

Adepts, Yogis, and Masters in the Works of René Guénon

Anonymous

Introduction and Method

One cannot meaningfully dispute the fact that to René Guénon, *initiation* was a primary if not core principle in both his intellect and in his collective *oeuvre*. Oddly enough, while Guénon provided his students and readers with ample discussion of initiation as a process, and described in detail categories among and between regular and irregular, virtual and effective initiation, he provided relatively little information about initiates themselves. By this we mean, for purposes of this discussion, initiates at the advanced levels of the spiritual hierarchy, or the spiritual or intellectual elite—all these last terms being Guénon’s own. What descriptions there are of high initiates or “Adepts” throughout Guénon’s published works are found in bits and pieces, almost like clues and hints, since he devoted no book-length or even article-length publication specifically to this subject.

Accordingly, this discussion seeks to provide a brief overview of Guénon’s observations and perspectives on this compelling subject, and to do so by a method that utilizes Guénon’s own words and descriptions as much as possible, with as little interpretation or extrapolation by the author as possible. In this endeavor, we have confined the borrowed quotations from Guénon’s published works to those translated into English and published in the series of his collected writings by Sophia Perennis press. Under the circumstances, this is a method preferable to using quotations from the French, given that the English translations just mentioned are quite competent, and given further that the number of quotations used is sizeable. For ease of reference to readers of this

discussion, we have integrated the abbreviated citations to sources for each of the quotations into the text using a variation of the style of scientific journals and treatises. The list of such source or book-title abbreviations used here is to be found in the endnotes.¹

The author prefers to remain anonymous for the simple reason that he advances no position or argument here other than that forwarded by Guénon himself on this subject, but has simply extracted and organized a compilation of quotes which, taken together, circumscribes the subject in the interests of scholarship and further discussion. It should be further understood by the reader that no claim is being made that these quotes taken from Guénon's writings on this subject are comprehensive. Those quotes that appear here are but representative samples among all references to initiates of high degree one can find scattered throughout Guénon's published works, and additional references to these initiates can readily be found in those works.

Adept, Yogi, Master, Mahatma, Guru, Sheikh, and Universal Man

While the terms used above in the heading to this section of the discussion are all related, and in cases synonymous, they had slightly different meanings to Guénon depending upon the context in which he used them. What is true of them all, however, and what relates each to the other is that each refers to a hierarchically advanced or high initiate, even though the mission, or culture, or religious tradition, or rank of that high initiate may have differed somewhat from those of the others. Four of these terms—Yogi, Mahatma, Guru, and Sheikh—appear in the original French as they do in English, being adopted by Guénon directly from the Indic and Arabic languages. The terms Adept, Master, and Universal Man are English and are cognates and transliterations which appear in Guénon's original French publications as "Adepte," "Maître," and "Homme Universel."²

Although Guénon himself described "degrees" of initiation in this spiritual hierarchy, and occasionally made reference to "level" and "rank," the reader should be advised that the focus of the subject in this discussion are those initiates of advanced or high degree who are both the guardians of esoteric knowledge and the teachers of serious seekers who are typically newer initiates. Thus, there will be no attempt here to distinguish between such degrees or levels, but rather to focus on

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