

THE GREAT SACRIFICE

and the Mystery-Land of Shambhala

It is widely accepted by students of Theosophy that the *real* Founders of the modern Theosophical Movement were certain “advanced occultists” of the East; Adepts initiated into a hidden esoteric Brotherhood which guides and watches over the spiritual evolution and advancement of humanity.

In the early days of the Movement they were generally referred to as “The Brothers.” Later they were also called Mahatmas (meaning “Great Souls”) and Masters of Wisdom. H. P. Blavatsky was described by these Masters as Their “Direct Agent” and indeed there is plenty of evidence to show that she served as their public representative, spokesperson, and Messenger to the world at large, assisted most ably in this by William Q. Judge.

Hardly anything in the nature of personal details was ever divulged or published by HPB regarding the Masters. The *mystic* names of a few of them – primarily the two most closely and directly involved with HPB and the establishing of the Movement – were made public but usually they are referred to simply by their initials. As to their grades or degrees of initiation, their previous incarnations, their physical appearances, bodily features, and similar matters, it is unthinkable that such sacred details would or could ever be legitimately made public. What is known, however, is that the Masters are not “Ascended Masters” (as in popular “New Age” ideas) but are generally physically incarnated, right here on this plane, for they have important work to do in this world but tend to dwell in solitary locations away from the often toxic influences of modern everyday life.

Our Movement owes its original inspiration to the Masters known as M. and K.H., who are part of a Trans-Himalayan Buddhist Brotherhood presided over by one known as the Maha Chohan. Yet the Trans-Himalayan is not the *whole* of the GREAT BROTHERHOOD. How, where, and when did it begin? Who established it and what sort of Being is its Supreme Head? Where in the world is its central base? Perhaps surprisingly, this is something gone into to some extent by HPB, particularly in “The Secret Doctrine,” and this is what we will now explore.

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The “Sons of Wisdom” is a name given to a group who incarnated themselves in the early period of the Third Root Race (the Lemurian Epoch) as the very first group of self-conscious, spiritual, intellectually awakened human beings, *prior* to the awakening of consciousness in the general mass of humanity, which occurred later.

In this early Lemurian period, which we are told was millions of years ago, the “Sons of Wisdom” used Kriyashakti (the objectively creative power of thought and will) to produce the necessary physical vehicle for the embodiment of a great Being who was ready and waiting, destined according to the Law of Karma, to enter upon our globe in order to fulfill the most important and highest possible role and position here. In “The Secret Doctrine” Vol. 1, p. 207, we read:

“This “Wondrous Being” descended from a “high region,” they say, in the early part of the Third Age, before the separation of the sexes of the Third Race. . . . In the first or earlier portion of the existence of this third race, while it was yet in its state of purity, the “Sons of Wisdom,” who, as will be seen, incarnated in this Third Race, produced by *Kriyashakti* a progeny called the “Sons of Ad” or “of the Fire-Mist,” the “Sons of Will and Yoga,” etc. They were a conscious production,

as a portion of the race was already animated with the divine spark of spiritual, superior intelligence. It was not a Race, this progeny. It was at first a wondrous Being, called the “Initiator,” and after him a group of semi-divine and semi-human beings. “*Set apart*” in Archaic *genesis* for certain purposes, they are those in whom are said to have incarnated the highest Dhyanis, “Munis and Rishis from previous Manvantaras” – *to form the nursery for future adepts*, on this earth and during the present cycle. These “Sons of Will and Yoga” born, so to speak, in an immaculate way, remained, it is explained, entirely apart from the rest of mankind.”

HPB later elucidates: “The Third Race had thus created the so-called SONS OF WILL AND YOGA, or the “ancestors” (the *spiritual* forefathers) of all the subsequent and present Arhats, or Mahatmas, in a truly *immaculate* way. They were indeed *created*, not *begotten*, . . . They were the “holy seed-grain” of the future Saviours of Humanity.” (S.D. 2:173)

Before these Great Ones had emerged on our Earth, that even Greater Being had appeared.

