

# FIVE PSYCHEDELIC PRAYERS ADAPTED FROM THE TAO TE CHING

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THE PSYCHEDELIC or visionary experience releases an enormous amount of awareness-of-energy and tunes us in to patterns of neurological signals which are usually censored from mental life.

Understanding, description, and intelligent use of these released energies have puzzled scholars for thousands of years. Today, LSD sessions puzzle, enrapture, awe, and confuse.

Mainly they confuse.

During the last five years, 1960-65, we have witnessed a psychedelic revolution. It is estimated that well over a hundred thousand Americans have taken the timeless voyage through their nervous systems—have had the veil of symbolic illusion lifted for a few hours.

And what is the net effect?

A chaos of potentiality.

A confusion of promise.

Most of these psychedelic voyagers are now aware of the limitless realities stored in the nervous systems, but there is no conception of the meaning and use of these potentials.

There are of course no pat solutions, no easy answers provided by LSD. On the contrary, every paradox, every ambiguity, every problem of static-symbolic life is intensified, raised to exponential powers. Where there once was a blind robot symbolic uncertainty (Johnson or Goldwater?), there is now an uncertainty compounded and multiplied by the knowledge of the illusory nature of routine reality and the existence of countless realities.

From the beginning of the Harvard-IFIF-Castalia exploration into consciousness two facts were apparent. First, that there were no extant maps, models, myths, theories, languages to describe the psychedelic experience. Second, that the temptation to impose old models, premature theories must be resisted.

No current philosophic or scientific theory was broad enough to handle the potential of the 13 billion-cell computer.

Our decision then was to maintain an open posture, to collect data on psychedelic sessions from a wide variety of subjects, in a wide variety of settings, and to continue to look for better models and theories to explain the psychedelic experience.

It became apparent that, in order to run exploratory sessions, manuals and programs were necessary to guide subjects through transcendental experiences with a minimum of fear and confusion. Rather than start *de novo* using our own minds and limited experiences to map out the voyage, we turned to the only available psychological texts which dealt with consciousness and its alterations—the ancient books of the East.

The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a psychedelic manual—incredibly specific about the sequence and nature of experiences encountered in the ex-static state. A revision of this text published under the title *The Psychedelic Experience* was our first attempt at session programming.

For the last two years we have been working with another old, time-tested psychedelic manual—the Chinese text, *Tao Te Ching*, sometimes translated as *The Way of Life*.

Written some 2600 years ago by one or several philosophers known to us now as “the old fellow” (Lao Tse), this text is still timelessly modern and will remain so for thousands of years to come—as long as man has the same sort of nervous system and deals with the range of energies he now encounters.

The *Tao Te Ching* deals with energy. *Tao* is best translated as “energy,” as energy process. Energy in its pure unstructured state (the E of Einstein’s equation) and energy in its countless, temporary states of structure (the M of Einstein’s equation).

The *Tao* is an ode to nuclear physics, to life, to the genetic code, to that form of transient energy structure we call “man,” to those most static, lifeless forms of energy we call man’s artifacts and symbols.

The message of the *Tao Te Ching* is that all is energy, all energy flows, all things are continually transforming.

The *Tao Te Ching* is a series of 81 verses which celebrate the flow of energy, its manifestation and, on the practical side, the implications of this philosophy for man’s endeavors. Most of the pragmatic sutras of the *Tao* were directed towards the ruler of a state. How can the King and his ministers use this knowledge of the energy powers to govern harmoniously?

Like all great biblical texts, the *Tao* has been rewritten and re-interpreted in every century and this is as it should be. The terms for *Tao* change in each century. In our times Einstein re-

phrases it, quantum theory revises it, the geneticists translate it in terms of DNA and RNA, but the message is the same.

The practical aspects of the *tao* must also be rewritten and adapted to the everyday situation. The advice given by the smiling philosophers of China to their emperor can be applied to how to run your home, your office, and how to conduct a psychedelic session.

The five sutras or prayers presented in the following pages are selected from a psychedelic translation of the *Tao Te Ching* to be published by University Books.

The forty-nine sutras in this volume are divided into five groups:

- I. *Preparatory Prayers* to be read before the session.
- II. *Prayers Concerning Pure Energy Flow* which are to be read, slowly and ethereally during the early "high" points of the session.
- III. *Prayers Concerning Biological Flow* and seed energy.
- IV. *Prayers Relating to Experience of Bodily Processes*, awareness of *cakras* or nerve centers of the body.
- V. *Re-imprinting Prayers* which concern the later parts of a psychedelic session (from eight to twenty-four hours after the session begins), when the subject is re-entering the routine world and selecting a post-session personality.

Each of the five prayers which follow has been selected from one of these five sections—preparation, pure energy flow, seed energy, *cakra* energy, and re-imprinting.

The *Tao* manual, like all other psychedelic texts, must be studied intensively, the detailed theory of energy transformations thoroughly learned, and the commentary notes for those sutras selected for the session re-read several times.

Psychedelic poetry, like all psychedelic art, is crucially concerned with flow. Each psychedelic poem is carefully tailored for a certain time in the sequence of the session. Simplicity and diamond purity are important. Intellectual flourishes and verbal pyrotechnics are painfully obvious to the "turned on" nervous system.

