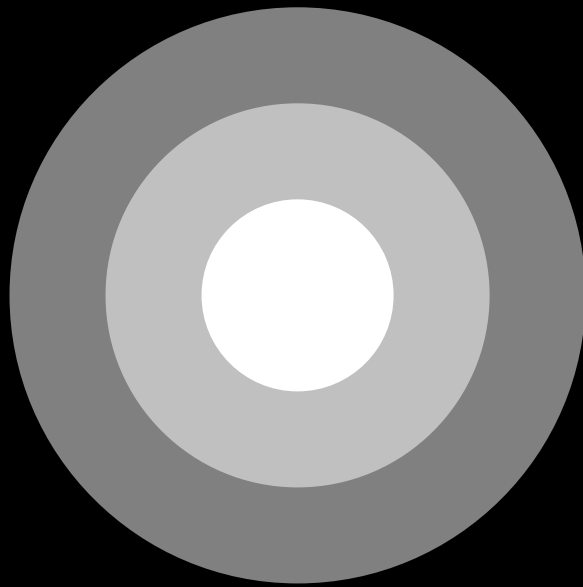


December 2004

# The Quest



**DEATH**

**THE ETERNAL MYSTERY**

# Contents



Vol 1, Issue 12

December 2004

- 3 **This Month**  
Message to the reader  
Readers write
- COVER FEATURES*
- 4 **Death – The Eternal Mystery**
- 6 **The Tibetan Book Of The Dead**
- 7 **Celebrate Your Death**
- 8 **Death – The East & The West**
- REGULAR FEATURES*
- 8 **Healing with Foods**  
Pneumonia  
Habitual sweating
- 9 **From Abroad**  
Psychic healing
- 10 **Siddhartha's Quest**  
Govinda
- 11 **Environment Watch**  
Beauty and humility
- 12 **Conan The Grammarian**
- 13 **Experience and Expression**  
Is life fragile?  
Ode to death
- 14 **Students Ask**  
**The Zen Corner**  
**Meditation**
- 15 **The Last Page**  
In God's Garden  
When one forgets to die

PUBLISHER & EDITOR

KUMAR RAJESH SHRESTHA

FEATURE WRITERS

J M MINGS

PIETER LANGEDIJK

SUPPORT TEAM

DINESH SHRESTHA

SHREE DEVI SHRESTHA

SOJEN PRADHAN

ADVERTISEMENTS & CONTACT

THE QUEST

TAHACHAL, CHHAUNI

PHONE 427-9712

EMAIL [vajratara@yahoo.com](mailto:vajratara@yahoo.com)

POST BOX 10046, KATHMANDU

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Death is not extinguishing the light;  
It is putting out the lamp  
Because dawn has come.

*Rabindranath Tagore*

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*Temple of heaven, Beijing*

## THIS MONTH

### TO THE READER

Death has been the eternal enigma. The question is: Can life ever unfold this mystery? Or does it require death's own hands to undo itself? This issue is an attempt to pry open the door to death, or perhaps to life itself.

Besides, with this issue we wrap up one year of formal publication. Together with you, we look forward to discover more of life in the coming years.

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### AND LASTLY TO

ALL WHO HAVE MADE THIS ISSUE POSSIBLE

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RESPECT AND LOVE?**

### READERS WRITE

UMBERTO NOVARINO, FORLI'

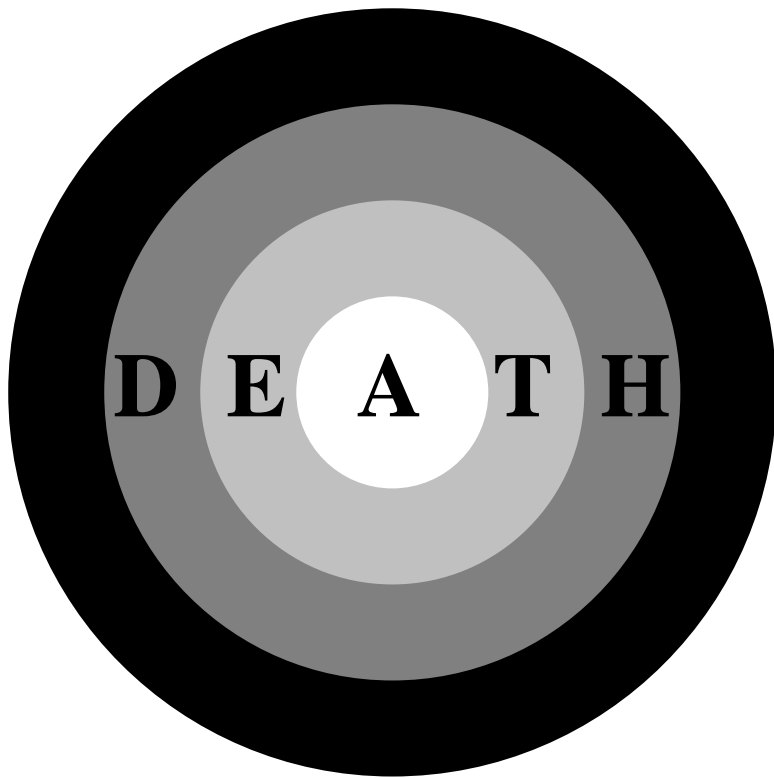
The September issue of *The Quest* is full of interesting articles, although I do not agree completely with the common idea that to be angry is a negative behaviour. I believe that nowadays we must be angry, in a polite way, with those who sell drugs and destroy millions of lives, and with those who promote prostitution. We must be angry, in a polite way, with those who destroy nature only for the sake of money. We must also be angry, in a polite way, with those who, in order to increase their own power and assure their supremacy, finance and stir up senseless wars killing thousands and thousands of innocent people.

