

Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of the 13th Dalai Lama

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This story describes the detective's 2 year stay in Tibet and his interview with the boy who was the Dalai Lama at the time.

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Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of the 13th Dalai Lama

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE ADVENTURE OF THE THIRTEENTH DALAI LAMA

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Dr. John H. Watson, M.D.

To Sherlock Holmes, he was always "that curious little Mongol boy, with a head like an egg, calm eyes, thick lips, and a mind beyond my comprehension." Though I have reviewed my notes on this singular case many times over the years and though the case is of obvious interest to admirers of the world's foremost consulting detective, I have hesitated to publish it. It will not, I fear, enhance his reputation. It will, however, provide indispensable information on the limits of a deductive intelligence of the first water. I decided, in the end, to leave instructions that the case not be published until the end of the next century. If, as I hope, my friend's reputation has grown during that time, and the science of reasoning has advanced beyond its current primitive level, this case may aid those who pursue this science into the next century.

Though my stories about Holmes's exploits have a relatively wide readership, it would perhaps be immodest of me to assume the reader is familiar enough with my chronicles to recall my earlier report on Holmes's visit with the Dalai Lama Thupten Gyatso, the thirteenth of that line. In my story "The Adventure of the Empty House," I described Holmes's escape from Professor Moriarity and subsequent years of travel. Indeed, it was Holmes's own reading of this tale which lead him to recount some of the details of his visit, details so strange that I must remind the reader of Holmes's meticulous attention to factual detail. We may take it as true that the events occurred exactly as he reported them.

I learned the details of the bizarre and disturbing meeting between the "God King of Tibet" and the world's foremost practical reasoner as Holmes and I sat in the flat at 221b Baker street. I was, at the time, living nearby with my second wife who had not yet passed away and I made it a practice to breakfast with my old friend as often as possible. I recall it was the beginning of one of those gray rainy winter days for which London is justly famous. Mrs. Hudson had cleared away the breakfast dishes and I sat gazing abstractedly at the rain and soot particles creeping down the panes of glass. Holmes filled his pipe with a pungent Latakia tobacco and proceeded to fill the room with clouds of smoke as he produced a copy of The Strand magazine.

"Really Watson, I must speak with you about this latest effort of yours. Once again you have obscured the science of deduction with your emphasis on the sensational details of the crime. Further, you have provided little of practical value to those wishing to learn my methods."

I had long been familiar with my friend's habit of smoking noxious tobacco when he wished to bait me into an argument. Therefore, I simply replied calmly,

"It would be instructive if you could give me a few specific examples Holmes. Shall I bring pen and foolscap and jot them down?"

"Your sarcasm does you credit, Watson," he said with a laugh. "But certainly you could have devoted less time to your description of the terrors of the Reichenbach Falls and more to a description of the Japanese art of Baritsu which enabled me turn the tables on the late Professor. Even more importantly, why did you not provide your readers with some details about the chat I had with the Dalai Lama?"

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"Regarding your first point, I did not feel the details of Japanese wrestling were of interest to the general reader. Regarding your second point, I could not provide information to my readers which you have never provided to me," I said with a calm which seemed to provoke his ire.

"Poppycock! Do you mean to say I never told you a word about that little Mongol boy?"

Holmes's words added to the discomfort I was feeling in my leg. Damp weather always seemed to intensify the pain from the bullet I still carry as a souvenir of my time in Afghanistan in Her Majesty's Army. I sprang from the chair and began to pace the room in agitation.

"I know my mind is not the equal of yours," I said. "but do you really believe I would have failed to recognize the importance of such information or that I would have simply forgotten the details of your meeting with a man who is a god in his own country but about whom virtually nothing is known in the civilized world?"

I snatched the copy of The Strand from his hand. "I will," I said, "read you every word you told me about the meeting. It begins after the bit about Moriarity's death, where you explain why you decided to confide in your brother Mycroft and not me." I found the appropriate page of the story and read:

"... The trial of the Moriarity gang left two of its most dangerous members, my own most vindictive enemies, at liberty. I traveled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhasa and spending some days with the head Llama."

