

## DEATH AND BEYOND

by John Pater

Many of us have had a burning desire to know what happens to us after death in terms that **we can understand**. Knowledge through faith, as given to us by many of our current religions, is no longer able to satisfy many of our questions as man has progressed in his evolution and now requires concepts suited to his level of understanding and development. Our present religions will provide nourishment and comfort for many years into the future but not for everyone. Some will want, in addition to their religious practice, something that we can call 'spiritual philosophy'.

With the progress of time the conditions on earth and in the heavens change, nothing is standing still, all is evolving. What was true for the earth and the heavens two thousand five hundred years ago has changed. For example the great Buddha taught that one should escape from the cycle of birth and death and seek to dissolve the self into the state of Nivarna. He taught this from what he saw in the spiritual world at that time. He saw that birth, life, death and the life thereafter was full of suffering and he saw no hope for man on earth and after death whilst, at the same time, in a different part of the world, the Ancient Greeks, by the saying "Better a beggar in this life than a king amongst the shades" showed that they feared the life after death and with good reason as the world of the dead was becoming more and more shadowy and dim but conditions have now have changed for the better due to the deed and sacrifice of the Sun being. Hence, certain views are correct at the time that they are given to mankind and they are given in such a form so as to suit his level of evolution. As time moves on further views need to be given to suit the changes to man's growth in consciousness. **So now a another picture of life after death has been given to the world so that man's evolution will progress forwards.**

Just as a mountain can be described from many sides so too can death and beyond be described. I'd like to speak about a picture of life after death which is largely derived from Rudolf Steiner's spiritual sight which has much in common with other religious philosophies. Rudolf Steiner was an Austrian born philosopher/initiate who died in 1925. Its important to note that this is only one of many ways of looking at life after death.

One thing is certain is that **death will come to meet us** all, either as an event to be feared or an event that we can meet with understanding and anticipation in that, just like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, death is just the next phase of our existence. Many people who have had "near death" experiences tell us of their wonderful journeys in the realm after death and there have been a number of enlightened souls who have objectively testified about the realm after death from their direct experiences.

But before one can examine what happens after death we need to have a few concepts as to what man's nature is. Man consists of the following four principals or sheaths:-

### **Physical body**

This is similar to our present minerals. This is the only part of man which we perceive with our senses. The other sheaths are invisible but their effects are imprinted on the physical body. The physical body is the oldest and hence the most perfect part of man's being. Just observe how objective and precise is man's eyesight when compared to one's emotions.

<b>Life Body</b> ( etheric ) -	We have this in common with the plants and this principal provides us with the living and growing force part of our being. We cannot see the etheric body with our normal senses. This provides the unifying force that holds the physical body together.
<b>Soul Body</b> (Astral, feeling) -	We have this in common with the animals and this is the seat of our of our emotions; sympathies and antipathies; Pain and pleasure.
<b>I</b> (atma ,ego, spirit, the immortal part of man )	This is unique to man and the gods. This is the youngest and the least perfect of man's nature but will become more perfect than the rest in the future.

### **What happens to an Individual during the initial stages after Death?**

When a person dies he\* leaves his ( physical ) body behind which now obeys the laws of the outer physical world and this now dissipates into its constituent elements from which it originally came from. Before death the normal physical laws operating in the mineral kingdom are opposed in the physical body by the forces of the life body.

Once freed from the limitations of his physical body man now experiences the whole of his life simultaneously spread out before him in a large tableau of his life's experiences. He sees what happened to him the day before he died up to the events of his birth. This experience happens briefly to many who have had near death experiences caused by falling from great heights, nearly drowning etc. This experience lasts for approximately three days after which the soul body and the 'I' detach themselves from the life body. The life body expands and dissolves back into the cosmic ether where it is of further benefit for the cosmos. An extract or seed of the life body is retained by the individual as part of his eternal being.

