

A General Look at Alchemy

Alchemy's Origin

Alchemy, according to esoteric writers, is said to be the invention of an ancient Egyptian sage called Hermes Trismegistus. The "Father of Alchemy" lived in an unknown age of Egyptian history, though he is thought by some Rosicrucian schools to have lived during the time of Moses and the Exodus of the Israelites. If true, being an Initiate of the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, Moses must have been tutored by Hermes himself, which later enabled him to carry out his mission and to realize his I AM Presence symbolised by the burning bush. The various precepts and the Ten Commandments of the Lord of Hosts revealed to the Israelites by Moses are the first alchemical steps of purification and putrefaction. Further steps were later added to the Mosaic revelation by the Nazarene Master. Indeed, the Christ declared that he came not to abolish the previous revelation, but to fulfill it.

It is thought by some that "Hermes Trismegistus" constituted a title assumed by distinguished hierophants of the Mystery Schools, in a somewhat similar manner that Zoroaster, the founder of the "Fire Religion" is regarded by certain scholars. Incidentally, alchemy may also be considered a Fire Religion, or at least a philosophy, because of its symbology of fire related to the alchemical principles, its prerequisite in the art of transmutation, and to the respect and honor paid to it by alchemists.

Jewish mystics identify Hermes as the antediluvian prophet Enoch, or Idris, as the Muslims call him; while ancient Egyptians see Hermes as Thoth, the god of Wisdom, Learning, and Writing. He was given this apotheosis along with Imhotep, the great architect under the reign of King Zoser of the Fourth Dynasty. It would appear that both men were overshadowed by the archetypal figure of Thoth, and were acknowledged as such by both the inner and outer circles of initiates of the Mystery Schools. Thoth, or his Greek counterpart, Mercury, was a messenger of the gods; and as an archetypal incarnation of this god, Hermes lived up to his name by his literary productiveness. Ancient writers declared that the "Trice Greatest" wrote thousands of books on what later became known as *Hermeticism* and *Alchemy*. It is unfortunate that very little of Hermes' works survived the conflagration and destruction of libraries and books by Roman and Christian zeal in the early dawn of the Piscean Age. The world as a whole is still ignorant of the great loss, and it will take some time before the invocation is made by the masses for the Greater Light, for disclosure of eternal principles that would shine upon the paths of men, and consequently, for a full restoration and establishment of an occult library of the world, with an archive and database of every known system and tradition of the metaphysical side of life. Although little is known of Hermes, it is evident through the works attributed to him that he was an intermediary of the Wisdom Ray of the Supreme Being.

One of the most famed works on Hermetic doctrine written, and in concise form, is the Smaragdine Tablet attributed to the authorship of Hermes. Its discovery is traditionally believed to have been made by Alexander of Macedonia in a cave near Hebron. This conqueror of nations who had Aristotle for a Master, was in search of immortality. Although he failed to attain his personal immortality, Alexander did uncover a philosophical jewel that would have given him what he had sought if he had only applied the principles that the Emerald Tablet contained. Tradition relates that

the Tablet was wrought out of artificial emerald, as a result of transmutation, with the Hermetic doctrine embossed on it.

Alchemy, as a philosophy and an art in the Western hemisphere in the past two millenia, existed concurrently in other ancient cultures and civilizations-- it was practiced intensely by Hindu Yogis and Taoists, in India and China. This parallel growth is probably the result of the Great White Brotherhood's periodic presentation of a spiritual method designed for the development of certain types of temperaments and belief-framework of those aspirants belonging to a certain era and stage of mankind's collective evolution.

Based on this parallel growth of alchemy in the Orient and the regions of the Fertile Crescent suggested to some Esoteric historians that alchemy may have had a common origin in that sunken continent Atlan, or Atlantis, as it is more generally known. Esoteric Tradition declares that a handful of the Atlantean Root Race survived the submergence of the land and transmigrated to Egypt, China, and the Americas. It is reasonable to assume that they brought with them their sciences, art, and culture, which influenced the inhabitants indigenous to the regions where they settled. This would explain the similarities in the traditions and beliefs of native cultures to be found both East and West.

Principles of Alchemy are the principles that Nature herself works with, and thus alchemy, scientifically, existed in the inner planes long before it was brought down to the earth plane by Master teachers. A study of Nature's mysteries would reveal to the discerning student that the higher Intelligences, the Elohim, and the Great Architect of the Universe utilized alchemical principles to precipitate the starry bodies out of Chaos, out of Cosmic Root Substance or "Sunyata," as termed by the Buddhist. Qabalists believe that Adam was taught by the angels in Paradise the art of transmutation, to prepare him for his "Fall" and his climb back toward his Monad, toward godhood-- his involution and evolution from a Divine Consciousness to Divine Self-Consciousness.

There is no general concurrence among scholars as to the origin of the word "alchemy." The consensus is that the word is derived from the word "Khem," the ancient name for Egypt, added to the Arabic article "al," meaning "the," thus forming the word "al-Khemy." However, Sir Wallis Budge is of the opinion that alchemy comes from the Egyptian word "khemein," meaning the "black powder" or "ore" which is presumed to be an ingredient in alchemy. No matter where it secured its name, the word "alchemy," it would seem, first came into prominence in the Mystery Schools in Alexandria.

Purpose of Alchemy

But just what is alchemy, and what role does it play in the promotion of the welfare of mankind? If alchemy has any true value, it must be based upon eternal values, upon the things that support Heaven's purposes; in other words, upon God's plan of humankind's becoming into the true Elohimic image of the divine. If alchemy simply had an earthly objective, masterminds of the Ages would not have concerned themselves with it. It would have been considered as something so trivial, so transient, as to distract Man from the real work of extricating himself, specifically, from his bondage to the carnal self, the kama manas, or animal soul; and generally, from samsara. Greed was never the impulse that prompted the invention of alchemy. It was, is, and always will be Man's desire for Truth and enlightenment of his true nature and estate that motivates him to seek through every channel and avenue for that certain something that he subconsciously feels he had "lost" and which is his to re-acquire--call it "the Lost Word," "the Philosopher's Stone," or "the Holy Grail," it matters not. Alchemy teaches Man the principles of regeneration and resurrection, laws of creation and transmutation; laws that would assist Man to regain his former estate lost in "the Fall." This "Fall"

from Paradise symbolically represents involution of the human life wave into physical matter. The way back to the Throne of God is scientifically called "evolution," and the acceleration of the latter is the art of the hermetic gnosis. This *Path of Return* is esoterically and graphically symbolised by Jacob's Ladder, and the paths of the Qaballistic "Tree of Life."

The drama of Jesus' life is an alchemical allegory of the steps of regeneration and ascension to the I AM Presence within, the "Father who art in Heaven." Orthodox Christianity does not recognize or is unaware of this vital truth, and because of the lack of mystical insight among most members of its priesthood coupled with the absence of esoteric truths in the doctrines and dogmas of the Church, the average Christian is ignorant and unaware of the true message of Christianity--of the Light, the Christ substance, and the true saving blood that Christ introduced to humankind. Esoteric Christianity is fundamentally an alchemical science and religion; its promulgator was a Master Alchemist--being taught in the initiatory halls of the Mystery Schools. It is related in the Gospels how the Master transmuted water into wine, multiplied loaves and fishes, and walked on water--all of which were manifestations of the applied principles of alchemy, the Hermetic philosophy--or perhaps these events were all allegories conveying some spiritual teaching.

Alchemy is defined as an art of transmutation and precipitation--the changing of base metals into gold. The work of alchemical transmutation is designated as "the Labor of the Sun." This "Eye of Ra" symbolically represents the perfection with which Nature is gradually unfolding in her creations. At the physical level the Sun of Perfection is represented by gold. Alchemy is the science and art which hasten the creations of Nature to attain perfection at their own respective level. Gold is the perfection attain by metals and minerals. Minerals, however, are also following another line of perfection--that of its ability to sustain life and consciousness. And Man, the acme of organic life, is evolving to the state where he acquires perfection in Divine Self-Awareness.