I am aware that being angry against these persons does not solve the problems but to be silent and not be angry can only show that we accept or approve the facts.

What will happen if millions of people become angry, in polite way, and complain all together?

**Let's keep our home neat and clean  
And our neighbourhood bright and green.**

**Let's treat this earth well  
And life shall treat us better.**



# THE ETERNAL MYSTERY

***By Raymond A Moody Jr***

What is it like to die?

That is a question which humanity has been asking itself ever since there have been humans. Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to raise this question before a sizeable number of audiences. These groups have ranged from classes in psychology, philosophy, and sociology through church organisations, television audiences, and civic clubs to professional societies of medicine. On the basis of this exposure, I can safely say that this topic excites the most powerful of feelings from people of many emotional types and walks of life.

Yet, despite all this interest it remains true that it is very difficult for most of us to talk about death. There are at least two reasons for this. One of them is primarily psychological and cultural: The subject of death is taboo. We feel, perhaps only subconsciously, that to be in contact with death in any way, even indirectly, somehow confronts us with the prospect of our own deaths, draws our own death closer and makes them more real and thinkable. For example, most medical students, myself included, have found that even the remote encounter with death which occurs upon one's first visit to the anatomical laboratories when entering medical school can evoke strong feelings of uneasiness. In my own case, the reason for this response now seems quite obvious. It has occurred to me in retrospect that it wasn't entirely concern for the person whose remains I saw there, although that feeling certainly figured, too. What I was seeing on that table was a symbol

of my own morality. In some way, if only pre-consciously, the thought must have been in my mind, "That will happen to me, too".

Likewise, talking about death can be seen on the psychological level as another way of approaching it indirectly. No doubt, many people have the feeling that to talk about death at all is in effect to conjure it up mentally, to bring it closer in such a way that one has to face up to the inevitability of one's own demise. So, to spare ourselves this psychological trauma, we decide just to try to avoid the topic as much as possible

The second reason it is difficult to discuss death is more complicated, as it is rooted in the very nature of language itself. For the most part, the words of human language allude to things of which we have experience through our own physical sense. Death, though, is something which lies beyond the conscious experience of most of us because most of us have never been through it.

If we are to talk about death at all, then, we must avoid both social taboos and the deep-seated linguistic dilemmas which derive from our own inexperience. What we often end up doing is talking in euphemistic analogies. We compare death or dying with more pleasant things in our experience, things with which we are familiar.

Perhaps the most common analogy of this type is the comparison between death and sleep. Dying, we tell ourselves, is like going to sleep. This figure of speech occurs very commonly in everyday thought and language, as well as in the literature of many cultures and many ages.



It was apparently quite common even in the time of the ancient Greeks.

These analogies are embedded in our own contemporary language. Consider the phrase ‘to put to sleep.’ If you present your dog to a veterinarian with the instruction to put him to sleep, you would normally mean something very different than you would upon taking your wife or husband to an anaesthesiologist with the same words. Others prefer a different, but related analogy. Dying, they say, is like forgetting. When one dies, one forgets all one’s woes; all one’s painful and troubling memories are obliterated.

As old and as widespread as they may be, however, both the ‘sleeping’ and the ‘forgetting’ analogies are ultimately inadequate in so far as comforting us is concerned. Each is a different way of making the same assertion. Even though they tell us so in a somewhat more palatable way, both say, in effect, that death is simply the annihilation of conscious experience, forever. If this is so, then death really doesn’t have any of the desirable features of sleeping and forgetting. Sleeping is a positive, desirable experience in life because waking follows it. A restful night’s sleep makes the waking hours following it more pleasant and productive. If waking did not follow it, the benefits of sleep would not be possible. Similarly, annihilation of all conscious experience implies not only the obliteration of all painful memories, but of all pleasant ones, too. So upon analysis, neither analogy is close enough to

give us any real comfort or hope in facing death.

There is another view, however, which disavows the notion that death is annihilation of consciousness. According to this other, perhaps more ancient tradition, some aspect of the human being survives even after the physical body ceases to function and is ultimately destroyed. This persistent aspect has been called by many names, among them psyche, soul, mind, spirit, being, and consciousness. By whatever name it is called, the notion that one passes into another realm of existence upon physical death is among the most venerable of human beliefs. There is a graveyard, in Turkey which was used by Neanderthal men approximately 100,000 years ago. There, fossilised imprints have enabled archaeologists to discover that these ancient men buried their dead in biers of flowers, indicating that they perhaps saw death as an occasion of celebration – as a transition of the dead from this world to the next. Indeed, graves from very early sites all over the earth give evidence of the belief in human survival of bodily death.

