

Before reading this lesson, review the lessons in *Tarot Fundamentals* dealing with Keys 20, 13 and 6, and with the letters Shin, Nun and Zain. Let a little time elapse between this review work and the study of the lesson now in your hands. Then you will get a great deal more out of what is written herein.

In the Tarot Key representing the fifth stage of spiritual unfoldment, personality was depicted by two small children, dancing in a fairy ring. In Key 20, the two children are merged into one, who now has the father and mother on either side. The child has its back to the spectator, so that the sex is indeterminate, though it seems to be a little boy. The child is the new concept of personality, born of subconsciousness, yet fathered by conscious knowledge and reasoning. One of the secrets of Key 20 is that the child's father and mother are lifted up because the child is rising.

What we see here is the stage of unfoldment immediately preceding cosmic consciousness. The scene has some of the features of the physical plane, but closer examination shows that it must be referred to the metaphysical realm. The figures, though nude, are not flesh-colored, but gray. The light that shines here "never shone on land or sea." Mountains rise in the distance, but they are mountains of ice. The whole suggestion is that this is the fluid region beyond the range of physical sensation.

This is confirmed by the position of the human figures. In this picture they rise from rectangular coffins. The same general suggestion is given in older versions of Key 20. By their shape the coffins represent the limitations of three-dimensional consciousness.

In symbolism the part is often put for the whole — in this instance, for a whole impossible to show in a picture. The figures stand at right angles to the coffins. This reminds us that the fourth dimension is said to be at right angles to all the dimensions we know. Therefore the meaning of this detail of the design is that the regenerated personality and its parents, self-consciousness and subconsciousness, are now liberated from the limitations of three-dimensional consciousness.

They have been set free by a trumpet-blast, sounded by an angel whose flaming hair signifies that he personifies the element of cosmic fire, attributed by Qabalists to the letter Shin. This is to remind us that the sixth stage of unfoldment is not accomplished by the student's personal effort. It is, indeed, never reached until the states of

consciousness symbolized by Keys 12 and 19 have been passed. Not until the seeker for more light thoroughly understands that of himself he can do nothing, is this liberation possible. We do not set ourselves free. The Life—power, working through us, confers this priceless gift of liberty.

At the same time we must remember that this angel is not some celestial being, come down to earth. He is no visitor from the skies. His trumpet—call comes from the Great Within. This whole scene is a representation of interior, metaphysical experience.

On the physical plane, sensation is stimulated by radiant energy, gases, fluids and solids. These are the fire, air, water and earth of the old physics, symbolized by the wand, sword, cup and pentacle on the Magician's table. Besides these four, Western occultism, especially in alchemy, recognizes a fifth, denominated the quintessence. These five correspond to what the yoga philosophy terms Tattvas, and declares to be subtle principles of sensation. It names them akasha (the subtle principle of sound vibration and hearing), tejas or agni (fire, the subtle principle of sight), apas (water, the subtle principle of taste), vayu (air, the subtle principle of touch), and prithivi (earth, the subtle principle of smell).

When we get beyond five—sense experience, two other senses are unfolded. The next beyond akasha is called anupadaka tattva. It is the subtle principle of interior hearing, and it is this that gives us realization of the true I AM, through the messages of the Inner Voice. That realization makes us understand that our true selfhood has nothing to do with time, and nothing to do with our physical parents, hence anupadaka means “the parent—less.” Beyond anupadaka is yet another subtle principle, the adi tattva. This is the divine flame, the primordial cosmic fire and light, corresponding to En Soph Aur, the Limitless Light of the Qabalists. The adi tattva, like its physical correspondence, tejas or agni, is a subtle principle of sight, but the vision it gives us is metaphysical.

Liberation is the result of the unfoldment of the potencies of the cosmic fire within us. In Key 20 the symbolism clearly indicates that the special form assumed by the liberating agency is that of sound. This is to be taken in no figurative or allegorical sense. Sound—vibration is the liberating agency. This is why the tradition of a “Lost Word,” whose pronunciation is a key to magical powers, is mentioned again and again in Western occultism. This is why, in Egyptian rituals, the candidate is repeatedly challenged, and cannot pass until he has pronounced the challenger's correct name. To this day, without knowing what it really means, we say the great name Amen (A M N) at the end of prayers; and those of us who have some knowledge of Hinduism are familiar with the importance of the mystic syllable A U M.

A practical occultist makes daily use of sound vibration. Even if he

has never heard of the greater mysteries of sound, the merest tyro who repeats an affirmation is using this power, whether he utter the words of the affirmation aloud, or merely recite them mentally. In the Orient the dominant idea of a brief sentence is expressed in a sequence of tones related to that idea, and this Oriental science of the correlation of sound and thought is known as *mantra yoga*. The same science is employed in the Western school of practical occultism.

