



A brief guide to
Trance Development

In the presence of White Feather

Developing Mediumship



There are without doubt many misconceptions about what constitutes a ‘trance state’ and many differing opinions concerning the most appropriate methods to employ when endeavouring to develop trance mediumship. Having been aware of being mediumistic since my late teens (prior to this I was aware of being ‘different’ to others, but unaware of having mediumistic qualities) I have encountered many opposing views, some of which have been quite hostile, and much ignorance about what is considered to be a genuine trance condition.

Essentially, all mediumship constitutes an altered state and all altered states can be viewed as trance states. Having worked for a period in my life as a qualified hypnotherapist I am only too aware that even during ‘normal’ everyday states, people drift quite unconsciously from one altered state to another without ever being aware of doing so. This fact alone quite often amazes people.

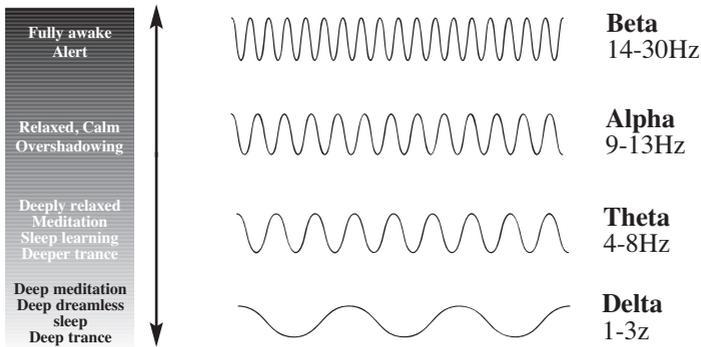
Mediumship, and in particular ‘trance mediumship’ is an extension of these naturally occurring states and differs only in as much that the medium usually enters into the altered condition by a wilful act of attunement and a ‘third party’ in the form of a spirit based control, or guide is also involved. The actual altered state of consciousness remains similar to many of the aforementioned normally occurring mind states which each of us enters during any given twenty four hours.

One thing that a trance state is not, is a sleep state. Even in the deepest of trances where the medium appears to be asleep, with eyes tightly closed, breathing heavy and limbs immobile, there is still a discernable difference between the two states. To the onlooker, they would appear to be identical, but there are many internal differences which are undetectable by outside sources.

Altered states of consciousness can vary quite considerably from what are sometimes referred to as ‘upbeat’ states to the opposite end of the spectrum and what are called ‘downbeat’ or deeper states. Brain wave patterns have been shown to vary markedly during these different ‘levels’ and activity is less apparent during deeper states such as meditation than during higher states such as excitement. The commonly referred to Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta states correspond to a lessening

of activity from something in the region of 14-30Hz per second in the Beta state of normal waking consciousness to 1-3Hz in the Delta range as the mind, operating through the brain decreases its mental activity. (see fig 1.) It is when this 'mind chatter' subsides that other aspects, both internal and external can become apparent. The student of mediumistic development should understand that the 'mind' is not one dimensional. It has many levels of expression, some of which we are consciously aware such as those involving everyday thinking and activity, but many which are unconscious until accessed through an altered state such as sleep, meditation, hypnosis, mediumship or simply a naturally occurring shift of the kind which sometimes happens during brief moments of insight or 'bliss'.

Fig 1. Changing brainwave patterns



When referring to the development of a state sympathetic to the emergence of trance mediumship the student should strive towards reaching a level where the mind is passive and yet alert. Stilled and yet open to movement. This can only be achieved through self discipline and regular practice, preferably within the safety and comfort of a well run development group or 'circle'. It is essential that such a group be run by an established and well developed medium who, acting as the leader can not only observe what is taking place during the meditation but also actively assist both the aspiring mediums and their spirit 'controls' to work together. Their encouragement to both the sitters and the spirit based teams is important in building confidence and also ensuring that both common sense and discipline prevail at all times. On many occasions I have witnessed inexperienced sitters deluding themselves with unnecessary posturing, bodily movements such as rocking backwards and forwards, facial contortions and even speaking in 'pigeon English' because they have assumed either consciously or unconsciously that this is how guides link with their medium. Other myths include the belief that the spirit body of the medium has to 'step out' of the physical in order to allow the spirit body of the communicator to 'step in'. I have also heard it said that the sitter must 'open

