

How Clairvoyance Is Developed

Concentration Meditation



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HOW CLAIRVOYANCE IS DEVELOPED

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When a person has studied the subject of clairvoyance sufficiently to realize that the claims made on its behalf are true, their next enquiry usually is "How can I gain this power for myself? If this faculty be latent in every one, as you say, how can I so develop myself as to bring it into motion, and so have direct access to all this knowledge of which you tell me?"

In reply we can assure them that this thing can be done, and that it has been done. There are even many ways in which the faculty may be gained, though most of them are unsafe and eminently undesirable, and there is only one that can be thoroughly and unreservedly recommended to all people alike. But that we may understand the subject, and see where lie the dangers that have to be avoided, let us consider exactly what it is that has to be done.

In the case of all cultured people belonging to the more developed population groups of the world, the faculties of the astral body are already fully developed, as I have explained in earlier lectures. But we are not in the least in the habit of using them; they have slowly grown up within us during the ages of our evolution, but they have come to us so gradually that we have not as yet realized our powers, and they are still to a great extent untried weapons in our hands.



The physical faculties, to which we are thoroughly accustomed, overshadow these others and hide their very existence, just as the nearer light of the sun hides from our eyes the light of the far-distant stars.

So that there are two things to be done if we wish to enter into this part of our heritage as evolved human beings; we must keep our too-insistent physical faculties out of the way for the time, and we must habituate ourselves to the employment of these others, which are as yet unfamiliar to us.

The first step, then, is to get the physical senses out of the way for the present. There are many ways of doing this, but broadly they all range themselves under two heads—one comprising methods by which they are forced out of the way by temporary violent suppression, and the other including methods, much slower, but infinitely surer, by which we ourselves gain permanent control over them.

Most of the methods of violent suppression are injurious to the physical body, to a greater or less extent, and they all have certain undesirable characteristics in common.

One of these is that they leave the person in a passive condition, able perhaps to use their higher senses, but with very little choice as to how they shall employ them, and to a large extent undefended against any unpleasant or evil influence which they may happen to encounter.

Another characteristic is that any power gained by these methods can at best be only temporary. Many of them confer it only during the limited period of their action, and even the best of them can only dower the man or woman with certain faculties during this one physical life.



In the East, where they have studied these matters for so many centuries, they divide methods of development into two classes, just as I have done, and they call them by the names *laukika* and *lokothra*, the first being the “worldly” or temporary method, any results gained by which will inhere only in the personality, and therefore be available only for this present physical life, while whatever is obtained by the second process is gained by the ego, the soul, the true human being, and so is a permanent possession for evermore, carried over from one earthly life to another.

For most methods of the former class little training is required, and when there is training it is of the vehicles only, and so at the best it can affect only this present set of vehicles, and when the human being returns into incarnation with a fresh set all their trouble will be lost; whereas by the second method it is the soul itself which is trained in the control of its vehicles, and naturally it can apply the power and the knowledge thus gained to its new vehicles in the next life.

Let me mention to you first some of the undesirable ways in which clairvoyance is developed in various countries.

Among non-Aryan tribes in India it is often obtained by the use of drugs—*bhong*, hashish, and others of the same kind. These stupefy the physical body something as anaesthetics do, and thus the person in their astral vehicle is set free as they would be in sleep, but with far less possibility of being awakened.

Before taking the drug, the person has set their mind strongly on the endeavour to train their astral senses into activity, and so as soon as they are free they try to use their faculties, and with practice they succeed to some extent. When

they awaken their physical body, they remember more or less of their visions, and try to interpret them, and in that way they often obtains a great reputation for clairvoyance and prevision. Sometimes while in their trance they may be spoken through by some dead man or woman, just as any other medium may be.

There are others who obtain the same condition by inhaling stupefying fumes, usually produced by the burning of a mixture of drugs. It is probable that the clairvoyance of the pythonesses of old was often of this type. It is stated in the case of one of the most celebrated of those oracles of ancient days, the priestess sat always upon a tripod over a crack in the rock, out of which vapour ascended.

After breathing this vapour for a time, she became entranced, and some one then spoke through her organs in the ordinary way so familiar to the visitors to séances. It is not difficult for us to see how undesirable both these methods are from the point of view of real development.

Probably most of us have heard of the dancing dervishes, one part of whose religion consists in this curious dance of ecstasy, in which they whirl round and round in a kind of frenzy until vertigo seizes them and they eventually fall insensible to the ground. In that trance, worked up as they are by religious fervour, they frequently have most extraordinary visions, and are able to some extent to experience and remember lower astral conditions. [Ed—See for comparison “The Luminous Shield” in HPB’s *Nightmare Tales*.]

I have seen something of this, and also of the practices of the Obeah or Voodoo votaries among the heritages from Africa; but these latter are usually connected with magical



ceremonies, loathsome, indecent, horrible, such as none of us would dream of touching for any purpose, whatever results might be promised to us. Yet they certainly do produce results under favourable conditions, though not such results as any of us could possibly wish to obtain.

Indeed, none of the methods mentioned so far would at all commend themselves to us, though I have heard of Europeans who have experimented with the Oriental drugs.

