

NEW BOOKLET TRACT: Meditation! Pathway to Wellness or Doorway to the Occult?

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Meditation! Pathway to Wellness or Doorway to the Occult?

By Ray Yungen

In the West, mysticism always used to be restricted to a tiny fraction of the population (i.e., shamans, esoteric brotherhoods, and small spiritually elite groups). Never before has there been a widespread teaching of these methods to the general population. Now, mysticism pervades the Western world. How did this happen?

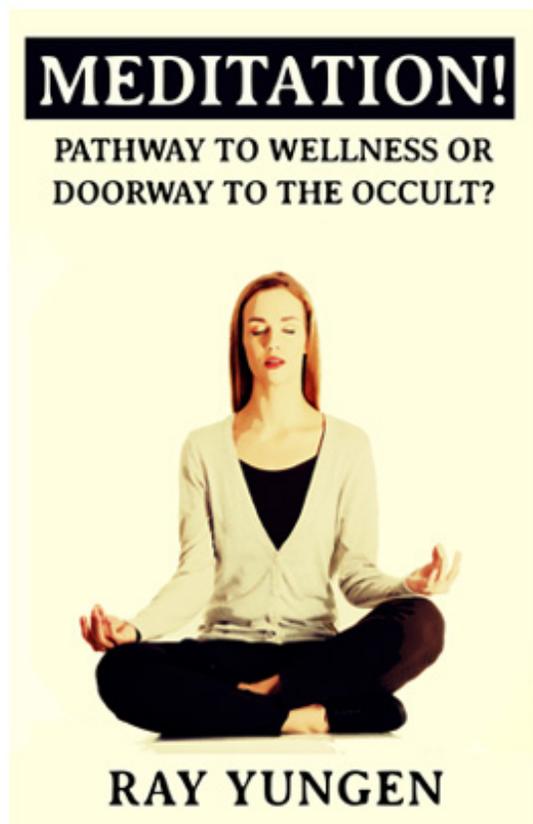
The first such book to reach a broad audience was *Creative Visualization* by Shakti Gawain. This book could rightfully be called a practical mystic's "Bible." Many people can trace their first involvement with metaphysics to this book. Since its publication in 1978, it has sold millions of copies and has influenced the fields of psychology, health, business, and athletics.

This book became so popular because it addresses such topics as creativity, career goals, relationships, better health, and simple relaxation and peacefulness. Who wouldn't want to have all this, especially if all it takes is engaging in a simple practice?

Gawain spells out very clearly what that practice entails. She teaches her readers:

Almost any form of meditation will eventually take you to an experience of yourself as source, or your higher self. . . . Eventually you will start experiencing certain moments during your meditation when there is a sort of "click" in your consciousness and you feel like things are really working; you may even experience a lot of energy flowing through you or a warm radiant glow in your body. These are signs that you are beginning to channel the energy of your higher self. 1

There were books like hers before, but those appealed to people already in the New Age subculture. This wasn't true of *Creative Visualization*. This book had just the right secular slant on something inherently spiritual. Gawain believed that one could stay a Jew, Catholic, or Protestant and still practice the teachings of the book. All you



needed to do was develop yourself, not change your religion.

Today, sales of this book and others like it have exploded in the Western world. This is not an understatement or scare-tactic conjecture. Take a look at book sales for some of the major New Age authors around today. Just the top two, Wayne Dyer and Deepak Chopra, have sold fifty million books between them. James Redfield, the author of *The Celestine Prophecy* can boast of a staggering twenty million books sold, and Neal Donald Walsch, the channeler of *Conversations with God*, a surprising seven million.

The basic message of these books and hundreds of others like them could be reduced to one simple word, a word that cries out a uniform consistent theme—meditate! That is to say, *you're not going to get anywhere in this life unless you get that "click" that Gawain spoke of earlier, and to do it, you must meditate.*

If you think the New Age movement is a colorful assortment of strange cults dressed in orange and populated by free-spirited aging hippies and assorted oddballs who are being duped by money-hungry charlatans and egocentric frauds, then think again. We are not dealing with fringe religious groups or chanting flower-children anymore but with a broad-based concerted effort to influence and restructure our whole society.