The departed, consisting of the astral body and Ego (known as the Jiva in Hindu philosophy), now journeys into a condition known as Kamaloca ( Purgatory, Place of Burning desires, Moon sphere ). This is not yet the pure spiritual world. Here the departed experiences his life sequentially but in a backward manner. The last day of his life is experienced then the day before and so on. Now he does not experience what he had experienced himself but what his companions and the environment experienced through him and his deeds. Hence if he had been cruel to his wife and children and inflicted physical or mental pain then he will feel the pain that they had experienced except to a much heighten degree. Yes, the departed can have a painful and an unpleasant time if his actions on earth had caused pain and suffering but he now objectively sees how imperfect he has become and now resolves to make amends for his past misdeeds. This is the first step in the shaping of karma for the future life on earth.

There are many earthly habits and cravings which we can acquire which do not progress spiritual growth, in fact these can actually hamper spiritual development. Even though we lose our physical and life bodies after death we still retain all our acquired earthly habits desires, likes and dislikes as these reside within the soul body. Hunger is a spiritual aspect of the physical body, and hence its satisfaction is quite right and proper as it assists man in evolving further in the physical body but taking the matter one step further the satisfaction of gourmet taste buds where one pursues food for the taste experience or being a wine connoisseur, over obsession with :- money, sexual desires,

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\* the departed have no gender

power and material goods are purely earthly acquired pleasures which are not of a spiritual origin and do not have a place in the pure spiritual world into which the departed will journey further. In Kamaloca the departed experience an immense desire for these acquired earthly pleasures but with no physical organs to satisfy these desires the departed experience a burning thirst and immeasurable pain for these pleasures. As a combustible material is seized by fire, so is the world of cravings dissolved and annihilated so that the departed are able to further continue their journeys into higher planes of spiritual existence.

At the end of the Kamaloca period, which lasts for approximately one third of the time lived here on earth, the departed soul has reviewed and confronted all of his imperfections. He now leaves behind that part of his soul body, which contains his imperfections, so as to be able to journey further into the pure spiritual world. This discarded part of the soul body is sometimes called the astral shell. Those who have many imperfections leave the majority of their being behind or it could be said that their being is, in effect, mutilated whilst those who have worked on their own being during life on earth in an appropriate spiritual and moral manner will take these fruits with them. **The pure spiritual world does not permit moral imperfections entering into it.**

Where are the departed after death? At the end of Kamaloca the departed occupy ( along with billions of other souls and spiritual beings ) the space up to the orbit of the moon. The departed interpenetrate each other. **Space becomes irrelevant**, it's consciousness that is important, in other words the departed are, in a sense, everywhere within the Astral plane and are no longer confined to the space occupied by a human body but consciousness is limited by the level of development and actions achieved during the past life. In the same way as the physical world is all around us whilst we sleep, except that we are not aware of it, so is the realm of the departed all around us except that we are not aware of this realm with our present consciousness but now, at man's present stage of evolution, it is necessary that we begin to **consciously participate** with the realm of the departed.

The Departed now journeys into further spiritual planes where the forces for his karma and his future physical body are worked out for his next life on earth. Spiritual beings bestow their gifts onto the soul as it journeys through these planes. One's ability to receive forces or gifts from the spiritual beings and conscious communion with the spiritual world and previous companions depends upon how the soul is able to light up its way. The ability to light up its way depends upon how it lived its previous life here on earth. Hence in the worst case imagine yourself totally in blackness, alone with your memories, and knowing that there are other beings around you but you can't see them or communicate with them. Imagine this condition for day, one week, one year, one hundred years. This is the hell that some souls experience. These souls wish for the ending of their existence as they experience great fear and loneliness in this state but they are not granted this wish. Its not as though the spiritual beings and other souls reject them, its because these souls, due to their deeds in their previous earth life, create conditions where other souls and spiritual beings can not approach them. Whereas, if a soul is able to light up its way then it is then in blissful communion with other departed souls with whom it was associated with on earth and with spiritual beings. This state of existence can be called heaven.

There are many other experiences and tasks which the departed souls are required to undergo, some of which are beneficial and some of which are unpleasant depending on how one lived in the previous life. There are those assigned the task of sending healthful forces, powers of growth and healing to the earth. These souls experience a profound blessedness as a result. Further, there are the pitiful souls who are forced, for a time, to serve dark evil spirits in the grim task of spreading disease, illnesses and premature death. Yes, for a time after death we still participate in earthly activities but from the other side.