his/her chakras' before spirit control can commence. Quite clearly, the majority of this is all nonsense and should be firmly discouraged by all concerned. If one feels the need to 'open the chakras' at the commencement of meditation, that is acceptable and some disciplines, particularly eastern philosophies actually assert that knowledge of the chakras is of great importance, but in my view it is not essential for mediumistic development and will certainly not prevent spirit controlled trance from taking place if it is meant to. I feel certain that the great pioneers of the past who demonstrated trance and physical mediumship did not need to know about opening or closing their chakras.

All that happens when a medium is entranced by someone from the spirit dimension is that a *mental* link is established that allows a thought flow to occur from one mind to another. There is no displacement of bodies (although this *can* happen if required, particularly in physical mediumship) just a linking of one mind to another, one spirit to another. The fact that this takes place at all is due to several factors, the most important of which is the ability of the medium to attune with the spirit helpers and the law of attraction which draws the two parties together. No one can force communication to occur or 'call up' any spirit person in the vain hope that they will manifest to order. The only reason that the spirit world communicate with a medium is because they choose to. Nothing and no one can in any way force the issue.

Even where there is consent on both sides, a degree of spiritual development is required on behalf of the medium to facilitate a 'point of contact' with the spirit world. If there is insufficient 'spirituality' or spiritual development then it becomes more difficult, particularly for more evolved spirit teachers to link with the medium. There have of course been many documented cases of so called 'ignorant' or 'earthy' type individuals who have demonstrated the most sublime mediumship. But a closer analysis of these people will reveal that however 'base' their physical make-up, however lowly their social status, however lacking in intellect or appearance, they still possessed a more evolved 'spiritual' aspect to their constitution which allowed the spirit guides to draw close.

History shows that many of the so called 'saints' and spiritual giants of the past frequently emerged from very humble backgrounds. Never judge a book by its cover. Although there are no hard and fast rules governing spiritual training and unfoldment and everyone who has ever developed their mediumship to any degree will invariably claim that *their* system is the best, there are I believe, certain parameters which should be adhered to in order to allow the spiritual potential of those who aspire to the noble art of mediumship to blossom.

It should be stated that there are no short cuts to spiritual attainment. There is no 'quick fix' or ready made formula that will in any way bypass the requirements of discipline, high aspiration and the innermost desire to serve humanity. Spiritual teachers have no time for egos and will inevitably seek to impart this to any personality that sees itself as more important than its fellow man. I have seen many an inflated ego cut down to size by a great, yet humble spirit teacher, whose aim

was not to hurt, but to heal, not to chastise, but to teach and lessons of this type learned early on are usually worth their weight in gold and are seldom forgotten. Generally, the best way to progress with any form of mediumistic unfoldment and most certainly with the development of trance is to find a sincere, dedicated group of people who share similar aims and aspirations and with whom one can feel empathy.

The group should essentially meet at a regular interval and meditation should commence and complete at a set time. Each sitter should have their own 'place' or seat within the circle and the members of the group should occupy these places at each sitting. Ideally, upwards of five people should form the basis of the circle, with seven or nine members of opposing gender being the ideal combination. If sitters can alternate around the circle in a male - female - male configuration, this is even better as it compliments the balance of energies within the group dynamics.

Peaceful surroundings are preferable and should encompass comfortable seating, correct temperature according to conditions, suitable lighting (preferably subdued) and soothing, appropriate low level background music (optional). It goes without saying that complete harmony between all students is essential and any conflict, jealousy, resentment or egotism should be quickly dealt with by the group leader. The proceedings should commence with a silent or spoken 'prayer' either by the group as a whole or by a nominated individual on a rotation basis. In this way, everyone gets to 'open' in prayer sooner or later. The speaking of a prayer or as I prefer to call it an 'invocation' should never be read from a book. Nor should it be religious in any way. Religion has little to do with true spirituality and the idea behind the invocation is not to promote a religious attitude but simply to unite the group as one and to invoke the help of the divine intelligence which we refer to as 'God' through those in the spirit world who act as ambassadors and facilitators of spiritual unfoldment.

