

In A Nutshell

"... I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space..."
Wm. Shakespeare

Summer 2009

Renouncing Violence

by Paul Strashok

I was listening to a CBC radio program the other night in which they were discussing The Bhagavad-Gita, the Hindu Scriptures also known as 'The Song of God'. The narrator spoke of how deeply the life of Mahatma Gandhi had been influenced by those scriptures from the time he was 20 years old and onward and how valuable his practice of non-violent resistance had been in bringing about an independent India, free from British rule. But, surprise, surprise – it also spoke of how his assassin (a practicing Hindu) believed that he, also, was obeying the Bhagavad-Gita by shooting Gandhi. The reason for this, of course, is that one of the central themes of the Gita is that an incarnation of God appears to a member of the warrior caste, Arjuna (who is not fighting for he is having compassion on his enemies) and persuades him that it is a part of his karmic obligation or religious duty to slay and destroy in battle. Thus, Gandhi's assassin, a sincere, but misguided man may have believed that it was his 'duty' to murder one of the most enlightened souls this planet has ever seen.

This was all too familiar to me for, in my early days, I had studied with an East Indian religious cult, and had, also, identified with Arjuna on the battlefield. This led to a response of violence to authority figures such as police and psychiatric attendants. In full-blown mania and delusion, hearing voices, I would hear the 'departed' devotees calling to me from beyond death that I was to fulfil my 'karmic obligation'. This was compounded by the fact that the other devotees in this cult brutalized me viciously when

I tried to return to the temple (maybe they all thought they were Arjuna as well!).

I remember coming into violent conflict with the attendants in the asylum, but there was one remarkable person who was trying to show me a better way. Whenever the attendants would manhandle him, he would fall on the floor and make himself very passive and somehow 'heavy' and 'slippery' so they could hardly move him. I realize now, of course, that he was practising non-violent resistance. I would have done well to learn from that individual.

There was one time, years later, when I was being admitted to the asylum and being busted to P.J.s and slippers, but I had an umbrella in my hand and was seriously

thinking of using it as a weapon. The real problem was that the attendants insisted on calling me 'David' and all that I could think of was the

"I realize now, of course, that he was practicing non-violent resistance."

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warrior-King David of old on the battlefield. At the last moment, in the midst of a huge standoff between me and four or five attendants, another attendant came along and called me 'Isaac'. At once, I thought of Isaac, the beloved son of Abraham, who did little but inherit his father's blessing. That calmed me right down, and I submitted to the procedure. Later on, I was thankful that I had not taken out someone's eye with that umbrella.

Another incident occurred earlier in Alberta. I was on a locked ward and was 'acting out'. Attendants were called in and surrounded me in the main dayroom of the ward. I prepared for the worst, but suddenly, a man who was a friend of my dad's and a member of the same church, who worked as an attendee came up and softly touched me on the elbow. The touch was so meek and gentle and conveyed such a sense of pity and softness that I immediately calmed down and became compliant with me treatment without further violence.

In my recent experience with the mental health system, I find there is a new breed of therapist coming up through the ranks. Many of

the male nurses in the past had been called upon to do forced 'takedowns' on non-compliant patients. Some of the male nurses graduating now are learning to use language to engender a sense of safety and well-being and have not had to use force in treating patients. As a six-foot four 220 lb

man, I have always looked intimidating to those around me. (However, I found out later that my church friends nicknamed me 'the gentle giant'). The use of non-violent defusing of crisis situations can only be seen as a change for the better.

If there was one lesson to be learned in my hospitalizations, it was that violence in the face of perceived oppression only exacerbates the situation (and puts a huge asterisk

beside your name in the file!). I have been lied to, forcibly medicated and manhandled (even tasered I believe) all in the name of mental health, but to return blow for blow and violence for violence is not and never will be the answer. I commend those who use non-violent ways in which to protest any injustices that are done in the name of mental health and provide alternatives for consumer/survivors of the mental health system. In my own limited way, I hope to be doing the same.

*"...but to return
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Quotes:

"Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."

Mahatma Ghandi

"Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon... which cuts without wounding and ennoble the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals."

Martin Luther King Jr.

The Editorial Board of **In A Nutshell** welcomes letters, articles, and poetry on mental health issues from you, our readers. Authors of writing that is accepted and published will receive an honorarium - \$50 for articles over 500 wds, \$25 for shorter articles, \$10-\$15 for poetry depending on length.

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News Briefs From All Over

Compiled by Scott Dixon

GIMME SHELTER

The on-line magazine theyee.ca reports that Vancouver City Hall staff are recommending the five new city shelters that were created this winter stay open until April of next year ...after the Olympics.

Homeless people are said to prefer the city shelters because there are fewer rules, and the shelters were open consistently, not just when the temperature dropped or the precipitation rose.

