consequence of such desecration. The Maha-Chohan of the Genii has foretold it four years ago. The chief President was warned repeatedly in the beginning by the voice of his “instrument”; it protested in vain, and finally it was swept along itself with the current of enthusiasm, and added its own voice to proclaiming things holy in public, and throwing pearls before swine, and casting that which was sacred to the dogs: the swine are now treading upon the pearls and the dogs rending the givers. The light that shone in the Darkness which comprehended it not—is now out: Darkness has put its heavy extinguisher upon it.

This would have never happened had the light been sacredly preserved in its own birth-place and sphere—India. But the veneration of her sons for that light was laughed down to scorn; it was called “hero-worship,” mocked and finally represented as a screen to hide unholy practices. The names of the Genii are now dragged into publicity and figure in full in the *Report*. None of the *Presidents* would listen to the sage advice to keep their knowledge of the Genii secret; and the holy names were prostituted publicly by every scoffer.
KARMA. (BCW, X 10)

To my certain knowledge Professor Coues has *never* received any letter from the individual known as Koot Hoomi, not through me, at any rate. And, as the said “K.H.” in a letter to Colonel Olcott, extracts from which were published in *Lucifer*, No. 14, of October last, expressly says that “since 1885 I have not written, nor caused to be written, save through her [H.P.B.’s] agency, direct or remote, a letter or a line to anybody in Europe or America, nor have I communicated orally with, or through, any third party”—the following becomes evident. The letters which Professor Coues claims to have received, if they purport to come from Mahatma “K.H.” must be of the same stamp as the clumsy forgery which was published in the *Chicago Tribune* last year over the signature of “K.H.” and has caused to many Theosophists and myself extreme annoyance. This bogus production Professor Coues himself describes in a recent letter as a silly joke of a newspaper man, with which he assures me he had nothing to do. Strange to say, however, the *Tribune* letter bore the facsimile of a seal on a ring I have worn for over fifteen years, and with which Professor Coues is well acquainted.

This is all I have to say in the matter. The names of two living men, great in learning and wisdom, for whom the majority of Theosophists have the greatest reverence, have been sufficiently desecrated by the outside public, and the foolish, though sincere, exaggerations of some would-be Chelas. Was it necessary that Professor Coues, who aspires to become the President of the American Section of the Theosophical Society, should so wantonly and flippantly drag in the mire of his irony a name which, if it says nothing to him, is loved and respected by so many of his brother Theosophists? H. P. BLAVATSKY. (BCW, XI 211)

Harrisse brought his portrait.¹⁵ (BCW, I 407)

15 Monsieur Harrisse was a Frenchman in New York with whom the Founders were on friendly terms. He was an amateur artist. One evening H.P.B. asked him to draw the head of a Hindu chieftain, as he should conceive one to look. Evidently with the unspoken help of H.P.B. who sat near him, Harrisse produced in black and white crayons the first portrait of Master M. ever drawn. After the portrait was finished, the cryptograph signature of the Master was precipitated upon it. *Vide* Col. Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 370-72, for a full account of the circumstances involved. (BCW, I 435)

In recalling the incident for the present narrative, I note the fact that no aura or spiritual glow is depicted around the yogi’s head, although H. P. B.’s account of him confirms that of his Indian admirers, that he was a person of the highest spirituality of aspiration and purest character.

The same remark applies to the first portrait of my Guru, the one done in black and white crayons at New York by M. Harrisse: there is no nimbus. In this case at least, I can testify to the likeness, along with others who have had the happiness of seeing him. Its production was, like that done in oils at London in 1884 by Herr Schmiechen, an example of thought-transference. I think I have never published the facts before, but in any case they should have a place in this historical retrospect.