With this, I closed the magazine. My irritation increased considerably when I saw that the editors of the magazine had not corrected the spelling of "Lama" as I had clearly instructed on the galley proofs, thereby giving the impression that Holmes had spent time with a South American animal rather than a Tibetan wise man.

It is a rare thing to see Holmes perplexed. "I must beg your pardon my dear friend. It is clear I never told you about it. What a regrettable lapse! I cannot think why I forgot to tell you about this adventure. My brain is usually not so muddled. Still, better late than never. We can pass a pleasant hour away from this land of rains in the Land of Snows."

Holmes's intense manner was at odds with his casual speech. Further, he was not a man to have "forgotten" something as important as this.

"First of all, I must explain why it was absolute necessary to contact my brother Mycroft. I had to hide in the most remote spot on earth. Tibet was the logical deduction. No European is allowed in the country and some who have attempted to enter have been expelled by force of arms. The Tibetans, like Mycroft, value their privacy. Moriarity's gang would never search for me there because they would conclude it is simply impossible that I should be there. Mycroft, however, has something of a reputation in certain circles for arranging the impossible."

I had the pleasure of meeting Holmes's brother Mycroft in connection with the depressing affair of the Greek interpreter and the theft of the plans for the Bruce Paddington submarine. My own experience confirmed Holmes's almost unbelievable assertion that Mycroft's mind was superior to his own.

"I am sure I mentioned that Mycroft works as a civil servant in the British Government." Holmes said with a mischievous smile.

"You also mentioned that during certain international crises it is accurate to say that he IS the British Government," I reminded him.

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"Quite so. My brother has always had the most remarkable memory; he seems to know every detail of every important policy decision taken within the last century. He also has acquaintances in the most out-of-the-way places who owe him favors. Certain members of the East India Company and the British Raj were particularly eager to repay past favors by helping his brother establish a new identity and fade from sight. They provided me with a new identity, that of the Norwegian explorer Lief Sigerson, and the necessary papers to make that identity believable. They also bore the considerable expense of outfitting an expedition in Darjeeling, on condition that I never publish any account of my travels which might make things difficult for the Tibetan officials who approved my entry against the explicit policy of the Tibetan government."

"From Darjeeling, I made the eighteen-mile trip by cart-road to the Teesta River valley. The most uncomfortable part of the trip was the next sixty miles to the Tibetan frontier. I found the leeches particularly troublesome. It is rather dreary to sit down at the end of a long day's trek and remove from your legs those bloated creatures who have been feeding on your life blood.

"We followed a pony-track through Kalimpong, gradually climbing along the river to Rangpo, and then passed through Sikkim on the way to the Jelep La, our pass through the mountains. I shall not soon forget the views I saw there. The vastness and strangeness of the terrain and the absence of a period of twilight between evening and night, contributed to my own feeling of isolation. I was the only European in our small expedition, alone in a group of yellow faces and incomprehensible tongues, traveling under an assumed name, with the whole civilized world thinking I was dead."

Knowing Holmes as I did, I could well imagine how he must have felt. I suddenly realized that he had regretted not telling me he was still alive but had only now found the means to express his regret. For perhaps the only time in my life, I correctly deduced what Holmes was about to say.

"Watson, it is difficult for a man like me to admit an error in judgment but it is a capital error to deny such a mistake when it does occur. My failure to communicate with you during the last three years was an error in judgment. Do I have your forgiveness for it?"

"My dear fellow, think nothing of it." I said. I knew Holmes would recall the many times in our friendship when he had used these exact words to dismiss a mistaken deduction or an error in judgment on my part.

"Very good then. We shall say no more about it. Let us return to the Tibetan frontier. Having crossed the Jelep La, we were still over 200 miles (and several mountain passes) from Lhasa. The story of this journey is not without its points of interest, but let me skip it for now. Upon arriving in Lhasa I sought out the Head Lama to present him with the traditional white scarf and an unopened letter Mycroft had given me with instructions to present it to the Head Lama. Mycroft said it was from a person of some importance who could provide a sterling character reference for me."