THE SNAKE PIT

Mother Jones magazine has published a horrifying look into Mexico's psychiatric hospitals. "It's damp and cold in the men's ward at Fernando Ocaranza Psychiatric Hospital-no more than 50 degrees. Around the edges of the common room are tangled nests of men lying together in heaps, trying to stay warm. Others shuffle busily back and forth, as if they have a destination in mind. In the middle of the floor, running half the length of the ward, is a pool of urine. Attendants prod a group of 15 or 20 naked men down a hallway into a shower room. The patients moan and shiver as a worker bathes them. Then they are herded back along the drafty hall, still dripping wet, and forced to compete with one another for items of clothing: shirts that cover only their shoulders, pants so large they have to be held up. A few pull on dresses, since women's clothing has been mixed in with the men's during washing....

...If you go into the children's ward, you'll hear kids screaming, banging their heads against the wall. Those could be your children...."

CLOSER TO HOME

The chair of Canada's mental health commission says the recession is causing a sharp spike in mental illness, especially with children. Michael Kirby says as unemployment increases, more and

more people are becoming stressed or depressed. He says one in five Canadians suffer from mental illness every year, and the recession is causing a substantial increase. (CHQR, Calgary)

THE TWENTY PERCENT SOLUTION

The Niagara Falls Review newspaper poses the question: If 20 per cent of Canada's children were stricken with cancer, the public outcry would be immeasurable, says the head of the primary provider of children's mental health services in Niagara. All levels of government would invest millions and pledge to win the battle against the disease, communities around the country would hold rallies, walk-athons, raffles, tag sales and bake sales all in an effort to protect the most vulnerable members of society.

Unfortunately, the same rallying cry is not heard for the children affected by mental health issues. An estimated one in five children in Canada live with a diagnosable, treatable mental health problem. That equates to 20 per cent of the population. Lack of resources, including inadequate funding to address the need as well as a lack of regional transportation to attend treatment programs, has left far too many families languishing on lengthy waiting lists.

LAUGH THOSE BLUES WAYS

Freelance author Mari Sasano writes in the Edmonton Journal she's really glad she has depression. "I would say that depression makes me a happier person, because I don't take being not-depressed for granted. I know that there are things that can make me happy: I study them and try to find other ways to keep myself sane. I know to monitor my moods and to appreciate every one

"Around the edges of the common room are tangled nests of men lying together in heaps, trying to stay warm."

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of them, because they are all precious. Even the crappy ones.... Depression is like winter; it's, well, depressing, but every day you're in it, you're closer to spring. It's part of a process, and may in fact be necessary for flowers to bloom. Cheesy! But what do I have to lose? The good times can end at any minute. So why worry?"

JUST BUTT OUT:

An article in the on-line magazine nurse.com says mental health patients smoke 44% of U.S. cigarettes and represent an estimated 200,000 of the 443,000 smoking-related deaths in the U.S. annually..

Smoking bans exist in most public places, but on many hospital grounds, this group is permitted to light up. Concerned for their health, nurses at New York-Presbyterian Hospital-Payne Whitney

Westchester in White Plains, extended a smoking ban to the outside campus and created a smoking cessation program in an attempt to reverse the statistics. On each unit, administrative senior staff nurses and patient care directors implemented the recommendations of the work group. Results have been mixed, with some patients lighting up soon after their discharge.

THE GREAT WHITE WAY

A new musical has broken another taboo. Next to Normal, recently opened on Broadway and deals with the crumbling of a family as they struggle to cope with the delusional beliefs of their mother, who has a combination of bipolar disorder and a traumatic past. It's described as a "pop-rock score". Tackling difficult topics in this manner might imperceptibly and gradually break the silence and fear around mental illness.

Life As A Highly Sensitive Person

by Rose Ananda Heart

I am a highly sensitive person and what this means for me is that I smell things that others can't smell, I notice subtle energies within my environment, I dislike crowded spaces, I think ahead, I need to be surrounded by calm and beauty in order to feel relaxed, I eat selectively, I'm very imaginative and creative, I'm spiritually oriented, I'm intuitive, I need a lot of down time, I am easily overwhelmed, and I can erupt like a volcano and have what appears to be a freak out attack if my nervous system has reached its limit due to stress. As a highly sensitive child living in an abusive environment I had an especially difficult time functioning early on in life and out of necessity I developed coping behaviors that compromised my well-being, both physically and psychologically. Some of the dysfunctional patterns I've dealt with include obsessive/compulsive thoughts and behaviors,

"...out of necessity I developed coping behaviours that compromised my well-being, both physically and psychologically."

substance abuse, chronic anxiety, stuffing anger, denying myself physical comforts and needs, isolation, and the inability to say 'no' even if it meant harm to my own wellness.

In her book, *The Highly Sensitive Person – How to Thrive When the World Overwhelms You*, Elaine N. Aron, Ph. D. describes this trait in full detail. She says that highly sensitive people make up about 15 – 20 percent of the current population, and that they have special kinds of gifts to offer within a society. Some of these special talents include a strong intuition, a conscientious nature, the power of empathy, the ability to foresee how choices affect outcome, awareness of subtle energies, and the talent to visualize and invent. The great challenge for the highly sensitive is the tendency to be easily overwhelmed by common modern hazards such as crowds, a flurry of ongoing activity, socializing, loud noises, caffeine, bright lights, extreme

temperatures, coarse fabrics, bad smells, odd tastes, unusual food combinations, and too many choices. For the highly sensitive person, excess stimulation can lead to anxiety, a feeling of panic, physical discomfort, exhaustion and frazzled thinking.