Shakti Gawain says any form of meditation will work, but what she really means is that any form of a particular type of meditation will work. She is not talking about the kind of "meditation" in which one ponders on or considers a certain topic. The type she practices and promotes involves stopping the normal flow of human thought. You can't get the "click" she speaks of unless you go all the way by emptying the mind versus simply just sitting and thinking. Merely pondering does not suffice. To meditate "successfully," you must employ a specific method which produces a void referred to by many New Age practitioners as "the silence"—or "the voice of the silence."

But how does one engage in the actual practice of New Age meditation? For starters, one begins by repeating a single word or short phrase for a minimum of twenty minutes (once a meditator is good at meditating, he can even shorten that time). But if for some reason, the meditator finds himself given to active thought again, he must revert back to repeating that same word or phrase. This word or phrase is what is referred to as "the mantra." A similar method involves focusing on the breath for the same amount of time. Yet another method, commonly found in Shamanic cultures, incorporates the use of both chanting and drumming. Alongside of this, there exists an even more subtle "Christian" form of meditation, which employs the use of biblical phrases, a single word such as "Jesus," and spiritual-sounding phrases such as "Maranatha," "Abba Father," "You are my Lord," and "Here I Am."

Meditation has always been the precursor to mysticism, and this especially applies to the underpinnings of far-eastern religions in particular (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism). We are all familiar with the stereotype of the Hindu guru or the Buddhist monk depicted in the lotus position, but this stereotype no longer is reflective of what meditation has come to mean in our post-modern or pseudo-modern society.

Meditation as we know it to be now has literally busted out from its foundational origins into a wide array of options and expressions. Undoubtedly, the most common way in which most encounter meditation is within the therapeutic realm. Many are incredulous when they discover meditation is not just for stress reduction but possesses a definite mystical component, irrespective of one's intent. We will now examine in more depth the existing evidence which bears witness to this.

Stress is believed to be one of the leading causes of illness in America today. Millions of people suffer from disorders such as headaches, insomnia, nerves, and stomach problems because of excessive stress in their lives. In response to this situation, an army of practitioners have come forth to teach *relaxation skills* and *stress reduction techniques* to the afflicted millions. A newspaper article proclaims:

Once a practice that appealed mostly to mystics and occult followers, meditation now is reaching the USA's mainstream. . . . The medical establishment now recognizes the value of meditation and other

Does all meditation lead to New Age mysticism? Can a person meditate *without* having a metaphysical motive? Can it be done just to relax and get rid of tension without any *spiritual* side effects? These are legitimate questions. Suppose a company brings in a *stress specialist* to give a seminar and all employees are required to attend. What if a doctor prescribes meditation to relieve migraine headaches? Say an aerobics instructor has participants of the class lie on their backs, close their eyes, and do breathing exercises. Is there such a thing as neutral meditation?

I once asked John Klimo (who wrote what has been called the definitive book on channeling) if the millions of people meditating for stress reduction could become *transformed* as a result. His response almost sent me through the ceiling! "Most certainly," he replied with marked enthusiasm. Being a channeler himself, he viewed the possibility of this with great expectation.

His optimism was well-founded. When the meditation techniques used in stress reduction are compared to the meditation used in New Age spirituality, it is clear to see they are basically the same. Both use either the breathing or mantra method to still the mind. A blank state of mind is all that is necessary for contact to occur.

Some well-known channelers became so because meditation catapulted them into the world of spirit entities. Jach Pursel, who channels the immensely popular "Lazaris," explains how this *entity* first came to him:

Early evening. Sitting on the bed, plumped up in pillows, I am preparing to meditate (ha!). I am going to seek insight (ha!) to help guide our lives. . . . Two hours later, Peny [his wife] didn't hear my sheepish apology for having dozed off. She was excitedly tumbling over words trying to tell me that an entity had spoken through me. She thought I had fallen asleep again, too. This time, however, my head didn't bob, so she waited. Some minutes passed, and then a deep, resonant voice began where mine had left off. The answers, however, were powerful, not of the caliber of mine. She listened. She wrote as fast as she could. . . .