In short, we are faced with two contrasting answers to our original question about the nature of death both of ancient derivation, yet both widely held even today. Some say that death is annihilation of consciousness; others say with equal confidence that death is the passage of the soul or mind into another dimension of reality. To dismiss either answer, in any way, may be a difficult task indeed. ☹

# The Tibetan Book

OF

## The Dead

This remarkable work was compiled from the teachings of sages over many centuries in prehistoric Tibet and passed down through these early generations by word of mouth. It was finally written down, apparently, in the eighth century, A D, but even then was hidden to keep it secret from outsiders.

The form which this unusual book takes is shaped by the many interrelated uses to which it was put. First of all, the wise men who wrote it regarded dying as, in effect, a skill – something which could be done either artfully or in an unbecoming manner, depending upon whether one had the requisite knowledge to do it well. So the book was read as part of the funeral ceremony, or to the dying person during the closing moments of his life. It thus was thought to serve two functions. The first was to help the dying person keep in mind the nature of each new wondrous phenomenon as he experienced it. The second was to help those still living think positive thoughts and not hold the dying one back with their love and emotional concern, so that he could enter into the after-death planes in a proper frame of mind released from all bodily concerns.

To effect these ends, the book contains a lengthy description of the various stages through which the soul goes after physical death. The correspondence between the early stages of death which it relates and those which have been recounted by those who have 'returned' from death is nothing short of fantastic.

First of all, in the Tibetan account the mind or soul of the dying person departs from the body. At some time thereafter his soul enters a 'swoon' and he finds himself in a void – not a physical void, but one which is, in effect, subject to its own kind of limits, and one in which his consciousness still exists. He may hear alarming and disturbing noises and sounds, described as roaring, thundering, and whistling noises like the wind, and usually finds himself and his surroundings enveloped in a grey, misty illumination.

He is surprised to find himself out of his physical body. He sees and hears his relatives and friends mourning over his body and preparing it for the funeral and yet when he tries to respond to them they neither hear nor see him. He does not yet realise that he is dead, and he is confused. He asks himself whether he is dead or not, and, when he

finally realises that he is, wonders where he should go or what he should do. A great regret comes over him, and, he is depressed about his state. For a while he remains near the places with which he has been familiar while in physical life.

He notices that he is still in a body – called the 'shining' body – which does not appear to consist of material substance. Thus, he can go through rocks, walls, and even mountains without encountering any resistance. Travel is almost instantaneous. Wherever he wishes to be, he arrives there in only a moment. His thought and perception are less limited; his mind becomes very lucid and his senses seem more keen and more closer in nature to the divine. If he has been in physical life blind or deaf or crippled, he is surprised to find that in his 'shining' body all his senses, as well as all the powers of his physical body, have been restored and intensified. He may encounter other beings in the same kind of body, and may meet what is called a clear or pure light. The Tibetans counsel the dying one approaching this light to try to have only love and compassion towards others.

The books also describes the feeling of immense peace and contentment which the dying one experiences, and also a kind of 'mirror' in which his entire life, all deeds both good and bad, are reflected vividly for both him and the beings judging him. In this situation, there can be no misrepresentation; lying about one's life is impossible. ☺



*Painting by Sarupa Shrestha*



# Celebrate your death!

You are sad? – start singing, praying. Whatsoever you can do, do, and by and by, the baser metal is changed into a higher metal – gold. Once you know the key, your life will never be the same again. You can unlock any door. And this is the master key: to celebrate everything.

I have heard about three Chinese mystics – nobody knows their names. They were known only as the ‘Three Laughing Saints’, because they never did anything else; they simply laughed. They moved from one town to another, laughing. They would stand in the marketplace and have a good belly laugh. The whole marketplace would surround them. All the people would come, shops would close and customers would forget for what they had come.

These three people were really beautiful – laughing and their bellies waving. And then it would become an infection and others would start laughing. Then the whole marketplace would laugh. They had changed the quality of the market.

And if somebody would say, “Say something to us,” they would say, “We have nothing to say. We simply laugh and change the quality.” When just a few moments before it was an ugly place where people were thinking only of money – hankering for money, greedy, money the only milieu around – suddenly these three mad people came and they laughed, and changed the quality of the whole marketplace. Now nobody was a customer. Now they had forgotten that they had come to purchase and sell. Nobody bothered about greed. They were laughing and they were dancing around these three mad people. For a few seconds a new world opened.

They moved all over China, from place to place, from village to village, just helping people to laugh. Sad people, angry people, greedy people, jealous people; they all started laughing with them. And many people felt the key – you can transform.

Then in one village it happened that one of the three died. Village people gathered and they said. “Now there will be trouble. Now we have to see how they laugh.