From the above it can be summarized that alchemy is the art of raising vibrations of an object in order to hasten its development or evolution into a higher expression or state. The result is perfection of the object of the transmutation.

Alchemy's Transmission to Christendom

Alexandria was the philosophical capital of Egypt, and perhaps of the whole civilized worlds in the early centuries of Christianity. Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Alchemy and Hermeticism flowered abundantly; these philosophies are intrinsically related, and to comprehend the Royal Art fully, the student of alchemy is advised by Master teachers to be familiar with their doctrines. Alexandria's Golden Age of occult philosophy did not last long, for the reptilian mind of the fallen angels had seized control of the rising new religion of Christianity (no offence to our Christian brothers and sisters). The philosophical sons and daughters of Hermes were persecuted and murdered brutally by Christian fundamentalists and fanatics. Fear and hatred were aroused among the masses and the ousting of the so-called pagan religions from the land ensued. One sad event was the cruel assassination of Hypathia, an illustrious daughter of the Mysteries--the Widow Isis, and propounder of Neoplatonism. She hardly had a philosophical equal during her day, and this caused the envy and jealousy of a certain priest who contrived her murder.

During the decline of the Roman Empire, the Secret Doctrine, or the Ancient Wisdom were passed on to the guardianship of the Arabian and Persian mystics. The tenets of occult wisdom were later incorporated into the Muslim faith with its higher aspects promulgated secretly in the traditional oral manner in certain sects, Orders, and mystical groups such as the Sufi and Dervish Orders, and among the community of Druzes in Lebanon and Syria.

In the 8th to the 11th centuries A.D., in the era of the golden period of alchemic-Islamic culture, we hear of eminent names in the field of the Royal Art, such as al-Farabi, Rhazes, Geber and Avicenna. These men studied the mystery teachings and occult wisdom of the Egyptian and Greek schools. They were most notably influenced by Hermetic, Alchemic and Neoplatonic ideas, and the knowledge that they acquired was synthesized with Islamic and Sufic doctrines. The Sufi adepts produced one of the most beautiful symbols of spiritual unfoldment and progression: the rose. Its symbolism is comparable to the lotus adopted by Hindu mystics.

The Knights Templar was an important link between both East and West, between Islamic culture and the world of Christendom. The alchemical doctrine was passed on by the Sufi adepts to these "Knights of the Holy Sepulchre," as the Templars were originally called. Even the mythical Christian Rosencruetz of Rosicrucianism is said to have acquired his occult knowledge from the Sufi Masters and adepts in Arabia.

After the days of the disbandment of the Templar Order by Philip the Fair of France, and the death-sentence of their last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay in 1314, the surviving Knights sought refuge in various countries; and in England some of them founded an alchemical Order which later became known as the "Elder Brothers of the Rose Cross." It is said that this Order comprised 33 members and that this group exists even to this very day in our computer age.

When the believers of Allah invaded and settled in Iberia, they brought with them the Secret Teachings. Colleges were established that had mysticism, metaphysics, and alchemy in the curriculum. With the establishment of the various schools, the Ancient Wisdom finally took definite root in European soil, and it spread gradually throughout the other regions of the Continent. This expansion was no doubt the result of the efforts put forth by the spiritual hierarchy of this planet. Man's evolution is divided into certain steps, stages, and cycles, and these have "time-tables" or schedules associated with them. It was expedient that the Flames of Truth and Freedom be given to the custodian of the Islamic world if it were not to be extinguished by some of the ungodly minds of Christendom of the Dark Ages which would have caused a setback to the Divine Plan already established.

The deviation from the right use of free will by Christian fundamentalists had made them unsuitable vessels for the Christic wine. In spite of exoteric Christianity's blind attack on the Light that gave it birth, the esoteric circle continued its existence clandestinely, preserving the secret teachings of Jesus and transmitting it to a selected few who had the vision of the divine plan within their hearts and minds.

Idries Shah, the eminent Sufi of contemporary times, mentions in his book "The Sufis," how an Englishman, one Robert of Chester, was instrumentally in 1144 A.D., in introducing alchemy to the Christian world by translating an alchemical manuscript originally written in Arabic. There were many others like him, for bearers of the Flame were not few.

Levels of Alchemy

Most of the principles of alchemy conveyed to the public were made up of images, mandalas, and jargon. These obscure languages were necessary considering the era that alchemical science was struggling--struggling for a recognition from the masses as a system of spiritual development in the midst of ecclesiastical persecution. The mentality of the masses of the Middle Ages were not much different from the time of Jesus. Ignorance, superstition, and fear still ruled the day. The letter of the law, as propagandized by Orthodox Christianity were still at odds, and at conflict with the spirit of

the law, as advanced by enlightened mystics. The inquisition, which lasted for centuries, showed how far the Church had strayed from the original precepts of Christianity. The Christ taught love, forgiveness, charity and kindness; the Church Fathers and Christian leaders only knew personal ambition, with sadism, and egoism set-up upon an unholy pedestal. The personal "I" was worshipped, the "Yekhidah," or the Divine I AM, was forgotten.

Neophytes of the Mysteries were given the keys of interpretation of Sacred literature when they were accepted in the various secret brotherhoods. The candidates of alchemical initiation were noticed by the Masters when they had proven their sincerity, and the sacrifices and effort that they had made. To the world at large, the existence of the Masters was unknown and unsuspected, even though their presence in the world of men was hinted at in various alchemical manuscripts. It was only in the last century that Helena P. Blavatsky, among others, who brought their existence to the world's attention; and even then, the world scoffed and derided at the idea. This is a little unreasonable, as people of various spiritual unfoldment and mental development may easily be seen and recognized. If some men and women are more perfect than others, why should not there be men and women totally perfect from our human point of view?

Esoterically, when a Master alchemist gave a student of alchemy the "Philosopher's Stone," what was actually conveyed were the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, and a certain yogic system that when applied and practiced, would transmute an initiate into a god.

To the public eye, alchemical icons and terminology conveyed no sense whatsoever, but the mystiqueness of alchemical texts and images aroused interest in potential practitioners of the Royal Art, and it turned the average person into a seeker. This was perhaps one of the intentions of the authors of alchemical manuscripts. Modern chemistry, feeling a little perplexed by alchemical ideas, contemptuously considers her sire as a pseudo-science, in the same manner that astrology is usually frowned upon by the students of astronomy. Modern research will in time change the opinions and prejudicial beliefs of a materialistically-inclined science; already pioneers of quantum physics are hypothesising what the Ancient Wisdom has been teaching for ages.

One key to understanding alchemy is to determine the objectives and the subject of transmutation. Without keeping this principle in mind, one would be lost in the alchemical wilderness. Alchemy is categorized into four levels :

- 1) Physical alchemy
- 2) Biological alchemy
- 3) Psychological alchemy
- 4) Transcendental alchemy

Physical Alchemy

Transmutation of one substance into another such as base metals into gold, water into wine, etc., is the physical aspect of alchemy. It is often referred to as the "Greater Circulation." Much charlatanry and quackery became involved with this aspect and many people were cheated by rascals who claimed that they had in their possession the Philosopher's Stone that could effect a transmutation of base metals into gold. Human greed knows no bounds; the poor wishes to be wealthy, the rich aims to be wealthier, and with all their efforts, whether successful or not, sorrow and suffering is the karmic result. Aspirants of the Ancient Wisdom are taught that the world of form is transient and that one's happiness should not be based upon something that is illusory. Illusions do not last and they are not eternal. They bind man to a false sense of human limitation. They enslave man to matter by seducing

him to indulge in things that hampers the development of the soul. Truth and the Real are that which is eternal and they are to be found in the "kingdom of God" within us. Unfortunately, most Christians overlook this one of the most important injunctions of the Nazarene Master. The ancient precepts advises us further that the less earthly desires one has, the richer one truly becomes.