The entity explained that he was Lazaris! . . . Lazaris requested two weeks of our time to finalize the necessary adjustments so he could "channel" through me. He provided Peny with a simple, but detailed, method I should use to enter trance more easily. He assured her that this experience would never be detrimental, that although he had neither a body nor time, he appreciated that we did, and he would never abuse either.³

Kevin Ryerson (featured in Shirley MacLaine's book and television movie *Out on a Limb*) also got into channeling by accident. He joined a meditation group hoping he could tap into some inner reservoir of creativity just as many in the business world are now doing. He relates:

When I entered this group, I had no intention or expectation of becoming a trance medium. But after six months, in the course of one of our sessions, I entered into a "spontaneous channeling state," as I refer to it now.⁴

John Randolph Price, founder of the Quartus Foundation and instigator of the World Healing Day Meditation, also became involved in metaphysics through this route. He reveals:

| *Back when I was in the business world, the American Management Association put out a little book*

on meditation, which indicated that meditation was a way to attain peace of mind and reduce stress in a corporate environment. So I decided I'd try it. . . . I learned that I could go into meditation as a human being, and within a matter of minutes, have transcended my sense of humanness. I discovered how to come into a new sphere of consciousness. Consciousness actually shifts, and you move into a realm you may not have even known existed.⁵

So, can meditation be done without potential spiritual side effects? For those who still say yes, give ear to the following:

In alpha [meditative state] the mind opens up to nonordinary forms of communication, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition . . . In alpha the rational filters that process ordinary reality are weakened or removed, and the mind is receptive to nonordinary realities. (emphasis mine)⁶

You must be willing to slow down, to stop and just be quiet. It is into this quiet space [meditation], not the noisy one, that Spirit enters. Make a sacred space for your Higher Self to enter by being silent and willing to listen, willing to simply BE. This attracts your superconscious essence like a magnet.⁷

First and foremost, almost all mediums agree on the significance and the importance of regular daily meditation. This single practice, above all others, is no doubt the very shaft that drives the wheel of development.⁸

Even though meditation can bring you seeming peace of mind and improved health, I believe it is evident, by the accounts just given, that those who engage in it may find themselves in similar circumstances. According to New Ager Betty Bethards, "Meditation can, and does, change your life because it changes you."⁹ Ken Wilber, another New Age writer and expert in the field of higher consciousness, aptly puts it:

If you're doing meditation correctly, you're in for some very rough and frightening times. Meditation as a relaxation response is a joke.¹⁰

I understand the bizarre implications of what I am trying to convey and certainly can see where a skeptic might laugh at such accusations. But evidence to the contrary is abundant. In 1996, *Time* magazine actually did an article on just such a reality. The article called "Ambushed by Spirituality" was written by a Hollywood studio executive and producer who described himself as "the last guy you'd figure would go spiritual on you."¹¹ Marty Kaplin explained how he "stumbled" onto "meditation" to keep from grinding his teeth when he became stressed. The following account backs up my bold assertion:

I got more from mind-body medicine than I bargained for. I got religion. . . . The spirituality of it ambushed me. Unwittingly, I was engaging in a practice [meditation] that has been at the heart of religious mysticism for millenniums. . . . Now I know there is a consciousness that transcends science, a consciousness toward which our species is sputteringly evolving.¹²

Nathaniel Mead, another authority that was honest and open about the *side effects* of simple meditation practice, echoed what Ken Wilber warned about. In a natural health magazine, Mead states:

One source of meditation problems comes from the attempt to turn a powerful, psychological technique into a simple physical therapy. When a meditator is led to expect stress reduction and instead comes face to face with his true self, the result can be anything but relaxing. 13

But in spite of the dangers and risks, meditation continues to be promoted by those in the alternative health profession. The prestigious and highly respected Mayo Clinic has put its stamp of approval on meditation as well in its book *The Mayo Clinic Book of Alternative Medicine*. The book gives the green light by stating:

Today many people use meditation for health and wellness purposes. In meditation, a person focuses attention on his or her breathing, or on repeating a word, phrase or sound in order to suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupies the conscious mind. . . . Meditation may be used to treat a number of problems, including anxiety, pain, depression, stress and insomnia. 14

The book then devotes an entire page with step-by-step instructions on how to meditate. These instructions are the exact same type of meditation you have been reading about in this booklet (i.e., focus on the breath and repetition of words and phrases). The Mayo Clinic's acceptance of Eastern-style meditation is an excellent barometer for how widespread meditation has become in respectable and mainstream society. And with the explosion of stress and anxiety in Western culture and the promotion of meditative techniques by such reputable institutions as the Mayo Clinic, this will neutralize any opposition people may have to meditation based on the perception of it being unorthodox. In essence, meditation is now for the masses!