One naturally likes to possess the portrait of a distant correspondent with whom one has had important relations; how much more, then, that of a spiritual teacher, the beginning of relations with whom has substituted a nobler for a commonplace idea of life in one’s consciousness. I most earnestly wished to be able to have in my room at least the likeness of my reverend teacher, if I might not see him in life; had long importuned H. P. B. to procure it for me; and had been promised it at a favourable time. In this case my colleague was not permitted to precipitate it for me, but a simpler yet most instructive method was resorted to: a non-medium and non-occultist was made to draw it for me without knowing what he was doing. M. Harrisse, our French friend, was a bit of an artist, and one evening when the conversation turned upon India and Rajput bravery, H. P. B. whispered to me that she would try to get him to draw our Master’s portrait if I could supply the materials. There were none in the house, but I went to a shop close by and purchased a sheet of suitable paper and black and white crayons. The shopkeeper did up the parcel, handed it me across

the counter, took the half-dollar coin I gave him, and I left the shop. On reaching home I unrolled my parcel and, as I finished doing it, the sum of half a dollar, in two silver pieces of a quarter-dollar each dropped on the floor! The Master, it will be seen, meant to give me his portrait without cost to myself. Harrisse was then asked by H. P. B. to draw us the head of a Hindu chieftain, as he should conceive one might look. He said he had no clear idea in his mind to go upon, and wanted to sketch us something else; but to gratify my importunity went to drawing a Hindu head. H. P. B. motioned me to remain quiet at the other side of the room, and herself went and sat down near the artist and quietly smoked. From time to time she went softly behind him as if to watch the progress of his work, but did not speak until it was finished, say an hour later. I thankfully received it, had it framed, and hung it in my little bed-room. But a strange thing had happened. After we gave the picture a last glance as it lay before the artist, and while H. P. B. was taking it from him and handing it to me, the cryptograph signature of my Guru came upon the paper; thus affixing, as it were, his imprimatur upon, and largely enhancing the value of his gift. But at that time I did not know if it resembled the Guru or not, as I had not yet seen him. When I did, later on, I found it a true likeness and, moreover, was presented by him with the turban which the amateur artist had drawn in the picture as his head-covering. Here was a genuine case of thought-transference, the transfer of the likeness of an absent person to the brain-consciousness of a perfect stranger. Was it or was it not passed through the thought of H. P. B.? I think so. I think it was effected in the identical way in which the thought-images of geometrical and other figures were transferred to third parties in the convincing experiments recorded by the S.P.R. in its earlier published reports. With the difference, however, that H. P. B.'s own memory supplied the portrait to be transferred to Harrisse's mind, and her trained occult powers enabled her to effect the transfer direct, viz., without an intermediary; that is to say, without the necessity of having the drawing first made on a card, for her to visualise it in her own mind and then pass it on to the recipient brain. The painting by Schmiechen, of the magnificent portraits in oils of the same and another Master, which now hang in the Adyar Library, was an even more interesting circumstance, for the likenesses are so perfect and so striking as to seem endowed with life. Their eyes speak to one and search one to the bottom of his heart; their glance follows one everywhere as he moves about; their lips seem about to utter, as one may deserve, words of kindness or of reproach. They are an inspiration rather than an illustration of thought-transference. The artist has made two or three copies of them, but not one has the soul in it that is in the originals. They were not done in the divine mood of inspiration, and the Masters' will-power is not focussed in them. The originals are the palladium of our headquarters; the copies like images seen in a mirror, possess the details of form and colour, but are devoid of the energising spirit. (*Old Diary Leaves*, First Series, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, pp. 370- 373.)

On 13th June I returned to London in company with Mr. Judge, who had come over from New York to see us on his way out to India, his intended future field of work. A little while before this I had instituted a friendly competition between certain of our London associates who were either professional or amateur artists, to try an important psychical experiment. My earlier readers will recall my description (see London edition, *OLD DIARY LEAVES*, 1st Series, ch. xxiii, pp. 370-373) of the way in which my adept Guru redeemed his promise that he would give me his portrait at a convenient time. This was a profile likeness, drawn by an amateur who was not an occultist, either trained or untrained, and so, while the resemblance was unquestionable as I verified later in personal intercourse it did not show the soul-splendor that lights up an adept's countenance. Naturally, I wanted to get a better portrait if possible, and bethought me to try whether my sympathetic artistic colleagues in London could get clearer, more life-like, spiritual glimpses of this divine face. Upon broaching the subject, the five three professionals and two amateurs whom I addressed, very kindly and willingly consented, and I lent each in turn the photographic copy of the original crayon sketch that I had with me. The results were very instructive. One had got the right idea of his complexion, another of his profile and a third, my respected friend Mme. De Steiger, of the luminous aura that shimmers about his head. But neither of the five was, on the whole, a better likeness than the New York sketch by Monsieur Harrisse. Before this competition was finished, Herr Hermann Schmiechen, a very well-known German portrait-painter, domiciled in London, joined the Society and, to my great delight, at once