Following the invocation, a period of meditation preferably lasting for one hour should commence. Each sitter should enter into their own silence and seek to attune with their group of spiritual helpers. During this period the spirit people will draw closer to each individual and attempt to employ and utilise whatever psychic abilities they have. Throughout this time the leader of the group will most certainly be both watching the proceedings, taking time to focus on each student whilst also communicating with the guides of each group to both encourage and assist them in linking with their chosen medium.

Indeed, a good group leader will often direct energy to a particular sitter and their helpers by means of thought and also by reaching out a hand and allowing power to flow into their auric field. During my own development the circle leader would often tip-toe carefully up to me, taking great care never to make physical contact which could have resulted in a form of psychic shock to my system, in order to place his hand close to my chin and direct power to the guides who were building an 'ectoplasmic voice box' through which they could later speak. Even though deeply entranced, I was aware of a great light emanating from his upturned palm

and was able to feel a gentle warmth around my throat. Often during this time the urge to speak would grow ever stronger within and as my own development progressed this became the signal for White Feather to commence his talk.

Each student should be encouraged to 'work' during their meditation and it should be emphasised here that there is a degree of difference between many meditative states and the type of meditation required for mediumistic development. For example, when sitting in contemplative meditation or when meditating for the purpose of relaxation a slightly different approach is required whereby one can attempt to subdue the thought processes and literally go 'beyond mind' where any thought is minimalised, whilst at the same time the body becomes very still and almost 'transparent'. It is at these deeper levels that 'out of the body' experiences can occur. For the purpose of trance mediumship however, a different type of approach is needed. One where, as previously mentioned, the mind is sufficiently calm to be considered passive and yet remains alert to the subtle thought influences of the spirit guides. This condition can be likened to that of a jelly which although still, vibrates when touched. In a similar way the medium's mind responds to the thought flow of the spirit person attempting to communicate and thoughts ascend from the unconscious levels up into awareness where they are witnessed by the conscious mind. Often these thoughts, which invariably follow a spiritual theme are thought to be the sitters own mind and are rejected as such because of a fear of self delusion. Indeed, in the early days there may well be some aspect of unconscious self delusion taking place, but this is to be expected as there will inevitably be a degree of colouration by the both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind. However, as development proceeds, there will be a greater emergence of the spirit influence at the expense of the medium's own thought processes - a gracious sacrifice of the self and a yielding to the deeper thoughts of another, which is the essence of mediumship. There will always remain some colouration, but where development is balanced and ego is subdued or surpassed, this can be kept to a minimum.

A good marker of whether a spirit controlled trance state is genuine, particularly where development appears to be advanced and speech is regularly evident, is to note both the eloquence of the language employed, the contents of the subject matter being given and the flow of the communication. If the words used are barely above those normally spoken by the medium in their normal waking state or if there is a degree of hesitancy then it is likely that the communication is suffering through interference from the medium's own mind. As the seance progresses, those sitters not drawn to philosophy or to working at deeper levels of trance should occupy their time in other ways, whilst remaining still and silent and aligned to the rest of the group. Seeking clairvoyance for other members of the group is one option, as is sending out healing thoughts to those in need. Some sitters are used as 'power packs' for the rest of the group and these wonderful souls who often fail to develop to any great degree as active mediums, despite their best efforts, are some of the most valuable individuals around. For their energies are used by the spirit

guides to assist in the development of others in the group and every circle will have at least one of these people present. They are of course compensated in other ways and are often more advanced spiritually than many of their compatriots who appear to have overtaken them on the path to spiritual progress.

It should be noted that sitters who are receiving clairvoyant messages during the hour's meditation should be discouraged from 'giving off' their findings until after the quiet time has been completed and the circle leader invites each person to reveal what they have undertaken during the evening. This keeps any disruption to a minimum and avoids any disturbances which may affect other sitters who might have entered a deeper state or who are under the control of a spirit helper.

A warning here; an entranced medium should never be touched by another in the group unless invited to do so by the spirit guide. To physically touch someone who is in this state can be at the very least dangerous to their health and at the worst, fatal. Even a pin dropped, can sound like a loud thunder clap to a person in this state of trance control, so one can imagine what a physical touch might do.