The "Lesser Circulation" of the herbal family is also included in this category of Physical Alchemy. The main object of this work is the search for a universal panacea that would cure the ills and sufferings of humanity. This is quite a noble desire should the lucrative aspect and profit motive be absent; it would exemplify the Bodhisattva ideal.

In contemporary times, there are many of those who have claimed to have accomplished a successful transmutation in their laboratories, even teaching the secrets of the art to their ardent followers.

Biological Alchemy

When alchemists realized that they were advancing in age and were no closer to the goal of physical transmutation, they sought a way to stall the process of old age, to regenerate the body, and even to acquire a degree of physical immortality and biological immunity to diseases that humankind is so prone.

With such an object in view, they commenced their search for an "Elixir of Life" that would prolong their physical existence. At the very onset, the search took them to the field of herbalism, for many plants were believed to possess the traditional virtues of the fabled "Fountain of Youth." The Hindu mystics attribute such qualities to the "Soma" creeper. The Chinese Taoists declare that a certain mushroom that they call "lung chih" has the virtue of regenerating the physical body. The Egyptian god Thoth is also said to have described a life-giving mushroom which conferred immortality.

At a later period, however, the discovery was made that the real Elixir lied within man himself, and it had to be manufactured via psycho-biological means. Briefly, this is the work to be undertaken at the biological level.

Psychological Alchemy

Psychological, or "Mental Alchemy," is the science of the development of the Mind. Of the four lower bodies, the mental sheath is the only one unstructured, as yet, into an organized body--that is, in most people. In the course of evolution, the mental body will be constituted and coordinated so as to allow the Ego, and the waking consciousness, to function fully in the mental realm. The "Secret Doctrine" of H.P.Blavatsky tells us that in the Fifth Round the mental body is expected to be fully developed. Mental Alchemy accelerates the evolution of the Mind. It permits its practitioner to acquire in the Fourth Round what Nature intends humankind to attain in the next with her somewhat languid process. Mental development entails the development and the refinement of the following abilities, qualities, and faculties :

- 1) A universal attitude and perspective
- 2) Imagination
- 3) Concentration
- 4) The ability to reason inductively, deductively, syllogistically, analytically, analogically, etc.
- 5) Mental quietude
- 6) Abstract thinking
- 7) Divine thinking

- 8) Mental receptivity
 - 9) Visualization
 - 10) Discrimination (Viveka)
 - 11) Detachment (Vairagya)
 - 12) Meditation
 - 13) Mental creation
- Etc.

Before quick progress can be made in developing the above faculties, the mind has to be purged of all the phobias, neurosis, and psychosis that are infecting it; even the guilts, resentments, and sinful feelings torturing one's consciousness. The aspirant is advised to forgive--forgive self and forgive others. The steps of conviction, contrition, confession, consecration, and communion should be adhered to when one desires spiritual unfoldment.

One of the other steps to be taken is the unification of the male and female aspects of the psyche. Psychoanalysis, however, has only touched the outer fringes of the mind with its inner probings.

Mental Alchemy, like the previous categories, is not considered the ultimate goal of Alchemy. They are but stepping stones leading to Transcendental Alchemy. More on Mental Alchemy and the general laws governing transmutation may be read in the *Kybalion* written by anonymous initiate-writers.

Transcendental Alchemy

All things in their natural unregenerated state are considered dead by alchemists. Man in his natural state is in a state of death. Master Jesus voiced this precept when he declared, "let the dead bury the dead." Transcendental Alchemy raises Man from the "S tate of Nature, to a State of Grace." The process reunites the sadhaka, the disciple, to the Atma, and later to the Monad in full awareness. This is the "unio mystica" sought fervently by mystics of all Ages. When Man unites with the totality of Life, he factually unites himself with God, for Life and God are synonymous.

Unity with "Tao," Lao Tse's mystic term for the Absolute, results in the realization of one's true Identity and Reality. The individual who is united with the Absolute is a Jivanmukta, a freed being--freed from ignorance, maya, and mortality; human consciousness expands and embraces Cosmic Consciousness in this unified state. Figuratively, the Drop returns to the Ocean, and the Spark to the Flame, and Man's essential divine nature shines forth with the splendour of the Sun. This is the destiny of Man--to advance into the Kingdom of God and be all that God wants him to be.

There are various systems of spiritual unfoldment catered to the basically, seven different temperaments of Man, that leads him to his ultimate goal. Transcendental Alchemy is one of these sublime systems. It is essentially yogic in nature. Meditation, concentration, and contemplation are stressed and the work of the previous levels of transmutation are conducive to its successful outcome.

Symbols of Alchemy

Since ancient times symbols have been used to describe something that words were not adequate enough to express. The intellect has its limitations in comprehending spiritual verities. Intuitively, Man feels that the forces of nature are intelligently directed. How and why, his human mind is unable to explain. Cosmic principles, though inadequately described verbally by prophets of God, finds its inculcation upon the human mind expressively through symbols and signs.

Symbols are not restrictive, nor exclusive. Minds interpret symbols according to the level of their mental and spiritual development. The child-mind interprets a symbol in one way, while the transcendental mind would interpret it in another.

Most symbols are taken from Nature; others invented by Man, usually take on the form of combined geometric elements. Examples of the former are: the snake, which symbolizes regeneration; the scarabeus--immortality; mountains--obstacles, etc. Examples of the latter: the Martinist pentacle--the unity of Man and Omneity; the Egyptian ankh--Life and Immortality; the circle--eternity.

Symbols have a certain usefulness in transforming the mind. Whatever man thinks upon, that he becomes. By meditating on symbols, or images representing power, love, holiness, and compassion, for example, through mental induction man unfolds such qualities within his nature.

Personally developed symbols are sometimes used as media for communicative exchange between the waking consciousness and the subconscious mind. This is effected by ascribing a certain attribute to a, preferably, invented symbol by repetitious thought and contemplation upon it. For example, the waking mind may ascribe to lightning as a symbol the meaning of danger by constant focus and suggestion upon it until it is absorbed by the subconscious mind. At a later date, when real danger is present, an intuitive impression with the lightning symbol would flash through from the subconscious to the waking mind, thus warning the individual. This method is also applicable to enrich and enlarge upon symbolic dream content and to induce the subconscious to utilize the newly absorbed symbols which are non-mystifying to the waking-consciousness.

Alchemy is very rich in symbolism. The Royal Art itself is sometimes represented by the Pelican and the Phoenix bird. The latter was invented by mystics in Alexandria during its heyday; the former, by a group of Knights Templar in the British Isles.

Alchemical symbols of past ages were designed to reveal, as well as to conceal; to stimulate the mind to awaken from its intellectual-complacency. Alchemical mandalas describe processes of transmutation. Truths, laws, and principles, which are pertinent to an aspirant's spiritual unfoldment, are similarly depicted within mandalas. Such truths were obscured by vague language and inexplicable diagrams for protection from persecution, because truths, for some reason, were, and still are, considered heretical by Christian orthodoxy. In accord with this dire situation, alchemical symbols, as an expedient, took on Christian coloration.

Let us examine the following common alchemical symbols :

- 1) The Hermaphrodite
- 2) Dragons
- 3) The Caduceus

The Hermaphrodite

Modern psychology has discovered that the human psyche possesses both masculine and feminine qualities. The male and female polarities are present no matter what our biological gender. One polarity in the human psyche is, however, usually repressed to the background in the Id, the subconsciousness, to the detriment of the psychological equilibrium and stability of the waking consciousness.

There are hierarchies of development and transformation of both male and female qualities evolving within the psyche. The "lowest" rung of the female hierarchy is the "Harlot," later transfiguring into the "Virgin" of the succeeding rung, and on to the "High Priestess" and the "Empress" of the higher stages. The masculine side has its transformation from "Barbarian," to "Knight," "Hierophant," and "Emperor."