agreed to have the inspirational test tried with him. The photograph was handed him with no suggestion as to how the subject should be treated. He began work on 19th June and finished it on 9th July. Meanwhile I visited his studio four times alone and once with H.P.B., and was enchanted with the gradual development of the mental image which had been vividly impressed upon his brain, and which resulted in as perfect a portrait of my Guru as he could have painted from life. Unlike the others, who all copied the profile idea of Harrisse, Schmiechen gave the face in full front view, and poured into the eyes such a flood of life and sense of the indwelling soul as to fairly startle the spectator. It was as dear a work of genius and proof of the fact of thought transference as I can imagine. In the picture he has got all the face, complexion, size, shape and expression of eyes, natural pose of head, shining aura, and majestic character. This is also true of the companion portrait which Schmiechen painted of our other chief Guru, and one feels as if the grand eyes were searching his very heart. I have noticed the signs of this first impression in nearly every case, and the feeling of awe is enhanced by the way in which the two pairs of eyes follow one about the room, still seemingly reading one, no matter where he may take his stand. Then, again, by some trick of the artist's brush, the shining aura about the two heads seems to be actually in a shimmery motion, just as it is in nature. No wonder the religiously-minded visitor finds himself, as it were, impressed with a sense of the holiness of the room where the two portraits hang, and meditative introspection is easier there than elsewhere. Grand as they are by day, the pictures are even more striking by night, when properly lighted, and the figures seem as if ready to step out of their frames and approach one. The artist has made two or more copies of the portraits, but they lack the life-like character of the original; he evidently lacking the stress of inspiration under which the latter were produced. As for the photographs which were against my passionate protest permitted to be made from the copies, they are as inferior to the originals at Adyar, as a tallow candle to the electric light. And it has made me inexpressibly sad that these glorious faces, in cheap photographs, have been sold over the counter by Judgeites, and published in a magazine and a book by Dr. Hartmann.

Does it not seem as if this foregoing experiment threw a great light on the mystery of art-inspiration, and helped us to see what makes the difference between a great painter or sculptor and the general rabble of the professions? The great artist must be a man whose lower mind is sensitive to the impressions that can be impressed on it by his higher, or spiritual, consciousness, and his best works would be produced in those so-called moments of "inspiration," when this transfer of consciousness is going on. Is it not illustrated in the case in point, when the artist, guided and fired by an influx from without, paints such pictures as he cannot duplicate in his normal state of independent mortality? And is not the Titian, Rubens, Claude, Cellini, Leonardo, Praxiteles, or Pheidias, one who is open to the guidance of the Higher Self, capable of receiving in "flashes" those race-lifting glimpses of the divine reality behind these walls of flesh? A point of interest in this instance is that the Schmiechen portrait of my Guru was the seventh attempt to get a worthy reflection of his image, for the helping of those who cannot as yet go in sukshma sharira to the Ashram and converse with him face to face. (ODL, Third Series, Chapter xxiii, pp. 162-373)

Among the objects at Adyar which provoke the most admiration in visitors are the splendid specimens of native wood-carving in teakwood in the library doors, and the long, high screen which shuts off and secures the privacy of the portraits of the Masters. (ODL, Sixth Series, Chapter XII, p. 333.)