In Key 20, however, the stress is upon the Soundless Sound, sometimes called the Voice of the Silence. This is the manifestation of the anupadaka tattva, working in the field of personal consciousness. It calls us higher, out of the mortal state of persons born from certain parents, into the parentless state. This is the state which is “after the order of Melchisedec.” According to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (See Hebrews 7), Melchisedec (or Melchizedek, as it is spelt in the Old Testament) was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto a Son of God; abiding a priest continually.”

Note: Incidentally, let it be noted that the words “after the order of Melchizedek”, which occur in one of the Psalms and also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are by no means a reference to any secret order of priesthood on the “higher planes.” The Hebrew and Greek words translated “after the order of” really mean “like unto, similar to, having like properties or qualities.” We mention this because every so often some pseudo-occultist tells his followers wondrous tales about the supposed “Order of Melchizedek.” In the years we have been at work in this field, there have appeared “Heads” and “Messengers” of the “only genuine Order of Melchizedek,” with tales of high initiation in caves, in remote mountain retreats, in all manner of Arabian Nights surroundings. But the whole nonsensical structure of false pretense rests on the ignorance of pretenders and believers alike, who do not know what the word “order” in this particular connection, really means.

When one hears the Inner Voice, through the activity of the “parentless,” subtle, metaphysical sound vibration, one is freed from all sense of being a mortal, having earthly parents and genealogy. One then knows what the I AM really is — the timeless, eternal, immortal Self, having neither beginning nor end. Thus, in this sixth stage of spiritual unfoldment, one is consciously aware that one never was born and will never die.

Note that the agency in this work is symbolized by Key 13, which has to do with the fiery Mars-force. Key 20 also represents the element of fire, because the latter corresponds to the letter Shin. Link this up with Key 16, which is attributed to Mars. Liberation has an aspect of destruction as Hindus indicate when they say that Shiva, the destroyer,

is the great Lord of Yoga. Every change in consciousness tears down coils. Human life is an invisible conflagration.

Thus the very first character of the letter-name Shin (Sh I N) means *tooth*. As the office of teeth is to break down the structure of the food we eat, so that solar energy may be released by further processes of digestion and assimilation, so, in higher aspects of unfoldment, the fiery Life-Breath breaks down cells in our bodies. The liberation of the fiery essences of these cells is what makes us aware of states of consciousness beyond thought. Long before this can happen, however, the Mars-force must burn up cells which obstruct the free flow of the Life-power through certain bodily channels.

Let us consider one specific instance. The spinal cord is a tube. In young children it is open at the lower end, so that the serpent-power coiled in the sacral plexus can rise through it. This is why little children often have metaphysical vision, and why they sometimes have invisible playmates, human and animal. As they grow older, this tube is closed at the lower end, in order that the greatly increased activity of the Mars-force at the time of puberty may not cause the serpent-power to rise prematurely and injure the brain, as it sometimes does in adolescent dementia.

This is a wise provision of nature; but when the practical occultist seeks to gain metaphysical vision, he must apply the Mars-force to destroy the cells which close the lower end of the tube. By opening it again he really becomes "as a little child."

Knowledge of this fact has led foolish experimenters into disastrous attempts to open the spinal tube by concentrating on the center at its base. Persons who have grasped the truth that all this work is done, not by personality, but by the Life-power itself, will not make this mistake. We speak of what occurs, because you need to understand it, because you should see that the awakening of the higher vision is according to law, and involves a physiological change. On your head be it if you begin to concentrate on the centers in order to hasten unfoldment. Nobody knows enough to attempt anything of the kind, except under the guidance of a truly competent teacher, who is really clairvoyant. Even such a teacher will usually give instruction in the safe methods of meditation that lead to the same result, without subjecting the student to the grave risks attending direct concentration.

The three letters, Sh I N, will reveal to a Qabalist the main factors at work in the sixth stage of spiritual unfoldment. The letter Shin (Sh) stands for the cosmic fire. I, or Yod, represents the working of that fire in what alchemists call the "black dragon of putrefaction," that is, the intestinal tract, governed by the zodiacal sign Virgo, attributed to Yod. N, or Nun, is the sign of that fire after it has been extracted from food, water and air by the various assimilative processes, and, having been converted into nerve-force, is stored up in the Mars center, rul-

ing the region corresponding to the sign Scorpio.

The nerve-force in the Mars-center is raised until it energizes a center in the brain. Then we escape from the world of sense and three dimensions into the supersensual world known as the fourth dimension. But again we say, no man does this work for himself. It is done *within* him.