Nevertheless we also have undesirable methods in the West—methods of self-hypnotization which should be carefully avoided by all who wish to develop in purity and safety.

A person may be told to gaze for some time at a bright spot, until paralysis of some of the brain centres supervenes, and in that way they are cast into a condition of perfect passivity, in which it is possible that the lower astral senses may come into a measure of activity.

Naturally they have no power of selection in receiving under such circumstances; they must submit themselves to whatever comes in their way, good or bad—and on the whole it is much more likely to be bad than good.

Sometimes the same general result is obtained by the recitation of certain formulae, the repetition of which over and over again deadens the mental faculty almost as the gazing at a metal disc does.

It may be remembered that the poet Tennyson tells us that he was able by the recitation of his own name many times in rapid succession to pass into another condition of consciousness. The account is given in a letter in the poet's



handwriting which is dated Faringford, Freshwater, Isle of Wight, May 7th, 1874. It was written to a gentleman who communicated to him certain strange experiences he had when passing from under the effect of anaesthetics. Tennyson says:-

“I have never had any revelations through anaesthetics; but a kind of waking trance (this for lack of a better name) I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being; and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? This is the most emphatic declaration that the spirit of the writer is capable of transferring itself into another state of existence, is not only real, clear, simple, but that it is also infinite in vision and eternal in duration.”

Now here is undoubtedly a touch of the higher life; no one who has practical experience of realities can fail to recognize the description as far as it goes, even though the poet just stops short on the brink of something so infinitely grander.

He seems to have held himself more positive than do many people who dabble in these matters without the



necessary instruction or knowledge, and so he gained a valuable certainty of the existence of the soul apart from the body; yet even his method cannot be commended as good or really safe.

We are sometimes told that such a faculty can be developed by means of exercises which regulate the breathing, and that this plan is one largely adopted and recommended in India. It is true that a type of clairvoyance may be developed along these lines, but too often at the cost of ruin both physical and mental.

Many attempts of this sort have been made here in the United States; I know it personally, because on my previous visit many who had ruined their constitutions and in some cases brought themselves to the verge of insanity came to me to know how they could be cured. Some have succeeded in opening astral vision sufficiently to feel themselves perpetually haunted; some have not even reached that point, yet have wrecked their physical health or weakened their minds so that they are in utter despair; some one or two declare that such practice has been beneficial to them.

It is true that such exercises are employed in India by the Hatha Yogis—those who attempt to attain development rather by physical means than by inner growth of the mental and the spiritual. But even among them such practices are used only under the direct orders of responsible teachers, who watch the effect upon the pupil of what is prescribed, and will at once stop them if the exercises prove unsuitable for them.

But for people who know nothing at all of the subject to attempt such things indiscriminately is most unwise and dangerous, for practices which are useful for one person may



very well be disastrous for another. They may suit one person in fifty, but they are extremely likely not to suit the rest, and, myself, I should advise every one to abstain from them unless directed to try them by a competent teacher who really understands what they are intended to achieve.

You may be the one person whom they will suit, but the probabilities are against it, for there are far more failures than successes.

It is so fatally easy to do a great deal of harm in this way, that to experiment vaguely is rather like going into a chemist's shop and taking down drugs at random; you might happen to hit upon exactly what you needed, but also you might not, and the latter is many times more probable.

Another method by which clairvoyance may be developed is by mesmerism—that is to say, if a person be thrown by another into a mesmeric trance it is possible that in that trance they may see astrally. The mesmerizer entirely dominates their will, and the physical faculties are thrown utterly into abeyance. That leaves the field open, and the mesmerist can at the same time stimulate the astral senses by pouring vitality into the astral body.

Good results have been produced in this way, but it requires a very unusual combination of circumstances, an almost superhuman development of purity in thought and intention both in the operator and the subject to make the experiment a safe one. The mesmerist gains great influence over their subject—a far greater power than is generally known: and it may be unconsciously exercised.



Any quality of heart or mind possessed by the mesmerist is very readily transferred to the subject, so if he or she be not entirely pure, we see at once that avenues of danger open up before us.

To be thrown into a trance is to give up your individuality, and that is never a good thing in psychic experiments; but beyond and above that element of undesirability there is real danger unless you have the highest purity of thought, word and deed in your operator; and how rarely that is to be found you know as well as I do. I should never myself submit to this process; I should never advise it to any one else.

I say nothing against the practice of curative mesmerism by those who understand it; that is a totally different matter, for in that it is unnecessary to produce the trance condition at all.

It is perfectly possible to relieve pain, to remove disease, or to pour vitality into a person by magnetic passes, without “putting him or her to sleep” at all. To this there can be no possible objection; yet the person who tries to do even this much would do well to acquaint himself thoroughly with the literature of the subject, for there must always remain a certain element of danger in playing, even with the noblest intentions, with forces which you do not understand, which to you are still abnormal forces.

None of these are plans of clairvoyant development which can be unreservedly recommended for trial by every one.



What, then, it may be asked, are the desirable methods, since so many are undesirable?

Broadly, those which instead of suppressing the physical body by force, train the soul to control it.

