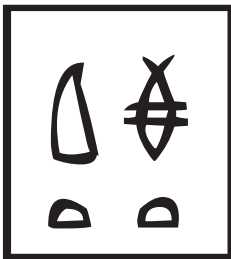
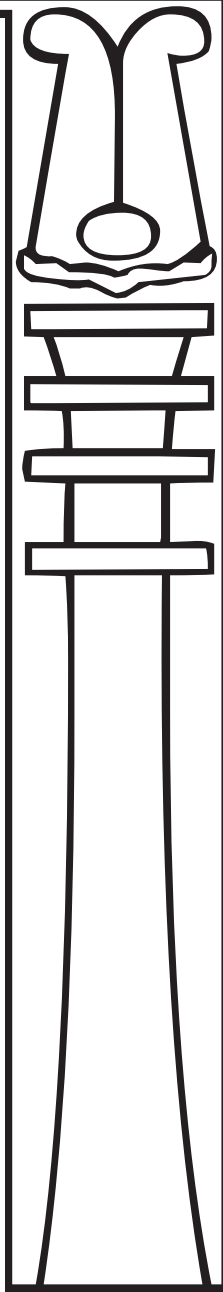


GENERAL
NOTES
ON THE
PRACTICE

BY
MARCELO
RAMOS
MOTTA





A.:A.:

www.astrumargenteum.org

GENERAL NOTES ON THE PRACTICE

The results obtained in A.·A.· practices fall into three general classes; these correspond to three main types of practitioners. We shall concentrate here on the case of Probationers, who are the outpost, so to say, of the Order.

1. The practices, although they are not abandoned throughout the Probation Year, do not yield any remarkable success; some days are better than others, and the Probationer may even deceive himself or herself that Samadhi has been attained in one of those "better" or "more inspired" days. (It is very easy to mistake good digestion, sexual stimulation, or even drug effects for Samadhi--if you have never attained Samadhi.)

The type of Probationer who corresponds to this class of "result" is automatically passed on to Neophyte, since they are deemed to have fulfilled the Task. This, of course, provided they have learned their prescribed Chapter of the Holy Books, etc. etc.

However, the Knowledge and Conversation to which they are admitted is usually merely a franker and more direct contact with the Instructor. The Instructor may remain the same, but he or she speaks to the Aspirant on a higher level--that of a Zelator talking to a Neophyte.

These people, who form the great majority of members, are likely to continue obtaining the same formal results throughout their contact with the Order, within reasonable variables. It cannot be denied that their character is strengthened by the Ordeals. It is not easy to persist in the same kind of actions throughout a year, especially if these actions are not the type of actions we would be usually inclined to perform. You might say these are men and women of Earth--karma yogis, or bhakta yogis (depending on their temperament), or combinations of both.

2. The practices, although ardently and skillfully performed, yield no result whatsoever. There is a factor infinite and unknown. Many Aspirants whom the Instructor considers remarkably talented and apt fall into this case. There is no explanation of this failure on a rational level. They simply are not "chosen ones". We incline to say that, although the lower vehicles may be intensely geared to Aspiration, there is no "sincerity", that is to say, spiritual harmony with the purposes of the A.·A.· in the higher vehicles--Neschamah, or the Higher Ruach (called Buddhi Manas by the Hindus). Such students may fall into the previous class in appearance, but they are "traitors", and will, sooner or later, go against the Regulations or disobey

orders and directives from their Superiors. It must be understood that they often are very assiduous in their practices, and may reach all kinds of technical results. Indeed, they may often seem totally superior to the previously described class. But the truth is that they are spiritually much lower than those others--at least, from the Order's point of view. In old mystic parlance, they are those who are splendid keepers of the letter--but betrayers of the spirit. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, was founded by such people, and was kept in existence by such people.

3. The highest--and rarest--type of student achieves a definite spiritual result through the practices. These can get classified either as gnani yogis (the higher octave, so to speak, of the bhakta) or as raja yogis (the higher octave, so to speak, of the karma).

This type, we repeat, is very rare. The rarity is perhaps due to the fact that psychosomas of this class seldom coalesce in the genetic stream; but at least in part, the rarity they represent may be ascribed to the courage and dedication with which they are willing to try the impossible; to their mad (repeat mad, and repeat it again!) hunger for the infinite.