Their friend has died; they must weep.” But when they came, the two were dancing, laughing and celebrating the death. The village people said. “Now this is too much. This is unmannerly. When a man is dead it is profane to laugh and dance.”

But they said, “You don’t know what has happened! All there of us were always thinking of who was going to die first. This man has won; we are defeated. The whole life we laughed with him. How can we give him the last send-off with anything else? We have to laugh, we have to enjoy, we have to celebrate. This is the only farewell that is possible for the man who has laughed his whole life. And if we don’t laugh, he will laugh at us and he will think. ‘You fools! So you have fallen again into the trap?’ We don’t see that he is dead. How can laughter die, how can life die?”

Laughter is eternal, life is eternal, celebration continues. Actors change but the drama continues. Waves change but the ocean continues. You laugh, you change and somebody else celebrates, but celebration continues. Existence is continuous, it is a container. There is not a single moment’s gap in it. But the village people could not understand and they could not participate in the laughter this day.

Then the body was to be burned, and the village people said, “We will give him a bath as the ritual prescribes.” But those two friends said, “No, our friend has said, ‘Don’t perform any ritual and don’t change my clothes and don’t give me a bath. You just put me as I am on the burning pyre.’ So we have to follow his instructions.”

And then, suddenly, there was a great happening. When the body was put on the fire, that old man had played the last trick. He had hidden many fireworks under his clothes, and suddenly there was a big Festival of Lights. Then the whole village started laughing. These two mad friends were dancing, then the whole village started dancing. It was not a death, it was a new life.

No death is death, because every death opens a new door – it is a beginning. There is no end to life, there is always a new beginning, a resurrection.

If you change your sadness to celebration, then you will also be capable of changing your death into resurrection. So learn the art while there is still time. Don’t let death come before you have learned the secret alchemy of changing baser metals into higher metals. Because if you can change sadness, you can change death. If you can be celebrating unconditionally, when death comes you will be able to laugh, you will be able to celebrate, you will go happy. And when you can go celebrating, death cannot kill you. Rather, on the contrary you have killed death. But start it, give it a try. There is nothing to lose. ☺

# Death & The East The West

By Dr Vasant Joshi

Death may become a public event when we read it mentioned in the obituary section of a newspaper, but it is essentially a very private affair. There are two experiences which are strictly private and intimate – death and dreaming. No one else can die for me, no one else can dream for me. The understanding of death plays a vital role in one's spiritual growth.

The phenomenon of life and death are seen in the West as opposed to each other, as mutually exclusive. Death is taken to be an object of fear, it is a taboo, one wants to avoid talking about it. As one professor of religion once said: Now sex is openly discussed and dying is

obscene". Many Western philosophers have thought about death, especially the Existentialist thinkers. A statement by Jean Paul Sartre shows a typical Western viewpoint concerning death: "Death is never that which gives life its meaning; it is, on the contrary, that which on principle removes all meaning from life".

The Western orientation is to see death as associated with evil, essentially negative in character. Life and death are seen in conflict. This has its origin in the Aristotelian perspective of either-or but not both: A equals A, and that which is not A is anti-A. According to this dualistic concept, for example, whoever is not against abortion is for it. In the same way death is seen as anti-life. The result is that more and more value is laid upon being youthful, on hiding old age or being defensive, apologetic about old age.

The Eastern view of death is dynamic, it is based on the holistic premise that A equals A plus more. The East believed that nothing is absolute, everything is relative and everything is in motion. Modern science, the new understanding emerging in the medical science, the interdisciplinary approach of the social sciences, all are now recognising the validity and significance of looking at the reality in terms of 'both-and' rather than 'either-or'. ☺

## HEALING WITH FOODS

### Pneumonia

Daniel P Reid

Pneumonia is severe inflammation of lung tissues owing to vicarious elimination of highly toxic water through the respiratory system, which becomes infected by pathogenic bacteria as a result. This occurs due largely to excessive long-term consumption of pasteurised milk, refined starch and sugars. At the turn of the century, Dr J H Tilden of Denver treated thousands of cases of pneumonia using only two methods: fasting with daily colonic irrigations, and nutritional therapy; no drugs, no surgery. He never lost a single patient!

Foods that are beneficial for this ailment are:

**Horseradish and lemon juice:** provides quick relief from mucus congestion.

**Carrot, celery and radish juice:** dissolves mucus; alkalises bloodstream and respiratory tract; accelerates detoxification and thus restores natural immunity; 250ml/150ml/100ml, 0.5 litre daily.

**Carrot and spinach juice:** detoxifies colon and restores normal bowel functions, thus taking excretory load off the respiratory system; 300ml/180ml, 1.2 litres daily.