The surest and safest way of all is to put oneself into the hands of a competent teacher, and practise only what they advise. But where is the qualified teacher to be found? Not, assuredly among any who advertise themselves as teachers; not among those who take money for their instruction, and offer to sell the mysteries of the universe for so many shillings or so many dollars.

Knowledge can be gained now where it has always been available—at the hands of those who are adepts in this great science of the soul, the fringe of which we are beginning to touch in our deepest studies.

There has always been a great Brotherhood of the people who know, and they have always been ready to teach their lore to the right person, for it is for that very purpose that they have taken the trouble to acquire it, in order that they may be able to guide and help.

How can we reach them? You cannot reach them in the physical body, and you might not even know them if it should happen to you to see them. But they can reach you, and assuredly they will reach you when they see you to be fit for the work of helping the world. Their one great interest is the furthering of evolution, the helping of humanity; they need men and women devoted to this work, and they are ever watching for them; so none need fear that they can be overlooked if they are ready for that work.



They will never gratify mere curiosity; they will give no aid to the person who wishes to gain powers for themselves alone; but when a person has shown by long and careful training of themselves, and by using for helpfulness all the power that they already possess, that their will is strong enough and their heart pure enough to bear their part in the divine work—then that one may become conscious of their presence and their aid when he or she least expects it.

It is true that they founded the Theosophical Society, yet membership in the Society will not of itself be sufficient to bring one into relationship with them—no, nor even membership in that inner School through which the Society offers training to its more earnest members. It is true that from the ranks of the Society people have been chosen to come into closer relation with them; but none could guarantee that as a result of becoming a member, for it rests with them alone, for they see further into the hearts of human beings than we.

But always be sure of this, you whose hearts are yearning for the higher life, for something greater than this lower world can give, that they never overlook one honest effort, but always recognize it by giving through their pupils such teaching and such help as each at their stage is ready for.

In the meantime, while you are trying in every way to develop yourselves along the path of progress, there is much that you can do, if you wish, to bring this power of clairvoyance nearer within your reach.

Remember that it is not in itself a sign of great development; it is only one of the signs, for the human being has to advance along many lines simultaneously before they can reach their goal of perfection. See how highly developed is



the intellect in the great scientific person; yet perhaps they may have but little yet of the wonderful force which devotion gives. See the splendid devotion of the great saint of some Church or religion; yet in spite of all that progress along one line they may have but little yet of the divine power of the intellect.

Each needs what the other has, each will have to acquire the faculty of the other before each will be perfect, so it is evident that at present we are unequally developed! Some have more in one direction, and some in another, according to the line along which each has worked most in past lives.

So if you particularly long for devotion in your character, by striving in that direction now you may attain much of it even in this life, and may assuredly make it a leading quality in your next life. So with intellect, so with every quality; so also with this faculty of clairvoyance. If you think it well to throw your strength into work along this line, you may do very much towards bringing these latent faculties into action.

I am not speaking here of a vague possibility, but of a definite fact, for some of our own members in this Society set themselves years ago to try to train the soul along the path of permanent progress, and of those who persevered without faltering, almost every one has even already found some definite result. Some have won their faculties fully, others only partially as yet, but in all cases good has come from their efforts to take themselves in hand and control their minds and emotions.

If you have this desire for higher sight, take yourself in hand first in the same way; make sure first of the mental and moral development, lest you should succeed in your efforts,



and gain your powers. For to possess them without having first acquired those other qualifications would be indeed a curse and not a blessing, for you would then misuse them, and your last state would indeed be worse than the first.

If you consider that you have made sure of yourself, and you can trust yourself under all possible circumstances to do the right for the right's sake, even against your earthly seeming interest, always to choose the utterly unselfish course of action, and to forget yourself in your love for the world, then there are at least two methods which will lead you towards clairvoyance safely, and can in no way do you harm, even though you should not succeed in your object.

The first of these, though perfectly harmless and even useful, is not suited for every one, but the second is of universal application, and I have myself known both of them to be successful.

This first method is a purely intellectual one, a study to which I have already on several occasions had to refer, the study of the Fourth Dimension of space.

The physical brain has never been accustomed to act at all along those lines, and so it feels itself unable to attack such a problem. But the brain, like any other part of the physical organism, can be trained by persistent, gradual, careful effort to feats which appeared originally quite beyond its reach, and so it can be induced to understand and conceive clearly the forms of a world unlike its own.

The chief apostle of the Fourth Dimension is Mr. C. H. Hinton, of Washington, D.C. He is not a member of our Society, but he has done many of its members an excellent



piece of service in writing so clearly and luminously on his wonderful subject.

In his books he tells us that he has himself succeeded in developing this power of higher conception in the physical brain, and several of our own members have followed in his footsteps. One of these has developed astral sight simply by steadily raising the capacity of the physical brain until it contained the possibility of grasping astral form, and thus awakening the latent astral faculty proper. It is simply a question of extending the power of receptivity until it includes the astral matter.

But I suppose that out of a score of men who took up this study, not more than one would succeed as well and as quickly as that; but at any rate the study is a most fascinating one for those who have a mathematical turn of mind, and where it does not bring increased faculty to see, it must at least bring wider comprehension and a broader outlook over the world, and this is no mean result, even if no other be attained.