"It took some time to arrange the meeting with an individual who claimed to be the Head Lama. I arrived at the Potala, the Dalai Lama's palace, at the appointed hour on a bitterly cold morning. The exterior of the palace is splendid but the interior is surprisingly dark. I was shown to a small bare room where I found an old man in monk's robes. With his breath smoking in the icy air he asked me, in surprisingly good English, if I would like a cup of tea. Though Tibetan tea is nearly undrinkable because it contains the butter of the stinking yaks, it warms one wonderfully.

"As it happened, my host turned out not to be the Dalai Lama who was, of course, a boy of 15 living in seclusion at the time. At first he merely said he was a friend of the Dalai Lama. When I protested that I had instructions to give my letter directly to the Head Lama, he explained that he actually outranked the Dalai Lama in spiritual matters though he was subordinate to him in purely temporal affairs. I decided that it would be wise to give him the letter. Upon reading the letter he smiled with a subtlety which I had seen on the faces

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of many of the residents of the Potala.

" â Mr. Sigerson, we are members of a very isolated and backward race. Can you please explain to me, who is Queen Victoria?â , he said with perfect innocence, playing along with Mycroft's joke on me. Naturally, I was surprised though I had suspected that She might be the author of the letter.

" â She is the beloved monarch of the greatest empire since Rome,â I replied.

" â In her letter she says you are a very fine chap and that you have helped her government on several occasions. Is this true?â

" â I have rendered some small service to Her Majesty on more than one occasion.â

" â She asks that we give you sanctuary and says that you have very special talents which may be of use to us. What are these talents Mr. Sigerson?â

"Though I did not wish to give myself away I did wish to give him some general idea of my talents in case they should be needed in this out-of-the-way spot. I chose an indirect answer.

" In addition to being an explorer I am also a scientist of sorts. My specialization is the science of deduction. Through the practiced application of the principles of this science I can draw conclusions and solve a variety of little puzzles in all sorts of areas which escape others. Indeed, the results can be quite startling at times. By way of demonstration, I will tell you the few details I have been able to deduce about you and what is on your mind at the moment. First, though I have not met you before this hour I can deduce the obvious facts that you are an extremely busy and competent professional man who has risen from a humble background because of natural talent. Early in your life you nearly ruined your health through intense study, but approximately 20 years ago you went through a profound personal experience which transformed you both physically and spiritually. You have a level of personal discipline which is remarkable even among these monks. You also have a very large problem upon which you wish to ask my help and a small personal problem which you had not intended to bring up. I do not know whether I can help you with your larger problem but I know that it involves the Dalai Lama himself. You will be pleasantly surprised to learn I can help you with the small personal problem.â

"You know my methods, Watson. I always watch to see how the client reacts to these disclosures. The Lama sat for one full minute with no change of expression or movement, with his gaze intently fixed on mine. Then the lines of his brown weathered face shattered and reformed into the smile of a child of two."

" â Help me with my small problem then we shall perhaps discuss the large problem,â he said with a laugh and a clap of his hands.

" â Very well. Your small personal problem at the moment is that you have a very severe migraine headache. A physician friend of mine, Dr. Watson, has helped me recognize the symptoms well enough. I am sure he would say your case is as severe as any he has seen. I believe you would be heeding your own doctors' advice and resting in bed if you did not have a very good reason for meeting with me. Further, the quiet but efficient search your attendants have been conducting since I arrived attests to the fact that they are attempting to find a small object that will, in some way unknown to me, cure your condition. Your own extraordinary level of self discipline is shown by the fact that you can even carry on this conversation in the face of what, to most people, would be intolerable pain. The fact that the small object has not yet been found allows me to illustrate one of the principles of my deductive science: When we eliminate the impossible whatever remains, however unlikely, must be the truth. Since the object has not been found elsewhere, it follows that it must be on your person. In your pain and eagerness to meet with me, you did not conduct a thorough search of your

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own clothing. If your Holiness will stand and loosen his robes, I believe the object will fall to the floor.â

"Almost before I had finished speaking he sprang up and threw his robes wide, sending a small jade figurine flying across the floor. His attendant snatched it up excitedly and handed it to him, grinning and jabbering in his incomprehensible language as he pointed toward me and bowed deeply, placing his palms on the floor. Meanwhile, the Lama's face scarcely changed, but I could see that the pain seemed to leave him almost instantly when he touched the small image of a woman in robes holding a bowl.

