

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

# What is a Spiritual Master?



Izvor Collection



P R O S V E T A

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## Chapter One

# How to recognize a true spiritual Master

A disciple who has met his Master has found a mother who will carry him in her womb for nine months so that he may be born into the spiritual world. Once he has been born, once his consciousness has awakened, his eyes will discover the beauty of creation, his ears will hear divine words, he will taste heavenly food, his feet will bear him throughout space on errands of good and his hands will learn to create in the finer, higher worlds of the soul.

Very few people understand what a Master really is. They have read books which tell all sorts of unlikely tales: a Master is perfect, all knowing, and all powerful; he has no need to eat, drink or sleep; he is beyond temptation and above all, he spends his time performing miracles. All these ideas can be found in Spalding's 'The Life of Masters,' and many people have been swept off their feet by this book, never questioning the improbability of many of the anecdotes. Great Masters have indeed got exceptional powers,

but they never use them for performing feats to astound the casual bystander. Even though they are capable of appearing and disappearing, of walking on water, flying through the air, producing banquets, passing unhurt through flames or raising houses out of the dust, true Masters will not do these things, as to witness such happenings does not help people to work on themselves and change.

It is important you know that a Master is made exactly like all other men: he has the same organs, he feels the same needs and has the same longings. If you cut him, his blood will flow red like everybody else's. What makes him different is that his consciousness is very much greater than that of most people: the Master has an ideal, he sees things from a higher point of view and above all, he has achieved perfect control over himself. Clearly, it takes an enormous amount of time and work to achieve this, and that is why no one can become a Master in a single incarnation.

Should you meet a Master, you must realize that all the qualities and virtues that he manifests have not been acquired in just this one lifetime. He will have had to have worked over centuries, even millennia, and the qualities that he has gained by his own work not only remain with him when he leaves the earth but return with him too. So from incarnation to incarnation he keeps adding new

spiritual elements to his being until the day comes when he can truly conduct light and heavenly virtues.

Unfortunately, there are also those who have been working over the centuries to become conductors of hellish forces and they are masters of black magic. People are free to choose either good or evil. Should they choose evil, Cosmic Intelligence will let them continue on this path a certain time, according to the degree of their revolt against the universal order, but they will always finish by being annihilated. At the beginning, however, man has a free choice. As long as he is alive, he is free to choose which direction his path should take.

Very occasionally, under rare circumstances, you can find beings whose path is fixed, despite the free will which is given them. Great initiates, for example, are pre-determined for light and for love. Some of them may have indeed fallen, but the majority have remained spirits of light. Moreover, as time goes on, it becomes less possible for them to change direction: through their work they succeed in so spiritualizing their physical material that they become untarnishable, like pure gold. Until a being has arrived at this degree of evolution, it is always possible for him to change direction and you can find cases in history of white magicians who have become black magicians.

If you are wondering what one has to do to become a black magician, I will tell you that in fact it is very simple, so simple that even you can become one. All you have to do is to give way to your lower nature. If you keep on breaking the laws of goodness, justice and love through trying to be successful at the expense of others, if you push people around and destroy them, then you, too, will be on the way to becoming a black magician. There it is, clear and simple. Many imagine that you have to have a diabolical master who will teach you all sorts of wicked incantations and the art of casting magical spells. Of course this can happen, but you do not have to have a master to work for evil; even without any teacher, any magical formulas, anything, you can become a black magician merely by letting yourself be too much influenced by your lower nature. The same goes for those who think only of helping and enlightening others: even if they have no Master teaching them, they are on their way to becoming a white magician.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, everybody has a master, whether visible or invisible. Criminals have masters in the invisible world who keep on suggesting that they should harm others. They may well say, 'What, us? A Master? Not on your life!' but these blind people should realize that they do have a master and that they follow his pernicious advice, day and night.

Obviously, when I talk to you of the Masters, I always mean the great spiritual Masters, the true white magicians. I know very well that the title of Master is given to many craftsmen to show that they excel in their work, and that lawyers, magistrates and artists are also given this name. It is a way of looking at things, and I would not deny them their title. However, you must understand that a true Master, in the spiritual meaning of the term, is a being who first of all knows the essential verities, not what people have written, invented or told in legend, but the essential truths as seen by Cosmic Intelligence. Secondly, a true Master has to have both the will and the ability to dominate, master and control everything within him. Finally, this science and this control which he has acquired must only be used to manifest all the qualities and virtues of unselfish love.

A true Master is recognized by his disinterestedness. Every Master who comes on earth has a particular quality to manifest: there are, therefore, Masters of wisdom or of strength or of purity... but all of them, without exception, have in common this quality of disinterestedness.

There are so many impostors and charlatans, ready to take advantage of people's naïvety! They merely read a few old books on occult science (often written by ignorant people) and with no more ado, they parade themselves as great Masters. There

are no signs on them that heaven has acknowledged them, they just call themselves Masters and think that that is enough. As for their followers, instead of studying their leader a while to see how he behaves, they follow him with their eyes closed. They will be deceived, stripped of everything and enslaved, but they will not even notice. What a magnificent state of affairs! You can at least say that the so-called Master is a pretty shrewd human being whereas his followers are fools. Why not ask where he has come from, how he has lived, who his Master was and who sent him? No, they do not see the point of such questions; as they have been promised initiation in three days (at the cost of a few thousand dollars, to be sure!), they will believe him. You see they are in a hurry, and so their initiation must not take longer than three days! The world is full of people like that, humbugs and swindlers who demonstrate their own intelligence by taking advantage of the credulity and the stupidity of others.