Short of absolute astral sight, it is the only method of which I know by which a clear comprehension can be gained of the appearance of astral objects, and thus a definite idea of what the astral life really is.

If that line of effort commends itself only to the few, our second method is of universal application. It also is not easy, but its practice cannot but be of the greatest use to the person.

That is its great and crowning advantage; it leads a person towards these powers which they so ardently desire; but the rate at which they can move along that road depends upon the degree of their previous development in that



particular way in other lives, and therefore no one can guarantee them a certain result in a certain time; yet while they are working their way onward, every step which they take is so far an improvement, and even though they should work for the whole of their life without winning astral sight, they would nevertheless be mentally and morally and even physically the better for having tried.

This is what in various religions is called the method of meditation. For the purpose of our examination of it I shall divide it into three successive steps: concentration, meditation and contemplation, and I will explain what I mean by each of these three terms.

But remember always that to attain success, this effort must be only one side of a general development, and that it is absolutely prerequisite for the person who would learn its secrets to live a pure and altruistic life.

There is no secret about the rules of the greater progress, the Steps of the Path of Holiness have been known to the world for ages, and in my little book *"Invisible Helpers"* I have given a list of them according to the teaching of the Buddha, with the characteristics which mark each of its stages. There is no difficulty in knowing what to do, the difficulty is in carrying out the directions which all religions have given.

The first step necessary towards the attainment of the higher clairvoyance is concentration—not to gaze at a bright spot until you have no mind left, but to acquire such control over your mind that you can do with it what you will, and fix it exactly where you want to hold it for as long a period as you choose.



This is not an easy task, it is one of the most difficult and arduous known to humanity, but it can be done, because it has been done—not once, but hundreds of times, by those whose will is strong and immovable. There may be some among us who have never thought how much beyond our control our minds usually are. Stop yourself suddenly when you are walking along the street, or when you are riding in the car, and see what you are thinking, and why. Try to follow the thought back to its genesis, and you will probably be surprised to find how many desultory thoughts have wandered through your brain during the previous five minutes, just dropping in and dropping out again and leaving almost no impression.

You will gradually begin to realize that in truth all these are not your thoughts at all, but simply cast-off fragments of other people's thoughts. The fact is that thought is force, and every exertion of it leaves an impression behind.

A strong thought about some other person goes to them, a strong thought of self clings about the thinker; but so many thoughts are not by any means strong or especially pointed in any direction, and so the forms which they create are vaguely-floating and evanescent. While they last they are capable of entering into any mind that happens to come their way, and so it comes that as we walk along the road we leave a trail of feeble thought behind us, and the next person who passes that way finds these valueless fragments intruding themselves upon their consciousness.

They drift into their mind, unless it is already occupied with something definite, and in the majority of cases they just drift out again, having made only the most trifling impression upon their brain; but here and there they encounter one which



interests or pleases them and then he or she takes that up and turns it over in their mind, so that it departs from them somewhat strengthened by the addition of a little of their mind-force to it.

They have made it their own thought for a moment, and so has coloured it with their personality. Every time we enter a room we step into the midst of a crowd of thoughts, good, bad or indifferent as the case may be, but the great mass of them just a dull, purposeless fog which is hardly worth calling thought at all.

If we wish to develop any higher faculty, we must begin by gaining control over this mind of ours. We must give it some work to do, instead of just letting it play about as it will, drawing into itself all those thoughts which are not ours, which we really do not want at all.

It must be not our master but our servant before we can take the first step along the line of the true trained clairvoyance, for this is the instrument which we shall have to use, and it must be at our command and fully under our control.

This concentration is one of the hardest things for the ordinary person to do, because they have no practice at it, and indeed has scarcely realized that it needed to be done. Think what it would be if your hand were as little under your control as your mind is, if it did not obey your command, but started aside from what you wished it to do. You would feel that you had paralysis, and that your hand was useless. But if you cannot control your mind, that is dangerously like a mental paralysis; you must practice with it until you have it in hand and can use it as you wish.



Fortunately concentration can be practised all day long, in the common affairs of everyday life. Whatever you are doing, do it thoroughly, and keep your mind on it. If you are writing a letter, think of your letter and of nothing else until it is finished; it will be all the better written for such care. If you are reading a book, fix your mind on it and try to grasp the author's full meaning. Know always what you are thinking about, and why; keep your mind at intelligent work, and do not leave it time to be so idle, for it is in those idle moments that all evil comes.

Even now you can concentrate very perfectly when your interest is sufficiently keenly excited. Then your mind is so entirely absorbed that you hardly hear what is said to you or see what passes round you.

There is a story told in the East about some sceptical courtiers, who declined to believe that an ascetic could ever be so occupied with their meditation as to be unaware that an army passed close by them as they sat under their tree wrapt in thought. The king, who was present, assured them that he would prove to them the possibility of this, and proceeded to do so in a truly Oriental and autocratic way.

He ordered that some large water-jars should be brought and filled to the brim. Then he instructed the courtiers each to take one and carry it; and his command was that they should walk, carrying this water, through the principal streets of the city. But they were to be surrounded by his guards with drawn swords, and if one of them spilled one single drop of his water, that unfortunate was to be instantly beheaded then and there.