The Hermaphrodite symbolically represents the ideal anima and animus in symbiotic conjunction; the highest aspect of the male and female qualities in perfect balance and unity within the psyche. This is the state of unity that every man and woman unconsciously seeks in an external partner. The search for wholeness should really take place within. Man's union with Omneity is preceded by man's union with his alter ego within his waking consciousness.

Any individual with such a coordinated psyche functions balance and creatively in society. An aura of holiness enfolds the person; the world knows the person as a compassionate, wise, and powerful being. He, or she, is the "twice-born."

Esoteric tradition teaches that in a future Root Race individuals will be hermaphrodites. Aside from having an androgynous psyche, man would biologically possess two spinal columns with the cerebro-spinal and autonomic nervous system functioning in a closer relationship. Individuals who are capable of controlling autonomic functions such as the heart beat, is a certain indication of where the biological and physiological aspects of man are evolving.

Dragons

There are many myths and legends concerning heroes slaying dragons that are to be found in the mythology of various cultures. We hear in Greek myth of Apollo vanquishing Python; Siegfried, St. George, Krishna, Hermes, and many other heroic figures have also had their dragons to slay. There are basically two species of dragons to be found in alchemical mythos: the celestial, and the terrestrial dragon. The latter dragon is sometimes called "the red dragon."

What do dragons represent? Dragons are symbols of raw energy within the psycho-biological organism of man. The terrestrial dragon in the microcosm, is the kundalini fire nesting in the *kanda*. In the average person, this energy is used mainly in sexual gratification and indulgence in sensual activities. Slaying the dragon symbolizes the tapping of this energy for higher uses of the Ego. The student-hero utilizes the sword, symbolic of the will, to overcome the beast within, does so by directing the kundalini fire upwards toward the brain centers via the channel called *sushumna*--stimulating creativity of a higher order as a result. Illumination is the consequence of the internal marriage that takes place between the negative kundalini force and the higher positive Christic force, symbolised by the celestial dragon, within the Holy of Holies of the sanctum within the cranium. In a symbolical sense, the hero is smeared by dragon's blood making him immortal. The resurrected Kundalini is sometimes represented by the Phoenix bird.

The individual who has his kundalini raised permanently and hissing through the Third Eye, is honorably called a "Naga," a Hindu mystic term for "dragon," or "serpent." With the experience of illumination, the Naga realizes the oneness and unity of life. The Naga is known for his wisdom in his words, action, and behavior. Master Jesus is presumed to have praised the enlightened Nagas by exhorting his followers to be "as wise as a serpent . . ." Dragons, occasionally, represent the unresolved and repressed energies to be found in the psyche--the "monsters of the id"--such as phobias, neurosis, guilt feelings, and the like.

From the geo-terrestrial angle, dragons represent certain currents of magnetic energy found in certain parts of the earth's terrain. They could perhaps be called "chakras of the planet." They also correspond to accupressure points in the body of man. Ley lines are, likewise, associated with geo-terrestrial dragons. The Knights Templers had certain knowledge in this regard--they knew how to determine the locations of magnetically-charged regions. Such hallowed grounds were chosen as sites for cathedrals, chapels, and temples. Dragons are sometimes associated with the body, soul, and spirit of Man.

The Caduceus

Mystic gurus, when instructing disciples, sometimes adopt teaching devices to train their chelas. The Caduceus is one such device. It represents the major nadis, or subtle nervous system to be found in man's occult anatomy.

The Caduceus, or staff of Mercury, is composed of a rod with two snakes intertwined around the rod. The rod represents *sushumna*, an etheric counterpart of the spinal cord. Within the *sushumna* there are other subtle nerves, channels of refined energy; they are called by yogis "Vajrini," "Chitrini," and "Brahman." The *sushumna* extends upwards and outwards into the Overself as the "Sutratma." Pingala and Ida are the two nadis depicted by the snakes. The junctions where the snakes and rod meet are symbolic of the major chakras. Vagabond yogis sometimes carry bamboo staffs with seven knots on it to represent *sushumna* and the chakras.

Atop of the caduceus rod is a knob; a vine creeper is sometimes attached to this knob ending somewhere midway at the staff. The protuberance represents the medulla oblongata with the vagus nerve, the creeper, connected to it. The vagus nerve ends in the thoracic region. Each of these components plays an important role in man's mystic development. They serve various spiritual functions.

Occasionally, a pair of wings are to be found appended to each side of the knob or rod. This indicates that the kundalini energy at the base of the *sushumna* had been raised and resurrected. Angelic wings symbolize a superior degree of consciousness and mind.

As a whole, the caduceus symbolizes regeneration and enlightenment. It further depicts the attunement of the mind of man with the Cosmic Mind.

In bygone days, in the Mystery Schools, only the adepts and those of a higher standing were worthy enough to hold such a symbolic staff in their hands. Sometimes the caduceus, or versions of it, were magnetized with odic energy and Atmic force. The Thyrsus held in the hands of hierophants of the Eleusian Mystery School was one rod with such a divine quality impregnated into it. It was primarily designed to stimulate the kundalini fire of the disciples and initiates when their gurus deemed it necessary and appropriate at certain stages of their spiritual growth. The act of impregnating a mystical or religious object with divine influences is called "consecration," or "magnetization."

Some occultists interpret the caduceus as representing the Universal Magickal Agent. This magickal force is used abundantly in theurgic and thaumaturgic operations. Egyptian hierophants were adepts in the application of this force. The laws and principles involved in controlling the agent were transmitted under oath of secrecy to seekers of Light. Appolonius, Pythagoras, and Moses are names that come to mind when considering the display of so-called miracles. These eminent individuals were all initiates of the Mystery schools in the Land of Khem.

Nowadays, the Caduceus is an emblem employed by the medical profession. Only in recent years is this branch of science discovering the subtle energies with which this emblem is silently pointing.

Themes of Alchemy

Alchemy, no matter what its level of application, is essentially psychic in nature. All of the laboratory processes described by alchemists takes place mainly in man's consciousness. Consciousness is the key to transmutation. God-Consciousness is the secret of the royal Art. Functioning in higher dimensions, the conscious mind in unison with higher levels of consciousness, creates forms of perfection in higher realms, in archetypal worlds. The consciousness operating therein coalesces the necessary electronic particles to bring about a manifestation in the physical world. Consciousness, when in the borderline state, easily experiences and produces psychic manifestations.

The Mind is the creator and director of the dynamism and kinetics of subatomic particles. Out of Cosmic Root Substance, or Prima Materia, the Cosmic Mind and Intelligence fashioned the entire universe. Man, being the reflection of the macrocosm, is able to use the same Mind to manifest his designs. Patterns of perfection held constantly in mind becomes living archetypes which stimulates its creator to work spiritually upon his redemption and salvation from bondage to human mortality. We become what we think. Thoughts are living energy, and it is the proper directing of those thoughts by the will that effects transmutation or precipitation. It is declared that thoughts of a divine nature give rise to the vibrations of a Master Soul. Thoughts influence us holistically. Our nerve substances, composition of the blood, auric energies and radiations, are all affected by the state of our mind, by the thoughts that we dwell on a day to day basis.

Every organism is an embryo of a higher development and expression. Nature is constantly striving to produce perfection. Alchemists believe that it is Man's prerogative to speed up the processes of nature to quickly attain perfection. This spiritual labor is conducted in the laboratory of the soul.

From the Absolute's point of view, we may speculate that everything is perfect, for "everything" does not truthfully exist--everything is his being. All is God in his omnipresence. God is Immanent and Transcendent. Perfection is a divine quality ever present within Nature and Man. This innate divinity is stressed by spiritual gurus. The "know ye not that ye are gods" precept is emphasized repeatedly.

