

Salvia with Meditation Study

Ian Soutar

A GROUP OF US are in the planning stages of an experiment to establish the effectiveness of *Salvia divinorum* in very low doses. The idea is to discover whether or not this herb will enhance a group meditation experience and individual meditation.

The experiment started with a core group of six Quakers who were experienced with meditation and who had experimented with psychedelic drugs before. In discussion we all felt that very low doses of these substances might very well enhance a meditation group. Another six people from the community at large joined us who are Buddhist, Sufi or other experienced meditators. The general Quaker community, as well as the Sufi and Buddhist communities are not particularly sympathetic with this type of experiment, but we are not discouraged by this.

We have decided, with the help of MAPS, to be scientific in our methods and will use a modified form of Rick Strassman's *Hallucinogen Rating Scale* system to evaluate the herb + meditation state. We will use a placebo herbal mixture along with two concentrations of *Salvia divinorum*. MAPS is funding the chemical analysis of the material to be used.

Administration of the herb will be through the use of the dried leaves held under the tongue at the beginning of the meditation. Experimentation by a few members of the group has shown that 1 or 2 (15 cm, weighing about 1/4 gram each) leaves have a subtle but noticeable effect that seems perfect for meditation:

- 1) Thoughts become much more focused and clear.
- 2) Distracting thoughts and worries almost completely vanish.
- 3) The effects begin in about 15 minutes and last for slightly under one hour.
- 4) The herb has a calming effect.

Other than these effects, at this dosage there are no visions or other pronounced effects. The experience is similar in strength to a strong cup of coffee. We found that when we did meditate under the influence of the herb at this level, meditation was extremely easy and effective.

This research is being done by dedicated amateur researchers under the guidance of professional researchers who have kindly offered advice on the design and evaluation methods to be used. The fully legal status of the herb has made the organization of the experiment very easy.

We are in the planning stages and would be interested in hearing any anecdotal knowledge that people may have on sublingual (under the tongue) *Salvia divinorum* use. Of course we would be particularly interested in knowing if anyone has used *Salvia divinorum* for meditation. •

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