Highly sensitive people tend to experience added intensity of feelings due to the fact that their central nervous system is wired to the emotional center within the right brain. This sets the ultra sensitive up to being deeply affected by the abuse, neglect, violence, conflict, bullying, judgments and criticism, commonly found within the current society. Growing up in dysfunctional families, the gifts attributed to sensitivity mostly go underground as the child attempts to cope with a painful environment. Because of their innate empathic nature, the child often plays the role of emotional caretaker, which later can develop into a deep sense of emptiness and even suicidal depression. It is understandable, that within the current fast-paced, competitive culture, the highly sensitive person would be vulnerable to experience psychological trauma that could eventually become a full-blown illness.

For a highly sensitive person to thrive, she/he needs inner peace, a sense of beauty, a calming environment, emotional support, and plenty of time for quiet reflection and contemplation before taking action. Within a respectful, loving community, a highly sensitive person could experience vibrant health, valuable self-esteem and a strong sense of purpose. In many ancient cultures, the sensitive ones were valued as the inventors, the royal advisors, the artisans, the philosophers, the spiritual leaders, the shamans, and the healers. Unlike modern society, where those with sensitive gifts often feel as if there is something wrong with them, the ancient tribal mindset held these unique

qualities in esteem especially because they were the minority.

For me it has been helpful to understand my highly sensitive nature. I now understand why I've often felt different, misunderstood and out of place. These insights assist me in differentiating between the characteristics of unhealthy patterns (symptoms of mental illness) and the innate traits that are due to my sensitivity. I feel more compassion for myself when I am overwhelmed by a situation and suddenly need space to sort out my

feelings, something that frequently occurs within my very demanding role as a full time single parent. At times, it is still difficult for me to establish boundaries that protect me from feeling frazzled. I have become very selective about how I spend my time, so that I honor my need for simplicity. I have learned to love the fact that I am creative and intuitive and I enjoy honing my skills in these areas. I'm learning to calm myself down when my mind is racing or I'm

feeling overcome with emotion. I'm learning to be assertive when necessary and I'm allowing for support and love from others when I need it.

The truth is highly sensitive people are an essential part of a thriving community. Now that we are facing a global crisis, due to our insensitivity to plants, animals and fellow humans, perhaps, these gifts will once again be honored as essential to our health and survival as a species in the great web of life. I recently read, in a book entitled, *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, that when we help ourselves we help everyone. Her beautifully written story reminds me of this fact and I'm attempting to remember this truth in my own life as well. I can only make choices for myself and when I care for myself, I care for the earth and all living creatures because what is best for me is to live in alignment with all of nature. Aloha. ■

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Quote:

"Among the many gifts I showered on Martin, I was careful not to include talent. How easy it would have been to make him an artist, a writer: how hard not to let him be one, while bestowing on him the keen sensitivity that one generally associates with the creative creature. how cruel to prevent him from finding in art—not an "escape" (which is only a cleaner cell on a quieter floor), but relief from the itch of being."

Vladimir Nabokov

Everyone Should Have A Golden Mirror

by Janet Roddan

I love to fill my fridge full of good food: tofu, vegetables, fruit and warm fresh baking from the local farmers' market. I know I'm healthy when I'm eating well and the fridge is full. I know something is wrong when I eat everything in sight and continue eating until I stuff myself into bed. I survived my eating disordered period which lasted close to a decade in my late teens. I'd eat nothing but pink grapefruit and drink only diet Coke. For weeks. When the diet was over I'd gorge on jujubes because I thought they were only one calorie each. Then I'd get on the scale and go back on another diet. My moods were ruled by the thin red oscillating needle that told me not only my weight but foretold whether I was going to be cranky or pleased that day. Years were ruled by the bathroom scale. I used to wish that I had been born in Renoir's time when large buttocks were rendered beautiful in pink and flesh tones.

Studies, including one in which I was a subject, show that anorexics see ourselves differently. What we describe when we look in the mirror is not an accurate description of reality. Neither is the physical self an exact representation of the inner self. The paradox is that the anorexic sees neither the inner self nor outer self but a lie. I want to see the truth.

The diet regime set my weight on a pendulum, imbalanced and unstable. Some believe that bipolar disorder is exacerbated by this type of eating pattern, others see it as a symptom of the disease itself. Food is my first medicine. It seems so obvious. Of course what I put in my mouth affected my moods and energy cycles. But it felt like so many years had passed since I had used food to moderate, comfort and numb my feelings of disappointment and despair that it surprised me when I found myself back on the carousel. Eating after dinner, treating myself with little sweet snacks all the way to bedtime.

I was raised on treats. My dad would pick us up after Sunday school and take us down to Gordon's General Store. It was a large dark building in Crescent Beach which sold cans of spaghetti and pork and beans and shelves of white wonder bread. Long before 7-11. The wooden floors creaked as we ran straight to the candy counter. Sometimes it was a tootsie pop, or a fudgesicle or an Oh Henry bar. I learned that I deserved a reward after doing something unpleasant but necessary. A reward, a treat, especially something sweet could pacify most any distasteful feeling.