From the relative point of view, imperfections are to be seen everywhere. Man's earthly mission is to transmute this disordered condition, this cacophony of man's evolving principles by attuning with the rhythm of the Cosmos--with the dance of Shiva.

To understand the esoteric science of alchemy, it is necessary to elaborate upon the above through discussing briefly the following alchemical themes :

- 1) The Philosopher's Stone
- 2) The First Matter
- 3) The Seed
- 4) Mercury--Sulphur--Salt
- 5) The Seven Metals
- 6) The Universal Panacea
- 7) Fire

The Philosopher's Stone

The Philosopher's Stone is a catalyst that transmutes an object to its highest expression. With the application of the Stone, for instance, base metals are transformed into gold; men are changed into gods. The stone is a prime requisite in Alchemy and Hermeticism, without it the state of regeneration and resurrection are not attained.

Legends of mystical stones are to be found in various cultures; for instance, taoists refer their stone as the "Stone of Wisdom." The Burmese called theirs "the Stone of Live Metal." Muslims venerate a stone that lies reposed in the kaaba. This stone is said to be a fragment of a meteorite. It is traditionally believed to be white in hue but because of the sins of men, it turned black. There is a stone called "Cintamani" said to be a state jewel of the mystical and mythical city of Shamballa. Shamballa is believed to exist in the etheric plane above the Gobi desert. Esoterically speaking, "Cintamani," or the "love-jewel," represents the perfect expression of the anahata, or heart chakra, the enlightened mind, or bodicitta. When a seeker is told to acquire Cintamani, the unfoldment of the heart chakra is meant. This has its parallel with the Grail Quest in that, microcosmically speaking, a spiritual principle within man is the object of the search. This is further supported by the tradition that King Solomon's temple was built without the sound of tools. A certain stone called "shamir" was used to fashion the Temple. Esoterists know that the Temple refers to the causal body, the vessel clothing the Monad, the Spirit of Man. The Temple, or the causal body is built with the shimmering stone of virtues, good works, and an enlightened mind. These are nourishment that beautifies the Temple.

Perfect Love is truly a catalyst. Its power transforms human expression into that of the divine. Love is an aspect of the buddhic component within man; alchemically speaking, it is described as the gluten of the White Eagle.

From the above it can be gathered that the Philosopher's Stone is no stone in an ordinary sense. This is stressed repeatedly by alchemists in their writings. They declare that the Stone is made out of the First Matter, and is composite of the four elements. The Stone is believed to be hidden within man. Powers of the Godhead are ascribed to this fabulous Stone. Its appearance, so say the alchemists, is unsightly to look at, is to be found in filth, and is valueless to the majority of men. Since there are various categories of alchemy, it is probable that the Stone differs at each alchemical level, taking on a different characteristic and nature.

Aside from Love, other aspects of God, of Omneity, can be said to be the Stone, such as Supreme Reason, Wisdom, Power and Light. These qualities all have the ability to purify and illumine body, mind, and soul. To acquire the Stone is to discover Truth, Reality, and the Absolute, the "fixed," the non-aggregate--and this is the Magnum Opus--to experience and to know Reality veiled by the "adversary," "deceiver," "opposer," or "maya." It is the sublimest work any person can do. It fulfills the old adage: "Man, know thyself." The Stone derives its power from the highest aspect of man, from his divine Self which is essentially a spark of God.

Christ is sometimes described as a stone--a corner stone that is also at the same time its peak--which architecturally, describes a pyramidal structure; in the above sense, Christ, Light, Life, and Love are synonymous, for they all partake the nature of the Stone; they all have the capacity to transmute man's being. Christ Consciousness is the Stone that transmutes man holistically.

The heart of the crown chakra, and the heart chakra anchored to the thymus gland, are sites where the stone unfolds its power. Within the crown, the sahasrara chakra, the Christ Stone magnetizes the head

centers and crystallizes in the brain ventricles, resulting in the manifestation of hormones and nectars of a spiritual quality that flows into the blood stream and raising the vibratory rate of the body's atomic-structure. This transformed blood is the saving blood of Christ.

There is a divine flame of life, anchored in the heart. When nourished by the mystic Stone, by the Love--Life--Light principle, it radiates energy and magnetism to the surrounding area--to the thymus gland, to the pericardiac sac and fluid, and to the heart itself. It regenerates the blood cells as the blood stream circulates through the heart and lungs resulting in youth, vitality and radiant health. Hindu yogis declare that those who do not love, grow old quickly. In the light of the above, the "how" and "why" are easily discerned.

There are occultists who believe that the Philosopher's Stone represents a certain gnosis transmitted to worthy aspirants by Adepts of the Art. This Stone, then, concerns doctrines of mystical/occult principles that allows one to attain perfection in a single life time. Initiation and ritual play a vital role in this transmission. By applying esoteric principles, the aspirant is transformed into a master soul. An Adept is in a sense the Philosopher's Stone, for his very presence transmutes all who are fortunate enough to come into contact with him.

The First Matter

Nothing comes from nothing, therefore, matter and life must have had a source. The Absolute is that source; it is the Supreme Reality, and it is constantly emanating and absorbing back into Itself the energies and intelligences that manifest universes into existence. Out of the Absolute, there is an effluence of Prakriti and Purusha--Cosmic Root Substance and Cosmic Mind-Consciousness-Intelligence. These two principles are personified by Shiva and Shakti.

Cosmic Root Substance is the Prima Materia, the First Matter, or "Chaos," from which all elements and substance proceed. It is spirit energy unstructured as yet into particles of matter by the Cosmic Mind. Hindu mystics sometimes call First Matter "Akasha," meaning "Space."

Cosmic Mind creates by presenting a form, a thought-form, a blue-print of the intended manifestation, and coalescing around it the required substance from Prima Materia. First, the fluidic energies are concentrated into electrons, protons, and other subatomic particles; they are later combined to form an atom, which possesses the germ of "the Seed," the atomic number and structure of the blue-print and thoughtform of what it will eventually become. Atoms are then grouped to molecules which are later formed into a mass cognizable by the senses. The substance then fills the form-image, the "husk" of the Seed.

The mind of Man, being part of the Cosmic Mind, has the potential of creating in a similar manner as the Supreme Creator. Only when Man truly reflects the image of his creator will he be given authority to do so.

Alchemists declare that the First Matter is to be found within Man. Actually, our whole universe is permeated with it. It is everywhere present but no where manifested until magnetized by the Mind.

Differentiation between Matter and Consciousness is solely an illusion existing at the surface of Reality. The Many in its relative existence can be reduced to one--the Absolute, the Supreme Being. Qabalistically speaking, The fruits of the Tree of Life are absorbed into Ain Sof and Ain Sof Aur; these are reduced in their essence to Ain, the One, the All, the Unknowable.

The Seed

In a figurative sense, the alchemical seed, just like an ordinary seed, possesses both germ and husk--the male and female qualities. As applied to alchemy, the germ is the atomic number and the "DNA" of the substance, while the husk is the form that the substance would fill. Thoughtforms are seeds. They are blue-prints that manifest in the physical plane when magnetized and substantialized with the First Matter.

Alchemical Seeds are archetypes--the essences or germs of manifestations, and that which is in the process of being manifested. Everything has a seed, a conception of what a thing is destined to be. Mind, the Director, the Philosopher's Stone, nourishes Seeds with Prima Materia.

The following are the probable steps used by medieval alchemists for a transmutation on the physical level: first, the base metal is molten down--the heat of the flame has a transforming effect on the molecular level. Secondly, at a certain point of the operation, the mind of man comes into play, controlling and directing at atomic and subatomic levels--changing the vibratory rate, the atomic number and structure into gold. It is said that to make gold we must have gold. This does not refer to the adding to base metals a piece of gold. This seed of gold, is a seed in the form of an electronic pattern or blueprint of gold held in one's higher consciousness. The mind must be in a gold-consciousness state.

