

Consciousness Expanding Drugs

Catalysts or Corrosives?

NEW VIEWS ON PSYCHEDELICS

by

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The purpose of this pamphlet is to discuss certain aspects of the use of psychedelics with those who became interested in drugs primarily as a means of "liberation" and consciousness expansion to aid self-discovery, self-realization or God-realization; also with those presently involved in research with psychedelics. We are all responsible for informing ourselves about what we are doing and for honestly weighing the risks against the possible gains.

An acknowledged authority on the expansion and reorientation of consciousness is Meher Baba, a non-sectarian spiritual master living in India, who is regarded by hundreds of thousands of people all over the world as the leading spiritual luminary living today. His most definitive work on this subject is God Speaks (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1955). Meher Baba's messages regarding drugs were recently printed in a leaflet called "The Spiritual View on Psychedelics". Baba has offered his views on this subject to any who care to listen. He likens the states which are induced through taking psychedelics, including marijuana, to a dream within a dream, delusion within illusion. He says, "For whatever reason the drugs are taken, in the long run the individual is harmed, spiritually, mentally, and physically. This is irrespective of whether this use is motivated by spiritual aspirations or otherwise."

Psychedelics seem to offer a way out - a way that makes sense and that casts everything in a new light. But this can lead to a false sense of security; you may feel you have arrived when, in truth, you have barely begun to scratch the surface.

There are two recent quotes regarding the enticing features of the drugs which are especially pertinent here. One appeared in the April 20, 1966, issue of Manas. The writer of an article about the psychedelic drug movement observed that "the appeal of spiritual delights climaxed by a chemical 'illumination' that will dispense with long years of personal striving is likely to be persuasive to anybody able to believe that the universe is constructed for his effortless ease and translation." He ended his article with a reference to the enlightenment that the Buddha achieved. He said it "involved neither a proprietor nor a proprietary" and that "Buddha was his own man"; he relied on no outer agent.

The second related quote is from Professor Abraham Maslow. Regarding the "wild use of LSD by unselected people" he said, "... even if the drugs were not harmful psychologically, I think they can be harmful spiritually, characterologically, etc. I think it's clearly better to work for your blessings, instead of to buy them. I think an unearned Paradise becomes worthless."

The statements in Manas and by Professor Maslow point to one of the most beguiling attributes of the drugs; psychedelics appear to hold an answer to the dailyness of our lives and to the frustrations, distrust and meaninglessness which permeate so many of them. But psychedelics not only do not hold the answer, they delay finding an abiding understanding and finding an answer to the question: What am I doing here?

Through taking psychedelics your way is inevitably made more difficult. The unnatural stimulation of certain faculties and the speeding up of certain insights, can create an imbalance which, while not always immediately apparent, can result in years of need-less struggle to get one's feet back on the ground again.

What you are convinced is "up" by taking psychedelics is actually "over and out". Psychedelics have more to do with psychic phenomena and extrasensory perception than with spirituality. But it is a peculiarly western habit to associate anything which passes for the supernatural with the spiritual. This is not the case. Psychic phenomena and the occult in general are discussed by Meher Baba in many places in his works. A lengthy discussion appears in the edited version of his discourses called God to Man and Man to God (Gollancz, 1955). In Beams Baba says, "The curious might very well occupy their minds with these things, but they are best relegated to the background as insignificant. The real lover of Truth passes by these things without becoming entangled with any of them. He cannot afford to be distracted or diverted from his real objective...."

Psychedelics create distraction and also disorient the senses. S. I. Hayakawa has said in the December 1965 issue of ETC., "Perhaps my basic reason for distrusting the dependence on 'mind-expanding' drugs is that most people haven't learned to use the senses they possess.... I say, why disorient your beautiful senses with drugs and poisons before you have half discovered what they can do for you?"

No one in his right mind would want to be mad. Yet hundreds of persons, many with a pioneering spirit, are risking just such a fate because of the lure of the psychedelic bonanza.

Meher Baba has never been known to say that drugs cannot be administered by properly qualified medical doctors for treating physical ailments. The question arises in the case of legitimate experimentation with LSD and other psychedelics -- Are healthy people being used as guinea pigs and for no good reason?

Through the observations of those who take psychedelics, it is concluded that the drugs can trigger an opening-up process whereby the psychic propensities may be turned on. Continued use of psychedelics may seem to open them even more. When once opened, exciting events, stressful experiences, hysterical outbursts, may of themselves cause these potentially dangerous psychic attributes to develop. While some people enjoy uncanny psychic states, others find them maddening. Uncanny experiences can cause unreasoning fears. When a person is up, he may feel that he may never come down. Of course, some don't. Many have committed suicide and many are in artificially-induced schizophrenic states today. In a recently published statement, Dr. William A. Frosch, a psychiatrist at New York University Medical School, says in essence that LSD reactions can recur without taking the drug a second time, that these recurrences are usually transient, and that they seem to come during times of stress.