Should any aspirant want to become a member of this rarest of classes (in which the writer of these lines is impudent enough to boast membership), the following notes may be useful:

The key is to "strive ever to more". The Method is Excess. But Prudence is the guide. In these matters, if you lose common-sense, that is, perspective, that is, discrimination of the interaction between the planes of consciousness, you will end in physical madness in the best of cases, or in spiritual madness in the worst. Nevertheless, this is a risk that one must run. We repeat that there is a factor infinite and unknown. The Universe is not kind. Try to understand that only man cares for man; the rest of the Universe does not give a shit, one way or the other. It is ruled by Pure Chance. The most earnest and sincere student may become a "Black Brother" merely because he or she happened to reach Samadhi at the wrong moment in time and space--not through any personal "sin" or "defect"!

Keeping this in mind, consider the following:

1. You should start very timidly. You should not think that you are Clark Kent or the Incredible Hulk, or that everything will be all right if you cry "Shazam" at the moment a mad gorilla has you by the short hairs. If you think you are capable of doing ten minutes Asana without fidgeting (for instance), start your practices with five, or even three minutes, or even ten

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seconds (one second is impractical).

2. You should **always** increase the length and strength of your efforts. The moment it becomes easy to do ten seconds of Asana, increase it to fifteen seconds. (If you find out you were too ambitious, try eleven seconds the next time; but DO NOT go back to only ten! Excess is the key--but **gradual** excess.)

3. Eventually, by this process, you will reach a level of psychic tension which can only be described by the assertion that it will be bordering madness or death. It is useless to try to fake this feeling; the result is failure. Unless you are **genuinely** scared shitless that you are either going to die or go nuts, but **persist** just the same, and **exceed** just the same, you will fail, and you will be right back at the beginning. If you persist, one of three things will happen: you will die (a heart attack, or some such), you will go insane (either in Manas or in Buddhi-Manas), or you will reach true, spiritual Initiation (miscalled Samadhi).

You cannot tell beforehand which of the three will happen. This is why it is useless to try to fake this feeling; if you can fake it at all, you will not yet have reached the level of psychic tension in which it actually happens.

A curious (in appearance, that is) phenomenon happens when you have been seriously practicing for long enough: an inner "voice" begins to tell you what you must do (or not do) in order to reach this brink of failure or success. It is often not an "alien" voice at all: it comes from you, yourself, but from a higher level of consciousness. What is happening is that, by the intensity of your aspiration and the constancy of your dedication, you finally attracted the personal intervention of the Hierophant, and this spiritual entity is communicating to the Spiritual You the information necessary to reach success in your practice--whatever the practice. And the information is relayed to your human mind--the "scribe"--coming from your own Higher Manas, usually through the Middle Pillar.

The culmination of practices done at this level of dedication and intensity is **always** the direct Knowledge and Conversation of the A... This cannot be described; besides, the variations are as many as the practitioners. The point is, you acquire spiritual experience, and at least a momentary awareness of a level of existence indescribable in human language except through the arts, mathematics (perhaps), mystical jargon, or babbling.

Yet, any attempt to communicate is recognizable as genuine by those who have been "there"--so to speak. And only by us. To any lesser level of consciousness, any attempt at interpretation ends in sophistry or dogma. This is the worst type of failure, and always to be discouraged.

Even when you fall down from that level where you achieve the Knowledge and Conversation of the A..A.. you will remember it, and thus become more useful to mankind in general, and to Aspirants in particular. And if you genuinely achieved it, you don't really "fall" from it. It is always there--or you would not be able to remember it at all. But you must work--are you not sworn to deny yourself utterly on the behalf of those under you? And thus, you come back. But you are no longer the mere human machine you were before. You are an Initiate at work.

One last point: success being achieved, excess is to be abandoned at once, since it is no longer necessary. For instance, if you were doing four hours of Pranayama a day, you fall back into one hour, or even less--maintenance level, so to speak. Athletics and true spiritual training have much in common.

The above advice applies to yoga practices and to rituals of invocation; it does not apply to related, but not as critical, practices (such as Astral Travel, for instance). Those may be abandoned, unless they become (as they sometimes do) your chosen Rite of Union or, better expressed, Theurgy: meaning, the Creation of God in yourself.

It should be needless to remark (therefore perhaps we better remark, as Crowley would say!) that the above advice applies to all humans, regardless of race, social status, or sex-- and perhaps even to other species than ours.