

**A**fter the stress and shock of the sudden awakening to the fundamental error of separateness, after the lightning-flash of true knowledge has toppled the crown off the Tower of Common-sense, as shown in Key 16, there comes a period of calm and gradual growth. In the second stage of unfoldment, considered in the preceding lesson, there is a sudden and painful overthrow of the false wisdom of the world, a momentary but never-to-be-forgotten glimpse of reality, a quick insight into the absolute unity of life. In the third stage, this conception of the Oneness of All begins gradually to develop.

What happens during this development, and the specific activities involved therein, we may discover from the 17th Key of Tarot. As you will remember, this picture develops the esoteric meaning of the Hebrew letter Tzaddi, named "the fish-hook." To this letter the function of meditation is assigned. Astrologically it corresponds to the zodiacal sign Aquarius, the sign of the Man, ruled by Saturn.

Let us begin with this last detail. In Tarot, Saturn is the 21st Key, The World, symbol of cosmic consciousness. As in mythology the god Saturn was said to eat his children, so in occult psychology we find that cosmic consciousness, when it becomes a personal experience, swallows up all its differentiations. As Saturn was the father of the gods, so is cosmic consciousness really the source of the states of consciousness that we have known up to this moment. From it spring all personal nodes of consciousness. It is not something new, even though for most of us it seems to be in the future. We are really going *back* to cosmic consciousness, even though the actual realization is as yet in the future. Hence in the books of wisdom, the methods which lead to personal realization of cosmic consciousness are often described as constituting the Path of Return.

Persons familiar with the conventional astrological interpretations of Saturn are often puzzled when they find this planet represented by the gay dancer of Key 21. Many astrologers call Saturn a "malefic" influence. It is said to be constricting, limiting, and confining. That it seems to have an unfortunate influence on worldly affairs cannot be denied, but the reason is that ordinary worldly affairs are conducted from the point-of-view of limited, three-dimensional consciousness. In short, the affairs of "this world," and the structures of politics, economics, and so on, devised by human beings to take care of those

affairs, are based upon a fundamental delusion. To men and women engaged in the vain endeavor to erect a house of life on the lonesome peak of personal isolation, the influence of Saturn is, indeed, inimical. Not so with those who have developed, and are living from, a consciousness of the unity of Being. Then the Saturnine force of restriction becomes a means for concentrating the Life–power into definite, specific, desirable and beautiful forms of expression.

This is the form of Saturnine manifestation depicted by Key 17. It is the basis of the growth and increase in wisdom characterizing the third stage of spiritual unfoldment. For meditation, “an unbroken flow of knowledge in a particular object,” as Patanjali defines it, begins with concentration, and concentration is a voluntary limitation of consciousness. That limitation is Saturnine in quality, and because its consequence is understanding, we find that Qabalists give to that aspect of the Life–power which they call Understanding the additional designation, “The Sphere of Saturn.”

Meditation is prolonged concentration. By associating it with the letter Tzaddi, Qabalists liken meditation to a fish–hook. The analogy is a good one, even in its more obvious implications, and we shall discover that its deeper meanings are also worthy of earnest consideration.

A fundamental assumption of Ageless Wisdom is that every center of the Life–power is related to the *whole* Life–power. The Many are expressions of the One. In its perfect knowledge, the One unites present, past and future. It knows the whole of its self–expression, and knows every part of the whole. Our personal consciousness is a specialization of this cosmic consciousness, and since the Life–power is omnipresent and omnipotent, there is nothing whatever to prevent it from communicating to any one of its personal centers any detail of knowledge possessed by it.

We call this an assumption, but for us it is more than that, as it has been for men and women far wiser than we, down through the ages. The Life–power knows all things, and stands ready to share whatever detail of its knowledge may be required to aid in the unfoldment of any of its personal manifestations.

While yet we are deluded by the illusion of separateness, it seems to us that we, as persons, think and feel that we have personal states of self–consciousness and subconsciousness. Except for comparatively brief periods of ecstasy, even the greatest sages experience the same illusion. They, however, know it for what it is, and are not deceived by it. Hence we find them saying, with Jesus, “Of myself I can do nothing,” yet saying also, “All that the Father hath is mine.”

This has been touched upon many times in the work you have had from TAROTA. It cannot be mentioned too often. These lessons are not the work of Paul Foster Case. Neither is your response to them something which originates in your personality. This teaching and your ap-

plication of it are actually phases of the work of the One Life–power, which uses these words and your response as means for ripening us, its centers and channels of self–expression. The illusion of personal effort persists, to be sure, but the more we know it for what it is, the less are we deluded by it. This is the meaning of that fine sentence in *Light on the Path*: “Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest, be not thou the warrior.”

We find from experience that the less personal effort we put into writing these pages, the better the result. Whenever we permit ourselves to be deluded into thinking: “This is a hard lesson to make clear; we must take great pains in preparing an outline for it,” we always find that nothing worth mentioning is accomplished. Just as soon as we remember that we draw *all things needful* from the limitless resources of the Life–power, and, acting on that knowledge, sit down to write, without any outline at all, the work is quickly finished, and from what has been said of it, is well done.