**Other beneficial foods:** cranberry; raw garlic; whole lemon puree; molasses.

**Foods to avoid:** pasteurised milk and all dairy products; all cooked foods, especially meat and eggs, all refined starch and sugar. ☺

### NOW FOR SOMETHING EXOTIC!

FOR THE ADVENTUROUS MINDED: TRY THESE FOLLOWING PRESCRIPTIONS FOR **SWEATING WITHOUT PRIMARY CAUSE:**

#### PORK WITH WINE

PUT 250 G PORK (PREFERABLY ABDOMINAL WALL PORTION) IN 500 ML RICE WINE AND COOK AT A LOW HEAT UNTIL WELL DONE. ADD SOME WHITE SUGAR. ADMINISTER ONCE EVERY TWO OR THREE DAYS.

#### BLACK SOYBEAN SOUP

SOAK 150 G BLACK SOYBEANS IN 500 ML WATER FOR A FEW HOURS. TAKE 9 G DRIED BEAN SKIN. MIX 9 G FLOATING WHEAT (PUT WHEAT IN WATER, USE THOSE GRAINS WHICH FLOAT ON THE WATER SURFACE) WITH THE BEAN SKIN AND COOK TO MAKE A SOUP. TAKE IT IN A DRAUGHT.

#### MAIZE CORE SOUP

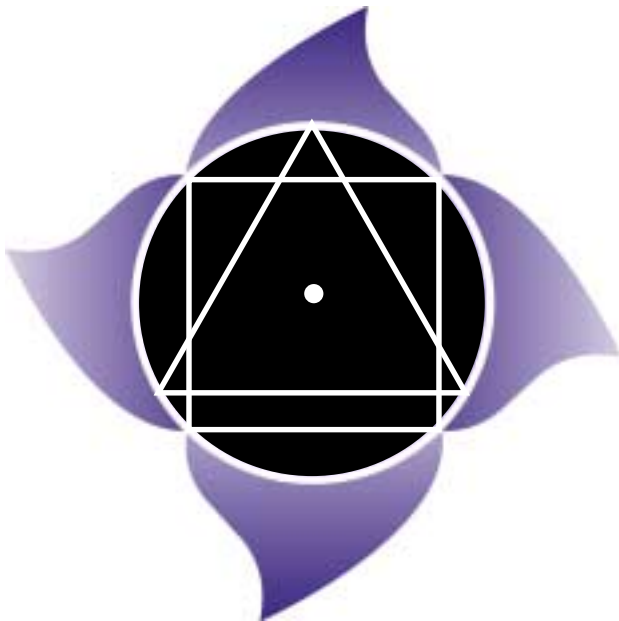
MAKE A SOUP OUT OF THE SPONGY CORE OF MAIZE, AND DRINK. GOOD FOR SWEATING DUE TO DEFICIENCY IN POST-PARTUM WOMEN.

*IF SWEATING IS ONLY A SYMPTOM SECONDARY TO SOME DISEASES LIKE FEVER, PNEUMONIA, TUBERCULOSIS, ETC, WHEN THESE ARE CURED, SWEATING WOULD STOP SPONTANEOUSLY.*

- FROM DIETOTHERAPY IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

## Psychic healing

Pieter Langedijk



The English psychologist and researcher Maxwell Cade examined hundreds of people, among them many psychic healers. He connected their skin with a skin resistance machine and their brains with an EEG machine. He found that good psychic healers have a very high skin resistance, an indication that the parasympathetic part of the ANS (autonomic nervous system) worked very well, and that both parts of their brains, during the healing process, produced very few quick beta-brainwaves, but a lot of slow alpha and theta-brainwaves. This was especially the case with three healers who had many positive results in their clients and patients.

The moment these healers had a low skin resistance and their brains produced a great amount of quick beta-brainwaves, their clients had the feeling that there was no positive effect. But after a week of rest, they felt better and continued to have positive results.

In normal situations the brains of healers produce normal brainwaves, but at the moment they were concentrating on helping another, their brainwaves change and both parts of the brain start to produce less of beta-brainwaves and more of slow alpha-brainwaves, theta and even delta-brainwaves.

**Influencing the brainwaves of clients:** Many healers start their therapy by holding their hands some centimetres above the head of the client or by laying their hands on the head itself. Maxwell Cade connected electrodes to the client's head. He saw that the brainwaves of the client started to change after some minutes till they produced exactly the same waves as the brain of the

healer. After that the healer put one hand on the place where something was not functioning well. Some clients said they felt a positive influence – that the pain became less or that they felt the spot become more warm. The stronger these low brainwaves are in the healer the easier it is able to influence the brainwaves of the client and the better the healer can help the client or patient.

Maxwell Cade also discovered that the 'inner attitude' of the patient towards being helped influences the 'transfer' of brain waves. If the patient consciously opens up to being influenced the transfer appears to take place easier.

The experiments of Motoyama and Cade prove:

1. There is an exchange of energy between people who are near to each other, even during a meeting. This energy can be measured. (After a meeting I was always very tired, even exhausted; my skin resistance decreased considerably.)

2. Exchange of energy is higher between people having positive emotional ties.

From a different point of view, a positive feeling also appears to be an important condition in psychotherapy, as is stated by Truax and Carkhuff in their book.

Some healers are bluntly authoritarian in their conduct, supercilious and out of touch with their patients. This means in principle they are not able to help people solve their mental problems and even have a negative influence on physical healing.

