

## The White Lodge and Its Messengers by Annie Besant

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[Page 1] IF you could look backwards beyond historical periods; backwards still across the mist of legend and of myth; backwards into the darkness of the past where even legend and myth have ceased to be; backwards ever, into the far night of time, into the beginnings of humanity, as humanity, on our globe; then would you see a brilliant golden cloud flashing down to earth from a far-off planet — the planet which you know as Shukra, and which we call Venus in the West. From that planet far away in space a radiant cloud is coming, a cloud of fire and of light; and as it descends through the ambient air, as the clouds of heaven roll away dispersing at its coming, the fire-cloud sinks gently to earth like some huge Bird of Heaven, and settles down upon an island — the White Island, it is called in the Purānas — the island on which later was built the sacred City of Shamballa. There the fiery cloud comes to rest; there the glorious Beings who were borne in it, as in a chariot of fire, descend. They [Page 2] are the Sons of the Fire, the Lords of the Flame: They come to this planet as the Messengers of the Logos, of Īshvara Himself; They come as the Helpers of our infant humanity, to guide its tottering steps along the path of evolution.

Many names have been given to this Root of the White Lodge by human reverence and by human wonder, to express something of the marvelous life with which those mighty Beings were instinct. In the Purānas They are called the Four Kumāras, the Virgin Youths; sometimes we read of Shiva Kumāra, sometimes of other names; for names in this are nothing, and They transcend all names that human tongue can syllable. From that far, far-off-time, perhaps some sixteen millions of years ago, They have dwelt in that which was the White Island, and is now a portion of the Gobi Desert, an island, once washed by a great sea which spread northward into the Arctic Ocean That sea was drained in the mighty convulsions which also changed an African sea into the Desert of the Sahara, and in its stead stretches the Gobi Desert; but those wastes of sand are broken by the remains of the cyclopean architecture raised there some fifty thousand years ago and more, fragments of broken temples, magnificent even in their ruins, and near these a city now beneath the sand-dunes, connected with the island by a wondrous bridge, stretching across a flood that long since has vanished in the desert sands.[Page 3]

Because These were the Founders of the White Lodge, They have been spoken of in occult records as the Root of the spreading Banyan-Tree, and no symbol could be more graphic or more exact. Look around you at the mighty tree under which you are sitting; in the center you see a huge pillar which has increased slowly since the tree commenced its growth; from that central trunk spread out great far-reaching branches, and from time to time roots descend from a branch and fix themselves in the soil beneath, and make a new center for the tree's perennial growth. Even so is that center of the life of the world like the central stem of the Banyan-Tree, and the far-spreading branches are like the branches of the Occult Hierarchy that looks to that center as its root and home; it also from time to time sends down, as it were, roots into the earth, and a new religion is founded and a new center of spiritual life is made on earth. Thus ever spreading and spreading, growing ever mightier and mightier, the great Banyan-Tree of the White Lodge spreads its branches over the world, and the nations of earth take refuge beneath its

shade, generation after generation.

Such the wondrous beginning, such the founding of the great White Lodge, the Guide and Guardian of Humanity. Then, as nation after nation grew up, families forming into tribes, tribes into nations, miniature copies of .the Center were made on one [Page 4] continent after another, and Lodges were formed, centers of civilisation and instruction.