Apply the same principle when you study the lessons. If you think this study is your personal work, if you regard many of the details of esoteric knowledge as being terribly difficult, so that you must get them into your head by dint of strenuous *personal* exertion, you actually increase the difficulty. Think of your study as the work of the Life–power, which already knows every one of these details of instruction. Remind yourself that the Life–power brings you just exactly what you can use, at the very moment you need that knowledge most. You will be amazed to see what a difference this will make in your work.

This is not so much of a digression from our main theme as it may seem, because success in meditation cannot come until we realize that, just as the Life–power is the Teacher and Worker, so is the Life–power really the One who engages in meditation. We do *nothing* of ourselves. We are instruments through which, or by means of which, the Life–power does certain things. Through us it concentrates, through us it meditates, and through these activities ripens us into perfected centers of its all–embracing consciousness.

To return to the connection between the letter Tzaddi, the “fish–hook,” and what goes on during meditation, let us remind you that the inner consciousness, or subconsciousness, is often compared to a sea, and the various forms of knowledge to fishes swimming in it.

When we select some particular object for concentration, and focus the Life–power upon it in an act of attention, we are baiting a hook and dropping it into the sea of subconsciousness. As fish are attracted by bait, so are various forms of knowledge having an affinity with the object of concentration attracted to our mental fish–hook.

Suppose, for example, you concentrate on some Key of Tarot. In the beginning you may not see very much, but the longer you watch, the nearer will you come to this experience: *some detail will be em-*

*phasized in your consciousness*, and glimpses will come to you of a meaning below the surface. This is the time to land your fish, that is, to make notes of what you have glimpsed, just as soon as it is definite enough to put into words. Then cast your hook again, and watch until another thought-form takes the bait.

Remember always to maintain the mood of expectancy. Your subconsciousness is like a bay opening into the ocean of cosmic consciousness, and thought-forms from the remotest reaches of that great sea will be drawn to you by meditation. This is no theory. It is a plain statement of what many persons have experienced.

The Life-power knows just what everything means, and has perfect memory of every thought that has ever taken form through the consciousness of any human being. There is no such thing as a secret, or a lost art. Said Jesus: "Nothing is hidden that shall not be revealed." His words are sober truth, without the slightest tinge of exaggeration.

So are these words from the *Confessio* of the True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order: "Were it not an excellent thing ... so to live that neither the people which dwell beyond the Ganges, nor those which live in Peru might be able to keep their counsels from thee? So to read in one only book as to discern, understand, and remember whatsoever in all other books (which heretofore have been, are now, and hereafter shall come out) hath been, is and shall be, learned out of them?" Meditation is the process whereby these wonders are accomplished.

The name "fish-hook," moreover, is a clue to something else that happens in meditation. For human beings such as us, every kind of mental activity has physical accompaniments, and the physical changes caused by mental states are by no means limited to transformation of cells in the brain. It is to this fact that the letter-name Tzaddi refers.

You have learned that in the Hebrew alphabet the "fish" is the letter Nun, and that to this letter is assigned Scorpio, the zodiacal sign governing reproduction. As a fish-hook draws fish out of the water to be eaten, so the right practice of meditation lifts up the nerve-force which energizes the organs governed by the sign Scorpio. So lifted up, this energy becomes food for the growth of the spiritual man.

It is on this account that continence and chastity are insisted upon in all books on spiritual development. Many persons, however, exaggerate and over-emphasize these requirements. They who suppose that celibacy is necessary to right meditation are sadly in error. On the contrary, the celibate life, because it is a life of repression, is a hindrance to spiritual unfoldment. The Bible contains accounts of men who ripened into the higher consciousness, and tells us that some of these men were fathers of large families. In these days, too, there are men and women of illumination who are by no means celibate. Clean living and control are indispensable. Control, however, implies right use, not suppression.

Until seekers for light come into possession of right knowledge concerning the true functions of sex, there must needs continue to be more or less running after false doctrines. This is not the place to elaborate on this theme. Those who are ready for more light will find it if they will but fix in mind these two points: 1. The sex-force has other uses than reproduction; 2. its misuse may consist either in employing it for mere sense-pleasure, or else in repressing it, because it is supposed to be inimical to spiritual growth.

The third stage of unfoldment, though it makes use of, and modifies, the nerve-force which is ordinarily employed in the sex function, has nothing to do with that function itself. Right meditation releases and lifts up the "serpent-power," (Kundalini) stored in a nerve center at the base of the spine. In Yoga philosophy this is called the Muladhara chakra, or basic lotus. In modern physiology it is related to the sacral plexus. In these lessons it is called the Saturn center, and is thus directly connected with the planet which rules the sign Aquarius. In meditation the force stored in this center is made to rise, so that it energizes, in succession, six other centers, of which three are in the body, one in the throat, and two in the head.