Touching the truth is a little like playing with a loose or sensitive tooth. I had moved out of the city to a cabin in the woods to give myself the quiet emptiness of living alone in Nature. I like the simple, rustic lifestyle and I hoped to escape the city, to paraglide, to learn to live simply and to put down my burden of fears: women being raped in underground parking lots, stuffed into the car trunks and the lids slammed shut. Too much bad tv as a teenager. Afraid of the dark, of monsters under the bed since I was 5 years old. Most of the time this past year I have been able to talk myself off that slippery slope.

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But my artist's retreat wasn't panning out the way I'd thought. I was still afraid of the dark and the cougar often replaced the boogymen or the rapist. A friend had told me that cougars track their prey and if you went out to pee every night, one night he'd be there waiting for you. My generator was out in the woodshed. A treat or two would convince me to go up the loft to bed and let the machine run on into the night.

One evening I was out walking with my two ginger cats. They both follow me around the property and come when I call them, if they feel like it. We were walking up the old road which is completely carpeted with last year's leaves, a

beautiful, cinnamon, honey road home. Somewhere between the two huge cottonwoods a thought flashed through my mind. "I wonder if someone is watching us?"

The thought took hold and my heart rate picked up with the next. "I wonder if some man is watching us through the bushes?" I snatched the cats and crunched up the hill to the cabin. My door doesn't lock so I propped a piece of driftwood against the sliding glass and taped it into place with duct tape. I climbed straight up the ladder into the loft. From under the covers I felt around for the small knife I keep by my bed. And then for the heavy candleholder. A lifetime of tv scenarios cascaded through my brain. I am a strong, muscular woman but thoughts of being attacked, raped, hurt, turn me into a jellyfish. These haunting fears defy logic, take me out at the knees.

I've been practising meditation for more than a year now. Watching my thoughts, feeling my breath, opening my heart. Learning how to stand aside from emotional storms; to watch the rising, then the dissipation of thoughts; like passing weather. Tonight, under the covers this gave me a moment to pause and I noticed how strongly my heart was beating.

When I fall in love I become 3 years old again. I give my entire heart, my whole self to the relationship. So far, I haven't found one that works for

longer than a few years. Sometimes I agree with my psychiatrist, "It's part of your illness", other times I think it's just me. Hard to live with. My cats help the situation. I don't feel lonely with them, or at least I don't think I do. But there is a little bruise there, on my heart which often feels shut in my morning meditation. Except if I'm thinking about flying or climbing. The insight swooped into my head: the only time I feel my heart strongly is when I'm afraid.

Fear has been a very important teacher in the sports I practise. Learning to let it tune my senses without taking me over has taken decades of practise. Fight, flight or freeze. I have often chosen to 'walk through the fear door' and transcend my own self created limitations. I love my sports because I stand my ground; learn to make one move at a time.

And now, lying in bed I realized I was scaring myself again. And I wasn't on a rock face or on a hillside about to fly. I was in my own bed and I was the scriptwriter who had created the scenario which scared me up the hill and into my bed under the covers. But I was still afraid. So I made a wish for a golden mirror that sees below the surface of the skin. A golden mirror which reflects not only my spirit as well as my vulnerabilities and weaknesses but a golden mirror to remind me of my true strengths and inner beauty. Even from beneath the covers.

OCD And BCLC – A Very Bad Mix

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

The fact is, BCLC (British Columbia Lottery Corporation) is exploiting the weaknesses of many of its consumers – especially those suffering with OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) — almost to the point of total callousness.

Although I currently enforce my limit "and stay within it," BCLC in the past (Spring, 1986 to be precise), has had me and my money for a full day. While I was supposed to be searching for a position at the airport at which I could complete my work-and-learn program practicum, I instead ended up spending the \$50 I had on "Scratch & Win" tickets. I was enduring an uncontrollable, futile compulsion to buy ticket after ticket until I

would eventually win something substantial. I did acquire one or two \$2 wins and a \$5 win, at which time I should have stopped playing and cut my losses; however, I could not resist but to go for the gusto and played on until I was broke and feeling depressed.

There is post-secondary psychology-course literature that states that gamblers purposely, though unconsciously, play and lose money on games of chance and then kick themselves around the proverbial block afterwards just to mentally

(continued on pg.11)

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Over Soul

by Satya Devi

Closing my hands, I
fell into ecstasy for an hour,
I opened my hands: empty.

Swimming: I divided
the water
with my hands,
empty.

Dancing on the shore
I cupped the sky
My hands: empty.

I am a bird without feet –
I cannot land –
Marooned without
prayer
water or
sky.

no air.
Only being,

dissipated like holy ash
between Nirvana and Naraka.

Recovery Journey

by Rose Ananda Heart

Spiraling downward
into a well of darkness,
willing myself to face
the inner demons
that have their hooks
in my heart and belly.
A shaman's journey,
to release the clutches
of past mistakes,
I face the death
of all I've known
Pain and anguish
spur me onward
as I continue
to reach for a home
of peaceful meadows
with brilliant birds
singing harmoniously
and radiant sunshine
caressing my back
The lovely blooms
in patches of color
calling me to life
to dance barefoot
giving praise to Earth
Reconnection with Divine
In Presence, 'I Am'
The gloom disappears
as I relax into the Mother
my body melting in bliss
without the clutter of thought.