Come in thought to far Atlantis where now the Atlantic is rolling, but where then there existed a mighty continent; on that continent was a great city, capital of the wide Toltec Empire, the City of the Golden Gate. There ruled the White Emperor, son of a divine dynasty, and there Messengers of the Lodge built up that prodigious civilisation which has not yet been overtopped on earth. As you follow the spreading branches from that center, you see the building of kingdom after kingdom, empire after empire. Egypt knew Them, with her wondrous civilisation which, Bunsen declared, sprang fully formed on to the stage of history with no past to explain it — as Pallas Athene from the head of Zeus. See how mightily Egypt built, so that modern engineers look in wonder at her ruins, and ask how the men of old lifted the huge stones which top the giant pillars of her temples; see her learning, the “wisdom of Egypt”, her joyous civilisation, her divine dynasties, her pre-Âryan Pharaohs, her strange knowledge of the worlds invisible, her science of the world visible. Turn westwards from Atlantis instead of eastwards and see an empire where now Mexico is struggling, a reproduction of Egypt, already ancient when the Aztecs destroyed it. See South America, the corpse of an ancient greatness, where the last fair relics of an exquisite culture were trampled out in blood and fire under [Page 5] the terrible hoofs of the invading hordes of Spain. And if you turn your eyes to this Indian Peninsula, in the days when the Himālayas had but newly risen, rearing their mighty crests into the azure sky, you see stretching southwards from their bases the land which had emerged from the bosom of the ocean, a huge mass of swamps untreadable by human foot, uninhabitable by man; as they dry up and become drained by rivers, coated by vegetation, fit for human home, the vast Toltec hosts pour down upon them through the Himālayan passes, and over-spread the Indian plains; they build splendid cities, they rear great fortresses, they shape a luxurious civilisation — the civilisation known in the Purānas as that of the Daityas which sinks into decay, and gives way before the flood of invasion of the younger and more virile Âryan race, “the high-nosed barbarians from the north”.

Thus glancing over the history that seems to you so far away — and, truly, far away it is — what is the one point which emerges on whatever empire you may fix your gaze ? It is that the splendid culture, the wondrous architecture, the control over natural forces, all came from the Divine Kings who founded and ruled nations, whose grandiose figures loom gigantic through the mists of time, who were the Messengers of the White Lodge, shaping the civilisation of the infant world. No savages were they who reared the gigantic buildings the ruins of which, though dumb, speak trumpet-tongued of the [Page 6] architectural genius which raised them. No savages were they who built the cities in Chaldaea, which have been unburied one below the other — one city forgotten in the dim past and buried 'neath the earth ere another was raised on its site — and in the lowest of them, deep down below the surface of the ground, great corridors, libraries filled with thousands of volumes, telling of the thoughts, the laws, the knowledge, of those who lived in those incredibly far-off days. No savages were they who, in Europe, in a much less ancient antiquity, raised the huge stones of Stonehenge, poised those strange rocking-stones with such skillful accuracy that a child's finger can set them rocking, yet the push of a giant could not overset them — tangible witnesses to a past that long since has disappeared, eloquent in their age-long silence of a knowledge that made them what they are.

China, again, is being slowly penetrated — as yet unknown to the western traveler through nearly all its huge extent — and I have been told by a traveler who passed far into the interior, engaged in geological research, some of the wonders that he saw in that ancient land; he spoke of a bridge, the age of which none could tell, made of slabs of marble so huge, that he, an American, familiar with his country's mastery over machinery — and here the American engineers stand easily first — could not even form a theory as to how those slabs had been placed where they were, and fitted together into [Page 7] such a structure. In one of the old books of China which has been translated into English, known under the name of the *Classic of Purity*, one of the most exquisite gems of translated Chinese literature, you will find a significant tradition that it came from the West, transmitted from mouth to mouth, and was only committed to writing by Ko Hsüan: "I got it from the Divine Ruler of the eastern Hva; he received it from the Divine Ruler of the Golden Gate; he received it from the Divine Mother of the West". The name, the City of the Golden Gate, was given to later capital cities after that first wonderful pile was known by that striking title, but even the youngest — and last — of these capitals of Mid-Atlantis was ancient when ancient Greece was born; and the long tradition, handed down 'from millennium to millennium, shows how deeply the impression of its glory had been graven on the minds of generations.