"Dismissing those trivialities I come to the chief charges brought against me, the first being that the Mahatmas were fraudulent arrangements of bladders and muslin concocted by Madame Coulomb to swindle the public. No one who has seen a Mahatma could believe such an absurdity, and a well-known painter at South Kensington has painted in London the portraits of the Mahatmas without having seen them, producing a likeness which was identified immediately by Englishmen and natives who have seen them in India. He will show you two portraits which not even the wildest imagination could mistake for an arrangement of bladders and muslin. Now suppose, for a moment, that this accounted for all the appearances of the Mahatmas at Adyar, it could not account for their appearance hundreds of miles from where Madame Coulomb was living. She could not project her bladders and muslin three hundred and ten thousand miles

through space, so as to deceive simultaneously some of the most intelligent men in India. The Mahatmas manifested themselves in India hundreds of years before the Coulombs were born, and since the Coulombs have left the Society there have been more numerous manifestations than ever.” (BCW, VI, 311)

There is a secret body—whose diploma, or Certificate of Membership, is held by Colonel Olcott alone among modern men of white blood to which that name was given by the author of *Isis Unveiled* for convenience of designation, but which is known among Initiates by quite another one, just as the personage known to the public under the pseudonym of “Koot Hoomi,” is called by a totally different name among his acquaintances. What the real name of that society is, it would puzzle the “Eulian” phallicists of the “H.B. of L.” [Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor] to tell. The real names of Master Adepts and Occult Schools are never, *under any circumstances*, revealed to the profane; and the names of the personages who have been talked about in connection with modern Theosophy, are in the possession only of the two chief founders of the Theosophical Society. (BCW, X 126)

This choice is now no longer based on the query: “Do the Mahatmas exist,” or are they, as very *theosophically* put by Dr. Coues, simply a HOAX of H. P. Blavatsky. The questions, whether the teachers are an *actuality* or an ideal, and H. P. Blavatsky a truthful woman, or an old fraud, a vixen endowed with every vice, retire in view of the plain alternative into the background, or, at any rate, to a secondary plane; nor will the above-named personage stoop to debate the mooted problem. The really important fact to ascertain is simply whether H. P. Blavatsky *is*, or *is not*, possessed of the occult knowledge, whose source was hitherto attributed to the teaching of the MASTERS. The answer is easy and self-evident. If the TEACHERS whom she claims to know, do not exist, then every bit of philosophy from the earliest *Esoteric Buddhism*, down to the latest *Secret Doctrine*, in short, every tenet of the Occult Sciences taught and learnt in the T.S., *comes from her*; this, whether she has *invented it all*, or acquired the knowledge by some mysterious means. Turn it whichever way you will, the fact remains the same for the Theosophists—she is the origin, the *fountainhead*, of all the esoteric knowledge they have learned or may learn. Whether she be the *source*, or only the modest *channel*, as claimed by her, H.P. Blavatsky *has the means and the necessary knowledge to teach*. (BCW, XI 309-310)

It is, however, right that each member, once he believes in the existence of such Masters, should try to understand what their nature and powers are, to reverence Them in his heart, to draw near to Them, as much as in him lies, and to open up for himself conscious communication with the guru to whose bidding he has devoted his life. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE BY RISING TO THE SPIRITUAL PLANE WHERE THE MASTERS ARE, AND NOT BY ATTEMPTING TO DRAW THEM DOWN TO OURS. (BCW, XII 492)

“Let me explain it this way,” she answered, after a long gaze at the end of her cigarette. “Have you ever made experiments in thought-transference? If you have, you must have noticed that the person who receives the mental picture very often colours it, or even changes it slightly, with his own thought, and this where perfectly genuine transference of thought takes place. Well, it is something like that with the precipitated letters. One of our Masters, who perhaps does not know English, and of course has no English handwriting, wishes to precipitate a letter in answer to a question sent mentally to him. Let us say he is in Tibet, while I am in Madras or London. He has the answering thought in his mind, but not in English words. He has first to impress that thought on my brain, or on the brain of someone else who knows English, and then to take the word-forms that rise up in that other brain to answer the thought. Then he must form a clear mind-picture of the words in writing, also drawing on my brain, or the brain of whoever it is, for the shapes. Then either through me or some Chela with whom he is magnetically connected, he has to precipitate these word-shapes on paper, first sending the shapes into the Chela’s mind, and then driving them into the paper, using the magnetic force of the Chela to do the printing, and collecting the material, black or blue or red, as the case may be, from the astral light. As all things dissolve into the astral light, the will of the magician can draw them forth again. So he can draw forth colours of pigments to mark the figure in the letter, using the

magnetic force of the Chela to stamp them in, and guiding the whole by his own much greater magnetic force, a current of powerful will.”

