

Many treasures await those of you who choose to read **K.** from descriptions of the Earth as a living organism to intricate patterns of Chakric interaction. My journey through **K.** has been a serious one of sorting through many new words and constructs - some I found helpful and beautiful and, to be fair to potential readers, some I found confusing, wordy, preachy and dry. I am thankful to Mary for her efforts to explain her understanding. She has also given me a few leads to go on - attractive directions to continue growing (such as Alice Bailey's **Esoteric Healing** and **Esoteric Psychology**). As Mary says: "This is the goal of yogas of enlightenment - to know at least at the end of the journey what it has all been about". I surely have not reached the end of my journey.

Susannah Wright:

MEDITATION: Delights and Dangers

"From the Unreal lead me to the Real; from Darkness lead me to the Light; from Death lead me to Immortality".

Those lines from the Upanishads are the words with which I used to begin my morning meditation period. At the time I had little understanding of what I asked, but the heart unerringly seeks what it needs long before the intellect acquires understanding.

After being in therapy for a year, and having recently read Janov's "Primal Scream", I want to write a few words about the relationship between meditation and therapy. I write from the perspective of the client, without the objectivity of the therapist, from my own experience of the compatibility of primal therapy and meditation.

When I speak of meditation I refer to something which, for me as a christian, is Christ centred. For me it is a means of getting in touch with a space, or still point, at the centre of my being from which flows the knowledge that I am, and the awareness of myself as part of the outpouring of the great "I AM" that some of us call God. Such centering down, as I believe the Quakers call it, is achieved by simple relaxation techniques of which there are many. The body, mind and emotions are put to rest (but not to sleep) and the attention then focussed on a object, a mental picture, a mantra or simply the rhythm of breathing, in the awareness of resting in the Be-ing of God. Sometimes the concept of light is used - the Christ aspect of

God being associated with the illumination of the Way by God in man. Awareness of the inter-relatedness of all people may enter at this point in an intercessory openness to the needs of others and a commitment to being alongside those in our care. The meditation is ended with a conscious closing down of the centre and commitment to what follows with full attention.

Janov's claim that meditation is anti-primal echoes in the therapeutic context the complaint made by others that to meditate is to escape from reality, that seeking stillness is a denial of the God who is to be found in engagement with people and situations all around us.

As a child I looked to the church for substitute home and parenting, and in my teens I still expected God to rescue me from the rising tide within that threatened disaster. Married and with a family, I identified with all that the church taught, yet could not find the magic "how" - the connection between the raging torrent within and the answers promised in God. Like most people I know I began to practise meditation in the hope of finding healing of my pain, relief from the struggle and conflict. Experience of the more formal traditions of prayer had only seemed to increase my sense of isolation. Meditation did at least seem to earth me in myself as and where I was and opened up the possibility of space within-space in which I could grow and God could grow in me. My own developing intuition that these were one and the same was joyfully affirmed in the knowledge that the more I went into myself the closer I came to God.

The immediate benefits were numerous and pleasant: a greater ability to relax, a more focussed existence capable of fuller attention to the present moment and a sense that I had stopped chasing something - that the something would come to me in the depths of the stillness. But I had asked for healing, and I soon discovered that growth to wholeness did not mean playing for ever on nursery slopes in the sunshine. The danger with some meditative practice I believe is that the spin-offs enjoyed in the early days as a result of letting go can become ends in themselves. Ultimately this can only lead to a dead end, a cul-de-sac, which becomes stale and is cast aside in favour of some new pass-time. I have on occasions sat through guided fantasies presented as meditation which could best be described as exercises in feeling pleasant things in pleasant places! Whether Christian or not the practice of meditation should, in my view, be a growth point resulting in lives that are more attuned to their energy source, more rhythmically at one with the ebb and flow of creation. This means becoming more, not less, aware of the things that alienate and isolate us from ourselves and from one another. Tranquility and tension-

release are to be welcomed and enjoyed when they come our way, but to seek to clothe ourselves in them as an outer garment covering up all the scars by means of the imagination is to fulfil Janov's gloomiest assessment of the value of meditation in healing.

My own experience, after enjoying the first fruits mentioned above for a time, was to have the lid taken off a kind of internal "Pandora's box" and to have to face once more the emotional problems that I believed I had previously overcome. In the absence of a wise counsellor I was overwhelmed and finally had a nervous breakdown. My second phase of meditation coincided with a period of sound spiritual/emotional counselling, and a slow climb towards health began at last. I enjoyed a degree of vitality and fulfilment hitherto unknown. Paradoxically the more I felt myself unfold and the more integrated life became, the more aware I was of the bits that refused to integrate, the parts that blocked the unfolding. My own deepening sense of what I call a contemplative dimension (i.e. the ability to give the whole of one's attention to BE with) that I had found in meditation and saw mirrored in the whole of life, the medium of growth and healing, led me eventually to seek further help with the pain that I knew had always been part of me. Coming into therapy was for me a natural progression along the meditative path. The disciplines of detachment and becoming still in order to create a clear pool of reflection at the still centre that had given me a new sense of self-worth enabled me to get in touch with the hurt shut-down parts of me. And so I have entered a third phase in meditation. The quiet times at the start of the day, far from being serenely recollected, are often flooded with memories, insights and pain. Sometimes this had led into primals; at other times I have felt like the snow storm in an inverted paper weight. Having said that, the discipline and intention have seemed important as a centering context for the work I was doing. I had acquired the habit of detaching from thoughts and feelings in a quiet body in order to be with **me**, and with my source, in a totally accepting way free from guilt and judgement of the thoughts and feelings that issued forth from that **me**. That habit helped me now to accept the sick child that was emerging in all her mess and to be with her as much as she needed. Understanding came slowly, but I knew from my centre how to stay with her grief and rage that at times terrified and overwhelmed. The practice of letting go and relaxing into the flow of love that sustains and energises myself and my world gave me reassurance that I had a context that existed before my conception and continues beyond my death. It provided security when it felt as though my whole being was blowing apart. As my awareness of pain became increasingly primal, the contemplative discipline of paying attention to the present moment with the whole

of one's self helped me to surrender to the upsurge of feeling even when it terrified me. Equally, at times when the demands and responsibilities of home were more urgent than those of my pain, the same discipline helped me to assess the situation, to consciously put aside the pain for a time and give myself to the situation in hand with full attention.

Perhaps in the therapeutically favourable conditions from which Janov worked, this last observation would seem delaying and obstructive. For those like myself whose therapy, with all its traumatic upheaval, has to be contained among numerous other pressing responsibilities, often in secret, the ability to put the pain away even for a short time and at little distance, is essential, I believe, to the survival of oneself and those nearest and dearest. The point being that it is a conscious putting away and not a splitting off in the truly neurotic sense.

Leboyer in his "Birth Without Violence" shows us in language and pictures of exquisite beauty the paradox that is contemplation: the finding of the still point at the centre of activity where we touch what truly IS and stay with it until our knowledge of it leads us to re-engage in activity - the activity that is the process of creation, the dance of life, the coming to birth and to being of the new. Seen and practised thus, contemplative meditation, rather than becoming part of the neurotic pattern, can truly lead from the Unreal to the Real.