In “The Secret Doctrine” he is referred to in various ways, such as –

- * The Wondrous Being
- * The Nameless One
- * The Initiator
- * The Great Sacrifice
- * The Solitary Watcher

- and it is he who “holds spiritual sway over the *initiated* Adepts throughout the whole world.” It is taught that he changes form from time to time, as evolution requires, but in his inner and real nature “remains ever the same.” He “has to remain nameless” although numerous names have been applied to him by different people. It is he who is the Supreme Head of the entire Great Brotherhood, sometimes also called the Great Lodge or Great White Lodge, “white” in the sense of light and goodness, as the antithesis to what is termed *black* magic.

In such books as “The Voice of the Silence” and “The Secret Doctrine” it is explained that there are four basic grades or degrees of initiation but that the fourth of these consists of four possible degrees in itself, thus making an actual total of seven degrees on the Path of Initiation. These are given, in Buddhist terminology, as:

- #1. Srotapatti or Srotapanna
- #2. Sakridagamin
- #3. Anagamin
- #4. Arhat or Arhan

[But, says S.D. 1:206, “The Arhan, though he can see the Past, the Present, and the Future, is not yet the highest Initiate. . . . Three further higher grades have to be conquered by the Arhan who would reach to the apex of the ladder of Arhatship.”]

- #5. Arhat of the 2nd degree
- #6. Arhat of the 3rd degree
- #7. Arhat of the 4th degree

This “apex of the ladder of Arhatship” is referred to in the Stanzas from the Book of Dzyan (in S.D. 1:33) as “THE FOURTH “FRUIT” OF THE FOURTH PATH OF KNOWLEDGE THAT LEADS TO NIRVANA.” Referring to these very highest Initiates and how they stand in relation to the Wondrous Being, “The Secret Doctrine” says:

“The *Arhats* of the “fire-mist” of the 7th rung are but one remove from the Root-Base of their Hierarchy – the highest on Earth, and our Terrestrial chain. This “Root-Base” has a name which can only be translated by several compound words into English – “the ever-living-human-Banyan.” This “Wondrous Being” descended from a “high region,” they say, in the early part of the Third Age, before the separation of the sexes of the Third Race.” (Vol. 1, p. 206-207)

The symbolism of the Banyan tree is significant, as any Indian or Oriental knows. HPB also uses the phrase “THE TREE FROM WHICH THE ADEPTS GROW.” Also significant is the fact that the word “human” is used in his description and that further down on p. 207 it’s emphasised that despite his great spiritual and divine nature he is also “objective *man*.”

Let us reflect upon these beautiful and inspiring words:

“He is *the* “Initiator,” called the “GREAT SACRIFICE.” For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know – aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE.

“It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA – (great) – GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. It is through these “Sons of God” that infant humanity got its first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge; and it is they who have laid the first foundation-stone of those ancient civilizations that puzzle so sorely our modern generation of students and scholars. ...

“It was a child of pure Spirit, mentally unalloyed with any tincture of earthly element. Its physical frame alone was of time and of life, as it drew its intelligence direct from above. It was the living tree of divine wisdom; and may therefore be likened to the Mundane Tree of the Norse Legend; which cannot wither and die until the last battle of life shall be fought, while its roots are gnawed all the time by the dragon Nidhogg; for even so, the first and holy Son of Kriyashakti had his body gnawed by the tooth of time, but the roots of his inner being remained for ever undecaying and strong, because they grew and expanded in heaven not on earth. He was the first of the FIRST, and he was the seed of all the others. There were other “Sons of Kriyashakti” produced by a second Spiritual effort, but the first one has remained to this day the Seed of divine Knowledge, the One and the Supreme among the terrestrial “Sons of Wisdom.” Of this subject we can say no more, except to add that in every age – aye, even in our own – there have been great intellects who have understood the problem correctly.” (S.D. 1:208, 211)

It is then hinted at (p. 209) that this Great Being dwells at that “certain Sacred Island in Central Asia,” which is often known as Shamballa or Shambhala.