The soul now journeys into further spiritual planes or spheres where its resolve to correct its imperfections is now imbued with the forces to build up its future body which will be suitable for the fulfilment of its karma. The spheres or planes can be called lokas, devachan, mental, budhic, nivarna planes in Hindu philosophy or they can be known as Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter Saturn planes and the starry Cosmos. These planes are related in space to the names of the heavenly bodies mentioned.

In the moon sphere, through reviewing and re-experiencing one's life, a resolve is made to make amends for the inappropriate deeds that one had committed.

In the Mercury sphere a soul is able to light up its way, if it led a moral life whilst in the Venus sphere if it led a religious life.

In the sun sphere recognition of the divine in all human beings irrespective of their race, religion or nation is necessary. For the majority of souls the sun sphere is where most time is spent by the departed and here, the major part of their karma is elaborated. The first half is spent concerned with the elaboration of one's future physical body whilst the second half is spent elaborating the moral side of karma. Specific talents are then further elaborated in the Mars, Jupiter and Saturn spheres.

To be conscious in the Mars sphere one needs to have absorbed concepts similar to those given by spiritual philosophy. The soul can pass consciously through the Jupiter region only if it has liberated itself from the particular religious confession to which it belonged ie. the soul has absorbed all the fruits that can be offered by that particular religion.

To be conscious in Saturn sphere one needs to exercise a certain degree of **self knowledge**, in a completely unbiased manner, as is given by spiritual philosophy. And only by being able to put this self knowledge into practice can the soul find entrance and companionship into the regions beyond Saturn where the soul is imbued with impulses to bring about major changes in mankind's progress on earth.

### **Can the departed communicate with the living and vice versa ?**

After death one has virtually no **possibility of learning anything new of the spiritual world other than the fruits of what one has gained here on earth** ( as one no longer has a physical body to have thoughts and to experience free actions). The earth is a special and unique place within the evolutionary cosmic processes where man and spiritual beings can gain knowledge of which cannot be gained from any other realm. Hence the person who says "of what importance is there in knowing about the spiritual world here on earth. If I'm a good person, when I die, and if there is life after death then I'll learn about the spiritual world at that time." Such a soul will be utterly lost in his life after death as he has denied the only place where he can learn about the spiritual world for himself. He will experience the life after death but he will not in any way understand what will be around him.

However, the departed can read the thoughts of his previous companions back here on earth provided they have spiritual thoughts and feelings. If his companions are materialists the departed sadly knows that his past companions are some where still on earth but he cannot locate them. To help the departed along their journey, especially if the departed had ignored the spiritual world in his earthly life, one can picture one's companion as they had lived here on earth and read to them, with feeling, :- what they will experience, spiritual philosophy, religious teachings etc. The departed can be greatly benefited and guided by these thoughts. Many of the traditional religious practices are having less beneficial effects on the departed because of the changes to man's evolution and of the cosmos, hence, the present need for conscious communications.

Many questions can be answered by the departed. One again calls up a favourable image of one's departed companion and places the question ( with feeling ) to the departed and during the night the departed will be able to read our thoughts that we have formulated during the day. A favourable time for receiving answers to one's questions is in the morning, just at waking, before the world impinges on us and, provided we are observant and sensitive, we can receive an answer in the form of our own thoughts. The departed speak to us through our own thoughts and we must be sensitive as to where these thoughts originate from. A pathway of meditation and self development will certainly assist one in becoming more sensitive to the communications received. In the normal course of life communications from the spiritual do occur frequently only one is generally not sensitive to these. **Conscious communications with the departed and the spiritual world must again become common if man and the earth are to continue their evolution in a wholesome manner.**

### **What can one do to help one's journey after death?**

The earth has a special mission in that it is the only place for man and other spiritual beings to learn about the spiritual world and to fulfil the purpose destined for him by the Gods. Moral living and religious practice will greatly assist us after death. Reading about the spiritual world, the purpose of man, the Earth, etc. (spiritual philosophy ) will help us to know where we are and what we will experience after we die. Additionally, for those who are ready, a pathway of conscious self development through meditation and spiritual exercises, which requires much effort, can prepare an individual to enter the spiritual world before one has died, then death will lose its sting and this is the best help of all for one's journey after death.