The courtiers started on their journey filled with terror; but they all got safely back again, and the king smilingly greeted them with a request to tell him all the incidents of their walk, and describe the persons whom they had met. Not one of them could mention even one person that they had seen, for all agreed that they had been so entirely occupied with the one idea of watching the brimming jars that they had noticed nothing else of any sort. "So, gentlemen", rejoined the king, "you see that when there is sufficient interest concentration is possible."

When you have attained concentration such as that, not under the stress of the fear of instant death, but by the exertion of your will, then you may profitably try the next stage of effort. I do not say that it will be easy, on the contrary, it is very difficult; but it can be done, for many of us have had to do it.

When your mind is thus an instrument, try what we call meditation. Choose a certain fixed time for yourself, when you can be undisturbed; the early morning is in many ways the best, if that can be managed.

It is not always an easy time for us now, for we have in modern civilization hopelessly disarranged our day, so that noon is no longer its middle point, as it should be. Now we lie in bed long after the sun has risen, and then stay up injuring our eyes with artificial light long after it has set at night. But choose your time, and let it be the same time each day, and let no day pass without your regular effort.

You know if you are trying any sort of physical exercise for training purposes how much more effective it is to do a little regularly than to make a violent effort one day, and then



do nothing for a week. So in this matter it is the regularity that is important.

Sit down comfortably where you will not be disturbed, and, turn your mind, with all its newly-developed power of concentration upon some selected subject demanding high and useful thought.

We in our Theosophical studies have no lack of such subjects, combining deepest interest with greater profit. If you prefer it, you can take some moral quality, as is advised by the Catholic Church when it prescribes this exercise. In that case, you would turn the quality over in your mind, see how it was an essential quality in the Divine order, how it was manifested in Nature about you, how it had been shown forth by great ones of old, how you yourself could manifest it in daily life, how (perhaps) you have failed to display it in the past, and so on.

Such meditation upon a high moral quality is a very good exercise in many ways, for it not only trains the mind but keeps the good thought constantly before you. But it needs to be preceded generally by thought upon concrete subjects, and when those are easy for you, you can usefully take up the more abstract ideas.

When this has become an established habit with you, with which nothing is allowed to interfere; when you can manage it fairly well without any feeling of strain or difficulty, and without a single wandering thought venturing to intrude itself; then you may turn to the third stage of our effort—contemplation.



But remember that you will not succeed with this until you have entirely conquered the mind-wandering.

For a long time you will find, when you try to meditate, that your thoughts are continually going off at a tangent, and you do not know it till suddenly you start to find how far away they have gone.

You must not let this dishearten you, for it is the common experience; you must simply bring the errant mind back again to its duty, a hundred or a thousand times if necessary, for the only way to succeed is to decline to admit the possibility of failure. But when you have at length succeeded, and the mind is definitely mastered, then we reach that for which all the rest has been but the necessary preparation, good though it has also been in itself.

Instead of turning over a quality in your mind, take the highest spiritual ideal that you know.

It does not matter what it is, or by what name you call it. A Theosophist would most probably take one of those Great Ones to whom we have already referred—a member of that great Brotherhood of Adepts, whom we call the Masters—especially if he had the privilege of having come directly into contact with one of them.

The Catholic might take the Blessed Virgin or some patron saint; the ordinary Christian would probably take the Christ; the Hindu would perhaps choose Krishna, and the Buddhist most likely the Lord Buddha himself. Names do not matter, for we are dealing with realities now.



But it must be to you the highest, that which will evoke in you the greatest feeling of reverence, love and devotion that you are capable of experiencing.

In place of your previous meditation, call up the most vivid mental image that you can make of this ideal, and, letting your most intense feeling go out towards this highest One, try with all the strength of your nature to raise yourself towards Him (Her), to become one with Him (Her), to be in and of that glory and beauty.

If you will do that, if you will thus steadily continue to raise your consciousness, there will come a time when you will suddenly find that you are one with that ideal as you never were before, when you realize and understand Him (Her) as you never did before, for a new and wonderful light has somehow dawned for you, and all the world is changed, for now for the first time you know what it is to live, and all life before seems like darkness and death to you as compared with this.

Then it will all slip away again, and you will return to the light of common day—and darkness indeed will it appear by comparison!

But go on working at your contemplation, and presently that glorious moment will come again and yet again; and each time it will stay with you longer, till there comes a period when that higher life is yours always, no longer a flash or a glimpse of paradise, but a steady glow, a new and never-ceasing marvel every day of your existence.

Then for you day and night will be one continuous consciousness, one beautiful life of happy work for the helping



of others; yet this, which seems so indescribable and so unsurpassable, is only the beginning of the entrance into the heritage in store for you and for every child of humanity.

Look about you with that new and higher sight, and you will see and grasp many things which until now you have never even suspected—unless, indeed you have previously familiarized yourself with the investigations of your predecessors along this path.

Continue your efforts, and you will rise higher still, and in due course there will open before your astonished eyes a life as much grander than the astral as that is than the physical, and once more you will feel that the true life has been unknown to you until now; for all the while you are rising nearer to the One life which alone is perfect Truth and perfect Beauty.

This is a development that must take years, you will say. Yes, that is probable, for you are trying to compress into one life the evolution which would normally spread itself over many; but it is far more than worth the time and the effort.

