

From the Lost Books of the Six-Fingered Mage

Magic: History, Theory and Education

Magic has been practiced by men since pre-civilized times. At its beginnings, it was a mysterious and haphazard affair, thought to be the power of the gods, invoked by ritual and directed, with more or less certainty, by magician-priests. It is obvious that this early magic was no different than modern magic in substance, but it was improperly understood, and therefore ineffectively practiced. Then, as now, the incantations, gestures, offerings, etc. were merely aids to the concentration of the magician. Whether or not he realized it, the real power flowed not from the gods but from within himself. It was believed that anyone who knew the rituals and incantations (which were of course kept secret) could summon the gods to perform magic. But then, as now, the ability to use magic (and *this* is the true gift of the gods, not the magic itself) was stronger in some than others, so the “spells” were not equally effective for everyone who tried them. Nonetheless, many did try, and when for the vast majority the spells produced no results at all, magic fell into disrepute among “rational” people.

Only the Kelessi, hidden away in the Great Forest and distrustful of the “advances” of civilization, kept up the study and practice of magic, concurrent with the study of healing. It was they who slowly learned the true nature of magic, and they who realized that the use of magic is an ability inborn in a chosen few, and that those few must be trained to become truly effective wielders of it. Accordingly, they systematized and codified the various branches of magic, and developed their schools of magical training.

The Classification of Magic

Magic is divided into two major branches, the perceptive and the active. Perceptive magic (*gyaan*) is that which is concerned with the extension of the senses beyond ordinary constraints. It is further divided into two branches. The first deals with perception beyond the normal space-time limitations (*asamvedik gyaan*): this branch comprises pre- and post-cognition (*purvgyaan* and *paravartigyaan*), and “visions” of things far away or in some other way obscured from ordinary sight (*durgyaan*). The second branch of *gyaan* is that of the empathic skills (*antargyaan*): the sensing of another’s feelings, even the reading of his thoughts. The highest and most difficult of *gyaanik* magics is telepathy (*dursamvedan*), the ability to transmit one’s own thoughts to another, and to receive thoughts directed to oneself,

All these perceptive magics were well known among primitive peoples, as prophetic dreams, omens, insights, fortune-telling, etc., though they were practiced with varying degrees of truthfulness and accuracy. *Dursamvedan* was particularly subject to abuse — visions of “gods” being used to direct people’s actions in desired ways. It is possible for a highly skilled *antargyaani* (empathic magician) to project thoughts so strongly upon one or more people that they perceive his visions as real — the illusion is created in their minds of something which does not exist in reality. But this is very difficult, and even today only a

handful of the world's best magicians can do it. It took a team of these, working together, to produce the illusions which, temporarily, held the Meshvid at bay when they invaded the Great Forest. The effectiveness of such illusions is limited, for once the subject knows what is being done to him, he ceases to believe what is thrust into his mind, and so, unless caught off guard, he is immune to further illusion.

Certain of the *gyaanik* magics, particularly *dursamvedan*, are rumored to be in common use by some primitive tribes on distant islands. This would seem theoretically possible, but I have not seen conclusive proof.

Modern *gyaanik* magic is generally more accurate than its primitive counterparts. But now, as then, these magics can be a tremendous mental and emotional strain upon the practitioner. Making a profession of discerning people's innermost thoughts can be dangerous to one's own sanity. There have been a few great empaths in recorded history; they have all gone mad. Those who deal in perceptions distanced by time or space have different problems: from a tremendous amount of disorganized information which their wide-open minds receive, they must learn to sort out what is useful and desired from the dross of millennia of past and future history, of millions of events and scenes flashed before their inner eyes.

Training in the *gyaanik* magics must be done carefully, so that the student learns to process information even as he learns to gather it, and thus can avoid emotional or sensory overload. Clumsy training leads to madness, the total closing of the mind against a volume and intensity of experience it is not yet able to endure. Some of these cases recover, but they never return to the study of magic.

Active magic (*karya*) also requires careful training, though for different reasons. The *gyaanik* magician is usually a danger only to himself and his own sanity. The active magician is a potential danger to the world around him, because he learns means of manipulating and controlling that world which are far beyond the abilities or comprehension of ordinary mortals. The most basic of *karyik* magics is the transportation of things, living or otherwise: levitation (*vahari*) and teleportation (*durvahan*), of which the latter is far the most difficult. Even the relatively simple lifting and moving of objects can be dangerous: imagine the effects of a house-sized boulder, magically hurled into a city street.

