

God in a pill?
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MEHER BABA
on
L.S.D. and THE HIGHROADS

"Alas, alas, I pity those who compare a glass bead
to a pearl."

Hafiz

Many of those drawn to the use of LSD and other mind-changing drugs are prompted by the need to find out whether some enduring reality and purpose is to be found in life. The ideal is to experience such a sense of reality and purpose for oneself, if it is to be had. Many of those who have taken LSD trips are deeply affected by their experiences, regarding the use of psychedelics not only as a means of developing key insights into their own problems, but into the nature and purpose of creation as well. Certain individuals have become pioneers and in a sense prophets of the movement, largely as a result of the religious and even mystic implications that appear to flow from use of the drugs.

In this connection it is imperative to search for corroboration or refutation of these implications from persons credited with a high state of spiritual development, through other disciplines. Meher Baba, of Ahmednagar, India, is such a one. Revered by millions throughout the world as a God-realized being and as Avatar of the age, he is doubtless the best non-acid authority available to compare the results of chemical stimulation of the deeper layers of being with those produced by techniques known and used throughout time by spiritual teachers.

Through an unusual series of events, Meher Baba has captured the devotion and imagination of a number of young thinkers and experimentalists who have been in the early forefront of the psychedelic movement. Recognizing the authority of his statements concerning internal realization (inner experience of Truth), they have received oral and written descriptions from Meher Baba comparing the effects of psychedelics with the enduring states* of consciousness generated through inner development.

*Meher Baba has described these states in great detail in his God Speaks, Dodd, Mead 1955, and in Dr. William Donkin's The Wayfarers, Meher Pub., Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India, 1948

It has seemed desirable to collect these statements by Meher Baba for their obvious value to all those intrigued by the effects of psychedelics, particularly those who read into their experiences an interpretation of spiritual significance. We quote now from Meher Baba:

"In an age when individual liberty is prized above all achievements, the fast-increasing number of drug addicts forms an appalling chain of self-sought bondage! Even as these drugs hold out an invitation to a fleeting sense of ecstasy, freedom or escape, they enslave the individual in greater binding. LSD, a highly potent 'mind-changing' drug differing from the opium derivatives and being used in the research of mental science, is said to 'expand consciousness and alter one's personality for the better.' In America it has become tragically popular among the young, used indiscriminately by any and many. They must be persuaded to desist from taking drugs, for they are harmful--physically, mentally and spiritually.

"All so-called spiritual experiences generated by taking 'mind-changing' drugs such as LSD, mescaline and psilocybin are superficial and add enormously to one's addiction to the deceptions of illusion which is but the shadow of Reality.

"No drug, whatever its great promise, can help one to attain the spiritual goal. There is no short-cut to the goal except through the grace of the Perfect Master,** and drugs, LSD more than others, give only a semblance of 'spiritual experience', a glimpse of a false Reality.

"The experience of a semblance of freedom that these drugs may temporarily give to one is in actuality a millstone round the aspirant's neck in his efforts towards emancipation from the rounds of birth and death.

"The experience is as far removed from Reality as is a mirage from water. No matter how much one pursues the mirage one will never reach water and the search for God through drugs must end in disillusionment. One who knows the Way, who is the Way, cannot approve the continued pursuance of a method that not only must prove fruitless but leads away from the Path that leads to Reality.

** The Perfect Master is the God-realized being who has completed the cycle of evolution and involution through which consciousness is developed, matured and perfected, and who subsequently elects to return to active participation in creation in order to help other souls perfect consciousness.

"Experiences gained through LSD are, in some cases, experiences of the shadows of the subtle (emotion, energy) plane in the gross (physical) world. These experiences have nothing at all to do with spiritual advancement.

"The user of LSD can never reach subtle consciousness in this incarnation despite its repeated use. To experience real spiritual consciousness, surrenderance to a Perfect Master is necessary.

"It is human, and therefore necessarily wrongsighted, to view the result of the drug by its immediate relative effects - to calculate its end result is beyond human knowledge, and only the true Guide can point the way."

Meher Baba makes a fundamental point in this last observation which deserves amplification. If something is to be measured, a measuring standard should be used. The varied experiences of daily life provide a small part of the yardstick, but the greater part--the ultimate spiritual experience--is not readily available to most. Thus the psychedelic experimentalist must use an incomplete standard of measurement. Beyond the psychedelic experience he has only a few hints to be found in books on religious and mystic disciplines.

The honest seeker will recognize from this the inadequacy of his basis for judging his experiences through psychedelic media. Meher Baba has given several comments on this troublesome aspect of trying to judge the profundity of psychedelic experience.

"The experiences derived through the drugs are experiences by one in the gross world of the shadows of the subtle planes and are not continuous. The experiences of the subtle sphere by one on the subtle planes are continuous, but even these experiences are of illusion, for Reality is beyond them. And so, though LSD may lead one to feel a better man personally, the feeling of having had a glimpse of Reality may not only lull one into a false security but also will in the end derange one's mind. Although LSD is not an addiction-forming drug one can become attached to the experiences arising from its use and one gets tempted to use it in increasing doses, again and again, in the hope of deeper and deeper experiences. But eventually this causes madness or death.

"An example of experiences that are shadows of the subtle plane encountered in the gross world is that of a yogi who taught his 150 students to go into trance. When the students came out of the trance they were asked by the yogi to describe their experiences. Their accounts would be amazing to a man in the street, for in their state of trance they saw lights and colors galore--dazzling lights in colours and in circles and in different designs. They felt all

things around them pulsating with life and felt themselves separate from their own bodies and become witness to all things.

"Even such experiences as these are but the shadows of the subtle plane experienced in the gross world, for they are not continuous. However, these are NOT spiritually harmful, but neither are they spiritually beneficial. But experiences induced through the use of drugs are harmful physically.