The Path That Aging Takes Us On

by Huddy Roddan

Because I married a wonderfully interesting man who had a manic depressive personality, which today would be called bipolar disorder; I learned many things about myself and discovered strengths I didn't know were mine. That was over fifty years ago. Now I'm in my 88th year and I am learning that I must use some of those strengths to meet each day. I face things such as how to keep life interesting and managing to get my body from point A to point B without toppling over, learning to work with the physical challenges that come with time, forgetting words being left out or forgotten, even getting to sleep. Many things I took for granted are now giving me the opportunity, as my life with my husband sometimes did, of using each challenge as a way of becoming stronger.

I sang in a church choir for fifty years. While I am not religious in an orthodox way, I find comfort in the words of hymns I sang so many years ago. Sometimes I use PSALM 23, THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD to help me get to sleep at night. I was raised on a farm in Saskatchewan where we kept our animals in a paddock. But thousands of years ago the shepherds slept out with their flocks. Psalm 23 is really a story of hardships encountered by shepherds at that time. To start with they rest for the night in green pastures beside a lake or creek where the herd could drink before their journey to the next green meadow.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green: He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

Over night the shepherd regains his strength and is able to choose the safest and best pastures.

My soul he doth restore again;
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
Even for his own Name's sake.

The shepherd uses his stick or rod to ward off hungry animals and his crooked staff to fetch the sheep back onto the pathway, frightened and running off in fear.

Yea though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet I will fear none ill;

For thou art with me; and thy rod and staff me comfort still.

"Many things I took for granted are now giving me the opportunity... of using each challenge of a way of becoming stronger."

The reason why I am telling this story is that we all follow the pathway of life in a different way. When we are children our parents or caregivers supply us with a place to sleep and food for our sustenance. They are the shepherds and as we go through life we pass through trouble spots; rebelling against our shepherds by skipping school, refusing to eat healthy food, some turning to drugs or alcohol. Our shepherds attend to us, pulling us back into the fold with the crooked staff, hoping to guide us through and into adulthood.

My table Thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

Now the shepherd and his sheep have made their way past the dangerous and dark part of their journey to the next meadow. The shepherd rests and partakes of a lunch he has carried with him. Still, the wolves lurk in the distance. The shepherd is grateful to have made it this far and gives thanks for his safety and good fortune.

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me;
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling place shall it be.

(Scottish Psalter 1650)

Now that I am just over 88, I can relate to both the Shepherd and the sheep. I sometimes feel powerless as I watch my health deteriorate. I feel depressed when I lose sight of the path that my life is on and I am filled with fear and stress which only makes my health worse. Some Seniors panic and turn to negative remedies: drugs, gambling, alcohol and too much t.v. to name a

few. We all need words of encouragement and to try our best to use each flare up as an opportunity to learn. We must keep reminding ourselves how strong we are at getting through the rough spots. I feel blessed that I have had a long and productive life. Through the many challenges I have faced in my life, and aging is one of the greatest, I have learned to trust in life and to take action.

OCD And BCLC

(continued from pg.7)

punish themselves; sadly, it's a form of psychological masochism.

The most insidious aspect of BCLC conduct is the Extra! option whenever one buys a 6/49, BC/49 or Super 7 lottery ticket. Even if you, the player, do not wish to play the Extra, BCLC regardlessly gives you the random four numbers printed on the ticket stub, ranging anywhere from 1-99, with the word "NO" adjacent to them. BCLC very likely does this to allow fear to fester in the minds of all of the players who do not purchase the Extra numbers: i.e., when checking their regular-ticket numbers, many players cannot help but to check if their Extra numbers had been drawn (maybe just to confirm that they had saved a dollar by saying NO to the Extra). Thus, the "*I'm sorry ... so sorry ... that I waaas such a fool*" commercial jingo undoubtedly alluding to all of those regular-ticket buyers who would have won half a million bucks had they just parted with the \$1 and said "YES" to the Extra.

Therefore, what I, a non-Extra player, do is simply not check the drawn Extra numbers non-solicitously forced upon me. (Ignorance is bliss, is it not?)

For the record, the odds of someone matching 4/4 numbers in the Extra! is 1/3,764,376; three of the four numbers, 1/9,906 (which gets you \$1,000); two numbers, 1/141 (which gets you \$10); one number, 1/6.8 (which gets you \$1). All of which leaves lottery consumers, such as myself, wondering just how far BCLC is willing to go, ethically speaking, to get their revenue and just how far into dreamland many abusive-ticket-buying mentally ill persons and non-mentally-ill persons have drifted.