" â I presume I have Mr. Sherlock Holmes to thank for this clever and compassionate act,â he said, giving me the first of a series of surprises which must have delighted him. I believe that I stared at him for a full minute before I said simply, â Yes.â Despite his obvious intelligence and alien manner of speech, the man had a simple truthfulness which encouraged one to reciprocate.

"With the obvious air of a man with no time to waste on trifles, he did not ask me to tell him HOW I knew of his past and of his large and small problems but instead moved directly to the main business.

" â Mr Holmes, you are quite right on all particulars of which you spoke. I know enough of the English to know that they like to "come right to the nub" and not "beat about the bush" so I will tell you that we do seek your help on a problem involving the training of our current Dalai Lama.â

" â I see you have mastered the skill of reading another's thoughts to an unusual degree. It is a useful skill and will be essential in your work with our young Dalai Lama. I am pleased you have been sent to help us.â

" â No one sent me sir,â I replied. â I came of my own accord.â

" â True enough Mr. Holmes, true enoughâ " he replied. â Allow me to change the subject and ask you to explain again to me please the "Science of Deduction?"â

" â Simply put, your Holiness, it is the science of drawing particular conclusions from general principles.â

" â And you used these principles to deduce that I was in pain and eager to find my healing amulet?â

" â Yes. It is obvious to me when a man is attempting to control pain, though you seem to be more adept at it than anyone with the possible exception of certain Yogis of my acquaintance. Further, your quick expectant glances at your attendants showed you expected them to find something to relieve your pain.â

" â How utterly amazing, Mr. Holmes. You say that it is "obvious" to you when another person is attempting to control pain?â

" â Of course, through his tensed muscles, his facial grimaces, and so on.â

" â But how do you know that facial grimaces mean someone is in pain?â Was he trying to be obtuse?

" â From common human experienceâ , I said with some impatience.

" â So your conclusion was based not on deduction from a set of givens but on your access to common human experience?â

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" â Of course, common human experience provides the general principles from which we deduce particulars.â

" â Does it indeed Mr. Holmes? Would not the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose ideas have reached even this backward country, disagree with you? Even your fellow Englishman John Stuart Mill questions whether experience provides the grounds for the sort of general principles you describe. I believe he uses the word INDUCTION rather than deduction to describe the process of practical reasoning at which you seem to be so adept.â

" â Sir, you have me at a disadvantage. I know only enough of Kant and German Idealism to know it is useless to me in my work. I know little more of the work of Mr. Mill. If I am, as you say, an expert, does it not follow that I should be the best authority on the nature of this reasoning process?â

" â No Mr. Holmes it does not. A man may know how to use a tool without really understanding it. Let me illustrate. Do you play chess?â

" â Not very well, but in this sport my country leads the world. The name of Harold Staunton will live forever in the history of the game.â

" â Some men play chess very well but cannot tell you how they decide on any particular move. Similarly, some men are very good military commanders or administrators but cannot tell you exactly how they reached some of their best decisions. However, some who are not great thinkers but who know their own minds through careful training may observe some truths which escape the notice of the most expert practitioners. May I ask you please to fix this point in your mind as we discuss the ways you may help our Dalai Lama.â

"At this point he paused, but I waved him on with some impatience. For a man who had promised not to beat about the bush he was surprisingly willing to waste time discussing his own fanciful ideas. I could not tell whether he recognized my impatience but if he did, he did not express any irritation, but simply continued in his deliberate manner.