On a transcendental level, to transmute oneself into a god, one would require a god-pattern, a god-ideal visualized and meditated upon. Once the picture is perfected one assumes or identifies oneself with it, keeping it constantly in mind even after the meditation session. This would result in an increased vibratory rate of the various principles composing Man. Technically, the mind of Man synchronizes with the god-archetype, and by magnetic induction, is transformed into the god. Visualization, or mental imaging, is the method used with which the archetype is established. Precipitation may occur instantly, as in a paranormal manifestation, or after a lapse of time depending on the nature and magnitude of the archetype.

The processes described above appear to be one of the great Hermetic secrets of the Egyptian Mysteries. The methods correspond with the practices of Vajrayana in Tibetan Buddhism, as for instance, the discipline of the "divine pride" of being a Buddha.

Ethically speaking, before man attempts to put the forces of nature into action, it is expedient that he contemplates as to the worthiness of his designs. If his designs do not fit nor fulfill divine requirements, then bringing them into manifestation would simply be a violation of Cosmic law, and consequently, may be regarded as an operation of black magick. According to Martinism, it is this very violation of the Law that brought about "the Fall" of Adam Kadmon.

Mercury-Sulphur-Salt

According to alchemists, Mercury, Salt and Sulphur are the three-fold aspects of all phenomena--to be found in all compounds of a mineral or organic nature. It is postulated that by differing the proportions of each aspect in a compound, would cause a transmutation to occur. Mercury, as well as Salt and Sulphur, are not the common vulgar materials so used to effect a transmutation. This is made clear by exponents of the Royal Art.

Esoterically, Mercury represents Spirit, Salt--Body; and Sulphur--Soul. Every phenomenon and object in Nature is believed to possess these three attributes. It is thought that by separating each

aspect of an aggregate substance, purifying, and then recombining them, the result would be a total refinement of the object.

Philosophically speaking, Mercury is the Mind; Salt--Will and Wisdom; Sulphur--Love. The three are components or principles of the Philosopher's Stone, and they work potently to transmute any base metal or character into golden perfection. Without these principles, the coveted Stone is ineffectual in its capacity to change vibratory rates.

Sulphur moulds a person into a balanced individual, with the desire and motive to act creatively; Salt actually bestows the individual with the will and power to act; while Mercury, the intellectual principle, is the coordinating factor of both Sulphur and Salt. Mercury, Sulphur, and Salt together with the mysterious Azoth, the Divine Fire, or "Scamayim," are the attributes of the Stone, and they work wonders when applied knowledgeably. These triune principles and Azoth correspond to the Christian Trinity and the feminine principle personified by Mary. Azoth is the Shakti aspect of the triune godhead.

The Seven Metals

Metals in the world of alchemy and esotericism, in general, represents various conditions and principles to be found in Man and Nature. For instance, metals may represent the seven components or bodies making-up the being called "Man"; the seven exoteric rays from the Great Central Sun; and the seven major chakras within the subtle body. The seven metals also correspond to the seven angels presiding over the rays; to the seven archangels, the seven Chohans, the seven pairs of Elohim, etc.

Symbolically, the seven metals represent the seven planets known to the ancients--counting also the sun and moon, which are not planets proper, but a solar body and a satellite. The correspondences are as follows: gold-Sun, silver-Moon, lead-Saturn, mercury-Mercury, tin-Jupiter, iron-Mars, and copper-Venus.

The true subject of alchemy is Man--Man is the object of the transmutation. The alchemist is at once the subject and the object, the operator and that which is operated upon. Metals are associated with elements of Man's character. Pure gold is the character of a "perfect" person--it is the manifestation of that perfection already inherent within man's highest principle.

Within the etheric body, the chakras are the microcosmic planets. In Gichtel's "Theosophia Practica," a diagram is shown of a human being with the position of the orbs placed in the body. This indubitably reveals the fact that the chakras were known by Occidental mystics in the past centuries and played an important role in their spiritual tradition. The seven seals in *Revelation* is indeed another "revelation" of this fact.

The Universal Panacea

Compassion is one of the Ego's highest feelings for other life-units who are struggling in the business of living. The sense of unity with all life around is an indication of one's growing realization of God. Being "my brother's keeper" is no longer a burden to such a person advancing in the spiritual path; it is a *dharma* or duty that one feels a privilege in obeying--of being true to Self. It was because of such a sense of duty that spiritual alchemists embarked upon the search for a Universal Panacea to cure the ills, suffering, and pain of a fallen humankind.

Pain, illnesses, and imbalances may be found in various levels of the microcosm--the physical, emotional, mental, etc. The Universal Panacea, in general, can be said, to be principles and laws of God that would establish harmony and health if applied.

Physical pain and illness are the result of a lack of prana, of the life-force, or "Mumia," as Paracelus called it, into the psycho-biological system. This interrupted flow is mainly the result of a psychic condition unleashed by negative thoughts and emotions. When the channels or prana-influx are purified, when the Yin and Yang, the positive and negative polarities within the body are well-balanced, when the four elements residing in the body are in a state of equilibrium, then health should result.

There is a higher source of the life-essence that is rayed from the Great Central Sun directly to the Monad and down to the Atma of man, and this is associated with the flame of life residing in the physical heart. Daily devotions to the flame within and to the "Father who art in heaven," causes a descent of the essences of life, of the Atmic fire, into the quaternary vehicles of Egoic expression and results in a regeneration of the whole psychobiological system.

A surplus of the life-force within the body is radiated-out and forms an aura of protection around the corpus. There are, however, major terminal points where the life-force flow out in a concentrated state. The hands are just two of these terminal points. The energy radiated out from these *chakras* are called by various names: Od-force, animal magnetism, nerve energy, etc. Egyptian mystics of bygone days called it "Sa-Ankh."

There is an interesting concept concerning the above principle and the Atmic fire. When concentrating and meditating upon the Atma, the higher forces tends to flow more abundantly, and this energy together with the solar, lunar, and earth prana, when imbued upon a substance, such as water, would cause the fluid to be charged with life-essences capable of restoring the sick into wholeness when consumed by them.

This magnetically charged water can be considered as one of the manifestations of the Elixir of Life, the Nectar of the gods, or the Universal Panacea. Tantric icons of deities are sometimes depicted as holding a vessel of nectar in their hands. Evidently, a certain law and principle are indicated by this mudra. Practitioners of meditation would do well to experiment holding in their hands a cup of water during meditation and consuming it directly after the meditation session. The result could be invigorating and vivifying to the psycho-biological system, reinforcing the vital forces already present.

Fire

Fire is essentially divine, emanating as it does from the godhead. "God is a consuming fire," is a well-known expression to be found in holy scriptures. Fire purifies and accelerates the motion of atomic particles--it increases their vibration. Fire is a creative principle, a divine tool in Shiva's hand, transforming and transmuting matter to spirit, and spirit to matter. Heraclitus considered fire to be the first principle from whence all things owe their existence; by "fire" he meant the Divine fire, the "Scamayim" of the Qaballists that is continuously being outpoured by Ain Sof. The center of this emanation in our solar system is the sun. In man, it is the Monad. This indicates that all that is, is essentially fire.

Man, the Monad, is a spark of Fire from the Great Central Sun; all of Man's principles are fire in lesser manifestation and intensity. A spark of the Monad lies hidden in Man's heart. Fueling this

flame with daily devotions of Right Action, Right Thought, Right Speech, meditation and prayer, increases the power, wisdom, and love of the divine nature of Man--this is spiritually represented by the threefold nature of the heart-flame, the fleur-de-lis.

Adepts of alchemy advise their students to work on the Prima Materia with the Internal and External Fire; that is, the fires of the mind, kundalini, Christ substance, sexual energy, prana, and chemical fire. This teaching of master minds reveals that fire manifests in various ways in visible and non-visible worlds. Fire is defined as "an internal activity whose external manifestation are heat and light."