H. P. BLAVATSKY ON SHAMBHALA

- * "... the sacred Island (now the "fabled" Shamballah, in the Gobi Desert) ..." (S.D. 2:319)
- * "In the same manner and on the plan of the Zodiac in the *upper* Ocean or the heavens, a certain realm on Earth, an island sea, was consecrated and called "the Abyss of Learning"; twelve centres on it in the shape of twelve small islands representing the Zodiacal signs – two of which remained for ages the "mystery signs" and were the abodes of twelve Hierophants and masters of wisdom. This "sea of knowledge" or learning remained for ages there, where now stretches the Shamo or Gobi desert. It existed until the last great glacial period, when a local cataclysm, which swept the waters south and west and so formed the present great desolate desert, left only a certain oasis, with a lake and one island in the midst of it, as a relic of the *Zodiacal Ring* on Earth." (S.D. 2:502-503)
- * "What is claimed is simply the fact that the Wisdom imparted by the "Divine Ones" – born through the *Kriyashakti powers* of the Third Race before its Fall and Separation into sexes – to the adepts of the early Fourth Race, has remained in all its pristine purity in a certain Brotherhood. The said School or Fraternity being closely connected with a certain island of an inland sea, believed in by both Hindus and Buddhists, but called "mythical" by geographers and Orientalists, the less one talks of it, the wiser he will be." (S.D. 2:636-637)
- * "The "Island," according to belief, exists to the present hour; now, as an *oasis* surrounded by the dreadful wildernesses of the great Desert, the Gobi." (S.D. 2:220)
- * "*Arghya Varsha* – "the land of libations" – is the mystery name of that region which extends from Kailas mountain nearly to the Schamo Desert – from within which the *Kalki Avatar* is expected." (S.D. 2:416)
- * "... *that Sacred Island* – 'from whence the last Saviour will come' ..." (A Commentary quoted in S.D. 2:350)
- * "... *her [Mother Earth's] heart* – which beats under the foot of the sacred Shambalah ..." (A Commentary quoted in S.D. 2:400)
- * "Although these matters were barely hinted at in "*Isis Unveiled*," it will be well to remind the reader of what was said in Vol. I., pp. 587 to 593, concerning a certain Sacred Island in Central Asia, and to refer him for further details to the chapter in Book II. on "The Sons of God and the Sacred Island"." (S.D. 1:209)
- * "S'ambhala (*Sk.*). A very mysterious locality on account of its *future* associations. A town or village mentioned in the *Puranas*, whence, it is prophesied, the Kalki Avatar will appear. The "Kalki" is Vishnu, *the Messiah on the White Horse* of the Brahmins; Maitreya Buddha of the Buddhists, Sosiosh of the Parsis, and Jesus of the Christians (See *Revelations*). All these "messengers" are to appear "before the destruction of the world", says the one; before the end of Kali Yuga say the others. It is in S'ambhala that the future Messiah will be born. Some Orientalists make modern Muradabad in Rohilkhand (N.W.P.) identical with S'ambhala, while Occultism places it in the Himalayas. It is pronounced *Shambhala*." ("The Theosophical Glossary" p. 287)
- * "Every *seventh* year, these teachers are believed to assemble in SCHAM-CHA-LO, the "happy land." According to the general belief it is situated in the north-west of Tibet. Some place it within the unexplored central regions, inaccessible even to the fearless nomadic tribes; others hem it in between the range of the Gangdisri Mountains and the northern edge of the Gobi Desert, South and North, and the more populated regions of Khoondooz and Kashmir, of the *Gya-Pheling* (British-

India), and China, West and East, which affords to the curious mind a pretty large latitude to locate it in. Others still place it between Namur Nur and the Kuen-Lun Mountains – but one and all firmly believe in Scham-bha-la, and speak of it as a fertile, fairy-like land, once an island, now an oasis of incomparable beauty, the place of meeting of the inheritors of the esoteric wisdom of the god-like inhabitants of the legendary island.” (“Editorial Appendix,” “H. P. Blavatsky Theosophical Articles” 3:333)