" â Thupten Gyatso, our Thirteenth Dalai Lama, is currently an adolescent boy who is being trained in seclusion to assume his duties.â

" â He has been the Dalai Lama since his birth, then?â

" â We believe he has been the Dalai Lama for considerably longer than that but, as you might say Mr. Holmes, let us not waste time with trifles.â

" â Though Thupten Gyatso is the embodiment of Compassion, he is also a 15 year old boy. In Tibet, that is a difficult age for many boys. Perhaps it is so in England also. Here in Tibet we discourage foreign visitors very strongly, but we know we must learn as much as we can about foreign ideas and customs, especially English customs since you are currently the master of the seas and therefore of the earth. You taught this lesson to our Chinese neighbors some years ago.

" â Your English educational system is one of the sources of your power, and we have attempted to incorporate some of it into the training of our Dalai Lama. Would it surprise you to learn that copies of The Strand magazine have found their way to our remote country? A committee of us read several of the stories and determined that they might make good diversionary reading for our Dalai Lama as they do for many English schoolboys. Further, the stories illustrate proper British virtues like energetic pursuit of the truth regarding the mysteries presented to us by our sense perceptions, careful reflection on the basic facts of existence, and a strong compassion which causes you to devote your life to helping the weak and suffering, a

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compassion which sometimes leads you to let the guilty go free.

" We had to edit some of the more lurid details of the stories (you should speak to your friend, Dr. Watson, about the excessive sensationalism), but the Dalai Lama has now read seven of the stories and, as you might expect, he now admires you more than any of his teachers. His admiration for your type of rationality is so great that it threatens to hinder his training. Under the circumstances you can see how fortuitous it was that you decided to visit us at this moment "of your own accord" ."

"His eyes twinkled as he attempted to parody British speech. " We would like to employ you, and to offer you a generous consulting fee, to assist our Dalai Lama in a spot of detective work. His quarry is hard to define but we think you would call it his "soul" or perhaps his "self." We want you to help him track the beggar down."

"You know, Watson, that I have been involved in some strange cases and have dealt with some strange requests from clients, for example, in that nasty business of the Devil's Foot. Yet when the client is in earnest, as this man obviously was, I take all requests seriously. I said simply "please explain further."

" The ability to suspend judgment and keep an open mind is also a very rare skill which you will need in dealing with our Dalai Lama. Do you not suspect that I may be joking or mad when I make this request?"

"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has all the data. I know already that you are not joking, and I will decide whether you are mad once you have explained your request more fully" . This response on my part provoked another childlike smile from the old man.

" Well said! Well said!" he ejaculated. " The right person has been sent to us. Apparently he had forgotten or chosen to ignore my earlier remarks about coming of my own volition.

" Let me ask you, what deductions have you reached concerning your "self" or "soul?" Do you believe that it exists or not?"

" I have not drawn, nor can I draw, any deductions on a subject which is not susceptible of rational proof."

" Have you read the work of your countryman David Hume on this question, specifically, his Treatise of Human Nature?"

" David Hume is not a countryman of mine in the strict sense. He is a Scotsman and I have no more use for the Scottish school of philosophy than the German school. If you wish to know what my personal beliefs are, I believe we each have an immortal soul and this is our essence or self. I fail to see the importance of this line of inquiry."

" I believe the King of Bohemia once told you the fate of his country depended upon your helping him to locate a photograph. I am now telling you that the fate of my country depends on your helping Thupten Gyatso to locate his essential nature. In return we can promise you a generous fee, and we may be able to help you solve your problems. Will you help us?"

" I must say at the outset that I have serious doubts about my ability to help in this matter, but as a guest I cannot refuse the attempt. Further, I cannot resist meeting a fifteen year-old boy who is also a god in this country."

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"At this he winced. Something about my remark had apparently caused him more pain than his migraine had earlier. " I know in your country he is called the God-King of Tibet. He is in truth neither a god nor a king. But he is more than a mere 15 year old boy. Perhaps you would like to meet him to see if you agree with me."

" " By all means," I said excitedly. " When can a meeting be arranged?"

" " Now."

" " Do you mean this very moment?"

" " If not now, when?" he said, and, seeing my blank face he said " Or, if you prefer, there is no time like the present!"