When you come to later days, the time of the fifth Root-Race, the child of the fourth, we find that similar care is said to have surrounded its founding and its childhood — Divine Kings nurtured it, Divine Teachers instructed it. For we read of an august Lawgiver, known by the name of Vaivasvata Manu; we read of a revered compiler of the scriptures for the people, known by the name of Vyāsa; we read of many other Rshis, known under various names, appearing from time to time, generation after generation, bearing always one [Page 8] message, teaching the later people as they had taught the earlier; and the Hindû records tell us of Divine Kings. What Hindû heart does not swell with reverence, with admiration, with devotion, as there shines out from Samskrt; story the splendid outline of Shrî Rāma, the Ideal Monarch, the Ideal Son, divine in His nature, mighty in His rule, perfect in His manhood, Lawgiver and King ?

And so with others also, not in India only, but in the lands where settled other offshoots of the Âryan Race which spread over the world. They all carried with them the memory of Divine Kings; they all speak of Divine Teachers, the Founders of their faiths; they all tell of mighty heroes, of demigods who ruled and taught them in their early days. That universal tradition testifies of the days when the gods walked with men, ruled them, instructed them, and were the great Ideals which even yet survive to charm and fascinate the hearts of men. For think you that Kingship would still exert its wondrous magic, even over the nations which boast themselves as in the van of civilisation and vaunt their own enlightenment; think you that the name of King would yet remain so sacred and so dear — spite of many who have sullied and outraged it, spite of many who have blotted and obscured it — were it not that the memory of Kings, divine in Their love and wisdom, divine in Their power and justice, has thrown such a glamor over men, that still we love the name of Kingship, that still we [Page 9] bow our hearts in reverence to the one who wears the crown ? If you would realize how empty is all the talk against Kingship, and how futile the attempt to lower the ideal that reigns in the nations' hearts, if you would understand how weak and paltry is all that is said against it, then throw yourself only a few years back in time, when Victoria, Queen and Empress, went through the streets of London to S. Paul's Cathedral, to give thanks for the many years through which she had wielded the scepter of Empire, and see the street crowded with men and women from every part of that Empire; and in that homage of nations, in the great waves of love, almost of adoration, that surged round that stately age, you will realize that Kingship is something more than a constitutional convenience, something more than acceptance by a Parliament, that in very truth a King

rules by a right divine, and is the symbol of divine power among men. And that tradition has come down from nations ruled by Kings who were indeed royal:

“Men the masters of things.”

I spoke not of Kings only as Messengers of the White Lodge, but also of Teachers, and Founders of the faiths of the world. For religion is of heavenly birth, and man's continual seeking after God draws an answer from that great White Lodge, which is the center of divine life on earth. For what is religion ? Religion is not [Page 10] a mass of formulae which people can learn by heart and practice by rote; it is not a number of ceremonies which priests can perform and people look on at; it is not even sacred books, however noble, however inspiring, however precious. Religion is the cry of the human spirit to the Life whence it came; it is the appeal of the little self, bewildered in the mists of earth, to the supreme Self whose reflection it is; it is the search of the human heart for God, syllabled in the words of the Hebrew poet: “As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God”. It is the perennial thirst of humanity for divinity, and can never be quenched until man drinks the water of life in the realization of God.

The many religions of the world are the answers of the Elder Brothers, telling the child-souls of the Eternal Life, and giving them in child-language as much as the child-soul can grasp. And so from time to time, whenever the Mother-Race branches, and sends her children into far-off lands and waste places, to make them fertile, life-giving and beautiful, to build a new nation, then the Father-Lodge does not forget those children, removed from its physical neighborhood, but sends after them a Messenger, one of its greatest, in order to give them the ancient message of the eternal and ever-young Truth, clothed in the garment which best fits the necessities of the time. [Page 11]

When the second-born of the Âryan Race was sent out to Arabia and Africa, and traveling southwards founded a great empire in southern Africa, we find in Egypt, and in communication with the leaders in Arabia, the Messenger to whom Egypt gave the name of Thoth, to whom Greece later gave that of Hermes, who clothed His message in the symbology of Light. In the central home the Race had been taught that the Self is one, “the Person in the Sun”, and that all selves are rays of that Sun. The same idea was carried by Hermes to Egypt, but the symbology was that of Light. For He said that the Light dwells in heaven, and yet finds its home in every heart of man, that Light in the heaven above us is identical with Light in the heart within us, and that when once men have seen the Light in their own hearts, then they can look abroad and see it everywhere in heaven and earth. The message was still, the ancient teaching, but in the new form the message spoke of Light, where in the earlier time it had spoken of the Sun.