To be sure, the student employs mental and physical exercises; but even these are not his own doing, as he soon finds out, when he becomes more or less proficient. The object of all such practices is, or should be, to deepen one's understanding of the truth that no human personality ever does *anything* of itself. The object of all training is to get the inadequate personality out of the way, so that the true Self, which knows just what to do and how to do it, may find no resistance to the free expression of its perfect mastery of mind and body. In the beginning, the student seems to himself to be getting out of the way. Later on, he finds that not even this is his "own" action. It is the angel who sets us free, not we ourselves.

We have spoken of the fact that the bodies of the human figures are gray. If you have reviewed our analysis of the symbols, you will remember that the man is maintaining a passive posture, while the woman is actively holding up her hands to receive the influx of power from above. At this sixth stage of spiritual unfoldment there begins to be manifest that peculiarity of the consciousness beyond the level of intellectual thought, a peculiarity for which we have no adequate words. It is a reversal of the usual relations of consciousness and sub-consciousness, so that self-consciousness, hitherto apparently active, becomes quiet. Observe, too, that in contrast to Key 6, where the man looks at the woman, and in contrast to Key 1, where the Magician looks down, this man looks up, and his gaze is fixed on the angel.

In the sixth stage of spiritual unfoldment, self-consciousness persists. But it is no longer the dominant element. If anything, sub-consciousness appears to be the more active member of our personal mental pair. On the other hand, while self-consciousness is quite still, since it has realized that personality does nothing of itself, this denial is not by any means the extinction of personality. It is a different evaluation of the meaning of self-consciousness. Nor is this merely an intellectual state, conviction, or conclusion. It is a vivid experience.

At this stage of unfoldment, the last enemy, Death, is overcome, because the experience itself is a transmutation of the very force which destroys our physical bodies. It is an actual liberation of the higher vehicles of consciousness from bondage to the physical plane.

This liberation is effected by the very force which brings about the decay and destruction of the physical organism. The liberation is even more than this, but at this point in our work, it does not seem wise to enter into details. Let it be enough to say that in the sixth stage of

unfoldment what is raised is an incorruptible body which, as St. Paul tells us, is "sown corruptible." The secret of this sowing and reaping is shown in the symbolism of Key 13.

The process which leads to this result is hinted at in the *Emerald Table*, in these words: "Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle, from the gross, gently, and with great ingenuity. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends to earth again, and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors."

The principle involved is a gentle, gradual and careful separation of the finer vehicles of the Life-power from the grosser ones. This operation is performed, as alchemists put it, by the aid of Mercury and Mercury is the planetary ruler of Gemini, the zodiacal sign symbolized by Key 6. The separation is an act of discrimination. The whole work of separating the subtle from the gross, of extricating the finer vehicles of fourth-dimensional consciousness from their bonds of flesh, calls for the application of the principle explained in our analysis of Key 6 in *Tarot Fundamentals*.

The result of right discrimination is mental equilibrium. Until this equilibrium is established, there is continual friction between self-consciousness and subconsciousness, so that the very law of suggestion which brings about so many seeming miracles when it is constructively applied acts negatively to intensify our inner disharmony.

When we grasp our true relation to the Life-power, when we understand that unflinching wisdom finds expression however inadequate, through all our thoughts and words, when we begin to rest our lives upon the foundation of Eternal Being, our perceptions of these truths and our endeavors to live them begin to affect the structure of all our vehicles. For subconsciousness eagerly accepts the implicits of these perceptions and conceptions, and begins to act upon them.

It then becomes, as shown in the 6th and 20th Keys, the immediate recipient of the all-wise direction of the Life-power. The personal consciousness (the man) becomes a passive observer of daily experience. This does not mean that subconsciousness becomes the ruler of personality. As we have said elsewhere, it is a mistake to assume that subconsciousness is the superior of the two modes of our personal consciousness. No error is more productive of unfortunate results than the one that leads to dependence upon subconsciousness for guidance. We are to recognize that its highest office is to serve as a *channel* for guidance, but the guidance itself comes always from superconsciousness.

When this truth is understood and lived, we are actually reborn. The story of the virgin birth told in so many versions of the ancient mysteries, is re-enacted in us. The little child of regenerated personality, conceived by the Holy Spirit (the *ruach elohim*), is born of the liberated woman, because the direct action of the Life-power on subcon-

consciousness builds up a new conception of personality within us. More than this, the “seed of the woman,” as we read in the Bible prophecy, now crushes the serpent’s head, by overcoming the illusion of separateness, and with that illusion, the lie of death. The new man is the little child of Key 20, and in this sixth stage of unfoldment he it is who, through his ability to enter the fourth-dimensional consciousness, does truly lead personal self-consciousness and subconsciousness into a new world.