

Guidance in Esoteric Training ~ From the Esoteric School

Buddha Eightfold Path ~ Eight soul practices to structure our soul organism

1. General Requirements
2. Daily Exercises
3. Sixteen Petalled Chakra/Lotus Flower/Sense Organ, situation near the larynx
4. Effects of developing this sense organ
5. Light on the Path ~ Mabel Collins

1. General Requirements ~

“The following rules should provide the esoteric pupil with the means to arrange his life as far as possible in such a way that he can continually watch and govern himself, observing whether he is really allowing himself to be inwardly guided by particular requirements. All esoteric training, particularly when it progresses to higher stages, can lead the pupil only into calamity and confusion if such rules are not observed. But as long as he strives to live in accordance with them he will have no cause to fear embarking on such a training. Neither will he need to lose hope if he should have to say to himself: ‘I fulfill this requirement in a most inadequate way.’ It will suffice if he honestly strives, in every area of his life, to remember these rules. Such an honesty must, above all, be an honesty towards oneself. Many deceive themselves in this respect, believing their striving to be a true one. Yet if they would examine themselves more closely they would find a good deal of concealed egoism and refined feelings of self – worth lurking in the background. Such feelings often assume the mask of selfless striving and lead the pupil astray. An earnest inner self – examination cannot be practiced often enough, to observe whether one is, after all, harbouring such feelings within one’s soul. One can become ever freer of such feelings be energetically following the rules which are presented here. These rules are:

Firstly: *No idea which has not first been examined shall be allowed to enter my consciousness.*

One should occasionally observe how many ideas, feelings and impulses of will live in the soul of a human being, which he adopts as a result of life – circumstances: his family, profession, nationality, the time in which he lives, etc. There is no need to regard the banishing of such soul content as a necessary and moral act for every human being. After all, the human being finds certainty and security in life when he is upheld by nationality, time, family, education, etc. If he should thoughtlessly reject such things he would very soon have thrown away all the supports in his life. Particularly for those of a weak disposition it is undesirable to go too far in this direction. Every esoteric pupil should be quite clear that, at the same time as observing this first rule, he should never be led to a lack of restraint or to think that he should break with everything that surrounds him in the form of life – circumstances. On the contrary, the more he examines it, the more he will recognize the legitimacy of what lives in his environment. It is not a question of struggling against and arrogantly rejecting such things, but of becoming inwardly free through a conscientious examination of everything that stands in relationship to

one's own soul. The strength of one's own soul will then shed light upon all one's thoughts and conduct; one's consciousness will grow correspondingly broader and one will be able, above all, to form the habit of allowing the spiritual laws which reveal themselves in the soul to express themselves in the surrounding world. It could be said, with some apparent justification, that this rule might imply that the pupil must especially scrutinize the occult and esoteric teachings given to him by his esoteric teacher, if he is to examine everything. But one also needs to have a correct understanding of such scrutiny. It is not always possible to investigate something in a direct way; one must find indirect ways of providing oneself with proof. No one today, for example, would be able to establish directly whether Frederick the Great ever lived or not. What can be done, however, is to check whether information about Frederick the Great has reached on through reliable channels. It is the same with all belief based upon the word of an authority. When receiving a communication from someone which one is not in a position to verify directly, one needs to examine the available material to establish whether the person in question is a trustworthy authority, whether the things he says ring true. This example should demonstrate that scrutiny and proof must start at the right point.

A second rule states: *My soul should be vividly aware of the obligation to increase constantly the sum of my concepts and ideas.*

Nothing is worse for the esoteric pupil than staying fixed with a certain number of concepts and trying to understand everything by means of them. It is infinitely important to be constantly appropriating one new idea after another. If this should not happen, the pupil would be ill – prepared to meet any sense free perceptions he might develop, and would be overpowered by them either to his disadvantage or at least to his dissatisfaction. To his dissatisfaction because under such circumstances he could well be having higher experiences already without even noticing it. There are many pupils for whom this is the case, who do not recognize higher experiences because of incorrect expectations due to a paucity of concepts. Many people are not in the least indolent in their outwards lives, but are nevertheless quite reluctant to enrich their conceptual life with new ways of understanding.