Positive feelings turn out to have a positive effect on the number of red and white blood-corpuscles. Talking about nice things, and feeling happy and laughing results in the increase of lymphocytes by about 30% in half an hour.

Truax and Carkhuff demonstrated that good therapists should meet these three important conditions:

a. They must be able to identify themselves well with another person. This is shown by the way in which they react to their patients and the questions they ask them. By doing so the patient gets more insight into his own situation.

b. They must be warm-hearted and sympathetic. They must feel affection for their patients. These properties are revealed from the way they talk and from the voice they use. The positive feeling of a therapist towards a client also means that he or she sends a positive energy, and creates a positive atmosphere for healing to take place.

c. They must be genuine, must feel on the same level as their patients, and must not try to show that they are omniscient nor treat the patients like stupid infants.

One could summarise these conditions by saying a therapist must have a positive attitude towards the patient in order to ensure a transfer of energy from him to the patient. Only then psychic healing takes place to its fullest capacity and helps solve the patient's problem in an effective manner. ☺

***The true vocation of a man is to find a way to himself.***

*The final part from 'Siddhartha', Nobel Prize-winner Hermann Hesse's most famous and influential work.*

### Govinda

The two old men were silent for a long time. Then as Govinda was preparing to go, he said: "I thank you, Siddhartha, for telling me something of your thoughts. Some of them are strange thoughts. I cannot grasp them all immediately. However, I thank you, and I wish you many peaceful days".

Inwardly, however, he thought: Siddhartha is a strange man and he expresses strange thoughts. His ideas seem crazy. How different do the Illustrious One's doctrines sound! They are clear, straightforward, comprehensible; they contain nothing strange, wild or laughable. But Siddhartha's hands and feet, his eyes, his brow, his breathing, his smile, his greeting, his gait affect me differently from his thoughts. Never, since the time our Illustrious Gautama passed into Nirvana, have I ever met a man with the exception of Siddhartha about whom I felt: This is a holy man! His ideas may be strange, his words may sound foolish, but his glance and his hand, his skin and his hair, all radiate a purity, peace, serenity, gentleness and saintliness which I have never seen in any man since the recent death of our illustrious teacher.

While Govinda was thinking these thoughts and there was conflict in his heart he again bowed to Siddhartha, full of affection towards him. He bowed low before the quietly seated man. "Siddhartha," he said, "we are now old men. We may never see each other again in this life. I realise that I have not found it. Tell me one more word, my esteemed friend, tell me something that I can conceive, something I can understand! Give me something to help me on my way, Siddhartha. My path is often hard and dark."

Siddhartha was silent and looked at him with his calm, peaceful smile. Govinda looked steadily in his face, with anxiety, with longing. Suffering, continual seeking and continual failure were written in his look. Siddhartha saw it and smiled.

"Bend near to me!" he whispered in Govinda's ear.

"Come, still nearer, quite close! Kiss me on the forehead, Siddhartha."

Although surprised, Govinda was compelled by a great love and presentiment to obey him; he leaned close to him and touched his forehead with his lips. As he did this, something wonderful happened to him. While he was still dwelling on Siddhartha's strange words, while he strove in vain to dispel the conception of time, to imagine Nirvana and Samsara as one, while even a certain contempt for his friend's words conflicted with a tremendous love and esteem for him, this happened to him.

He no longer saw the face of his friend

Siddhartha. Instead he saw other faces, many faces, a long series, a continuous stream of faces – hundreds, thousands, which all came and disappeared and yet all seemed to be there at the same time, which all continually changed and renewed themselves and which were yet all Siddhartha. He saw the face of a fish, of a carp, with tremendous painfully opened mouth, a dying fish with dimmed eyes. He saw the face of a newly born child, red and full of wrinkles, ready to cry. He saw the face of a murderer, saw him plunge a knife into the body of a man; at the same moment he saw this criminal kneeling down, bound, and his head cut off by an executioner. He saw the naked bodies of man and women in the postures and transports of passionate love. He saw corpses stretched out, still, cold, empty. He saw the heads of animals – boars, crocodiles, elephants, oxen, birds. He saw Krishna and Agni. He saw all these forms and faces in a thousand relationships to each other, all helping each other, loving, hating and destroying each other and become newly born. Each one was mortal, a passionate, painful example of all that is transitory. Yet none of them died, they only changed, were always reborn, continually had a new face: only time stood between one face and another. And all these forms and faces rested, flowed, reproduced, swam past and merged into each other, and over them all there was continually something thin, unreal and yet existing, stretched across like thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, shell, form or mask of water – and this mask was Siddhartha's smiling face which Govinda touched with his lips at that moment. And Govinda saw that this mask-like smile, this – this smile of Siddhartha – was exactly the same as the calm, delicate, impenetrable, perhaps gracious, smile of unity over the flowing forms, this smile of simultaneousness over the thousands of births and deaths perhaps mocking, wise, thousand-fold smile of Gautama the Buddha, as he perceived it with awe a hundred times. It was in such a manner, Govinda knew, that the Perfect One smiled.