Of course, becoming a millionaire from a \$2 lottery ticket is, to most of us, a dream come true—a fact that has been taken advantage of by many public and private establishments through-

out the world for a very long time. In B.C., such a revenue-producing concept was institutionalized in 1985 as British Columbia Lottery Corporation, a B.C. government crown corporation operating all lottery-ticket games within this province. According to the BCLC's 2006/2007 annual report titled, "Our Commitment to British Columbia," the corporation allocates only 27 percent back towards prizes. Operations costs receive 7 percent; 22 percent goes to retailers' sales commissions and "... casino and bingo service provider companies," and 0.8 percent is spent on ticket printing and paper.

Yes, it's true—the purchase of a lottery ticket can brighten up a discouraged person's day simply with the concept of instantly winning a lot of money in exchange for a meagre couple of bucks, albeit a concept with almost zero chance of realization.

Regardless of the astronomical odds, people continue to play (including me, though not of the Extra sort) — a disproportionately large segment of which are those in society that are the least able to afford it. Although it all makes sense—i.e., those who need the money the most, put the most money (per capita) into the lottery system—the irony nevertheless remains quite bitter.

For this essay, I spent about eight solid hours on the phone and Internet seeking to learn what percentage — even just approximately — of the mentally ill populace has a gambling problem compared to the normal populace; but nobody knew anything about my query — all of which indicates to me just how unconcerned society, and perhaps neither some mental-health organizations (e.g., the CMHA didn't even know), is towards the issue of mental illness, especially OCD, and problem gambling.

Cross My Heart And Hope To Live

by reinhart

A dear friend of mine had another friend who happened to be addicted to cocaine. I'm not sure how the two knew each other – perhaps they were workmates; either past or present. In any case, everyone who knew her knew that she was a user. Indeed, she freely admitted it herself. I met the girl once or twice at my friend's house and quickly realized one possible reason why she might have been inclined to fess up to her addiction. The impression she made on me was that she was a very attractive youngish lady in her late thirties or early forties. She had a pretty face and a trim and beautiful body. However her nose was horribly deformed from sniffing cocaine.

Next that I heard of her was that she had quit the dope and gone in for cosmetic surgery to repair her disfigured nose. Life seemed to be getting better for this unfortunate and tormented young girl. I really didn't know the girl very well but I could imagine that there must have been some tragic pain that drove her to treat herself with this illicit drug. Unfortunately, a couple of months later I learned that she was back to sniffing cocaine and was once gain hooked on the coke.

One evening my friend was hosting a dinner part at her home. There were a half a dozen of us there. We were ready to sit down and eat when my friends cell phone rang. It was her junkie friend calling. The poor girl apparently was having an existential crisis and was reaching out for help. My friend told the girl that she did not know what to tell her. She said that as long as the girl was on the coke, she could not help her. They spoke a few words more and my friend repeated herself. Then she hung up. Two minutes later, the phone rang again. It was the cocaine girl. The conversation was virtually identical to the one before. Another two minutes later the phone rang again. Guess who? My friend once more had to tell her that as long as she was using my friend couldn't help her. Thereupon she added that she couldn't really talk at this time because she was busy with her dinner party. She said that she would talk to her later. This was not a good time to talk. As a good-bye she said I can't help you, and hung up.

A few minutes later the phone rang again. It was the same girl again. (My friend has call display on her cell phone.) My friend let the phone ring and did not answer. A few minutes went by and the

phone rang again. Same caller. Again my friend let the phone ring without answering. After all this we sat down to commence with our dinner party.

Two days later I heard the terrible news. The girl was dead. Perhaps with the exception of her immediate family, no one knew for sure the details and cause of her death. Rumours and speculations however were flying high. Most of the poor girl's friends believed it was a drug overdose – either accidental or intentional. Understandably, my friend was wracked with grief and guilt. She had weeping fits that lasted for days and she began to sink into a deep, black depression. My friend went to the memorial service and the funeral, but these did nothing to alleviate her grief and guilt. The weeping just wouldn't let up.

One day I was visiting my friend when she confided that she wanted to go to a church and pray for the dearly departed soul of her deceased friend. My friend asked me if I would come along with her. Of course I said yes. It was a beautiful sunny day and there was a church just twenty minutes walk away.

As soon as we entered the church I was struck by the beauty of the building. There was a very high vaulted ceiling and huge stained glass windows depicting biblical scenes. The colours gleamed and glowed in the sunlight like a dozen dazzling rainbows. Also there were several large statues of the Virgin Mary and some of the Apostles. The statues looked both alluring and serene. The word pious would certainly be an apt description thereof. My friend knelt on a cushion before the statue of the Virgin Mary and began to pray aloud. She prayed to G-d the Father and G-d the Son. She prayed that G-d would have mercy on the soul of her friend and embrace her in the kingdom of heaven where there is no more pain, suffering or weeping.

I listened to the prayer of my friend but soon my attention became fixated and riveted upon the life-sized crucifix that was mounted on the wall above and behind the altar. It was a standard layout for a church. First the cross, then the altar, then the statues of Mary and the Apostles and then the pews that completed the church. Maybe it was the size of the crucifix that captured my imagination. I had seen crucifixes before but nothing on this

scale. I was quite captivated by this depiction of our Lord and Saviour.