A third rule is: *I will only gain knowledge about those things to which I am not attached in sympathy or antipathy.*

An old initiate repeatedly drove home this point to his pupils saying: 'You will only learn something about the soul's immortality when you are as equable about the possibility of its annihilation after death as about the possibility of eternal life. As long as you wish to live eternally you can learn nothing about life after death.' It is the same with all truths. As long as the human being still harbours the slightest wish that things might be one way or another, the pure bright light of truth will not shine for him. Whoever, for example, retains even the most hidden wish that his good qualities might outweigh his bad will not be able to achieve real self knowledge, for this wish will pull the wool over his inner eyes and deceive him.

A fourth rule is: *I am obliged to overcome my reservations towards what seems 'abstract'.*

As long as an esoteric pupil clings on to ideas whose substance is derived from the sense world, he cannot attain to any truth about higher worlds. He must strive to develop sense free concepts. This is the hardest rule of all four, particularly in the circumstances of our day and age. Materialistic thinking has to a large extent deprived human beings of the capacity to think in sense free concepts. One must

do one of two things: either strive to think concepts that are never perfectly, but only approximately, present in sensory reality – for example, the concept of a circle. A perfect circle can be nowhere found, but only conceived of; such a conceived circle is the underlying law out of which all circular formations arise. Alternately, one can think of a high moral ideal; this also cannot be wholly realized by any human being, but is nevertheless the foundation or law underlying many human deeds. No one can make any progress in their esoteric development if they do not recognize the fundamental importance for life of such so called abstractions, and enrich their soul with the relevant concepts.”

2. For the Days of the Week

“The pupil must pay careful attention to certain activities in the life of the soul which in the ordinary way are carried on carelessly and inattentively. There are eight such activities.

It is naturally best to undertake *only one exercise* at a time, throughout a week or a fortnight, for example, then the second, and so on, then beginning over again. Meanwhile it is best for the eighth exercise to be carried out every day. True self knowledge is then gradually achieved and any progress made is perceived. Then later on – beginning with Saturday – one exercise lasting about five minutes may be added daily so that the relevant exercise will always fall on the same day.

Thus Saturday – Thoughts; Sunday – Resolves; Monday – Talking; Tuesday – Actions; Wednesday – Behaviour, and so on.

Days of the Week

SATURDAY

To pay attention to one’s *ideas*.

To think only significant thoughts. To learn little by little to separate in one’s thoughts the essential from the non essential, the eternal from the transitory, truth from mere opinion.

In listening to the talk of one’s fellow – men, to try and become quite still inwardly, foregoing all assent, and still more all unfavorable judgments (criticism, rejection), even in one’s thoughts and feelings.

This may be called

‘RIGHT OPINION’

SUNDAY

To determine on even the most insignificant matter only after fully reasoned *deliberation*. All unthinking behaviour, all meaningless actions, should be kept far away from the soul. One should always have well – weighed reasons for everything. And one should definitely abstain from doing anything for which there is no significant reason.

Once one is convinced of the rightness of a decision, one must hold fast to it, with inner steadfastness.

This may be called

‘RIGHT JUDGMENT’

having been formed independently of sympathies and antipathies

MONDAY

Talking. Only what has sense and meaning should come from the lips of one striving for higher development. All talking for the sake of talking – to kill time – is in this sense harmful.

The usual kind of conversation, a disjointed medley of remarks, should be avoided. This does not mean shutting oneself off from intercourse with one's fellows; it is precisely then that talk should gradually be led to significance. One adopts a thoughtful attitude to every speech and answer, taking all aspects into account. Never talk without cause – be gladly silent. One tries not too much or too little. First listen quietly; then reflect on what has been said.

This exercise may be called

'RIGHT WORD'

TUESDAY

External Actions. These should not be disturbing for our fellow men. Where an occasion calls for action out of one's inner being, deliberate carefully how one can best meet the occasion – for the good of the whole, the lasting happiness of man, the eternal.

Where one does things of one's own accord, out of one's own initiative, consider most thoroughly beforehand the effect of one's actions.