No longer knowing whether time existed, whether this display had lasted a second or a hundred years, whether there was a Siddhartha, or a Gautama, a Self and others, wounded deeply by a divine arrow which gave him pleasure, deeply enchanted and exalted, Govinda stood yet a while bending over Siddhartha's peaceful face which he had just kissed, which had just been the stage of all present and future forms. His countenance was unchanged after the mirror of the thousand-fold forms had disappeared from the surface. He smiled peacefully and gently, perhaps very graciously, perhaps very mockingly, exactly as the Illustrious One had smiled.

Govinda bowed low. Incontrollable tears trickled down his old face. He was overwhelmed by a feeling of great love, of the most humble veneration. He bowed low, right down to the ground, in front of the man sitting there motionless, whose smile reminded him of everything that he had ever loved in his life, of everything that had ever been of value and holy in his life. ☺

The End

## Environment Watch



***The individual person is the first step in making our habitat places worth living for decent human beings.***

### BEAUTY AND HUMILITY

It had been a cloudless day, hot, and the earth and the trees were gathering strength for the coming winter; autumn was already turning the few leaves yellow; they were bright yellow against the dark green. They were cutting the meadows and the fields of their rich grass for the cows during the long winter; everyone was working, grown-ups and children. It was serious work and there wasn't much talk or laughter. Machines were taking the place of scythes and here and there scythes were cutting the pasture. And along the stream there's a path, through the fields; it was cool there for the hot sun was already behind the hills. The path went past farmhouses and a sawmill; in the newly cut field, there were thousands of crocuses, so delicate, with that peculiar perfume of their own. It was a quiet, clear evening and the mountains were closer than ever. The stream was quiet, there were not too many rocks and the water ran fast. You would have to run to keep with it. There was, in the air, the smell of freshly cut grass, in a land that was prosperous and contented. Every farm had electricity and there seemed to be peace and plenty.

How few see the mountains or a cloud. They look, make some remarks and pass on. Words, gestures, emotions prevent seeing. A tree, a flower is given a name,

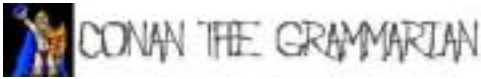
put into a category and that's that. You see a landscape through an archway or from a window, and if you happen to be an artist or are familiar with art, you say almost immediately, it is like those medieval paintings or mention some name of some recent painter. Or if you are a writer, you look in order to describe; if you are a musician, probably you have never seen the curve of a hill or the flowers at your feet; you are caught up in your daily practice, or ambition has you by the throat. If you are a professional of some kind, probably you never see. But to see there must be humility whose essence is innocence. There's that mountain with the evening sun on it; to see it for the first time, to see it, as though it had never been seen before, to see it with innocence, to see it with eyes that have been bathed in emptiness, that have not been hurt with knowledge – to see then is an extraordinary experience. The word experience is ugly, with it goes emotion, knowledge, recognition and a continuity; it is none of these things. It is something totally new. To see this newness there must be humility, that humility which has never been contaminated by pride, by vanity. With this certain happening, that morning, there was this seeing, as with the mountaintop, with the evening sun. ☺

J Krishnamurti in *Krishnamurti's Notebook*



*Here beginneth the lesson on writing and life – meaning, style, grammar, punctuation, and the lightness of being – by the world's foremost authority on the English language, Conan the Grammarian.*

*Let Conan take you into the romantic and adventurous world of English grammar and usage. Bon voyage!*



*Prof John M Mings*

**Dear Conan,**

***I want to address the deterioration of language in our society. All too often I meet and work with people who see absolutely no use in correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. They state "if you know what I'm getting at, what does it matter?"***

***With these attitudes we see more and more abuses of the language. Computer users are especially bad about this and the Internet is rife with poor English. What can be done?***

**Rhea**

Dear Rhea,

... Like you, Sir Thomas Smith got into a real snit in 1568 with his *De Recta et Emendata Linguae Anglicae* (The Correctness and Improvement of the English Tongue); Alexander Gil wrote *Logonomia Anglica* (The Word System of England) in 1619 to decry the deterioration of English. In 1653, John Wallis had a go at laying down the grammatical law in his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (English Grammar) because he believed our language was going to hell.

The inestimable seventeenth-century English poet, John Dryden, complained that English was in a 'barbarous' state, and demanded the establishment of a powerful committee 'to improve the English tongue.' Dean Jonathan Swift, whom I have cited before, urged acceptance of his Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue.

Indeed, our own John Adams pushed a bill in Congress in 1806 to 'refine, correct, and improve' English. The Fowler brothers and, more recently, folks like William Safire and Theodore Bernstein, have fought and are fighting the good but losing fight against 'barbarous' English, that is, misuse and abuse of our native language. Conan himself takes pen in hand to squirt the barbarians at the gate, but even he is overpowered by the multitudes.