Meditation has found its way to the masses through many routes—a primary one of which pertains to physical fitness in the form of Yoga. The very word “Yoga” means union with the god of Hinduism, namely Brahman. Meditation is the vehicle by which to accomplish this union. Vedic, which is Hindu literature, is filled with references to Yoga in this context. Although, in America, Yoga has erroneously been looked upon as just a series of simple stretching exercises, the mystical aspects are clearly evident if one takes the time to look into the matter more deeply. A considerably high percentage of those who are drawn to Yoga, roughly thirty percent, delve into the religious aspects of Yoga eventually. Yoga's popularity is to spirituality, what a gateway drug is to harder drugs; and it has laid the groundwork for an acceptance of meditation that wouldn't otherwise exist.

In recent years, a type of meditation known as mindfulness has made a surprising showing. Based on current trends, it has the potential to eclipse even Yoga in popularity. You will now find it everywhere that people are seeking therapeutic approaches to ailments or disorders. True to its Buddhist roots, mindfulness involves focusing on the breath to stop the normal flow of thought. In effect, it acts the same way as a mantra; and as with Yoga, it is presented as something to cure society's ills.

You will recall my mention of Marty Caplan who said he was ambushed by spirituality. This means there was someone or something that did the ambushing. The apostle Paul identifies these ambushers when he writes:

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (1 Corinthians 10:20)

These religions of which Paul speaks are the source of the modern meditation movement. It is not hard to find examples of this in various accounts of meditative experiences.

Lori Cabot, in her book *Power of the Witch*, actually backs up the apostle Paul's assertion, but instead of calling them devils, she refers to them as “spirit helpers.” In her chapter on meditation (which she refers to as alpha—the

brain waves level when one is in a meditative state), she makes the following recommendation:

Establish a reciprocal relationship with your spirit helpers from the start. Be aware of how you fit into their mission and purpose, and do your best to be a partner or companion to your spirit guides. 15

In the Western world today, meditation has become a kind of cure-all for all manner of mental and physical problems, for both young and old alike. Most people in the modern world see meditation as more of a therapeutic practice than a spiritual one. But as I've illustrated in this booklet, intent is not the main factor in determining the outcome of meditation practice. Before you or a loved one accepts the premise that meditation is a pathway to wellness, please give the contents of this booklet your most serious consideration.

For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. (Proverbs 8:11)

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Endnotes:

1. Shakti Gawain, *Creative Visualization* (Novato, CA: Nataraj Publishing, 1983, 9th Printing, p. 57.
2. *USA Weekend* Sunday Supplement, July 24-26, 1987, p. 12
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4. Mark Vaz, "The Many Faces of Keven Ryerson" (*Yoga Journal*, July/August 1986), p. 28.
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10. "The Pundit of Transpersonal Psychology" (*Yoga Journal*, September/October 1987), p. 43.
11. Marty Kaplan, "Ambushed by Spirituality" (*Time* magazine, June 24, 1996, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,984754,00.html>).
12. Ibid.
13. Andrea Honebrick, "Meditation: Hazardous to your health?" (*Utne Reader*, March/April 1994), citing Nathaniel Mead (*Natural Health*, November/December 1993, taken from the Transcendental Meditation Ex-Members Support Group, TM-EX Newsletter at <http://minet.org/news94sm.dtp.0.html>).
14. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, *Mayo Clinic Book of Alternative Medicine* (Time, Inc., Home Entertainment Books, 2007), p. 90.
15. Lori Cabot, *Power of the Witch* (New York, NY: Bantam Doubleday, 1989), p. 198.

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