No one can say how long it will take in any individual case, for that depends upon two things—the amount of crust that there is to break through, and the energy and determination that is put into the work.

They could not promise you that in so many years you would certainly succeed; he can only tell you that many have tried before you, and that many have succeeded.

All the great Masters of Wisdom were once people at our own level; as they have risen, so must we rise. Many of us in our humbler way have tried also, and have succeeded, some



more and some less, but none who has tried regrets their attempt, for whatever they have gained, be it little or much, is gained for all eternity since it inheres in the soul which survives death.

Whatever we gain thus we possess, in full power and consciousness, and have it always at our command; for this is no mediumship, no feeble intermittent trance-quality, but the power of the developed and glorified life which is to be that of all humanity some day.

But the person who wishes to try to unfold these faculties within themselves will be very ill-advised if they do not take care first of all to have utter purity of heart and soul, for that is the first and greatest necessity.

If they are to do this, and to do it well, they must purify the mental, the astral and the physical; they must cast aside their pet vices and their physical impurities; one must cease to defile their body with meat, with alcohol or tobacco, and try to make themselves pure and clean all through, on this lower plane as well as on the higher ones.

If one does not think it worth giving up petty uncleannesses for the higher life, that is exclusively their own affair; it was said of old that one could not serve God and Mammon simultaneously. I do not say that bad habits on the physical plane will prevent them altogether from any psychic development, but do very emphatically and distinctly say that the person who remains unclean is never free from danger, and that to touch holy things with impure hands is to risk a terrible peril.



The person who would try for the higher must free their mind from worry and from lower cares; while doing their duty to the uttermost, one must do it impersonally and for the right's sake, and leave the result in the hands of higher powers. So will they draw round them pure and helpful entities as they move onward, and will themselves radiate sunlight on those in suffering or in sorrow.

So shall one remain master of him or herself, pure and clean and unselfish, using their new powers never for a personal end, but ever for the advancement and the succour of people their brothers, that they also, as they can, may learn to live the wider life, may learn to rise from amid the mists of ignorance and selfishness into the glorious sunlight of the peace of God.



CONCENTRATION

From "Talks On The Path Of Occultism, Volume II,
The Voice Of The Silence" (Ch 2), 1926
[pages 40-42]

A Besant and C W Leadbeater

He who would hear the voice of Nāda, the "Sound-less sound," and comprehend it, he has to learn the nature of Dhāranā.

To this there are two footnotes, as follows:

The "Soundless Voice," or the "Voice of the Silence." Literally perhaps this would read "Voice in the Spiritual Sound," as Nada is the equivalent word in Sanskrit for the Senzar term.

Dhāranā is the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon some one interior object, accompanied by complete abstraction from everything pertaining to the external universe, or the world of the senses.

The word that is here translated concentration comes from the root dhri, to hold. The word dhārana, with a short final vowel, means holding or supporting in general, but here we have a special feminine substantive, with the long terminal vowel, as a technical term signifying concentration or holding of the mind.

It is described in some places as a kind of pondering or dwelling upon a given thought or object, and it is said in the Hindu books that meditation and contemplation will not be successful unless this is practiced first. It is obvious that while the mind is responding to the appeals of the physical, astral



and lower mental planes, it is not likely to hear the message that the ego is trying to transmit to the personality from its own higher planes.

Concentration is requisite, that attention may be given to the chosen object, not to the restless activity of the lower vehicles. It is usual to begin the practice of concentration with simple things. On a certain occasion some people came to Madame Blavatsky, and asked her upon what they should meditate; she threw a matchbox down on the table, and said: "Meditate on that!" It startled them somewhat, because they had expected her to tell them to meditate upon Parabrahman or the Absolute.

It is very important that this concentration should be done without strain to the body. Dr. Besant has told us that, when Madame Blavatsky first instructed her to try it, she began with great intensity; but her teacher interrupted her, saying: "My dear, you do not meditate with your blood-vessels!"

What is required is to hold the mind quiet, so that one looks at the object of thought with perfect calmness, just as one would look at one's watch to see the time, except that one keeps on looking for the length of time prescribed or decided upon for the period of concentration. People often complain of headaches and other pains as a result of meditation; there should never be any such result; if they will take care to keep the physical body calm and free from tension of any kind, even in the eyes, they will probably find their concentration much easier and more successful, and free from physical trouble and danger.



Various books have been written on this subject, and some of them offer exceedingly dangerous suggestions. Anyone wishing further information on this should read Professor Wood's book, "*Concentration—a Practical Course*", of which Dr. Besant wrote: "There is nothing in it which, when practiced, can do the striver after concentration the least physical, mental or moral harm."

In her footnote, H.P.B. associates dhāranā with the higher mental plane, for she says the mind must be fixed upon an interior object and abstracted from the world of the senses; that is, from the physical, astral and lower mental worlds. That is a prescription for the candidate who is already on the Path, and is aiming at the samādhi of the nirvānic or ātmic plane. But the three terms 'concentration', 'meditation' and 'contemplation' are also used in a general way.

To fix one's thought on a verse of scripture—that is concentration.