"Even actual experiences of the subtle planes in the subtle sphere (which are always continuous) are likened to the pleasure of children playing with toys. However, these experiences are spiritually beneficial since they create a longing in the aspirant for further advancement. But union with God is impossible without the grace of the Perfect Master.

"Consciousness is fully evolved and complete as soon as the soul identifies itself with the human form. This consciousness neither increases nor decreases; only the experiences of consciousness, sub-super consciousness, super consciousness and God consciousness. This in other words is gross consciousness, subtle consciousness, mental consciousness and God consciousness. The lighter the burden of impressions (sanskaras) the higher the experiences of consciousness.

"There is also a state of perverted consciousness. It is a state in which consciousness indulges in induced experiences such as those gotten from the use of drugs; and even the most fantastic experiences thus induced are only the shadows of the subtle plane experienced in the gross world.

"Only the One who knows and experiences Reality, who is Reality, has the ability and authority to point out the false from the Real. The only Real experience is to continuously see God within oneself as the infinite effulgent ocean of truth and then to become one with this infinite ocean and continuously experience infinite knowledge, power and bliss."

Some persons have commented to Meher Baba on their sense of having become a better man or woman through psychedelics, and have speculated on the possible future role of these materials in an enlightened society. While deeply sensitive to the need of the individual for an ideal, and for a sense of motion in relation to that ideal, Meher Baba has carefully dissected the maximum result achievable through drugs from the exacting requirements of what must be done.

"To a few sincere seekers, LSD may have served as a means to arouse that spiritual longing which has brought them into my contact,

but once that purpose is served further ingestion would not only be harmful but have no point or purpose. The longing for Reality cannot be sustained by further use of drugs but only by the love for the Perfect Master which is a reflection of his love for the seeker.

"An individual may feel LSD has made a 'better' man of him socially and personally. But one will be a better man through Love than one can ever be through drugs or any other artificial aid. And the best man is he who has surrendered himself to the Perfect Master irrespective of his personal or social standing.

"As for possible use of the drug by an enlightened society for spiritual purposes--an enlightened society would never dream of using it!

"All the experiences even of spiritual aspirants on the Path to God-realization (gotten in the natural course of involution of consciousness) are of the domain of Illusion and are ephemeral and absolutely unimportant; how much more illusory and distracting are the experiences through substances compounded in a laboratory which have the semblance of those of the aspirant on the Spiritual Path! The one and only true experience is the experience of the Truth, the Reality; for once the realization of God is attained it remains a continual and never-ending experience.

"The all-pervading effulgence of God the Reality can only be experienced by an aspirant who keeps himself scrupulously above all illusory experimentations and humbly takes refuge in love of God.

"God can only be realized by loving Him with all the love at one's command- pure, simple and unadulterated love. When one's love for God, and God alone, is at its zenith true longing for union with God is greatest, and the aspirant's ego assertion is then at its lowest point.

"The aspirant at this stage is in the sixth plane of consciousness (vide "God Speaks") and 'sees' God face to face in all His glory. The aspirant experiences this without fear of fluctuation in his continual and never-ending experiencing of 'seeing' the the glory of God. Even this most sublime experience of 'seeing' God face to face falls short of the only true experience--union with God the Reality.

"It is absolutely essential for a spiritual aspirant who genuinely longs for union with God--the Reality--to shun experiments with the effects of certain drugs. These things do not uplift the aspirant nor draw him out of the rut of Illusion. Experiences born of these practices wear off as soon as the aspirant withdraws from or is thrown out of the orbit of the effect produced by the technique employed.

"But there is no drug that can promote the aspirant's progress--nor ever alleviate the sufferings of separation from his beloved God. LOVE is the only propeller and the only remedy. The aspirant should love God with all his heart till he forgets himself and recognizes his beloved God in himself and others.

"Even the experiences of the planes of consciousness are only another kind of an illusion! Experiences of the planes are 'Real Illusion', whereas those derived from the use of drugs are Illusion into 'False Illusion'. This mundane life and the experiences thereof are a 'dream into a dream'; whereas the traversing of the spiritual Path by the seekers who gain experiences of planes of consciousness is a 'dream'."

While there is no room from the above for misconstruing Meher Baba's evaluation of the effects of psychedelics on the spiritual and social facets of the individual, some questions have been put to him on the medical use of these drugs. Here again his views are clear:

"Medically there are legitimate uses of LSD. It can be used beneficially for chronic alcoholism, for severe and serious cases of depression and for relief in mental illnesses. Use of LSD other than for specific medical purposes is harmful physically, mentally and spiritually.

"Any drug when used medically for diseases, under the direct supervision of a medical practitioner, is not impermissible and cannot be classed with individual usage of a drug for what one can get out of it--or hope to get out of it--whether thrills, forgetfulness, or a delusion of spiritual experience.

LSD and other psychedelic drugs should never be used except when prescribed by a professional medical practitioner in the case of serious mental disorder under his direct supervision.

"In short, LSD can be used beneficially for specific medical purposes, but for spiritual progress it is not only useless but positively harmful.

"If God can be found through the medium of any drug, God is not worthy of being God."

Meher Baba

1. God Speaks, Meher Baba, page 176 (Dodd, Mead 1955)
2. Listen Humanity, Meher Baba, page xiii (Dodd, Mead 1957)
3. Discourses, Meher Baba, Vol. V, pp. 22-23 (Adi K. Irani 1955)
4. Listen Humanity, pp. 163-166
5. Ibid, pp. 186-187
6. Discourses, Vol. V page 101
7. Ibid, pp. 105-106

Other books by Meher Baba as suggested reading:

Life at its Best

The Everything and the Nothing

Beams on the Spiritual Panorama