" " If I am to instruct His Holiness, should I not be given time to prepare?"

" " Allow me to be precise. You will not be instructing our Dalai Lama. You will be helping him to inquire. You do not require any preparation" .

" " As you wish. Let us go and meet him."

" " If you will wait one moment, he will come to us."

"A moment later, a young monk appeared at the door. He entered the room so quietly and unceremoniously I at first thought he must be a young messenger sent to announce the arrival of His Holiness. However, the old Lama's deep bow, palms to the floor, told me that this was no messenger. I bowed my head slightly toward the boy.

"Ignoring me, he turned to the old man and asked "Elder, why does the visitor not bow properly?"

" " Because he is not from our valley. He is a stranger. His letters of introduction say he is Leif Sigerson, a Norwegian explorer but this is not his true name or nature. Do you know his true name and nature, Younger Brother?"

"The boy looked at me with slight amusement. I saw on that face the look of a very bright schoolboy who has become bored with his lessons. " His true name is emptiness and his true nature is an aggregation of five skandas" , the lad said with a flippancy which again made the older monk wince.

" " Please Younger Brother, try to concentrate and apply the skills we taught you. If you can give us this man's true name it will please you." Obviously, the boy had been over-indulged and wanted a sound caning, but the old monk was not one for caning. " Please try," He said again.

"The lad cast a bored glance in my direction and then with a shrug he looked directly at me with real attention. I saw his face lose the look of boredom and acquire a look of perplexity. Then, all at once, he broke into a wide grin which reminded me of the grin I had seen on the old man's face.

" " It is him! You brought him, just as you promised. Thank you, Elder Brother!" He dashed from the room and returned with several dog-eared copies of The Strand. " You must tell me more stories" he said.

"Obviously, the lad had been told who I was and coached to pretend he did not know. I decided to play along.

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" â Young man, you obviously know who I am. Rather than telling you a story I will work with you as I did with The King of Bohemia, Sir Henry Baskerville, and many others on a problem the Elder has set for you.â

"Instantly the little fellow's face took on the look of boredom again. â I have already told my Elder Brother that I do not have a problem. I understand the basic teaching that all existences are void. I have no self .â

" â No man understands this truth until he has tried sincerely to find the selfâ , said the old monk, as though reciting a lesson he had told the young man many times. The young man rolled his eyes.

" â Young fellow!â I said somewhat sharply. â You would do well to listen more closely to this man who has your own interests at heart. As it happens, I do not agree with, or even understand, the phrase "all existences are void." It sounds like daylight madness to me. If you are sure of your conclusion, let us employ my methods to see whether your deductions are sound. I will play Watson and you will play me. You will need thisâ . I handed the boy my pipe. He snatched it up and put it into his mouth as he has seen in the illustrations in The Strand, and furrowed his brow in a comical way.

" 'Nowâ , I said â tell me how you know there is no eternal soul or self'.

" â My dear Watson,â said the boy with obvious relish. â I did not say I know there is no self. I said, in accord with the teaching of the Holy Nagarjuna, that no self can be found. It would not be right to go to the opposite extreme and say that I can prove there is no self .â

"As he spoke I recalled myself at that age in public school, a bright student who learns his lessons almost too easily and may therefore lack real depth of understanding. Such students need to be challenged, and I felt I was up to the task.

" â I must confess I am baffled. Surely the fact that I think proves I exist.â

" 'No, no, no, no.â He said, mimicking my own impatience which you have so accurately described in your stories. â Surely you understand thought can exist without a thinking self. This is the most basic fact of existence. Not only did our Lord Buddha observe it but so did that German man who talked about "apperception of the manifold".â

" â Immanuel Kant, brother,â said the old man.

" â Yes, yes , yes, yes. Immanuel Kant and that Englishman, Hume. Surely this is obvious. You have not thought things through.â The boy obviously was reciting lessons. He felt I had been sent to test him. I, on the other hand, was completely baffled.

" â Young man, let us drop the poses and talk straightforwardly to each other.â

" â Man to man,â he said.