My friend's prayers faded into the background while I stared at and inspected the Christ nailed to the cross. I was totally rapt in my attention. As I beheld the crucifix I slowly but surely began to imagine all the pain and suffering that was heaped upon the G-d-man hanging from the tree. It all became very real and vivid in my imagination. I looked upon the thorns that pierced His scalp, the nails that were hammered through His hands and feet and the spear that was thrust into His side. Pieces of His flesh had been torn away by the scourging that happened before the crucifixion. And then I remembered from scriptures how He was taunted and humiliated, laughed at and whipped with metal-tipped whips that ripped away his skin both front and back. My heart grew heavy as I beheld the tortured "Lamb of G-d". And as I gazed upon that massive crucifix, I began to understand something that most others don't. Jesus didn't just suffer on the cross – He suffered all His life since the day He was born. I was certain that He felt great mental anguish when He witnessed how mankind treats one another. He saw how they killed, maimed and tortured each other in the name of glory and empire. He empathized and probably wept at the fate of the sick, diseased and leprous. He suffered with the poor, the starving and the homeless. He felt the lashes, the toil and the hopelessness of the oppressed and enslaved. He commiserated with the beggars, the cripples and those that lived in and worked in garbage dumps. When He looked upon Gehenna, the garbage dump outside the walls of Jerusalem, I'm certain He saw the future of humanity. This also must have grieved him terribly. His heart was open to all the woes and wails of the world and He sympathized most with those who hurt the most. Scripture indeed calls Him "The Suffering Servant" – "acquainted with grief". His heart went out to the prisoners and all those burdened by the laws and traditions of the religious leaders. He identified with all those who suffered from injustice, lack of truth, discrimination, lies and corruption. His heart was filled with empathy for those who are counted least in this world. He empathized with all the pain, misery and afflictions that thrive upon and plague the earth.

Well, my friend finished her prayers and we left the church. She seemed to have found a certain measure of peace and I believe that I detected a small smile upon her face. As for myself, I was still focused on my ruminations. Why all this suffering in the world

Those of us who live in the Western hemisphere, for the most part, have it all. Don't get me wrong; there's a lot of suffering and deprivation right here at home as well. But it pales in comparison to the misery that is ingrained in the Third World. And in this part of the world we have the education, the resources, the technology and the wealth to remedy most of the ills of the world. Unfortunately, most of us are preoccupied with making money to pay the bills of our lavish lifestyles. I firmly believe that we have the power and the ability to bring us "back to the Garden". What we are lacking is the will – both in our governments, our population and our electorates. I firmly believe in "Paradise on Earth" if we could only change our attitudes and address the agonies of our world and make this a top priority and a concerted effort. We need a paradigm shift – people instead of profits! We all come from the same evolutionary tree, we are all brothers and sisters but we just don't see it that way, except maybe during some fleeting moments of clarity. Let us work toward a unified world that feeds the hungry, gives drink to the thirsty, clothes the naked, sets free the prisoner, provides shelter for the homeless, cures the sick and teaches peace, love and equality to all. Let us dismantle all the military industrial complexes all around the world and use all the resources to lend a hand to all those who are reaching out.

Then, however, the words of a pastor come to me. He said to me, "Even if every living soul on this world were a Christian we still would not be able to achieve "Paradise on Earth" because the devil would still be here to throw a monkey wrench into the proceedings." I remember how at the time I couldn't decide whether his statement was oversimplistic, even childish, or whether his statement was deeply profound. I still haven't determined which it truthfully was.

When it comes to this matter, basically, there is only one thing that I am sure of. Like it says in Scripture, that we should all strive to be perfect, even though we all know that we can never achieve this goal; we should and must nevertheless strive and try. I felt the same way about "Paradise on Earth" – even though it may be unattainable we should and must, nevertheless, strive and try to make it so. Without some noble purpose to work toward, such as global utopia, our lives become meaningless and less than mundane. We must "love our neighbour as ourselves" and put the needs of our brothers and sisters on an even par with our own needs. "The Kingdom of G-d is at hand."

Websites Of Interest To Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients

This list is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and has left out many well-known sites that are widely available and easily accessible from local directories.

Organizations (General)

www.mind.org.uk www.power2u.org www.mhselfhelp.org www.vnusp.org www.tao.ca/~pact
www.u-kan.co.uk www.mentalhealth.com www.icspp.org www.oikos.org www.icomm.ca/esinfo
www.aapd-de.org www.mindfreedom.org www.geocities.com www.mdri.org www.breggin.com
www.cvdfinfo.ca/mh-atlas/ www.szasz.com www.antipsychiatry.org www.peoplewho.org
www.walnet.org/llf www.mentalhealth.org.uk www.fsu.edu/~trauma/ip.html www.radpsynet.org
www.contac.org www.buildfreedom.com/ft/psychiatric_survivors.htm www.samhsa.gov
www.nueknfuts.com/index.php www.eam.org www.lino.com/~raiddat <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipsychiatry> <http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~nstaman/alternatives/OVNVinternational.htm>

