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cured, there can be no ultimate inward healing. It is a problem of cure for the survivor, and a problem for someone on the threshold of death who remains a prisoner of fear and greed and hatred earlier in his or her life. One has to try to identify with one's tormentor, to try to build up one's integrity and perhaps project it on to the tormentor. I knew a woman who managed this towards an interrogator after the Russian Revolution. She said eventually "I realised we were simply like leaves in the autumn taken up by the whirly wind; I happened to fall on one side of the table, and he on the other." "I smiled, and he smiled back . . . the spell was broken".

Martin Buber's book "The Tales of the Hassidim" tells of a young Rabbi who could change people's lives because he did not see their sins as theirs alone, but as belonging to both of them. We must really meet closely with men of violence, which means allowing them to look right into our eyes, our soul.

What of bereaved people? With every person who dies, part of us is already in eternity. We must, if we love this person, live up to the great encounter of a living soul with a living God. We must let go of everything that was small, that was separation, alienation and estrangement, and reach out to that serenity and greatness, newness and abundance of life into which the departed person has entered. We should not speak of our love in the past tense. Love is a thing that does not fade in a faithful heart. It does not go into the past unless we betray our love. We must keep our love alive in a new situation, but as actively and creatively, and more so, more often, than when the person was with us. Our love cannot be dead because a person has died. If that is true, our life must be a continuation of theirs, with all its significance. We must reflect on all that was beauty, and nobility, in that person, and make sure those around us, and our surroundings, do not lose anything through the death. This applies to all families and friends as well as the immediate bereaved, so that the seed that has fallen into corruption may give a hundredfold harvest in the hearts and lives of others.

One thing is at the front, with every bereaved person—the sense of separation, of being left alone. One has to accept it creatively and to say "I have a double task to fulfil—the dead person's work and my own. I must be great for two, reveal integrity for two". Yet in violent death, and prolonged death as with cancer sometimes, there can be a sense of horror—a body murdered, lacerated or emaciated. And yet the first signs of physical corruption I noticed on my mother's body were a liberation. A preserved body would have been an aberration, and I the prisoner of the tomb. I realised the person I loved was not to be sought in the body, but in terms of undying love, and for me, a creative faithfulness to example.

Sometimes people suffer great agony of mind before they die. It comes because of the aloneness in which they are left, and that aloneness comes from cowardice. Sometimes people who appear to be unconscious may be quite capable of receiving messages of hope and comfort, which alleviate their agony greatly. This is connected with the fear of telling someone that death is there. By not telling them we deprive them of the only possibility of sharing their anguish, fear and pain. We also deprive ourselves of the wonder of sharing and helping.

Grieving Hindus in Britain

By Dr. H. N. GHADIALI MD DPM MRCPsych

Second in our series on how different immigrant groups, and subsequent generations, mourn, is an article about the needs of bereaved Hindu people in Britain. Dr. Ghadiali is a Consultant Psychiatrist and Jungian Analyst at St. George's Hospital, Stafford,



A loss is a loss and it is never replaceable. Every death has a devastating effect on those who survive the dead, irrespective of one's race or cultural origin. Although healing of such devastation is a psychological phenomenon, a religious belief system and firm social customs often aid the healing.

Hindu Family System

Hinduism is not only a religion but also offers a social structure. For Hindus birth, marriage and death are not only family incidents, but are also bound up with social and religious obligations. Hindu family structure is essentially that of an extended joint family, having hierarchy and authority structure with clearly defined roles. Economic forces and migration have divided the joint family into nuclear families. However, unlike a western nuclear family, it maintains emotional ties with the rest of the extended joint family, often thousands of miles across the globe. The role of an individual as husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, etc. is deeply rooted in religious obligations and social tradition.

Religious Belief

Hindus generally believe that the soul is external, but is bound by the law of **Karma** (action) to the world of matter, which it can only escape after spiritual progress through an endless series of births. Death is seen as a door to rebirth. Death of an elderly and ill person is easily rationalised with this belief system. Hinduism emphasises the **maya** (illusive nature) of social relationships, but social tradition and interpretation of the law of **Karma** gives the opportunity of the same social relationships in the

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next life. This belief is supported by religious mythology. In order to facilitate the spiritual progress of the soul of one's relative, a Hindu has the duty to perform **Shradaha** (a religious ceremony). He arranges to feed a specific number of Brahmins (a particular caste) and/or relatives at least once a year.