This is called

'RIGHT DEED'

WEDNESDAY

The ordering of life. To live in accordance with nature and spirit. Not to be swamped by the external trivialities of life. To avoid all that brings unrest and haste into life. To hurry over nothing, but also not to be indolent. To look on life as a means for working towards higher development and to behave accordingly.

One speaks in this connection of

'RIGHT STANDPOINT'

THURSDAY

Human endeavor. One should take care to do nothing that lies beyond one's powers – but also to leave nothing undone that lies within them.

To look beyond the everyday, the momentary, and to set oneself the aims and ideals connected with the highest duties of a human being. For instance, in the sense of the prescribed exercises, to try and develop oneself so that afterwards one may be able all the more to help and advise one's fellow men – though perhaps not in the immediate future.

This can be summed up as

'TO LET ALL THE FOREGOING EXERCISES BECOME A HABIT'

FRIDAY

The endeavor to *learn as much as possible from life*.

Nothing goes by us without giving us a chance to gain experiences that are useful for life. If one has done something wrongly or imperfectly, that becomes a motive for doing it rightly or more perfectly, later on.

If one sees others doing something, one observes them with the like end in view (yet not coldly or heartlessly). And one does nothing without looking back to past experience which can be of assistance in one's decisions and achievements.

One can learn from everyone – even from children if one is attentive.

This exercise is called

'RIGHT MEMORY'

(Remembering what has been learnt from experiences.)

SUMMARY

To turn one's gaze inwards from time to time, even if only for five minutes daily at the same time. In so doing one should sink down into oneself, carefully take counsel with oneself, test and form one's principles of life, run through in thought one's knowledge – or lack of it – weigh up one's duties, think over the contents and true purpose of life, feel genuinely pained by one's own errors and imperfections. In a word: labour to discover the essential, the enduring, and earnestly aim at goals in accord with it – for instance, virtues to be acquired. (Not to fall into the mistake of thinking that one has done something well, but to strive to strive ever further towards the highest standards.)

This exercise is called

'RIGHT EXAMINATION'

3. Sixteen Petalled Chakra/Lotus Flower (How to Know Higher Worlds Chapter 6)

"The more advanced in soul development, the more regularly structured our soul organism becomes. This organism remains confused and unstructured in a person whose soul life is still undeveloped. Yet even in such an unstructured soul organism a clairvoyant can still see a form that stands out clearly from its surroundings. *The form extends from the inside of the head to the middle of the physical body.*

(...) One of the first things to occur when an esoteric student begins practicing the exercises is that the light of the lotus flower intensifies; later the flowers will also begin to rotate. When this happens, it means that a person is beginning to have the ability to see clairvoyantly. *These 'flowers' are the sense organs of the soul.* Their rotation indicated that we are able to perceive the supersensible realm. Until we have developed the astral senses, in this way, we cannot see anything supersensible.

(...) The spiritual sense organ, which is situated near the larynx, enables us to see clairvoyantly into the way of thinking of other soul beings. It also allows us a deeper insight into the true laws

of natural phenomena, while the organ located in the region of the heart (12 petalled) opens clairvoyant cognition into the mentality and character of other souls. Whoever has developed this organ is also able to cognize certain deeper forces in plants and animals.

(...) Specific soul activities are connected with the development of these sense organs. Whoever practices these activities in a particular way contributes to the development of the corresponding spiritual sense organ. For example, eight of the sixteen petals of the 'sixteen – petalled lotus flower' near the larynx were formed in the distant past, in an earlier evolutionary stage. We ourselves contributed nothing to their development. We received these first eight petals as a gift of nature at a time when human consciousness was still dreamlike and dull. These eight petals were already active then, and their activities corresponded to this state of dim consciousness. As consciousness intensified, these lotus petals then lost their light and ceased their activity. We ourselves can form the remaining eight petals through the conscious practice of exercises. This will make the whole lotus flower shining and mobile.

The acquisition of specific faculties depends upon the development of each of these sixteen lotus petals. As already implied, however, we can develop only eight of these petals consciously. The other eight then appear of their own accord.

To develop the *sixteen petalled lotus flower* we proceed as follows. We direct our care and attention to *eight specific soul processes that we usually perform without care or attention*.