To look at it in every possible light and try to penetrate its meaning, to reach a new and deep thought or receive some intuitional light upon it—that is meditation.

To fix one's attention steadily for a time on the light received—that is contemplation.

Contemplation has been defined as concentration at the top end of your line of thought or meditation. It is usual for the Oriental student to begin their practice on some simple external object, and from that to carry their thought inward or upward to higher things.



MEDITATION

From "The Monad", 1920, (Ch IX) [pages 141-151]

C W Leadbeater

THE readiest and safest method of developing the higher consciousness is by means of meditation, and it is already the habit of many of our members to begin each morning by spending a few minutes in a meditation which is intended to be devoted to aspiration towards the Masters. I should like to say a few words about this, because it seems to me that some of us are not getting quite as much out of it as we might do.

There are so many various types among us that it is not possible that one method of meditation can produce equally good results with all. Broadly speaking, we may divide into two classes the ways in which such a time as that may be most profitably occupied, and each person must decide for himself or herself to which class he or she belongs, which method will come most naturally and be most profitable.

We have the habit of calling all our exercises of that sort by the general name of meditation, though it is appropriate only to some of them. I have often spoken of three stages through which people have to pass: 'Concentration', 'Meditation', and 'Contemplation'; it is this last at which on the whole we ought to be aiming, when that is possible and comparatively easy for us.

There may be, however, some of us whose minds are not constructed along that particular line, and they may find meditation more useful and more profitable for them.



The art of acquiring perfect concentration is a slow process, and most of us are only in process of acquiring it. We have not fully succeeded in it yet, because wandering thoughts still come in to trouble us. But supposing we have sufficient concentration to keep out those thoughts which we do not want, it yet remains to be considered how we shall think during these few minutes. We speak of the time as devoted to aspiration towards the Master; but there are different lines of aspiration.

The nearest to what is really meant by meditation would be to hold the mind firmly upon our own image of Him or Her, if we are able to construct a good strong thought-image. Some cannot visualise as easily as others. If we can visualise strongly for ourselves, it is well to make our own thought-image and close our eyes. Having made such an image, our thought would then run along some such line as this:

“This,” we should say, “is the Master whom I have chosen, to whom I am devoting myself. He (She) is the incarnation of love, of power, of wisdom. I must try to make myself like Him (Her) in all these respects.

Have I succeeded so far in doing this? Not as fully as I should wish in such-and-such ways; I can think, in looking back, that I have not shown these qualities as I should. I shall endeavour in the future to remember Him (Her) always, and to be, and to act, and to think as I believe He (She) would be and act and think”. And so on with a strong effort to realise those qualities in Him (Her). I take it that that is really what is meant by the word meditation.

If a person finds after some effort that it is impossible for them to make a clear thought-image, it will be well for them to



seat themselves before a portrait of the Master, and fix their gaze earnestly upon it while thinking as above suggested.

There is something still better, perhaps, for those who find that they can do it readily and easily; and that is contemplation. In that case one forms the image of the Master and, having formed it, throws one's whole strength into an effort to reach Him (Her), an effort which I can best describe by saying that we are straining upwards towards Him (Her), trying to unify our consciousness with His (Hers). That effort will not immediately bring a result, in all probability; but if we make it every day in our regular meditation, the time will certainly come when it will meet with full success.

That is the best thing to do for those who can do it. But there are types of mind to which such an effort would be barren; and it is not well for them to waste their time over it if it is a thing which they cannot at all do, while the other form of meditation might be much more fruitful for them.

But for those who can reach upward in that particular way with any sort of success, with any kind of feeling that it is for them a path which will be likely (even though it should take a long time) to lead to a direct union with Him (Her), contemplation is clearly best, for such union when attained is most fruitful, most helpful. With deepest reverence we say to the Master:

“Holy Master, Father, Friend, I lay myself open to Your influence. It shall flow into me to the uttermost degree in which I am capable of receiving it.”

We need not ask Him (Her) to pour it out on us, because He (She) is doing that all the time. We do not pray to the Masters to do this or that. They know very much more about it



than we do, and are already doing all that can be done; but it is on our side necessary that we should make ourselves open to it, that we should remove the barriers of self that stand in the way.

That is the old story. It must be told over and over again, because the separated self is the one great difficulty in our path—the personality first and then the individuality. That is insisted upon in *At the Feet of the Master*, and in every book that has been written on occult progress. When there is anything hindering our progress it is always the lower self which stands in the way of the Great Self.

Having visualised and realised the Master as intensely as possible, the effort must be to clear away our own barriers, to break through them and reach up to Him (Her), because He (She) is ever ready to be gracious to us, always pouring out His (Her) influence just in such measure as we are capable of receiving.

We have nothing to ask Him (Her). We have only so to deal with ourselves that His (Her) light shall shine through.

That effort will eventually lead us towards an extension of consciousness. When we succeed we shall break through into a different world, a different way of looking at everything.

Along that line is the most rapid and the most satisfactory progress, but as I have said, it is strictly for those who can take it, and for whom that happens to be the way. The person whose nature instinctively runs the other way would probably waste their time by making this effort, whereas they might make distinct progress by following that other line.