At the end of the meditation, the circle leader will call the rest of the group to time. This can be done by a softly spoken command or simple request that the sitters 'come back' to full awareness. A more eloquent way however, is by thought alone and in a well attuned group the thought sent forth from the group head will be picked up by each sitter as they return to their normal waking states. This may sound implausible, but I have witnessed this myself on many occasions. Over time, even this request will probably become redundant as sitters will awaken and simultaneously open their eyes at the allotted time, much to their surprise.

It will be noted that those who have entered deeper states will take a little longer to return to normality and care should be taken to allow this to happen. If they fail to open their eyes, as sometimes occurs, the circle leader should note whether the sitter remains under spirit control and if so inform the helper that it is time to relinquish this or if this does not appear to be the case, should make a pass of the hand above the medium's head, taking care not to touch them in any way. This will have the effect of gently disturbing the auric field without imposing any harm and is similar to one person shaking another out of their slumber. Whisperings of 'time' can be uttered and after a few moments the entranced student should return to normality. If all else fails, a few loud coughs usually do the trick!

Once the entire group has regained full consciousness, the leader should ask each sitter to deliver any clairvoyance which they may have received along with any other comments concerning their experiences during the meditative hour. They in turn can be given whatever constructive comments the circle head deems appropriate along with any further guidance if needed. Whilst discipline is essential to maintain harmony and focus it is also required to prevent any unnecessary egotism or posturing which sometimes can arise within development groups of this kind. But care should be taken to retain a positive outlook within the circle as negative thoughts about mediumship are likely to produce negative results. Right thinking enhances and assists unfoldment and a good circle leader will

demonstrate fairness, discipline, wisdom, insight and confidence to the sitters. Favouritism should be avoided and all students, whatever their level of progression should be treated with equal respect. Where resentment and disharmony arise, mediumistic development can be severely hampered.

When the evening is drawing to its close and everyone has completed their work a closing prayer should be said, again by alternate group members and the proceedings brought to an end. Sitters should refrain from talking about their circle experiences to others outside of the group, even family members and endeavour to 'keep their own council' whenever possible. This is not to create an atmosphere of secrecy but simply to retain the group energies and further strengthen the group dynamic over a period of time.

The mechanics of spirit control

How exactly does a spirit helper or guide gain sufficient control of a medium to facilitate a trance state? The process is a gradual one which requires time, discipline and patience to develop. Both the guide and the medium have to learn to adapt to each other and the spirit control has to discover and implement to best ways to utilise whatever mediumistic qualities exist so that they can be honed and employed in the best way possible.

Initially, having linked with a medium, the guide will begin the process of making a more intimate connection through the unconscious or subconscious aspect of the sitter's mind with a 'thoughtflow' that can eventually emerge into the conscious mind as either inspiration, clairvoyance or controlled speech (trance). To understand more fully how this occurs, one has to consider the nature of the mind. The simple model in (Fig 2.) explains this more fully.

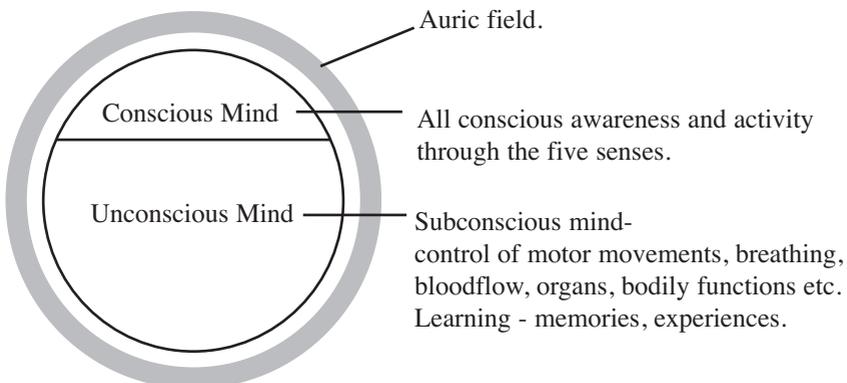


Fig.2

The reason that a spirit helper will link through the unconscious mind or as I prefer to call it 'the back door' is to avoid contamination from the conscious aspect. Also, within the realm of the unconscious mind lies the main control mechanisms of the body which the brain employs to regulate everyday functions such as breathing, blood flow, blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, motor movements and functioning of all internal organs. The unconscious mind also houses memory, language and all of our life experiences amongst its many treasures. It is amongst other things, a vast storehouse with links to every aspect of our being. It makes sense therefore, for a spirit guide to obtain some measure of control over this centre in order to then exert influence over the smaller, but in many ways more significant conscious mind.