Fire was worshipped in various ancient cultures as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Initiates of the temples invoked the Divine Fire within their beings in their daily rituals of adoration and esoteric exercises. Alchemy continues the tradition of honoring the fiery principle, however, adding a new dimension to the rites of worship by applying it practically and scientifically.

Mythologically, Prometheus was said to have stolen fire from heaven and given it to primitive man, to the displeasure of the gods, for humankind was not yet ready to use this principle in a creative, unselfish manner. The secrets of Fire was subsequently withdrawn, but not completely, for here and there, the sons (initiates) of those gods came of age and were, consequently, entrusted with the mysteries of fire and were given the authority to wield the force intelligently, wisely, and compassionately for the benefit of all beings.

In nanotechnology, a science still in the theoretical stage, miniature machines on the nano scale are hoped to be realized by future generations. The problem faced by scientist today is the creation of the first nano-machine, a "universal assembler," that would create other machines and parts composing of selected molecules and which would later be programmed to do special work. One of their ideas of developing this nano universal-assembler is to create a tiny assembler in the millimeter scale that would in turn create another assembler of a smaller dimension, and so on until it reaches the nano scale. This technology when realized, has a wide range of application in the fields of medicine, ecology, and industry. The potential for abuse is also inherent. In a sense this infant science is related to alchemy, for its development is applicable in the art of transmutation and precipitation on the physical level. Using their own terminology, it is the fires of the alchemist's mind that is the "universal assembler."

Fire fascinates and hypnotizes man, almost bearing him away to higher realities, as allegorized by the myth of Zeus in the form of an eagle snatching away Ganymede to the heavens. The closer one approaches God's fiery presence, the more one is cleansed of all karmic sins lodging and ossifying the four lower bodies.

Steps in Alchemy

Every spiritual system has its steps or phases of development. The Qabalist has his guide in the fruits and the paths of the "Tree of Life." Mahayana Buddhism teaches its adherents the various "bhumis," or "grounds" that has to be passed; other traditions such as Sufism and Yoga similarly have designated the rungs of the spiritual ladder. The 33 degrees of Freemasonry has its prototype in the vertebrae of the human spine. Kundalini is supposed to climb 33 rungs before she is crowned in the sahasrara chakra. The Patriarch Jacob was shown in a vision how to climb that spiritual ladder. In Alchemy, teachings differ as to the number of stages required; some adepts propound 5, 7, 9, 12, or even 14 steps. We choose to deal briefly with the following seven steps:

- 1) Sanctification
- 2) Purification
- 3) Putrefaction
- 4) Fermentation
- 5) Combustion
- 6) Regeneration
- 7) Atonement

Sanctification

Sanctification is the act of consecration, of rendering holy an object; or in the case of the spiritual path, the act of committing or consecrating one's life to an occult, esoteric purpose and objective. This step is undertaken when one, like Kaspar or Melchior, who saw the Star, and was determined to follow it despite obstacles, obstructions and hindrances. Psychologically, the determination to follow and see a project to its ultimate conclusion can be said to be an expression of sanctification.

Sanctification is an initiation which offers a test of one's sincerity, of being true to one's Self, to one's principles, and to the vows undertaken at the time of sanctification, which may or may not be in the form of a mystical ceremony. Once a person is sanctified, the eyes of the spiritual hierarchy are focused upon him, guiding, guarding, inspiring, and strengthening his newly-born Christ mind, as symbolised by the Nativity. Every step of the Way brightens the aura of the alchemist, expanding his consciousness and mind to greater frontiers, to greater realities; he develops a keener sense of awareness, comprehension, and appreciation of cosmic verities. The alchemist sanctifying his life never ceases to disperse from his four lower bodies the heavy particles that bind him down to mortality and limitation; and incorporating within his principles the atoms of an ethereal nature, conducive to his functioning in higher planes of consciousness.

Purification

Purification is the result of the diet, the spiritual discipline which the alchemist undertakes. By strict adherence to the laws of a spiritual ethical code, the process of purification goes underway. Purification is processed under three principles :

- 1) The raising of the vibratory rates of the atomic structures and atoms within the lower components of Man.
- 2) The dispersion of foul matter and toxins which corrupts the sheaths.
- 3) The prevention of the accretion of heavy atoms which densifies the sheaths and entombs the soul.

In esoteric Christianity, purification is represented by the Baptism. The soul being washed in the fluids of the Cosmic Sea, gradually changes its garments into Christ substance, and emerges into a new world of Light. The first Adam donned clothes of skin, the last Adam dons the apparel of the spiritual body. Purification is an on-going process. It never ceases as evolution never halts to the point of non-progression.

Impurity in Man results in a negative attitude and behaviour-pattern, a "tamasic" expression that makes a man sluggish in his ways. Records of karmic sins lodge in the *heart seed atom* and in the four lower principles. To the clairvoyant eye, these are seen as blackish-grayish clouds resembling the pollution emanating from an industrial center. The alchemist purifies and purges these astral, physical, and mental toxins from his system by living in harmony with the Tao, and by undertaking spiritual exercises designed to cleanse his being. It is the dark substances that prevents man's union

with God, and with the freedom to function in higher planes of consciousness. Love, Life, and Light are detergents that washes and baptizes the soul in the River Jordon. Such divine qualities should be allowed to unfold within one's nature.

Putrefaction

All things go through the change called "death," which is really a transformation into a new state of expression. Only forms change. The energy ensouling the form, or which gave form its expression can never be destroyed or annihilated. Molecules may break from its mass, atoms may disunite from one another and explode into a shower of electrons, but with all of this apparent destruction of identity, a law so profound operates which gives birth to a new being arising from the ashes of the old.

Putrefaction is an intensification of the process already commenced in the previous steps. Astral and mental toxins are dispersed from the spiritual structure of Man by the cleansing force, the Holy Fire, and disintegrating and decomposing the effluvia of the lower realms parasiting upon Man's fears and ignorance, making it possible for the laying of the foundations for the transmutation of tomb into temple. Like the Freemason, the alchemist has to construct a temple not made with hands; a temple worthy enough for the occupation and operation of the Ego.

In this putrefying stage, the alchemist resembles a cocoon who works upon itself internally; habitual thoughts and emotions that are not of an Ascended Master quality are decomposed and released into the Cosmic "incinerator."

The principle of change is symbolised by the Transfiguration of Jesus. Elijah representing Fire, and Moses--Water, are the wisdom and love aspects of buddhi that impregnates and fertilizes the Seed of Gold within Man.

Focus upon the solar principle, God's living fire, is a sure method of burning the dross, the dispersal of impurities, and the transmutation of tamas-rajasic metals of man's principles into qualities of gold. Fire quickens the buddhic seed within our being, awakening it into activity; Water purifies the seed giving it freedom to grow, and nourishing it at the same time. It is said that "putrefaction is the principle KEY to the process of the Transmutation." It is the agent which accelerates growth. The momentum is increased at each succeeding step of the way.

Fermentation

After undergoing the previous stage of putrefaction, one then undergoes fermentation, which is represented in Christian mysticism by the Passion, the agony of Jesus at Getsamene. Mystics of the Christian tradition call this spiritual condition, "the Dark Night of the Soul."

Chemically, fermentation is the breaking up of complex compounds, changing it into other structures with the aid of an agent such as yeast. Psychologically, it is a time of intense psychic activity where doubts assail one's deepest convictions and beliefs to their very root.

A man never knows the stuff he is made of until tried and tested by life and his rebounding karma. When man becomes "fixed" in his attitudes and outlook, denying the possibilities of soul-culture and development, when he gets complacent concerning his place in the scale of evolution and refuses to budge further, then Nature comes to the rescue acting as yeast would do in initiating a forced change in a compound, which in this case, is the complex being called Man. This forced change comes in the

form of tests and trials; and all of his previous beliefs and misconceptions are analyzed as to their purported value in sustaining his equilibrium, saneness, and comprehension of life.