I do not deny that these people have certain powers – anybody who does certain exercises can get powers – but the question is to know how to use them and to what end, because it is on this that heaven judges us. Heaven is not concerned with the abilities we have but with the use we make of them; not with our knowledge, our clairvoyance or powers, but with our disinterestedness. You can have all the knowledge, clairvoyance and powers

in the world; but if you are not disinterested, even though people regard you as a Master, heaven will not acknowledge you.

The real tragedy is people's lack of discernment: should they meet a true Master who is totally disinterested, they are wary of him, whereas the first person who turns up and throws dust into their eyes by saying that he is a Master, will be followed. In fact, a true Master will never once say that he is a Master but rather he will let you feel it and understand it. He is in no hurry to be recognized. However, once a false Master has decreed that he is a Master, he will only be concerned with imposing his will on others.

I have just received a letter from a man who thinks he is capable of being a spiritual guide, yet he wrote to me of his difficulties and sufferings. How can he deceive people by pretending to guide them whilst he himself is still confused? Obviously it would be better if he waited. Who told him to take on this task? People believe that they are capable of guiding others before they have gained the necessary virtues of wisdom, love, purity, strength and unselfishness and that is not the way things should be at all. Until you have received the order from a higher being that you should take on this crushing task of directing and guiding people, it is very dangerous to want to play this role.

I would very much like to help this particular man, because I can see that he is very unhappy and that he does not even know the reason for his unhappiness. He thought it was enough to read a few books of occult knowledge and then invoke the mighty powers of the invisible world, making use of them without ever having learnt that the first thing he must do is to get himself into harmony with them. Naturally, these forces take their revenge, 'Why are you trying to make use of us just to satisfy your own whims? You are weak, ignorant and we do not wish to submit to you. In fact, you deserve a good lesson.' There are many so-called occultists who have no real knowledge of the laws of the spiritual world. I repeat, they have read a few books and, without having prepared themselves at all, they want to flabbergast their disciples by performing marvels. Oh no, this is no way to set about things.

If you are to assume the role of spiritual guide, you must first have received a diploma. The diplomas which exist on the physical plane also have their counterparts above, awarded in just the same way. Luminous spirits, who have sent us to earth, watch us, measure us and if they see that we have made efforts and that we have succeeded in dominating ourselves and correcting some of our faults, they give us a diploma. What kind of diploma? Certainly not a paper which could be

obliterated or destroyed but, instead, our faces are stamped with a mark, as are our bodies, in proof that we have achieved a victory over ourselves. People may perhaps not see it, but all the luminous spirits of nature see it from afar and obey us and come to help us.

Yes indeed, in order to have the right to carry out certain tasks on the spiritual plane, we must also obtain the approval of certain beings and, believe me, that approval is not easily given. Many who have wanted to become teachers or professors found that the studies they had to undergo were long and difficult, but those studies are nothing, nothing at all, when compared to the conditions that have to be fulfilled by those who want to teach their disciples the truths of Initiatic Science. I am always amazed by the ignorance and naïvety of people on this question: just about anybody thinks he is qualified to use the title of Master and when most people meet a true Master, they think that he has fallen straight from heaven just like that, perfect, and without ever having had to put in any work!

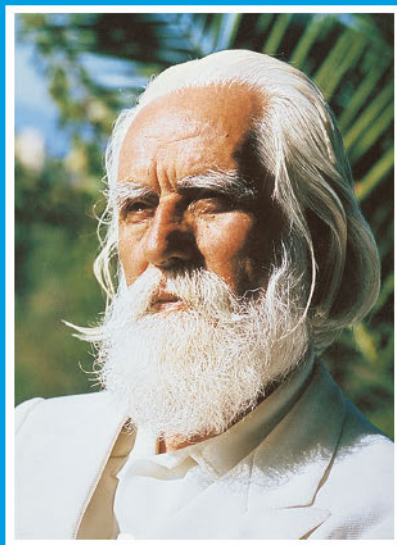
You will never find any being who has come to earth perfect. Whether he shows it or not, everyone has at least one weakness, if not several. Even the great initiates have weaknesses: it may be fear, or pride, or greed or sensuality. The superiority of an initiate lies in the fact that, first of all, he is aware

of his weakness and then that he uses all means to triumph over it.

When a being comes to incarnate on this earth, however elevated his spirit may be, he will inherit from his parents a more-or-less defective matter which he has to transform. This he does by using his other qualities and virtues and so he becomes even greater after this success because he has managed to transform crude material into a more refined material which can be used in his work. One can really discover the power of the spirit with initiates for they have learnt to dominate everything, whereas most people drag behind them weaknesses they have not been able to conquer throughout their whole life.

You must understand that an initiate comes to earth bearing those qualities which he has worked on in previous incarnations; because of these qualities he instinctively avoids the evil path and directs himself towards constructive and luminous activities. Even if he can remember nothing, he is pushed, despite himself, to continue in the same direction that he held in the past. I had absolutely no memory of my previous incarnations for many years, but I came to this life with certain traces stamped on me which pushed me in a particular direction.

I know very well that some of you will be astounded and shocked to hear that even great



*The distinguished philosopher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900 - 1986), was born in Bulgaria. In 1937 he moved to France, where he lived and taught for almost fifty years until his death. One of the most striking aspects of the Master's teaching is the enormous variety of ways in which he presents the one central theme of man and his growth in perfection. Whatever the question under discussion, it is invariably dealt with in terms of how man can better conduct his life.*

**Although the idea of a spiritual Master is becoming more and more familiar to the general public, his nature and role are still poorly understood, even by those who claim to be disciples. The main purpose of this book is to clarify this question. Some may find this clarification a little ruthless, but it is necessary, for it is of first importance not to delude oneself about spiritual realities. It is true that a Master is that prodigious being who can lead men to the highest summits of the spirit, but for him as well as for his disciples, this sublime venture can succeed only if it is accompanied by a rigorous inner adherence to truth and selflessness.**