The controlling entity will then, draw close to the medium through their auric field, blending their energies with those of the sitter before establishing a mind link with the unconscious mind and its various control centres. The medium will sometimes experience this linking through feelings of expansion, with the head area feeling as though it has ballooned to several times its size. This is the actual auric field which itself expands in meditation but does so greatly when a spirit guide links through it. (*see Fig 3*)

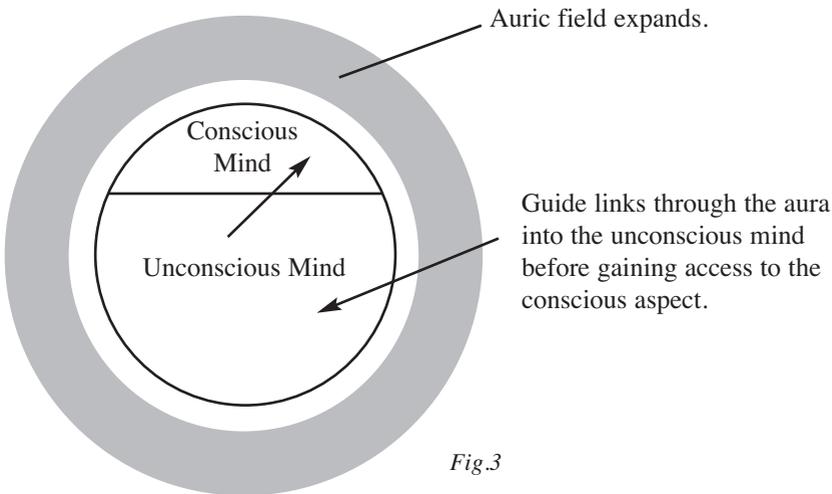


Fig.3

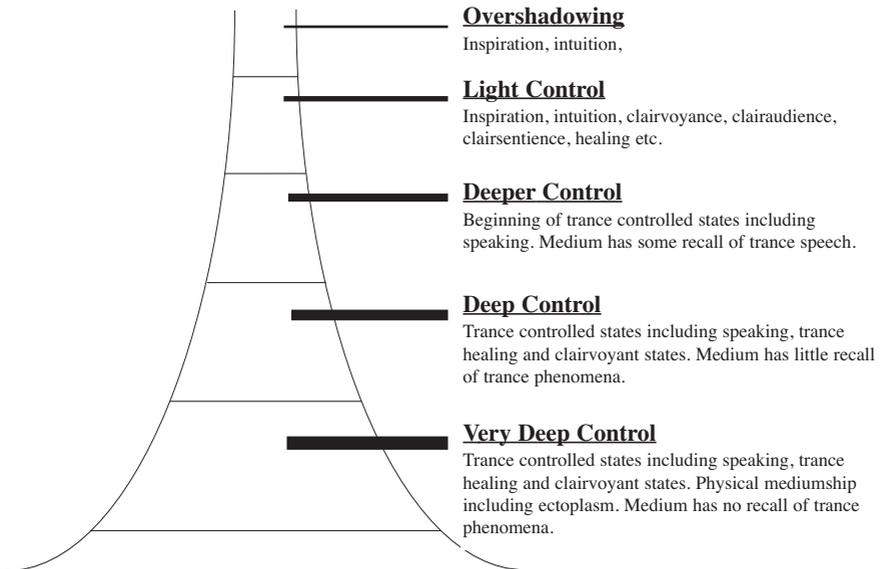
Having learned through a process of trial and error how to best work with their medium a guide (and their group) will begin working in earnest to implement whatever flow of spirit intelligence is to be directed through the instrument. In the case of trance development this will invariably be aimed at spiritual philosophy, with the thought flow from the guide being one of words and perhaps pictures. The medium will experience this firstly as 'inspiration', often mistaking it for their own thoughts and then as it gathers momentum over a period of weeks or months as a