And when again a sub-race went out to found the mighty Empire of Persia — lasting from B.C. 30,000 to B.C. 2,000 — the same great Messenger went thither 27,000 years before the Christian era; to teach the builders of the Empire and to strike the key-note of the Faith which still is preserved in our own days. We see Him garbing the one Truth now in Fire — Fire the purest of all elements, [Page 12] Fire the purifier of all else. Fire, the divine Fire on the altar; Fire, the divine Fire in the heart of man. Zarathustra was the Messenger of the Fire, drew down Fire from heaven, was caught up when His Mission was over in a cloud of Fire and rapt away from the sight of men; but the Fire He lighted has not yet been quenched, and still His people remember the Word of the Fire; for no new fire may be lighted in the Fire-Temple by a

modern Zoroastrian unless the Fire has flashed from heaven and has lit a flame on earth; many a Fire-Temple has waited for years ere the lightning has come down from the clouds and set some tree on fire, so that the heavenly Fire might be added to the fires gathered from the earthly hearths. Thus strong even yet is the tradition which has come down from the time when Zarathustra's outstretched hand compelled the Fire to come down from heaven, and to light the piled-up wood on the altar by which He stood.

Yet again another civilization was to be built, one that was to dominate European thought, the civilization that gave to Europe the literature which still it strives to copy, the beauty that still it tries to reproduce. Greece, in the days of her glory, raised buildings so exquisite that modern genius and modern skill only try to copy that which they may never hope to excel; Greece gave birth to philosophers so great that all Europe's greatest are still Plato's men, and modern pygmies gaze in [Page 13] wonder at that giant figure, rearing his head so high above his race. Greece is the master of European civilization, with a mastery unchallenged even to our own times. When that rare nation was a-building, when that unrivaled people was establishing itself, then came to ancient Greece the same Mighty Messenger, and now He came with Song. He had spoken in Light and in Fire, and as Orpheus he now spake in music, wondrous music that the Devas gathered to hear, wondrous music drawn by His own magic from a simple instrument, looking all unmeet for the giving forth of such melodious strains; music of voice, too, so marvelous that Nature seemed to hold her breath in listening in rapt delight — so exquisite the melodies He chanted, so mighty the magic that He wrought. Just as in Egypt He founded the great Mysteries which kept alight the torch of knowledge for many thousands years; just as in Persia He founded the Mysteries which trained the Magi; so in Greece He founded the Orphic Mysteries, which were the source of all the occult Schools of Greece; the Mysteries led up to by the Schools of Pythagoras, of which Plato spoke, which moulded the master-minds of Greece, where from they drew the wisdom which fed Europe.