I don't like the "Hopefully, it will not rain" construction one little bit; I hate it when somebody says, "He's very enthused!" or "She's so unique." The pompous,

muddle-headed, and hopelessly ill-educated computer users you cite, Rhea, are very well trained people who are completely uneducated. Do you see the distinction between being 'trained' and 'educated'?

Frankly, I have a hard time (but some fun) in putting down so-called engineers with a few computer science courses in favor of English scholars or linguists. The former make big bucks; the latter are paupers. Would you urge your child to study English or computer science?

The language has a life of its own, Rhea, completely inattentive to the preferences of its individual practitioners. The battle against the above illiteracies, for instance, is lost. Neither you nor I can do anything about it.

What we can do, however, is hone our own skills, and defend and try to propagate our own values. For instance, you will understand that I find that I have gone through life with a really wonderful joke to tell, but a joke whose punchline whizzes right past most of the people I come in contact with. When I meet someone who gets it, however, we both have a great laugh, and revel in our good fortune, not rive our hearts in sadness at the *Boobus Americanus* (as H L Mencken called him) who doesn't get it.

Poets know more about life than scientists do, Rhea, and don't forget it. The price of knowledge is the loss of innocence, and we are not innocent any more.

Ain't that grand?

Conan the Grammarian

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## Is life really fragile?

*Kumar Rajesh Shrestha*

She was more than happy to see me. After all, it had been quite long since the last time. I had known her son for some years and in the past, I had been to see them many times. She was a robust woman of the mountains. From her face, you could see that she had gone through a lot. Life had certainly not been easy, but she had not hardened with it. Her gentleness and loving care touched you and you felt at home every time you came here.

Sometime back, her son had left this house to live by himself. But he had returned to keep her company when his father died. She was sad that the husband was no more, but the fact that her son was near brought her some comfort. When the son would go outside on an errand, she would talk to me about her things, especially about her deceased husband. When the son would come back, he used to say, "Then you have had one of your chats." She would throw a glance at me and smile, as if to say – don't listen to him, he is just like this. But this time, the son was not there at all and the house seemed emptier than usual.

She offered me tea and inquired about my parents and me. She was sorry I did not go there frequently. I asked her how she was. She told me that it was not so bad. She had had many things to do and it had been a busy month. There was not any time to think. Then she stared at the wall and did not speak. I sipped my tea and felt very sorry for her. I felt the urge to take off my coat. It was warm in this room. Outside, the snow had just melted and the wind that blew was freezing.

"See what my son has done to me," she finally broke the silence. I had no words. She had lost her son recently. As soon as I came to know, I had come to see her. She was grateful that I was there but her eyes only showed her shattered heart. "When his friends come here, I feel him here." she said and started to weep. "But he gives me strength, a lot of strength – to go ahead. I feel that he helps me." When I asked her if she felt alone, she replied, "No, I don't feel alone. There is always someone who comes to see me – some relatives or some of his friends. It shows that he was loved by all. What do you say?"

Life is definitely fragile. It calls for lots of care on our part. If we handle it upside down, it can only break more easily. But we are more fragile than life. Life may be weak by nature, but we are weaker. We cannot change life but we can act on ourselves. Only love can make us strong. Only love can hold the pieces together. Only love can make up for the irreparable. However, this fragility is a wonderful gift. That which is fragile is more esteemed. The wiser of us cherish its fleeting moments and make the most out of them. Certainly, life is brief but this brevity only adds more meaning to it. There is great beauty in this fragility. Shall we find it before life breaks down for good? ☺

## Ode to death

When they take the body from the village  
The place is lonely

We give it company to the burial ground  
The goose files on alone

You gathered stones  
And made a palace

People said, He has a house

But the house was not yours  
The house was not mine

Our stay here is like a bird's flight.

(A song from an Indian tribal community)



*Stream in rainforest*

## Can one be aware of one's unconscious desires?

**J Krishnamurti:**

First of all are you aware of your conscious desires? Do you know what desire is? Are you aware that usually you do not listen to anyone who is saying something contrary to what you believe? Your desire prevents you from listening. If you desire God, and somebody points out that the God you desire is the outcome of your frustrations and fears, will you listen to him? Of course not. You want one thing, and the truth is something quite different. You limit yourself within your own desire. You are only half-aware of your conscious desires, are you not? And to be aware of the desires that are deeply hidden is much more difficult. To find out what is hidden, to discover what its own motives are, the mind which is seeking must be fairly clear and free. So first be fully aware of your conscious desires then as you become increasingly aware of what is on the surface, you can go deeper and deeper. ☺

## Zen & the art of dying

*Bassui wrote the following letter to one of his disciples who was about to die:*

*“The essence of your mind is not born, so it will never die. It is not an existence, which is perishable. It is not an emptiness, which is a mere void. It has neither colour nor form. It enjoys no pleasures and suffers no pains.*

*“I know you are very ill. Like a good Zen student, you are facing that sickness squarely.*

*“You may not know exactly who is suffering, but question yourself: What is the essence of this mind? Think only of this. You will need no more.*

*“Covet nothing. Your end which is endless is as a snowflake dissolving in the pure air.” ☺*