more definite and concrete message, distinctive from their own thoughts. To aid this process spirit guides will often blend their thought directive with one which occupies the sitter's own mind before altering it to their own. For example; a sitter may be contemplating a quiet country scene and thinking about the way in which nature organises the pageant of the seasons. The spirit helper, sensing this, will join their thought flow with this before enhancing it with deeper meanings and more profound imagery. Later, providing attunement is maintained, they may change the thoughtflow into something quite different, having established sufficient rapport with their student.

Over a period of time, when both sitter and guide are more at ease with each other, the one will sense the other's presence and control will be obtained more swiftly and easily. From taking perhaps an hour or so for trance control to take place, this will now be assumed in a matter of minutes, such is the ease with which an experienced guide will entrance his medium.

One concern which is often raised regarding what can be actually classified as 'trance control' as opposed to 'inspirational speech' is the level at which the one takes over from the other. When does 'inspiration' become 'spirit control'? There seems to be much confusion over this issue and many misconceptions have arisen as to what actually constitutes 'spirit control' and what is mere 'overshadowing'. The lines are somewhat blurred and as with many aspects of the mind, which are often subjective in nature, it can be difficult to draw definitive boundaries. The illustration below (*Fig 4.*) goes some way to addressing this problem, but even this should not be thought of as absolute.

Fig 4. The River of Trance



In practice a true trance medium will fluctuate between a deep and very deep control state, with the later being conducive to a more reliable communication, although even at this level there is likely to remain some colouration from the sub-conscious mind. It is doubtful whether a pure spirit communication is achievable, for even in the most highly developed states of mediumship the mind of the medium can never be totally excluded. One hopes, that where mediums are correctly developed and spirit control can be employed to its fullest degree the amount of contamination can be kept to minimal levels.

Demonstrating in public

The question of when mediums should be permitted to publicly demonstrate their gifts, particularly in regard to trance, is debatable. The golden rule should always be one of proceeding slowly but surely rather than the current trend of 'get them on to the platform as quickly as possible'. In my own case, I sat in a development group run by a very able circle leader and trance medium, Arthur Phelps, for several years and I will always be indebted to him for his patience and wise council. He knew before I, when the time was right for me to move from the protection of the circle to the more vulnerable arena of public demonstrations.

As a guide, when a developing medium - I refrain from using the word 'fledgling', is able to demonstrate proficiently on a regular basis to the satisfaction of the group leader that they are in true communication with the spirit world, whether that be through trance, or any of the numerous other forms of mediumship, then they should be trusted to work publicly. Spiritual organisations such as the SNU and the Greater World do offer training and qualifications to help maintain standards and there is nothing wrong with this provided that it does not become a concern of the ego to become 'a qualified medium'. I know of many 'unqualified mediums', myself included, who are equal in their abilities to many so called 'International Mediums' and Spiritualist Ministers. The pages of the spiritualist press are filled with such publicity seekers. It is better is it not, to let your public and your spirit helpers be your judges, rather than those who have placed themselves upon the pedestals of fame. A medium is only as good as his or her last demonstration and as previously discussed, humility is the greatest virtue that any medium can acquire. It is hoped then, that this brief guide will be of some value to the aspiring medium. The principles discussed herein are only to be used as a guide and are open to interpretation and hopefully, improvement. For mediumship is in many ways a science and as such is open to development upon all levels. One should never consider oneself to be 'fully developed' because then there is a danger of the mind becoming closed to new ideas and ways of thinking. All mediums should be prepared to experiment and to push back the boundaries of both research and knowledge for as White Feather himself might utter, 'many pathways lead to one place'. I hope that what we have outlined in this brief chapter may find accord with you and your pathway and that it may help deliver you to the place of your

In the presence of White Feather

choosing. If that place is in serving the Great Spirit and humanity through the able demonstration of your gifts, then it has been well worthwhile. I wish you the very best in your endeavours.

Robert Goodwin

November 2004