“That sounds quite reasonable,” I answered. “Won’t you show me how it is done?” “You would have to be clairvoyant,” she answered, in a perfectly direct and matter-of-fact way, “in order to see and guide the currents. But this is the point: Suppose the letter precipitated through me; it would naturally show some traces of my expressions, and even of my writing; but all the same, it would be a perfectly genuine occult phenomenon, and a real message from that Mahatma. Besides, when all is said and done, they exaggerate the likeness of the writings. And experts are not infallible. We have had experts who were just as positive that I could not possibly have written those letters, and just as good experts, too. But the Report says nothing about them. And then there are letters, in just the same handwriting, precipitated when I was thousands of miles away. Dr. Hartmann received more than one at Adyar, Madras, when I was in London; I could hardly have written that.”

“They would simply say Dr. Hartmann was the fraud, in that case.” “Certainly,” cried H. P. B., growing angry now; “we are all frauds and liars, and the lambkin from Australia is the only true man. My dear, it is too much. It is insolent!” And then she laughed at her own warmth, a broad, good-natured Homeric laugh, as hers always was, and finally said:

“But you have seen some of the occult letters? What do you say?”

“Yes,” I replied; “Mr. Sinnett showed me about a ream of them; the whole series that the *Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism* are based on. Some of them are in red, either ink or pencil, but far more are in blue. I thought it was pencil at first, and I tried to smudge it with my thumb; but it would not smudge.”

“Of course not!” she smiled; “the colour is driven into the surface of the paper. But what about the writings?”

“I am coming to that. There were two: the blue writing, and the red; they were totally different from each other, and both were quite unlike yours. I have spent a good deal of time studying the relation of handwriting to character, and the two characters were quite clearly marked. The blue was evidently a man of very gentle and even character, but of tremendously strong will; logical, easy-going, and taking endless pains to make his meaning clear. It was altogether the handwriting of a cultivated and very sympathetic man.”

“Which I am not,” said H. P. B., with a smile; “that is Mahatma Koothoomi; he is a Kashmiri Brahman by birth, you know, and has travelled a good deal in Europe. He is the author of the *Occult World* letters, and gave Mr. Sinnett most of the material of *Esoteric Buddhism*. But you have read all about it.”

“Yes, I remember he says you shriek across space with a voice like Sarasvati’s peacock. Hardly the sort of thing you would say of yourself.”

“Of course not,” she said; “I know I am a nightingale. But what about the other writing?”

“The red? Oh that is wholly different. It is fierce, impetuous, dominant, strong; it comes in volcanic outbursts, while the other is like Niagara Falls. One is fire, and the other is the ocean. They are wholly different, and both quite unlike yours. But the second has more resemblance to yours than the first.”

“This is my Master,” she said, “whom we call Mahatma Morya. I have his picture here.”