One or other of those things we ought to be trying to do, and we must not let it become vague. It has a great tendency to become vague; and it is odd that although we believe that all these advancements are within reach, we are never so much astonished as when anything happens, and we do really get any result. That ought not to be so. It is no doubt a touching example of our humility, but there is a humility that sometimes actually hinders progress.

We may feel so sure that we are far away from the possibility of doing anything, that we stand in our own light. It is better, so far as may be, with humble confidence (humble unquestionably, but still confidence) to take the line: "Others have succeeded in this. I intend to succeed, and I am going to persevere until I do".

Then we certainly shall succeed. It may not be immediately, but "immediately" from our point of view matters very little really, so long as we do the thing; and every human being can do it; it is only a question of the time it may happen to take, and the time is well spent anyhow.

I think if we remember these ideas it may help us to make more use of the time set apart for meditation. The natural tendency of the age generally is towards vagueness and looseness of thought.

Some people just relapse into what is called "feeling good" for a few minutes. Better to feel good than to feel bad, of course; but still it is not quite all that is meant.

Many people meditate daily alone, and obtain great help by so doing; but nevertheless there are even greater



possibilities of result when a group of people concentrate their minds on the one thing.

That sets up a strain in the physical ether as well as in the astral and mental worlds, and it is a twist in the direction which we desire.

For once, just for the time of that group meditation, instead of having to fight against our surroundings (which we always have to do practically, everywhere else) we find them actually helpful. That is to say, they ought to be so, if all present succeed in holding their minds from wandering, and that of course they must try to do, not only for their own sakes but for the sake of their comrades in the effort.

A wandering mind in such a group constitutes a break in the current. Instead of having a huge mass of thought moving in one mighty flood, we should in that case have little eddies in it, such as are made by rocks or snags in a river which deflect the water. Anyone who allows their mind to wander is thereby making things not quite so easy for those around them.

A number of people all sending their thought in the same direction offers a fine opportunity for progress if the direction is a good one; but it rarely happens in ordinary life. When it does occur it means great possibilities.

A striking instance, which I have described before, arises in my mind as apposite. I had the privilege of being present at the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

It was one of the most wonderful manifestations in the way of occult force that I ever saw. Just for a few moments, as the Queen's carriage passed, thousands of people were swept



into one line of thought, and it was a very good line, of intense love and loyalty. It was a sight from the inner side which is rarely equalled.

Before that came; we had to wait a long time for the procession. Thousands and thousands of people who were within sight had each their own set of thoughts. I happened to be in the heart of the city of London, where those present were mostly commercial or professional men with their wives.

The men were chiefly occupied in calculations, and their heads were surrounded by figures, just like a swarm of bees flying round them all the time. The various ladies were thinking about one another's dresses and about domestic affairs of all sorts. There was no unity, as is always the case with any crowd anywhere.

When the procession came along, the people were awakened, and by degrees began to take a stronger and stronger interest in it, and the culmination arrived when the Queen herself passed.

For a few minutes all those thousands were thinking and feeling alike. The effect was quite prodigious even on the physical plane, though they did not know why. Here were hard city men, absolutely with tears in their eyes, shaking each other by the hand; while practically all the ladies were weeping unrestrainedly.

The effect was amazing in those few minutes of utter exaltation. Perhaps for the first time in their lives they all of them simultaneously forgot themselves altogether, and were lifted right out of themselves by a high emotion. Now that was an opportunity.



In such moments as that, if the excitement is religious, wholesale conversions take place—tremendous temporary upliftments of the soul. I daresay those people afterwards wondered why they had been so shaken. It was exceedingly good for them, but it is rarely that such an opportunity comes.

We make a little current something like that on a small scale by our group meditation. We are perhaps only a score or so instead of many thousands, but in its way such a meeting is a real opportunity; if we could take better advantage of it we should make more rapid progress, we should feel ourselves more greatly helped.

It is a great assistance if in a group there are a few who are capable of rising to high levels. It is a great uplift that we should be for a few moments in the presence of thought on a higher plane. It is one of the advantages that we gain from our association, from “the assembling of ourselves together” for such work as this.

Collective meditation, such as some Lodges have at the public lectures for a mixed crowd, is frankly not of much use. It just keeps the audience quiet for a few moments, but it does little more, because the average person does not know how to think at all.

The unfolding of the higher consciousness is one of the possibilities which lie open to humanity at the stage which it has now reached. Therefore it is to a greater or less extent open to every one of us and it is well worth our while to make some attempt in that direction, for the addition to our usefulness which success would bring is almost incalculable.



That the greatest caution must be exercised is true, for the pitfalls are many; nothing should be undertaken without the advice and supervision of a trained psychic.

But the world needs helpers possessed of these powers, and it is among Theosophical students that we may reasonably expect to find them.

It is hardly necessary to point out how advantageous to our work is the ability to communicate at will with the Angels and with the so-called dead, and the force and precision which definite experience of the higher life will give to our teaching.

The knowledge gained is of the greatest comfort to one who acquires it, for it removes for ever from their life all doubt and all sorrow; yet each should strive for that transcendent wisdom not for his own sake, but that they may render themselves more extensively serviceable to their fellow creatures, for that is the aim of all true and faithful brethren throughout the world.