Self-help and helping others is a far more subtle affair than most of us have ever imagined. Psychedelics can disorient your life because no one can know you well enough, and know how the drug will work on your unique set of equipment to be able to gauge the immediate and long-range effects, or to help you recover from a bad experience or even to assimilate a good experience. The psychedelic guru assumes that a few hours or even a few days of preliminary instructions will adequately prepare most subjects for a smooth trip or an experience free from panic. It is a major fallacy to think that someone who is himself searching for the truth, and presumes that he is finding it, can necessarily help another person with any degree of safety for himself or the person he is presumably helping. Baba has explained that only a person on the fifth plane of consciousness can help another attain spiritual development without risk of spiritual harm to himself or the other. When you come to realize that most of us are not even on the inner planes, let alone standing in any relationship to the beginning of the planes, then you begin to see that those who can help you in a natural manner are few and far between. Those who can help you in the way the psychedelic guru thinks he is helping you are most misguided souls and are endangering their own progress in ways they cannot imagine.

Some people get so far out from using psychedelics that they go on for years unaware of some of the distressing changes in themselves. It is as if they lose all sense of discernment, all natural sense of the fitness of behaviour. The psychedelic game is rapidly developing into both a degenerative and reactionary game. This is especially ironic since many psychedelic users think they are escaping from outmoded conventionality. Through taking psychedelics they have surrendered the management of their minds to the strongest artificial mind-changing agents ever known. Some have done this through the urging of others, or under the tutelage of a psychedelic guru. But the result is always the same - the person who should be at the controls, and who needs to be at the controls if there is to be any true progress, has given over the controls in a child-like belief that somehow everything will be all right, even though neither he nor anyone else can ultimately govern what happens during or as a result of the psychedelic experience.

Taking psychedelics can lead a person to become "cool" to all human values. It can also lead to self-righteousness and deepening blindness to what is worthwhile in life. In a statement made by Edward J. Bloustein, President of Bennington College, this relevant thought is made, "The self-righteousness and obtuseness of those who are committed to revolt and defiance, on principle and instinct, is no less objectionable than that of those who are unswervingly committed to habit, custom and tradition. Likewise those who are 'cool' to all human values, who are detached from all the restraints of social life, are as convention-ridden and morally myopic in their way as the pillars of social respectability are in theirs."

These drugs are affecting the lives of thousands of people. The suffering and the anguish that is being experienced because of them, not only by the users, but by friends, family and innocent bystanders, are not calculable. A sociologist at the University of Cali-

fornia wrote in a letter in May that he concurred with Baba's views "that true understanding is not to be found through this route," and he added that "it seemed exceedingly difficult to convince young people that the problem is not merely in the minds of squares."

The further-out one gets with drugs, the more deeply one becomes enmeshed in what Baba called "the drug net of illusion". The psychedelic experience has acted to reinforce certain attitudes and misconceptions. Loudon Wainwright makes the following point regarding "the young people who are embracing the LSD craze" in his column in Life (March 25, 1966): "By envisioning power in themselves that does not exist, by wiping out limits that are there, by taking the quick, free ride to what feels like everything, they might not find out what they really are."

Not only does the psychedelic experience obscure real limitations, it also creates new ones by reinforcing isolation through thought, behavior and a strange kind of drug-user's snobbishness. By feeding distrust, hatred, brashness, hypocrisy, arrogance and lack of compassion for others into society, the drug-user is nurturing many of the qualities that he himself hates. The psychedelic cultist is in effect making his own life and the lives of all of us more difficult. This comes about through the disharmony and the destructive elements that the movement is fostering. Baba says that it is not physical wars which constitute the greatest threat and do the most destruction to humanity, it is the mental warring that goes on between people in their thinking, and subtly wishing ill of others, and greedily wanting all the best for themselves. Physical wars are simply symptomatic of this more elemental discontent and disharmony.

Meher Baba has recently warned that if the drug use in this country continues to increase, especially among college students, that half of the people in this country could soon become deranged. Some say that they do not believe this. Some say they feel that most people are already mad.

Psychedelic users have rejected games that they see others playing and they have not been able to evolve a game that works to replace the ones that they have rejected. Baba says that the only game worth playing has to do with deepening one's perceptions and striving to become a better person. He says:

"To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty - this is the sole game which has any intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments can, in themselves, have no lasting importance."

One of the reasons so many people hang on with such reverence to their psychedelic experience is that this experience has decreased their inhibitions in such a way that for the first time they feel a sense of freeness with others and a feeling that is

often equated in their minds with pure love. If you are convinced through taking psychedelics that this is the only way to reach this elusive experience of "real" love, you will not be easily persuaded that the artificial route is not only not necessary, it is not authentic.

The way to real love is not easy. It cannot come about through taking drugs. In response to an inquiry, Meher Baba has assured one of the well-known popularizers of the drug movement that although he feels the drugs have made him a better man, "Love will make one a better man than drugs or any other artificial aid ever will."

The proselytizers, even the legitimate researchers, are forgetting a most obvious question: Who needs these drugs? Why take such risks when the results are obviously so entirely incalculable to anyone who takes a look around.

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Books by Meher Baba - God Speaks, God To Man and Man To God, and Beams From Meher Baba - and the recently published book by Ivy O. Duce, What Am I Doing Here? are all available through:

Sufism Reoriented, Inc.
1290 Sutter Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, California 94109.

Meher Baba's views on the dangers of psychedelic drug use, "The Spiritual View on Psychedelics", and additional copies of this pamphlet are also available at the above address.

Other inquiries are welcome and can be addressed to Paula Gordon, c/o Sufism Reoriented.