Time went on and on, until the day dawned in which a yet greater Message was to be spoken upon earth, and in Northern India, in a family of Kings, a Child was born. Round His cradle Devas gathered, [Page 14] scattering flowers, hymning the Holy Birth gazing at the Mother and the Child, the Mother in whose arms was cradled the Hope, the Light of the world. He grew up through exquisite childhood to noble youth, from noble youth to perfect manhood, and no touch of the world-pain had ever weighed on His heart, nor dimmed His eye. Then from the world a sob of sorrow caught His ear; then through the diseased, the dead, the aged, the cry of humanity smote upon Him, and on one still fair night — all blessing on that night — He rose and bent over sleeping wife and slumbering babe, breathed over them His tender blessing and farewell, and cutting off with sharp sword-blade his flowing hair, casting off his royal robes, sending back his favorite horse — He, who was Siddartha and who was to be the Buddha, went out on His lonely journey, the goal of which was the world's salvation. Long He sought and much He suffered; many ways He tried, and none led Him to His end; emaciated, feeble, worn out, a mere skeleton, sinking to the ground, having tested austerity to the uttermost, and having found it fail, He took from a maid's hand a few drops of milk, and renewed His failing strength; then onwards He went to complete His work, to find the Light which was to shine on Him and through Him upon the world, He, the first of our humanity to climb that loftiest peak of Buddhahood. Under the Bodhi tree He sat, assailed by all the powers of evil, tempted by the weeping figure of His wife [Page 15] and the wailing cry of His child, until the Light broke upon Him, until His eyes were opened, until He saw the cause of sorrow and the path to the ceasing of sorrow; then the Devās gathered round Him, and Brahmā, the Creator of the world prayed Him to take to it the Light which He had found. After some days He arose and went near, to the holy City of Benares, and there He began the rolling of Wheel of the Law, and brought the Light of Life to men. Thereafter for many a long year His blessed feet trod the plains and forests of India, His exquisite voice brought knowledge to the ignorant and comfort to the sorrowing; until He cast away His last mortal body, and rose

high into super-celestial worlds, to shed thence His priceless blessing on the humanity He had glorified, lifting it in Himself to wisdom and love illimitable.

His work as Messenger of the White Lodge was over, for He had risen to the place where none might bid Him go forth again, and He then yielded the seat of the Supreme Teacher to His beloved Brother, who for millions of years had trodden the Path beside Him, whom we know as the Lord Maitreya, the future Buddha of Compassion. You know the great Rshi who is mentioned from time to time in the Hindū Purānas, in the *Mahābhārata*, the mighty One, gentle as He is mighty. The time came when He should manifest Himself in all the splendor of His Love, the power of His matchless tenderness, to the world to whose service He was [Page 16] vowed; and in the little country of Judaea, among the despised nation of the Jews, He came. Reverence gave Him the name of the Christ, the Anointed, but it is written in the Christian Scriptures: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not". Although it is true that they said of Him that no man spake such words as fell from His gracious lips, although His heart of love attracted round Him for a while the fickle populace, yet they who shouted welcome to Him a few days later shouted death, and slew the Holy One. Only for three brief years could they tolerate His presence, only for three brief years might His tender glory shine on a world unworthy of Him. Then they slew His body, and He, rejected of the world, went back to Those who were in very truth His own, to the great White Lodge that knew Him, and that did Him. reverence.

Many another lesser Messenger has come since then; there is not one new impulse given to the world that does not come from the hands of some Messenger of the Lodge. They come not only for religion, albeit that is their most perfect and sublime work; they come whenever man has need of teaching and of helping. As Prophets, Scientists, Warriors, Teachers, they come, carrying light and strength; Hunyadi, Paracelsus, Bruno — their names are legion. Many Rshis have come to this land of India, all of them Messengers of the one White Lodge: many great religious Teachers have arisen [Page 17] in the West, Messengers of the Lodge which is the Heart of the world.

When Europe was sunken in darkness, when the light of Greece was shrouded, when ignorance wrapped her people, when the Church had become the slayer instead of the guardian of knowledge, and priests were no longer light-bringers; then it was that, turning from Europe, a Messenger of the White Lodge, whom you know as the Prophet of Arabia, the Prophet Muhammad, was sent to light again the lamp of knowledge. Its rays spread over the Western world; for his work was not alone to teach the unity of God to the depraved and quarreling tribes of the country of his birth; there was a mightier work than conquest by the sword, a work grander than the Empire his followers built Islām brought knowledge back to the Western world; Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, gathered round him men eager for knowledge; they took up the tradition of Greece, they founded schools and universities. From the lips of the Prophet fell the startling statement: "The ink of the scholar is greater than the blood of the martyr". And the ink of the scholar was used in Arabia while the sword of the warrior was conquering in Turkey. Learning spread as power subdued. Behind the conquerors came the scholars, the teachers of science, astronomers, philosophers, mathematicians, architects. They appeared in Spain under the banner of the Prophet, and to them all Europe went to school. It [Page 18] is to Islām that Europe owes its great awakening. It is Islām that brought to Europe the treasures of science and made it possible for men to think and study where they had been willing merely to accept and to believe.

