

A PATHWAY of SELF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MEDITATION.

John Pater

In the West, where lifestyles have dramatically changed from the cloistered and protected environments of the East and of the early Church, a system of self development and meditation which can encompass the rigours of daily life is called for.

However, on a fruitful on pathway of meditation and self-development **there are no shortcuts** for a safe passage and a lot of hard self-initiated effort, in freedom, is required.

WHY MEDITATE? Maybe a better way to ask this question is - why undertake a pathway of self-development, which includes meditation as a necessary part of the process, since meditation by itself can actually be harmful if some of its effects are not balanced out by other harmonising exercises.

One of the major impulses in starting and continuing a pathway of self-development is to concisely understand why one is undertaking it. There are many valid reasons given but if the reason for one's meditation doesn't have its basis beyond oneself then it will be difficult to maintain a regular practice of it over a long period of time, which is necessary, if it is to have a fruitful effect.

As soon as we start reading or listening to a lecture on spiritual matters, let alone the conscious practice of self-development, our journey of self-development has begun both in its positive aspects and the negative aspects. The positive aspects involve the subtle development of spiritual sense organs, which lie dormant before our journey begins. At the same time the negative aspects of spiritual development appear which can include heightened egoism, arrogance, cold self-seeking wisdom or submissive acceptance. Its not that the forces behind theses negative traits are bad in themselves but these forces need to be brought under control and be used as tools of spiritual perception.

I'd like to share one of the reasons, which spurs me onto the regular practice of the meditative exercises.

For many years a central question dwelt within me. I asked myself why was there so much conflict and negativity within the Anthroposophical movement? I also pondered as to why Anthroposophy had not become a major force within western civilisation as Rudolf Steiner had hoped for? The normal answer that the adversarial forces of progressive evolution operated the strongest against such a noble stream, as anthroposophy didn't seem to be the right answer for me. Eventually I received the answer that the Anthroposophical Movement was cursed. This rather baffled me until I substituted the words 'had negative group karma' for 'was cursed' and that this negative group karma came to expression in the form conflicts, arrogance, egotism whereby initiatives were and are difficult to achieve. Obviously this lead me to the further question as to why these negative traits could make their appearance as anthroposophy has conceptually one of the best systems of self development that I've come across.

A view, which is commonly expressed today, is that if there is intense research being undertaken then the outside world will be attracted to Anthroposophy. I'm not sure that this fully applies as I have seen fantastic research being undertaken from individuals but their arrogance and/or egoism has had the effect of putting people off and caused social disharmony. Maybe intense research coupled with a loving nature

to one's fellow human beings wrought by a dedicated pathway self-developmental work could produce better results

Another view that is held is that the conflict that is occurring within the Anthroposophical movement is a necessary outcome of the working through of individual karma. Whilst this is most likely correct it does not appear very healthy, as it has had the effect of reducing the effectiveness of the Anthroposophical movement where the energy has been largely dissipated within the resolution of the conflicts thereby not achieving what Rudolf Steiner had hoped for the Anthroposophical movement as a positive and open influence in world affairs at the beginning of this century. There are two ways that one can work through one's karma with others. Firstly do nothing and through pain, suffering and conflicts it will be resolved to the next stage or alternatively by one consciously taking on an arduous pathway of self development one will be able to meet the other in equanimity and forgiveness and in this way there will be the energy to meet the outside world. The second way is not easy but it can be done.

In term's of the negative group karma which I have mentioned it manifests itself in the form of an **Occult clouding of the will** whereby many within the Anthroposophical movement will extol the virtues of meditation and supplementary exercises and will even try to teach these exercises but they are not able to undertake them effectively and on a regular basis but this is actually not really noticed or not deemed to be important even though the Anthroposophical movement has a consistent history of conflicts for the past eighty years.

Gavin Tang in a lecture in Sydney said that this present age of Consciousness soul is the age of the **example** and no loner the age of persuasion as was appropriate for the Intellectual Soul age, hence for me it seems that the current age requires that a number of individuals, **in full freedom**, to take up a balanced pathway of self-development and meditation on a regular basis if Anthroposophical movement is to proceed in a healthy manner. This is on of the main reasons for undertaken regular mediative exercises

Some of the various reasons that have been given for undertaking meditation are as follows and all of which have some validity: -

- To know oneself
- To know of a spiritual world
- To confirm what spiritual seers have said
- To develop so as to see objectively into the spiritual world
- To bring down knowledge from the spiritual world which can be used on the physical plane.
- To assist in furthering man's evolution and one's own evolution
- To raise oneself to a higher stage of human capacity for knowledge.
- To unite oneself with the Higher Self
- To become a 'better' person
- To heal oneself eg Stress control
- To respond effectively to the challenges of life
- As a necessity for this stage of evolution for our survival
- So as to develop a strong self, which can exist within the spiritual world in full consciousness
- **To become Human**
- A combination of the above and so on.

WHAT IS MEDITATION? The word Meditation has

been associated with numerous activities involving an individual in certain practices, which can bring that individual into another state of awareness. Included in meditative practices have been concentration, contemplation and even prayer. Some views of what meditation is, include: -

- Repeating and focusing on a mantra, which has been given by a guru/teacher, that has no/has meaning to the individual.
- Focusing one's attention on the breath or another area of the body eg pineal gland.
- Consciously immersing oneself in:-

Symbols

Religious/spiritual verses

Higher feelings eg love

Thoughts of higher principles

On an illness (for healing purposes)

Aspects of nature

Mystical sayings

Pictures

Colour

- Immersing oneself in the silence to the exclusion of the senses.
- Surrendering oneself to thoughts that have eternal worth.
- A combination of the above, and so on.