Practical Aspects Following Death

In tropical countries a dead body decays very quickly, hence immediate disposal is preferred. In Hinduism hygiene is combined with religious belief. Hindus believe that a dead body is unholy, and should be removed from the house as soon as possible. In India the funeral is often organised within a couple of hours of death. A dead body is always cremated since fire is a holy element. In the funeral pyre other holy substances are used. It is the duty of the youngest son to set light to the funeral pyre. (It is generally believed that the youngest son is overattached to his parents and if he sets light to the funeral pyre he is facing the reality.) The funeral pyre takes several hours to burn out, and generally all the male relatives and friends wait until the fire has finished burning. In my experience those few hours are very painful but enormously helpful for the psychological process. In Britain an appointment has to be made for cremation which means that sometimes there is a delay of several days to a couple of weeks before the funeral can be arranged. This is often difficult for a religious Hindu family. Cremation in Britain is impersonal and probably fails to offer reality confrontation.

Maybe eventually special crematorium facilities for Hindus, possibly with an open fire, will be provided in areas with a high Hindu population. On the other hand, Hinduism is not a dogmatic religion, and Hindus are gradually adapting both their attitudes and their family arrangements to the British facilities, especially in the second generation.

A great deal of attention is paid to food in both social customs and religious ceremonies. Relatives stay with the bereaved family until the thirteenth day after death, when the religious ceremonies are finished.

Relatives, friends and acquaintances visit the bereaved family and share their grief. Such meetings are arranged several times in a day, for the first seven or eight days, and serve a useful purpose in catharsis, mourning and providing support. An isolated Hindu family in Britain may not be able to obtain the required social support for successful mourning.

Special Problems

As a son bears the family name, he has an important place in the Hindu family structure. Death of a son, especially an only son, is extremely devastating. It is not only the death of a son; it is also the loss or end of the family name. The souls of the family members will not get help through **Shradaha** without the son. Often depression is severe following such a death.

Traditionally a young widow is not supposed to marry again, and her bereavement produces enormous sympathy and support. Often the extended family attempts to find a new role for her in the family. Occasionally the opposite may be true. The bereaved 'in-laws' may blame the young widow for the loss of their son, and make her life horrific by becoming extremely punitive. Her guilt about her loss and the bereaved parents' punitive behaviour make her a silent sufferer. It may require some skill to identify such a sufferer and help her to get out of it. For the younger generation remarriage may be acceptable, but it may produce conflict with the older generations.

A child's death may also produce conflict between generations, since a young couple may feel that the pragmatic approach of the older generations is insensitive and unfeeling. They may fail to appreciate that their parent's generation might have been brought up in a large family and experienced many children's deaths.

Migration and Bereavement

In order to have a meaningful death, a Hindu should die in the city named Kashi, should have cremation on the banks of the river Ganges and his ashes should be scattered into the same river. If Hindus cannot go to Kashi to die, many would like to retire to India. This desire is not only in response to religious obligation but is also a basis of ethnic identity. If someone has not come to terms with migration, death in Britain can be experienced as a failure to meet a basic obligation and becomes a source of guilt.

An Alien Culture

It is always difficult to come and live in a new culture. Initially, there is a threat to one's personal sense of identity, which is often compensated with increased cultural or ethnic sense of identity. It is quite common for migrants to show a stronger religious attitude or overvaluation of their own cultural attitudes. Any criticisms of their values or unkind comparisons are experienced and opposed violently, and any one from the host culture may be seen as potentially dangerous. It is not unusual for a Hindu family to see health workers with some suspicion, and it may take some time before a health worker breaks through this cultural suspicion.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Catherine Rosevear and Miss Christine Kilsby for their help.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE

There will be an International Symposium on Grief and Bereavement in Jerusalem between 11th and 14th November, 1985. It is organised by the Division of Rehabilitation, Israel Ministry of Defence, and the Israel Rehabilitation Society. Main topics will include: Bereavement (in Childhood, of Parents, after Violence), Cultural Factors in Grief, the Nature of the Mourning Process, Crisis Intervention, Counselling (the Bereaved, Friends of the Bereaved), Training of Counsellors, the Rehabilitation Approach, Religion & Bereavement, the Therapeutic Approach to Prolonged Mourning, Social Rehabilitation of the Widowed, Long-Term Effects, the Impact of Bereavement on Family Dynamics.

The conference is open to health care workers, funeral directors, social workers, sociologists, religious and community leaders. Participants wishing to present a paper should submit an abstract of not more than 200 words to the Secretariat before 1st May, 1985. Their address is: International Symposium on Grief and Bereavement, PO Box 50006, Tel Aviv 61500, Israel.