These seven centers are symbolized in Key 17 by the eight-pointed white stars, surrounding the great yellow star. The latter indicates the source of the power which is modified in meditation. It is the cosmic energy, the "stellar radiance" or "astral light" mentioned by Eliphas Levi in the quotation you have read in the first lesson of *Seven Steps in Practical Occultism*. That force Levi described in terms that have enabled us to identify it with the *prana* of the Hindus and the *ruach* of the Hebrew scriptures.

Remember this always. In your work you are not trying to control some power that is your personal possession. You are simply learning how to obey certain laws of a universal energy that is none other than the Limitless Light whence all things proceed. Because the primary activity of that Light is a whirling motion, it is represented in Key 17 by an eight-rayed star, whose rays are like the eight spokes of the wheel shown in Key 10.

People of little understanding are always bringing against this teaching the accusation that by it men seek to save themselves. It is, they say, an endeavor to lift man up by his own boot-straps. This is untrue. Ageless Wisdom again and again proclaims the folly of the man who thinks he can save himself. It tells us that little by little the Life-power ripens its personal centers to the point where they become able to understand and apply the perfect law of liberty. Each person's liberation is a particular fulfillment of cosmic law, and from another point-of-view we must regard it as being a true work of "grace," as an example of the perfect self-impartment of the One Life to one of its personal aspects.

The beginning of the way of meditation is concentration upon the things of the external world, upon the facts reported through the physical senses. The mood in which this concentration is undertaken is of the greatest importance. Whatever the particular object you select, bear in mind the fact that the Life-power already knows all about it, knows it just as it is, and perceives its true relation to all other objects. Make yourself receptive to the influx of this knowledge by holding your attention to the selected object in the expectant mood, confidently believing that the Life-power will impart such of its knowledge to you as you can use and apply.

As a result of this practice you will begin to perceive the unity behind the various appearances of the external world and, the longer you meditate, the deeper and clearer will be your understanding of that which is symbolized by the Wheel of Fortune. In fact, nothing is better as an object of meditation, than one of the Tarot pictures, or some combination of these Keys, because they speak a symbolic language already known to your subconsciousness, and their message has for its central theme the unity of life.

Gradually, as you continue to practice, you will begin to identify your personal consciousness with the consciousness of nature, or the Natural Intelligence. You will begin to know that the operations of your mind are linked to that great system described by Ezekiel as being composed of "wheels within wheels." This is the beginning of your practical experience of the truth of non-separateness. When you can see that all your mental states are phases in the manifestation of the one consciousness that directs the growth of trees and grasses, the flight of birds and insects, the flow of streams and the sweep of ocean currents; when you begin to feel that through your mind and body flows the power that holds the stars in their courses, the power that flames in countless suns, then you are beginning to exchange mere intellectual assent for that true knowledge which has been called the doctrine of the heart.

With this experience comes a new understanding of what is meant by "Mother Nature," or the feminine aspect of the Life-power. That is why all three Keys of Tarot which relate to the third stage of unfoldment so emphasize that phase of the One Reality. In Keys 3 and 17 the central figure is a woman — the same woman. In Key 10, the title of the design points to the working of the same feminine power, for this is the turning wheel of *Fortuna*, the goddess whom the Greeks called *Panthea*, or she in whom all feminine deities were synthesized.

She it is who makes meditation possible. For, as we have tried to make clear throughout this lesson, it is not we who meditate, but the Life-power that through our mental activity manifests its ability to meditate. That ability is expressed mainly through the operation of the universal subconsciousness, the Eternal Feminine. She meditates

through us. Our part of the practice consists largely in getting our notion of personal activity out of the way.

For the experience of the second stage of unfoldment, the swift, sharp flash of real perception, is called Exciting Intelligence because it sets up a subconscious response that takes form in meditation. In that moment the spiritual man is conceived in the womb of Prakriti, and the third and fourth stages of unfoldment correspond in many ways to the processes of physical gestation and birth. But this theme must be reserved for another time.

Let us take what space remains to make it perfectly clear that one need give no thought whatever to the physiological processes which accompany meditation, other than to recognize what takes place. For the present this is sufficient, and we would warn you against attempting to raise the serpent-power by any sort of concentration on any part of your physical body.

By this we do not mean that good results are not obtainable by such practice. We warn you because no two persons need just the same regimen in such specialized exercises; and to know what a student requires, his teacher must be able to exercise the clear vision whereby exact knowledge of the precise condition of the seven centers may be gained. We have given no detailed instruction in the technical practice of meditation, because these lessons are intended rather to give you a clear idea of what occurs in the seven stages of unfoldment, than to serve as a course of practical instruction. They are intended to give you a bird's-eye view of the Path of Liberation, as a preparation for subsequent work which will take you over the Path itself.

Find the deeper truths for yourself, by attentive study of the three Tarot Keys on which this text is based. Tarot has a particular message for you. There is a special application of the general truths it teaches, and that application has a direct bearing on the problems of your daily life. Remind yourself continually that the Knower seated in your heart has knowledge of this special application, and has power to communicate that knowledge to you. Listen for the voice of the Teacher within. Quiet your personal consciousness, and let the special manifestation of consciousness that *you* need find expression as your personal awareness of truth. Accustom yourself to study in this way, and you shall learn more than can be found in all the books.