* “Many are the names of that School and land, the name of the latter being now regarded by the Orientalists as the mythic name of a fabulous country. It is from this mysterious land, nevertheless, that the Hindu expects his Kalki Avatara, the Buddhist his Maitreya, the Parsi his Sosiosh, and the Jew his Messiah, and so would the Christian expect thence his Christ – if he only knew of it. There, and there alone, reigns Paranishpanna (Gunggrub), the absolutely perfect comprehension of Being and Non-Being, the changeless true Existence in Spirit, even while the latter is seemingly still in the body, every inhabitant thereof being a Non-Ego because he has become the Perfect Ego. Their voidness is “self-existent and perfect” – if there were profane eyes to sense and perceive it – because it has become absolute; the unreal being transformed into conditionless Reality, and the realities of this, our world, having vanished in their own nature into thin (non-existing) air.

“The “Absolute Truth” (Dondam-pay-den-pa; Sanskrit: Paramarthasatya), having conquered “relative truth” (Kunza-bchi-den-pa; Sanskrit: Samvritisatya), the inhabitants of the mysterious region are thus supposed to have reached the state called in mystic phraseology Svasamvedana (“self-analyzing reflection”) and Paramartha, or that absolute consciousness of the personal merged into the impersonal Ego, which is above all, hence above illusion in every sense.

“Its “Perfect” Buddhas and Bodhisattvas may be on every nimble Buddhist tongue as celestial – therefore unreachable Beings, while these names may suggest and say nothing to the dull perceptions of the European profane. What matters it to Those who, being in this world, yet live outside and far beyond our illusive earth! Above Them there is but one class of Nirvanis, namely, the Chos-ku (Dharmakaya), or the Nirvanis “without remains” – the pure Arupa, the formless Breaths. Thence emerge occasionally the Bodhisattvas in their Prul-pai-ku (or Nirmanakaya) body and, assuming an ordinary appearance, they teach men. There are conscious, as well as unconscious, incarnations.” (“A Few More Misconceptions Corrected” posthumously published)

* “The “Western paradise,” [mentioned in some Buddhist scriptures, also called the “Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha”] or Western heaven, is no fiction located in transcendental space. It is a *bona-fide* locality in the mountains, or, to be more correct, one encircled in a desert within mountains. Hence it is assigned for the residence of those students of Esoteric Wisdom – disciples of Buddha – who have attained the rank of Lohans and Anagamins (Adepts). It is called “Western” simply from geographical considerations; and “the great iron mountain girdle” that surrounds the Avitchi, and the seven Lokas that encircle the “Western paradise” are a very exact representation of well-known localities and things to the Eastern student of Occultism.” (“The Doctrine of the Eye & The Doctrine of the Heart” posthumously published)

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Earlier we saw how the Wondrous Being was emphasised to nonetheless be “human,” “objective man,” and living in a body subject to being “gnawed by the tooth of time.” And now we have seen how Shambhala – apparently situated somewhere in the Gobi Desert – is objective too. It is spiritual in nature, yet existing here on this physical plane, although none can ever find it or go there, except the very few who have earned the right and passed through the requisite initiations.

As was said in the “Glossary” quote, Hinduism, in the Vishnu Purana, declares that the tenth and

“final” Avatar of Vishnu, called the Kalki Avatar, will be born in a town or village named Shambhala. Tibetan Buddhism contains many more detailed references to Shambhala, mainly in the Kalachakra (literally “Time’s Circle” or “Wheel of Time”) system. This speaks of Shambhala as a Kingdom which has a capital city named Kalapa, where reside a succession of “Kings of Shambhala” also known as *Kalki* Kings/Emperors, who each reign for one century, each new “occult century” beginning with what in our calendar is the 75th year, i.e. 1875, 1975, 2075, etc. Interestingly, in 1775 the 6th Panchen Lama wrote a detailed guidebook of the way to Shambhala, titled “Shambhalai Lamyig.” Kalachakra teachings say that the current degeneration in the world will continue and worsen until 2424 (in our calendar) when the then Kalki King, who will be named Rudra (one of the names of Shiva in Hinduism) and in some way an incarnation of the Panchen Lama, will “appear to humans all over the world” and “defeat the barbarians” whilst “establishing a worldwide Golden Age.” This is the last Kalki King prophesied. In some respects this echoes a prophecy asserted by HPB in her article “Tibetan Teachings”:

“It is said that up to the time when Panchen Rimpoche (the Great Jewel of Wisdom) condescends to be reborn in the land of the P’helings (Westerners), and appearing as the Spiritual Conqueror (Chom-den-da), destroys the errors and ignorance of the age, it will be of little use to try to uproot the misconceptions of P’heling-pa (Europe): her sons will listen to no one.”