Advocacy and Activism

www.mental-health-matters.com/activist.html www.m-power.org www.narpa.org
www.protectionandadvocacy.com www.cchr.org www.popan.org.uk www.advocatweb.com
www.gamian-europe.com www.hri.ca www.hrweb.org www.iahf.com www.benzo.org.uk/prawi.htm
<http://members.aol.com/jimhofy/jimho.htm>

Alternatives

www.talkingcure.com/index.asp www.alternativementalhealth.com www.medsfree.com www.moshersoteria.com
www.transtherapy.org www.patchadams.org www.healthfreedommovement.com
www.weglauthaus.de www.elcollie.com www.stopshrinks.org www.lstpm.org
www.emotiosinbalance.com www.the-bright-side.org/site/thebrightside/ www.doctoryourself.com
www.emotionsanonymous.org www.projectresilience.com www.bu.edu/cpr/rr/alternative/
www.religiousfreedoms.org www.wildestcolts.com <http://stopbadtherapy.com> http://nht_amhl.blogspot.com <http://essence-euro.org/iasp/> <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/erthworks/nonmain.htm>

Drug Information

www.larsmartensson.com www.drugs-and-medications.com www.drugawareness.org
www.outlookcities.com/psych/ www.canadiandimension.mb.ca/v35/v35_5ab.htm#three
www.nmsis.org www.antidepressantsfacts.com www.socialaudit.org.uk/L4.html
www.chemsense.com www.prozaetruth.com www.quitpaxil.org www.talkingcure.com/archive/drugs.htm www.truehope.com www.astrocyte-design.com/pseudoscience/index.html <http://members.fortunecity.com/siriusw/Biochemical-Imbalance.htm> <http://groups.msn.com/SIDEEFFECTS>
www.benzo.org.uk

Children & Youth

www.voice4kids.org www.aspire.us www.hearmyvoice.org www.ritalindeath.com www.p-a-r.org
www.adhdfraud.org

Tardive Dyskinesia/Dystonia

www.power2u.org/selfhelp/tardive.html www.wemove.org www.dystonia-support.org www.dystonia-foundation.org
www.iatrogenic.org/index.html www.breggin.com/tardivedysk.html
www.caromont.org/16036.cfm www.emedicine.com/neuro/topic362.htm www.drugdigest.org/DD/Articles/News/0_10141_513136_00.html www.psyweb.com/Dicttion/tardived.html www.thebody.com/pinf/phenos.html www.reglan-lawsuit.com www.ninds.nih.gov/healthandmedical/disorders/tardivedoc.htm www.easyweb.easynet.co.uk/simplpsych/tardive.html

Bulletin Board

The Self-Help Resource Association of BC (SHRA) has changed its name to **PeerNetBC**. They also publish a Directory of Self Help/Support Groups in Greater Vancouver with over 600 listings, many of them dealing with mental health issues. **PeerNetBC** is located at suite 306 - 1212 West Broadway, Van. BC V6H 3V1 Tel. 604-733-6186 Fax. 604-730-1015 e-mail info@peernetbc.com . Website - www.peernetbc.com

West Coast Mental Health Network sponsors many self-help groups. Office at #201 - 1300 Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3G6 Tel. 604-733-5570 Fax: 604-733-9556 e-mail vrnhn@vcn.bc.ca

Named after Vincent van Gough's homeopathic doctor, Paul Gachet, **Gallery Gachet** works to provide a safe, borderless place of artistic expression. It is located at 88 E. Cordova, Vancouver. Tel. 604-687-2468

Check out the **Our Voice** website at www.ourvoice-notrevoix.com.

Websites Of Interest To Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients

(continued from previous page)

Electroshock

www.ect.org www.banshock.org www.idiom.com/~drjohn/review.html <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/bmj.326/7403/1363>

Forced Treatment

www.freedom-center.org www.namiscec.org/newsletters/August01/MindAid.htm www.hri/doccentre/docs/gosden.shtml www.garynull.com/issues/Psych/Index.htm www.psychlaws.org www.kqed.org/w/hope/involuntarytreatment.html

Mental Health Law

www.bazelon.org www.ac.wvu.edu/~knecht/law.htm www.psych.org/public_info/insanity.cfm
www.forensic-psych.com/pubs/pubADment.html www.psychlaws.org www.imhl.com www.ialmh.org
www.justiceseekers.com www.safe-trak.com/main/competency1.htm www.abanet.org/disability/sites.html www.experts.com www.expertpages.com/psychiatry-psychology.htm www.psych.org/advocacy-policy/leg_res/apa_testimony/testimonysub-crimeposted91800.cfm www.ilppp.virginia.edu/
www.law.cornell.edu/topics/mental_health.html www.helpforparents.net/LegalResources/1LegalResources.htm

History of Mental Health Care

www.psychiatrysurvivorsarchives.com www.webcom.com/thrive/schizo/kdarch.html www.cwu.edu/~warren/addenda.html www.epub.org.br/cm/n02/historia/psicoeirc_i.htm

Online Publications

www.mentalmagazine.co.uk <http://members.aol.com/asylumpub> <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~expert/psychnews>

Orthomolecular Medicine

www.islandnet.com/~hoffer/hofferhp.htm www.islandnet.com/~hoffer www.orthomed.org

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