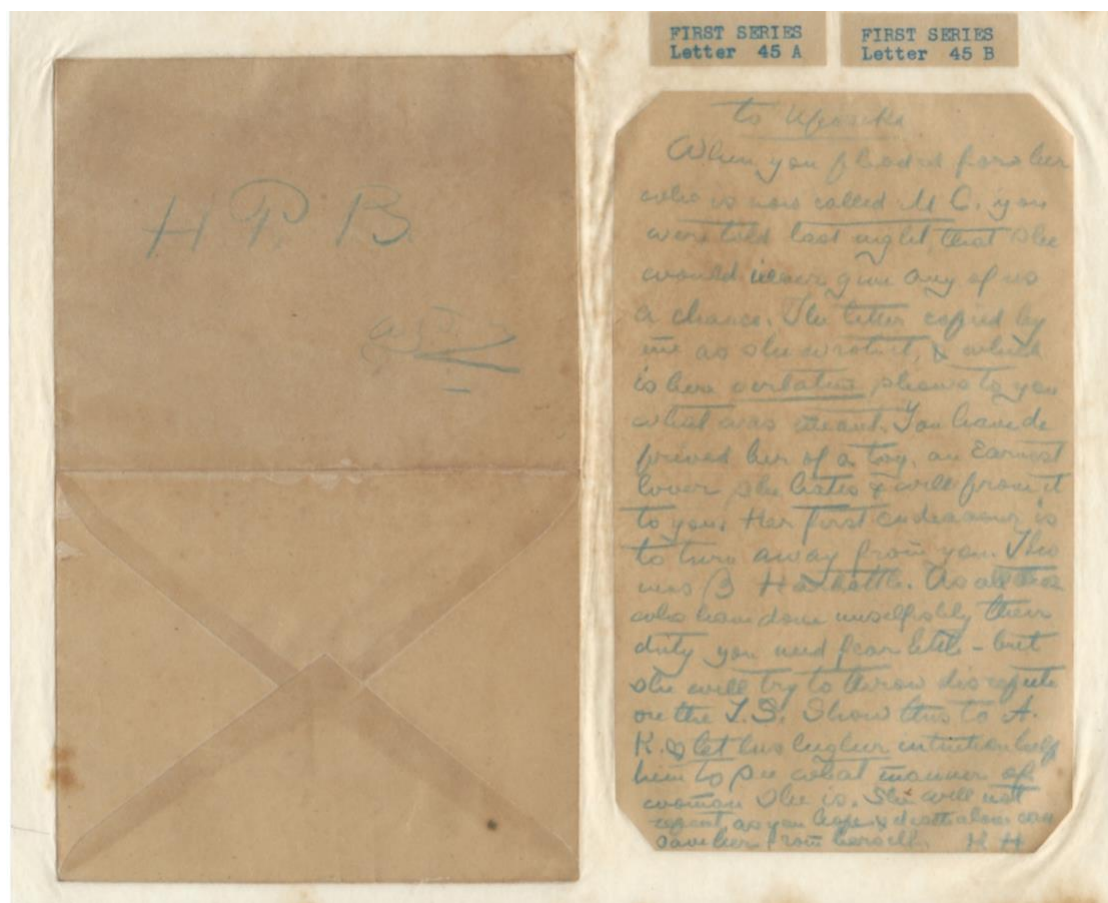
And she showed me a small panel in oils. If ever I saw genuine awe and reverence in a human face, it was in hers, when she spoke of her Master. He was a Rajput by birth, she said, one of the old warrior race of the Indian desert, the finest and handsomest nation in the world. Her Master was a giant, six feet eight, and splendidly built; a superb type of manly beauty. Even in the picture, there is a marvellous power and fascination; the force, the fierceness even, of the face; the dark, glowing eyes, which stare you out of countenance; the clear-cut features of bronze, the raven hair and beard—all spoke of a tremendous individuality, a very Zeus in the prime of manhood and strength. I asked her something about his age. She answered:

“My dear, I cannot tell you exactly, for I do not know. But this I will tell you. I met him first when I was twenty,—in 1851. He was in the very prime of manhood then. I am an old woman now, but he has not aged a day. He is still in the prime of manhood. That is all I can say. You may draw your own conclusions.”

“Have the Mahatmas discovered the elixir of life?”

“That is no fable,” said H. P. B. seriously. “It is only the veil hiding a real occult process, warding off age and dissolution for periods which would seem fabulous” so I will not mention them. The secret is this: for every man, there is a climacteric, when he must draw near to death; if he has squandered his life-powers, there is no escape for him; but if he has lived according to the law, he may pass through and so continue in the same body almost indefinitely.”

Then she told me something about other Masters and adepts she had known,—for she made a difference, as though the adepts were the captains of the occult world, and the Masters were the generals. She had known adepts of many races, from Northern and Southern India, Tibet, Persia, China, Egypt; of various European nations, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, English; of certain races in South America, where she said there was a Lodge of adepts. (BCW, VIII 399-400)



Master K.H.'s letter to HPB, August 1884. (Theosophy.Wiki)