Much is naturally kept shrouded in mystery but Theosophy, in contrast with the Kalachakra chronology, states clearly that “It is not in the *Kali yug*, our present terrifically materialistic age of Darkness, the “Black Age,” [due to continue for thousands of years more] that a new Saviour of Humanity can ever appear” (S.D. 1:470) and also that the occurrence which some describe as the “Coming of Maitreya/Kalki” will thus not be until the close of the Kali Yuga which will correspond with the close of the Sixth Root Race and will not take the form which many might be inclined to expect, for “this will be *the* One Wisdom and will incarnate itself into the whole humanity collectively, not in a single individual.” (“Lamas and Druses,” “H. P. Blavatsky Theosophical Articles” 3:288)

But who or what is the Great Sacrifice? Adi Shankaracharya, the founder of the Advaita Vedanta school of Hinduism, was an extremely high Initiate himself and in a certain sense the reincarnation of Gautama Buddha. He wrote a mysterious hymn called the Dakshinamurti Stotra, which some Theosophists believe is referring to the nature and the role of this Being:

“It is strange to see the very old disciples, sat around the Teacher of ever-youthful appearance, who sits beneath the Banyan Tree. The Teacher always teaches in silence, yet the disciples receive the answers to all their questions. Salutations to that Dakshinamurti, who is the meaning of the Pranava - OM - who is the personification of unalloyed Wisdom, who is crystal clear in his thought, and who is the epitome of peace. Salutations to that Dakshinamurti, who is the Teacher of the entire world, who is the doctor to those afflicted by the disease of birth and death, and who is the treasure house of all knowledge.”

Shankara said that this was the Adi-Guru, meaning the *First* Guru, the First of all Spiritual Teachers and he recognised him as an embodiment of Shiva. In one place where HPB talks about Shambhala (S.D. 2:502) she also makes mention of “Rudra Shiva, the great *Yogi*, the forefather of all the Adepts – in Esotericism one of the greatest Kings of the Divine Dynasties. Called “the Earliest” and the “Last,” he is the patron of the Third [i.e. Lemurian], Fourth [i.e. Atlantean], and the Fifth [i.e. ours] Root-Races.”

T. Subba Row stated that the Masters teach that Amitabha Buddha (the Buddha of Infinite Light) himself dwelt at Shambhala and “established the Brotherhood” there. Deductions could also be made from “The Secret Doctrine” that he is Avalokiteshvara or Padmapani of Tibetan Buddhism or

even the Vedic Vishvakarman, the one who sacrifices himself to himself, for the salvation of all. HPB has also suggested a link with the mysterious Biblical and Kabbalistic figure of Melchizedek.

Unlike certain later and distorted versions of "Theosophy," the original teachings do *not* endorse the now widespread and popularised notions that this Solitary Watcher came to Earth from Venus, nor that he came here in a fiery chariot flying through the sky, and they do not say that he is Sanat Kumara or any of the Kumaras. They do not say that he is the incarnation of the so-called "Planetary Logos" and they certainly do not call him "God." In fact, from "The Secret Doctrine" (Vol. 2, p. 282) we learn that higher than the highest Kumaras (divine celestial beings) "is only ONE on Earth as in Heavens - that still more mysterious and Solitary Being described in Book I."

Numerous names could be applied to this Nameless One but it ultimately aids our understanding very little. Names often get in the way and become self-imposed mental barriers and obstructions to comprehension. As HPB said, "Of this subject we can say no more." This greatness, this majesty, this love, this sacrifice, is barely within the realms of our comprehension anyway.

The divine love that blazes ever bright within the Silent Watcher's heart will not allow him to pass onward into infinite peace and liberation because "he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. . . . in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE."

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