The above should be accompanied by intense conscious willing/feelings about the subject at hand.

There are many meditative practices and techniques-, all of which work in some fashion or other - a Western approach uses thinking in the build up of the meditative subject. Today, each individual is now required to take full responsibility for his/her actions and hence it's imperative that the meditative techniques and their effects **should be understood** by the individual undertaking them. In one sense, each type of meditation can be said to have some validity if used in the appropriate manner. Every epoch must follow its own appropriate path of development and meditation, which is suited to the evolutionary state of individuals of that day. Today, taking self-responsibility is appropriate for a Western individual especially as there are no readily accessible, suitable ashram or monastic environments to which one can withdraw months at a time. In the past the mantras based on sound were effective meditative techniques. Today words and symbols filled with meaning and content are more appropriate for western individuals (western in character, not birth) as these have the effect of opening up the 'charkras' in a reverse 'kundalini' awakening, i.e from the head down. The awakening of normal kundalini is extremely dangerous and is best avoided unless one has an experienced teacher to guide one.

One method of meditation is that of concentrated, conscious attention and awareness, in an act of freedom, over a period of time on a theme, object, symbol, together with the associated feelings where the individual becomes one with the theme being meditated upon after the object has been thoroughly thought upon. All external sense impressions and internal non-self initiated thoughts should be excluded (in as much as this is possible). This is a difficult but necessary state to achieve.

When? It is important to meditate daily, even if for only five minutes, at the same time every day. The morning is preferably the best time, as soon as one awakens. Get up, wash one's face, rinse one's mouth etc, stretch, and if possible go outside and observe and 'greet' the morning so as to settle one's thoughts and to absorb some of the healing effects of the dawn and quietly place oneself into a state of reverence for the divine and the world. If the morning is not possible, then in the evening. If a daily rhythm is not possible then whenever possible, although this does not take advantage of the beneficent effects of rhythm. For those who are more committed then twice a day - morning and evening, with the morning session being the main one. Meditation should always go hand in hand with balancing and observation exercises.

Where? Find the same quiet spot where there will be minimum interruptions. For a Westerner, sitting on a comfortable chair with a good straight back support is recommended. (Crossing one's legs usually proves difficult). A place where there isn't passing people traffic, where one won't be disturbed.

BALANCE OF LIFE - Problems Encountered.

By taking up a spiritual path an individual will inevitably increase his abilities to act in the world. If one does not pay special conscious heed, in deed and thought, to the moral aspects of one's development then, even though one can perform much good, one invariably can also leave a trail of destruction and then can blame others for the problems that occur. Unfortunately *many individuals within spiritual organisations do not follow a balanced pathway of spiritual development* and the destructiveness of this can be easily seen. Undertaking only the meditative side can be problematical. In our normal everyday life we are supported by countless spiritual beings of which we are not aware. Once we choose a pathway of self-development some of the support we had received from the spiritual world is now withdrawn so that we can develop in freedom. We are then required to take over these functions otherwise we can be exposed to negative influences which can manifest as moral defects, **over sensitivity, egotism, desire for power, intolerant righteous towards one's fellow human beings, increased sensuality** etc. **EGOTISM** seems to be the predominant trait that is first encountered and then it is easy to fall into self-denial about the other negative qualities that follow.

On the other hand, for especially sensitive and/or insufficiently prepared individuals **meditation may throw them into a realm within which they are unable to cope**. Hence it is important that right judgement about oneself and one's experiences can be applied and appropriate actions are undertaken. Thus, deep meditative practice may be best avoided until one has built up sufficient strength through appropriate reading, subsidiary exercises, observation exercises and contemplation exercises. Test - If one can't read a book such as *Esoteric Science -An Outline* (-too hard, too intellectual, too boring, not enough time, too long, too philosophical etc) then one may be a candidate for these type of problems. The ability to read, with understanding such material is a good test of one's readiness to cope with the extra responsibilities that will be encountered on a pathway of meditation.

Supplementary Exercises. - Whilst these are absolutely essential in the undertaking a pathway of self-development in a western environment. Space precludes any elaboration (other than the headings) and the reader is directed to the suggested reading material for elaboration.

Control of Thinking -
Control willing -
Equanimity -
Positivity -
Right Judgement or Impartially -
Balance of the above or forgiveness

Review Of The Day - at the end of the day review the day's events as though one were observing another person, especially the painful moments, but in a backward manner - initially for 5 minutes a day.

Right Reading - this is important, as each individual is required to take full responsibility for his/her actions. There is sufficient information available for one to become conversant in all aspects of the meditative pathway that he/she undertakes. It is suggested that twenty minutes a day be set aside for this. Previously there was a necessity of finding a spiritual teacher or guru to guide one along the pathway of self-development. Today this no longer seems possible. However, as humankind has evolved appropriate written works, together with human discernment can substitute for a teacher/guru. The gaining of true spiritual concepts about ourselves, the world, spiritual experiences etc will provide great assistance in gaining the strength in being able to rightly bear and understand our new experiences.

WORKING WITHIN A GROUP. Working with others in a sympathetic group situation and the sharing of ones experiences is of great benefit, in fact it is usually essential, in gaining the inspiration and the will to continue the practice in this direction especially in difficult life situations and just upon starting on the pathway. The group must preserve the integrity and freedom of each of the participants