" â Yes. Surely you cannot be serious when â you suggest that there is any question about whether we exist or have selves. We may or may not have immortal souls but the fact that we have selves is as obvious as the fact that we have bodies. It is impossible to conceive of existence without a self. It simply does not make sense. Even if it did, a strong conception of self is the basis for the self-discipline that makes it possible for a man to live in and contribute to his society. Personal responsibility is the basis for moral conduct. I have spent my life dealing with the criminal classes whose chief distinguishing feature is that they do not take personal responsibility for their actions. To attempt to convince people the self does not exist undermines

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civilization.â

"It was obvious I had shocked him out of some of his smugness. He stared at me for a very long time with his face full of perplexity.

" â But how can you believe you have a stable self when you know that you change from year to year? What is the "self" that survives this change?â he asked with genuine curiosity.

" â I believe it is a mental or spiritual entity which is the seat of my highest desires and aspirations,â I answered.

" â But do you not see that when you British try to "realize your highest aspirations," you are really trying to shore up your false conception of "self"? You always end by enforcing these aspirations with gun ships on people whose highest aspirations do not match yours.â

" â I admit we have made mistakes in our attempts to civilize the world. Yet despite our mistakes we have brought the entire continent of India into the Nineteenth Century and may yet do so with China.â

" â But you must understand that you have given both India and China a terrible weapon which they will one day use against you. That weapon is your British concept of "self". The Indians will someday use this weapon to throw you out of their country. The Chinese, of course, will do far worse. Your gun ships woke them from a long period of lethargy. They were a great nation when London was a small village. In their history they have learned how to absorb foreign ideas and turn them to their own use. It will take them 100 years or more to absorb this notion of "self" which built the British Empire, but when they do, they will once again be a great nation. At that time, Britain will know some of China's present humiliation. Is it possible that you have not already deduced this yourself Mr. Holmes?â

"As he spoke I began to suspect that he might be suffering from the rigors of his training and seclusion. Though he spoke calmly, his words had the sound of a mystic's ravings. The future he foresaw was beyond belief. I said simply, â I have no idea what you are talking about.â

"The lad fixed me in his gaze and his eyes slowly assumed a look of fatigue one sometimes sees in the eyes of very old men.

" â Your Holiness!â said the old monk sternly. He no longer used the expression "Younger Brother." Does Mr. Holmes really not understand that the self is void?â

" â He does not understand.â The young man replied with downcast eyes.

" â Then since you understand the concept why can you not explain it to this man whom you yourself told us is more clever than all the Elders put together?â

" â I do not know,â said the boy, and I could see tears welling up in his eyes.

" â Are you still sure the Buddha's teachings on this point are correct and that you understand them fully?â said the man with tears in his own ancient eyes.

" â I do not knowâ said the boy, and he began to weep in earnest now. These were not tears of frustration in a clever student who has gotten his homework wrong. These were tears of deep sorrow. His small body heaved with sobs. I have seen mothers weep in this way when their infants died.

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"The old monk wept also as he said gently to the boy, "Mr. Holmes has rendered you a great service, Brother, greater than either he or you realize at this moment. It would be appropriate for you to formally express gratitude to him."

Homes paused to refill his pipe. I realized that the story had taken less time to tell than it took Holmes to finish a single bowl of tobacco.

"Sadly Watson that is all there is to the story. The boy was too upset to continue that day, and the next day the old monk came to thank me for my help and tell me that he had found lodgings for me with a local pious family who would be willing and able to see to my needs as long as I cared to stay, even if that should be for years to come. I never again saw the boy who would later rule the country, but when I did leave two years later, he provided a small guard to escort me safely to the border where I was presented with a small package from His Holiness to Queen Victoria. I was instructed to deliver it through my brother Mycroft, who later told me that it contained an exceptionally fine piece of the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli and an extremely short letter saying in effect,

"This jewel is a gift to the monarch of Great Britain. It symbolizes the gratitude of Dalai Lama Thupten Gyatso for the assistance rendered by Mr. Sherlock Holmes in locating the Great Jewel of Compassion."

Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of the 13th Dalai Lama

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