The transmutation of non-living matter (*nirjeev badal*) is the next higher skill in *karya*. This means changing the shape or other surface properties of anything which is not alive, including dead organic matter. Infinitely more difficult than this is *jeev badal*, the transmutation of living matter: that is, making alterations in plants, animals, or people. The challenge is not to harm - or outright kill - your subject, and it is the most difficult skill to master in all the magics.

The supreme magical art, which requires use of both *karya* and *gyaan*, is *chikitsa*, healing. The healer must be able to perceive the illness or hurt in its root causes, and then be able to make the delicate changes necessary to cure it. The *gyaanik* magics required are the abilities to see inside the patient's body, even to see things too small for ordinary visual perception, and *antargyaan*, for an illness may arise from or be connected with some problem of mind and emotion. The *karya* needed is *jeev badal*, usually

on a minute scale, to correct whatever internal problem is causing the external symptoms.

Mental distresses may be alleviated by *gyaanik* magics, such as the projection of soothing thoughts and images into the patient's mind. Long ago the Kelessi experimented with *karyik* healing of the mind, but these experiments all ended badly. The mind is far too delicate for even the mostly finely skilled *karyi* to tamper with. This should be obvious, since even uncontrolled *gyaanik* powers can do much damage. The Kelessi of course find a religious reason for the failure of their experiments: the mind being the seat of the Soul and therefore of the Mother, no magician should meddle with it.

(One may wonder whether the "love charms" and such sold by the unscrupulous to the superstitious are a form of *karya* practiced on the mind. They are not. In fact, they have no real effect at all. A great telepath may project, for instance, affectionate thoughts into another's mind, but unless the subject is highly susceptible to any kind of suggestion, these will have no lasting effect.)

These, then, are the magics which the Kelessi teach at Osatan.

The Kelessi Schools of Magic

The vast proportion of students at the Kelessi schools are Kelessi. This may be due to greater natural ability among them, passed on from parents to offspring; or a greater cultural aptitude, fostered by Kelessi attitudes and practices; or the disproportion may reflect the reluctance of the other races to send their young children into the mysterious Forest and the clutches of the Kelessi. Or it may result from a hidden Kelessi belief that no other race is as apt at magic as their own. Whatever the reason or combination of reasons, the Kelessi are overwhelmingly over-represented at the Schools, and the curriculum is geared towards Kelessi beliefs and lifestyle.

In the basic curriculum, begun by all Kelessi children at age six, concentration is the first lesson learned, for it is the basis of all magic. Kelessi children learn meditation from the time they are old enough to sit up, so these exercises are not difficult for them. Non-Kelessi master them quickly enough, given the will to do so. More difficult for the non-Kelessi to endure is the theological bent of the first years of training. Though the Kelessi long since gave up the notion that magic is the power of the gods, early education of their children (and the foreigners who join them) heavily emphasizes the lore, nature, and worship of the Mother, and especially the behavior she expects of her followers. There is some wisdom in this; magic practiced without some sort of moral guidelines could be harmful rather than helpful to what the Kelessi term "the harmony of Creation." The Kelessi creed of awareness of and care for the living balance of the world is inculcated in the students to ensure the proper use of magical skills by future magicians. Still, some of this could perhaps be abbreviated.

The Kelessi "basic six" also includes comprehensive education in all the familiar subjects: history, geography, mathematics, literature, etc. After the first six years, Kelessi children are sorted out into those who have the aptitude to learn magic and those who do not. The foreigners who come have generally been sent because the seeds of their abilities were perceived by Kelessi scouts. Unless the promise of ability

has turned out to be false, these foreigners continue with the next six years of the magical curriculum. They begin to learn magical theory, and primary practices of all forms of magic. Theology is still part of the day's lessons, though less emphasized, and higher concentration skills are taught. Aside from classes, students spend two hours a day in concentration exercises.

By the end of the twelfth year all students are expected to know what particular magical skill they will specialize in. This will have been decided on the basis of a student's abilities and desires, and on the advice of his teachers. By this time, some will have succumbed to the pressures of the regimen and dropped out. The rest will be divided among the three schools of higher education: the perceptive, active, and healing magics. This phase of education can take another six to twelve years, depending on the student's ability to learn, and on the level he wishes and will be able to attain. Healing of course takes the longest to learn, though healers learn only very narrowly focussed aspects of *ofgyaan* and *karya*. They spend much time learning about diseases and hurts, for perception must be guided by knowledge. Healing students also spend several years working with healing masters to learn their art.