Psychedelic poetry should be read aloud (or taped) at a slow tempo, in a low natural voice. The prayers are best read or taped by one who is "high" at the time. Any tension, artificiality, or game-playing on the part of the reader stands out in embarrassing relief.

Read by the static intellect, imprinted to symbols, and inundated by the verbosity of our culture these sutras are simply another sequence of lifeless words. But to the consciousness released from imprinted statics these prayers can become precise bursts of trembling energy and breathless meaning.

You will wonder, perhaps, at the use of the term "prayer" to label these sutras.

Prayer is ecstatic poetry. Psychedelic communication.

Ordinary, static communication in terms of prose symbols, is game. Mind addressing mind.

You cannot describe the ecstatic moment in static terms.

You cannot (without regret) communicate during the ecstatic moment in static prose.

You cannot produce ecstasy with static symbol sequences.

When you are in a psychedelic state—out beyond symbols—game communication seems pointless. Irrelevant. Inappropriate. Inadequate.

There is no need to communicate—because everything is already in communication. You are plugged into the multiplex network of energy exchanges.

But there are those transition moments of terror, of isolation, of reverence, of gratitude . . . when there comes that need to communicate.

That need to communicate with the non-game energy source that you sense in yourself and around you.

And there is the need, at exactly that moment, for a language which is not mental, cliché. A straight, pure, "right" non-game language.

This is prayer.

*Mantra.*

Ejaculation.

There are moments in every psychedelic session when there comes that need to communicate—at the highest and best level you are capable of.

This need has been known and sensed for thousands of years. All prayers are originally psychedelic communications with higher freer energies—tuning yourself into the billion-year-old energy dance.

Conventional prayers, for the most part, have degenerated into game rituals. Slogans. Meaningless verbalizations. Appeals for game help.

But that crucial non-game terror-reverence awefull moment comes. . . .

There comes that time when the ecstatic cry is called for.

At that time, you must be ready to pray.

To go beyond yourself. To contact energy beyond your game.

At that time you must be ready to pray.

When you have lost the need to pray . . .

You are dead.

1 — 1\*

**The Session Guide**

In the greatest sessions  
One does not know that  
there is a guide

In the next best sessions  
One praises the guide

In the good session  
One admires the guide

It is worse when  
One fears the guide

The worst is that  
One pays him

If the guide lacks trust  
in the people

Then  
The trust of the people  
will be lacking

The wise guide guards his words  
The wise guide sits serenely

When the greatest session is over  
The people will say—

“It all happened naturally”

Or

“It was so simple, we did it  
all ourselves”

(Adapted from Tao Sutra 17)

\* This sutra should be read aloud before the session so that both the guide and the voyagers are explicitly aware of the guiding contract.

## II — 1\*

**That Which Is Called the Tao  
Is Not the Tao**

The flow of energy .....

Here .....

It .....

Is .....

Nameless .....

Timeless .....

Speed of light .....

Float beyond fear .....

Float beyond desire .....

Into this Mystery of Mysteries

Through this Gate of All Wonder

(Adapted from Tao Sutra 1)

\* This sutra can be read, at very slow, measured, hushed tempo, in the first hour of the psychedelic session.

III — 5\*

**Lao Tse's Mind Becomes Preoccupied  
With a Very Difficult Subject—To  
Describe the Production of  
Material Forms by the Tao**

Is it a dream?

Shadowy

Elusive

Invisible

All things,  
All images  
Move slowly  
Within  
Shimmering nets

Here  
Essence endures  
From here  
All forms emerge

All forms  
Emerge  
From this second  
Back to the ancient beginning

(Adapted from Tao Sutra 21)

\* This sutra can be read between the first and the fifth hours of the LSD session.

## IV — 2\*

## The Water Cakra

Can you float through the universe of your body  
and not lose your way?

Can you lie quietly  
engulfed  
in the slippery union  
of male and female?  
Warm wet dance of generation?  
Endless ecstasies of couples?

Can you offer your stamen trembling in the meadow  
for the electric penetration of pollen  
While birds sing?

Twist sinuously on the river bank  
While birds sing?

Wait soft-feathered, quivering, in the thicket  
While birds sing?

Can you coil serpent writhing  
While birds sing?

Become two cells merging  
Slide together in molecule embrace?

Can you, murmuring

Lose

All

Fusing

(Based on Tao Sutra #10)

\* This sutra seeks to "break through" to the sexual *cakra* and is to be used in programmed sessions which attempt to systematically explore the sequence of *cakras* or somatic nerve plexes.



V — 9\*

How to Recognize the TAO Imprint

He who returns in the flow of *tao*  
Brings back a mysterious penetration  
So subtle  
That it is misunderstood

Here is his appearance  
Hesitant like one who wades in  
a stream at winter  
Wary as a man in ambush  
Considerate as a welcome guest  
Fluid like a mountain stream  
Natural as uncarved wood  
Floating high like a gull  
Unfathomable like muddy water

How can we fathom his muddiness?  
Water becomes clear through stillness

How can we become still?  
By moving with the stream

(Based on Tao Sutra # 15)

\* This sutra should be read during the last third of the psychedelic session to those who have selected the *Tao* model of flow for their re-imprint.