6. Exegesis to Light on the Path ~ Rudolf Steiner

**“Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears.
Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its insensitiveness.
Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters, it
must have lost the power to wound. Before the soul can stand
in the presence of the Masters, its feet must be washed in the
blood of the heart.”**

Mabel Collins 1888

Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears.

Anyone who still abhors the criminal in the usual sense, and still idolizes the saint in the same sense – has not rendered the eyes 'incapable of tears.' Consume all your tears in the will to help. Do not weep over someone stricken with poverty – understand it and change it into good. For your tears only dim the pure clarity of the light.

Your *sensations* are all the more delicate – the less *sensitive* you are. Sound becomes clear to the ear if its clarity is not disturbed by encountering rapture or sympathetic feeling as it enters the ear.

Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness.

Put this another way, and this means: Let the heartbeats of the other resound in you, and do not disturb them with the beating of your own heart. Open your ear – and not your nerve endings. For these will tell you whether the tone is *agreeable* or not; while your ‘open ear’ will tell you the tone’s true nature. When you go to someone who is ill – let every fiber of *their* body speak to you – and subdue the impression they make on you.

(‘Before the ear can hear’, it must have replaced its sensitivity with a simplified sensing into others. When a person is easily offended, it is the personality that reacts to the outer world. In a receptive person, it is the eternal part of that person that acts upon the outer world – with the simple rhythms of the eternal.)

To take the first two precepts together: reverse your will – let it be forceful as possible – but do not let it stream into things *as your own*. But rather, inform yourself about things and then impart your will to them – let your will and yourself stream *out* of things. Let the light – force of your eyes flow out of every flower, and every stone – but hold back yourself and your tears.

Bestow your words on dumb things – so that they may speak through you. For these dumb things are not a summons to your pleasure – but a summons to your activity. What they have become *without you* is not there for you – but what they are to become *through* you is there.

As long as you impress your wish on a single thing without this wish having been born from the thing itself – you are wounding it. But as long as you are wounding anything – no Master can listen to you. For the Master hears only those who need him; and no one who wishes to impress their self upon things has need of the Master. The lower self of a person is like a pointed needle that wants to engrave itself everywhere. As long as it wants to do that – no Master will want to hear its voice.

*Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters,
it must have lost its power to wound.*

As long as the sharp needles of the ‘I Will’ project from a person’s words – their words are the emissaries of the lower self. If these needles are removed and the voice becomes soft and pliant – so that it lays itself around the mysteries of all things as a veiling garment – then it weaves itself into Spirit – raiment (Mayavirupa, ‘illusion body’), and the Master’s delicate tone takes it as a gesture. With every thought which, in the true sense of the word, a person dedicates to the inner truth of things, they weave a thread of the garment in which the Master, who appears to them, may wrap himself. For one who becomes an envoy of the world – an organ through whom the depths of the world – riddle speaks – the I pours out the life of the soul into the world – the heart’s blood washes over the feet so that they may haste in carrying one to where there is work to be done. And when the soul is where the lower ‘I’ is *not*, when it is not where one lives to enjoy pleasant things, but where the active feet have borne one – then the Master appears.

*Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters,
its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.*

Those who remain within their self – cannot find the Master. For those who would find the Master must let the strength of the soul – their heart's blood – flow into all they do, into the active feet.

Here is the first meaning of the four fundamental precepts. To someone who lives with this first meaning, the second meaning can be unveiled – and then the succeeding ones. For these occult precepts are occult truths, and every occult truth has at least a seven fold meaning.

*Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be
not thou the warrior. Look for the warrior and let him fight for
thee. Take his orders for battle and obey them.*

Light on the Path – Second Series, stanza 1

When the Higher Self has taken complete command over the human being, when the sheath of personality has, therefore, fallen away – then the whole choir of higher spirits can speak through the human being; just as, previously, the sense world spoke through a human being... To prepare for this moment one must develop the capacity to no longer defend what belongs to oneself – what is separate. One ceases to be a warrior – one becomes a tool in the hands of the warrior.

This saying does not refer to the higher fact itself – but gives instruction for the development of the faculty whereby the higher fact may be obtained.