Students of Alchemy are advised by adepts to volatilize that which is "fixed" and to stabilize that which is volatilized. Esoterically, this implies that one has to liberate one's self from all delusions, glamour, illusions, and the ignorance of not knowing; to shift one's focus from the unreal to the Real, and to live in eternity and Truth.

This activity of conversion, or "renewing of the mind," is the result of fermentation, and it is usually undertaken under the supervision of an adept-master who introduces the "natural state," or the "Clear Light" to the initiate when judged to be ready.

Combustion

After experiencing the "Dark Night of the Soul" of the previous step, the alchemist is faced with a greater test, that of the "Dark Night of the Spirit," where one feels forsaken and cut-off from one's source of being, from the encouragement, inspiration, and support from one's teachers and loved ones. Accumulated karma of past embodiments returns in full force with apparently no mercy, but by remembering that God does not give more trials than Man can bear, the alchemist-initiate makes it through like Old Job.

In the state of crucifixion, which symbolizes combustion, the emotions and mind on their respective planes are literally on fire, or conflagration. One overcomes this period by being self reliant, dependent upon one's own resources. Although apparently neglected, the suffering initiate is never alone.

Combustion causes a reaction, an upheaval in Man's soul, which is accompanied by bliss and pain, symbolised by light and heat. Jesus expressed this paradoxical state when on one hand with agony he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34), and on the other, after recognizing his error in presuming separation, with total surrender he entered the blissful state by decreeing to the Supreme One that is supposed to have left him: "Father, into thy hands I command my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

What causes combustion, alchemically speaking, is God's all-consuming fire. With its descent upon one's psyche, the intensity of the Light temporary induces spiritual blindness, causing the delusion that darkness had fallen upon the soul. While surrounded by Light, one gropes around in seeming darkness. With the descent of Divine Fire, a conflagration is begun in the emotions and mind, generating pain and agony, which is later subdued by being accustomed to God's face. It is said that no one sees the face of God and live; what perishes are the last remnants of the false ego, and the active identification with the carnal self. Man dies to his lower self but lives in the glory of his greater Self.

The presence of fire prepares one for the next stage of regeneration, with which it plays a vital role. Combustion is the baptism of Fire and the Holy Ghost as promised by John the Harbinger. From the esoteric anatomical perspective, combustion is triggered by kundalinic activity. As the fiery serpent ascends in sushumna, sensations of heat, "cold heat," is felt along the spine.

Regeneration

All religions fundamentally, are concerned with regenerating Man, in laying the foundations for the regenerative process to proceed. It is the esoteric side of religion that puts Man into active contact with higher forces and principles that activates the regenerative phase of Man's spiritual development. Misguided by dogmatic teachings of the Church, the average Christian believes in a literal resurrection from the grave at the Last Judgment; however, when interpreted esoterically, Paul's writings present a wealth of information concerning the regenerative process. For instance, he declared that "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22). Adam, or the carnal self, causes the incarnating entity to be dead to higher realities. He operates his bodies sluggishly like a zombie. By contrast, when the prodigal son absorbs the universal Christ substance, and Christ Consciousness emanating from his higher principles, he then functions under the direction of a higher intelligence. He commences his life living in Truth and in eternity. Regeneration consequently, begins to occur within his four lower bodies, even transmuting the corporeal form into the "Body of Light." To be made alive in Christ requires a certain spiritual discipline to be exercised. But sadly, the average individual prefers believing rather than knowing and doing.

It is the destiny of Man to attain what Jesus had attained in the "resurrection," and thus Paul advised the Romans: "But if the Spirit of him that raiseth up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raiseth up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). If the Spirit must dwell in us for a quickening, then there must be a way for inviting the Spirit to dwell in our bodies, mere beliefs and faith are insufficient to invoke the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.

When relied upon Nature's pace of evolution and development, the regeneration of Man may require eons to accomplish. By entering the "straight and narrow gate," the Path of Return, the Prodigal Son may accelerate the regenerative process and quickly deify himself in his Father's arms. It is said that great men do not die, they simply fade away. Enoch, the great antediluvian prophet was one such an individual who simply faded away. It is recorded in Genesis that he walked with God and then he was not. There are basically two interpretations to this statement: one, the complete elimination and non-identification with the false self, the false ego; and two, the etherealization of the physical body.

After successfully treading the various phases of the way, the alchemist comes to a point where a greater influx of the rays of the Higher Self descends and takes active control of the four lower bodies. Every cell in the physical body is vitalized by this Paraclete and raised to a higher state of vibration resulting as a side effect, youth and a renewed power. Life is prolonged in the form, and all diseases that plague humankind comes to no effect.

Psychologically, regeneration causes a spiritualization of the character of the alchemist. Morals, ethics and principles held by the alchemist are unfolded and applied from the divine perspective. Every smile displayed and directed by the master alchemist to a recipient comes with a special blessing and force which is subtly felt projected from the heart center of the alchemist.

From the above it can be deduced that regeneration is represented by the Master Jesus' resurrection. Regeneration causes the unfoldment of the Seed of Gold within Man to mature, and preparing him for the final stage which concludes his path of transmutation.

Atonement

Exoterically, atonement is the reparation of any wrong or injury done to another. Esoterically, atonement is at-one-ment, the "unio mystica," or oneness between Man and God. It is the ascension in which Man is unified with his "I AM Presence." This is the conclusion of the path of human salvation, the attainment of alchemical gold. Many tests and trials have been passed, many initiations undergone. The Seed of the Tree of Life planted in Man's Edenic consciousness has matured and is bearing fruit of God-qualities. Man attains his high estate by personal effort and labor and not by depending upon another's merit and endeavors for his exaltation into the Light. This differentiates the Master soul from the puerile human being.

Oneness is Reality. Differentiation and separation are illusory, the projection of Maya. As Man unites with the One, he assumes the resemblance of the One; he has grown into God's image and becomes the Sun Initiate the, "Symbol of Wisdom, the Center of Power, or the Heart of Things." The Initiate, by virtue of being one with his Sun principle, is an enlightened mind and illumined being.

Atonement is the culmination of the alchemist's spiritual labour in the long process of purifying, refining, and improving the quality of his metals. The principles of Right Thinking, Right Speaking, and Right Action (some of the elements of Divine Thinking) are conducive in effecting the transformation of the various sheaths. The alchemist lives in a state of "constant" meditation and prayer, 24-hours a day, prior to his ascension. Like the Sufis, the names of Allah are continually upon his lips and mind. The spiritual practice of "zikir," or "remembrance," is applied devotedly by the maturing initiate. The alchemist is an active seeker for the kingdom of God within. In Esoteric Christianity, the principles, or the Panacea for attaining the transcendental state, and expanding the consciousness to embrace Solar Consciousness is given as Conviction, Contrition, Confession, Consecration, and Communion.

Conclusion

Whenever Man stalls in his evolution, the intelligences of the spiritual hierarchy offer a way out in the form of a new religion, philosophy, science, or art. Alchemy is at once all of these, and ever since its advent into the Mysteries, a profound inquiry had been made by aspirants and seekers as to the possible processes involved in effecting a transmutation. Confused by jargon and the real goal of alchemy, the average student of alchemy spends wasted time, funds, and energy trying to probe the secrets of the science. Sincerity, faith and perseverance were, and still are the keys that unlock the portal to a master's heart; and with his aid and guidance, a higher understanding and appreciation are acquired by the aspirant.

Though still dismissed as a pseudo-science by modern scientists, alchemy's value as a psycho-spiritual tool for Man's transformation cannot be denied when understood in its entirety. It only takes a mind of purity, freed from bigotry and intellectualism to become like a little child in the arms of the Divine Mother, or Sophia, in order to grasp the essential principles of alchemy which radiates so much light for the wayfarer to guide him to his destination.

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