Later came other Messengers like those I have mentioned, and brought alchemy which built chemistry, astrology which built astronomy: medicine was taught, and later the vital powers which could cheek

disease took a name from one of Their pupils. The White Lodge, the Master-builders, laid the foundation of modern Europe, and sent craftsmen and apprentices thither, that the new Temple of modern thought and modern civilisation might be built. The greater Ones have not left the world They Love, though They have not walked much among men; not because Their love is less, not because Their power is weaker, but because in the growth of the self-assertive intellect there was no place left for Them in modern minds and hearts.

The history of the Messengers of the great White Lodge, during many a century of European story, is a history of persecution, of torture, of hatred in every form. Every lover of humanity who came to Europe with a message of Light carried his life in his hands. If you ask why the higher Teachers do not come, look at the fires which the Inquisition lighted; look at the dungeons which the Inquisition built; see Copernicus holding back his knowledge till he lay on his death-bed; see [Page 19] Bruno defiant, and yielding his dying breath in the Field of Flowers in Rome; see Galileo forced upon his knees, and compelled to deny the truth he knew. Messenger after Messenger came, and met torture and death; Messenger after Messenger later found misery and social ostracism. Take the latest of them, that noble woman, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky; she gave up high rank, wealth and country, to wander over the countries of the earth in search of her Master; she found Him, learned from Him, and came back to the modern world: her hands filled with the treasures of the Ancient Wisdom; they rewarded her by branding her as cheat and fraud; she was disbelieved and scorned, slandered and outraged; until even that lion-heart was broken, and that body of tempered steel was shattered.

With such a record behind us, with such a shame of brutal treatment in our memories, we await again the coming of its greatest Messenger from the White Lodge; not one of the lesser Messengers, not one of the faithful and devoted disciples, not one of those who come because bidden by their Superiors to go out into the world. But One to whom none may say: "Go", but who ever breathes: "I come" — the supreme Teacher, the great Rshi, the Bodhisattva, the Lord Maitreya, the blessed Buddha yet-to-be. We who know something of the occult life, we who of our own knowledge bear witness that He lives upon our earth, are waiting for His coming and already the steeps of the Himālayas are echoing [Page 20] to the footsteps that tread them to descend into the world of men. There He is standing, awaiting the striking of His hour; there He is standing, with His eyes of love gazing on the world that rejected Him aforetime, and perchance will again reject Him; there He is waiting till the fulness of the time is ripe, till His Messengers have proclaimed His advent, and to some extent have prepared the nations for His coming.

Already among the peoples of the world there is the hush of expectation; already from many a pulpit in the Western world is ringing out the cry for a great spiritual Teacher, who shall shape the religions of the world into one vast synthesis, and spread true Brotherhood among men. Already the heart of the world is beating with hope; already the mind of the world is beginning to be alert; and before very many years have rolled over us and have become the past, in a future that is near, reckoned by our mortal years, there shall go up a cry from humanity to Him whose ears are never deaf, to Him whose heart is never closed against the world He loves. A cry shall go up: "O Master of the great White Lodge, Lord of the religions of the world, come down again to the earth that needs Thee, and help the nations that are longing for Thy presence. Speak the Word of Peace, which shall make the peoples to cease from their quarrelings; speak the Word of Brotherhood, which shall make the warring classes and castes to know themselves [Page 21] as one. Come with the might of Thy love; come in the splendor of Thy power, and save the world which is longing for Thy coming, Thou who art the Teacher alike of Gods and men".