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THE HUMAN AURA:
ASTRAL COLORS AND
THOUGHT FORMS

William Atkinson
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Colors and Thought Forms**

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William Walker Atkinson

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS THE HUMAN AURA?

The above question is frequently asked the student of occultism by some one who has heard the term but who is unfamiliar with its meaning. Simple as the question may seem, it is by no means easy to answer it, plainly and clearly in a few words, unless the hearer already has a general acquaintance with the subject of occult science. Let us commence at the beginning, and consider the question from the point of view of the person who has just heard the term for the first time.

The dictionaries define the word aura as: "Any subtle, invisible emanation or exhalation." The English authorities, as a rule, attribute the origin of the word to a Latin term meaning "air," but the Hindu authorities insist that it had its origin in the Sanscrit root *Ar*, meaning the spoke of a wheel, the significance being perceived when we remember the fact that the human aura radiates from the body of the individual in a manner similar to

the radiation of the spokes of a wheel from the hub thereof. The Sanscrit origin of the term is the one preferred by occultists, although it will be seen that the idea of an aerial emanation, indicated by the Latin root, is not foreign to the real significance of the term.

Be the real origin of the term what it may, the idea of the human aura is one upon which all occultists are in full agreement and harmony, and the mention of which is found in all works upon the general subject of occultism. So we shall begin by a consideration of the main conception thereof, as held by all advanced occultists, ancient and modern, omitting little points of theoretical variance between the different schools.

Briefly, then, the human aura may be described as a fine, ethereal radiation or emanation surrounding each and every living human being. It extends from two to three feet, in all directions, from the body. It assumes an oval shape—a great egg-shaped nebula surrounding the body on all sides for a distance of two or three feet. This aura is sometimes referred to, in ordinary terms, as the "psychic atmosphere" of a person, or as his "magnetic atmosphere."

This atmosphere or aura is apparent to a large percentage of persons in the sense of the psychic awareness generally called "feeling," though the term is not a clear one. The majority of persons are more or less aware of that subtle something about the personality of others, which can be sensed or felt in a clear though unusual way when the other persons are near by, even

though they may be out of the range of the vision. Being outside of the ordinary range of the five senses, we are apt to feel that there is something queer or uncanny about these feelings of projected personality. But every person, deep in his heart, knows them to be realities and admits their effect upon his impressions regarding the persons from whom they emanate. Even small children, infants even, perceive this influence, and respond to it in the matter of likes and dislikes.

But, human testimony regarding the existence and character of the human aura does not stop with the reports of the psychic senses to which we have just referred. There are many individuals of the race—a far greater percentage than is generally imagined—who have the gift of psychic sight more or less developed. Many persons have quite a well-developed power of this kind, who do not mention it to their acquaintances for fear of ridicule, or of being thought "queer." In addition to these persons, there are here and there to be found well-developed, clear-sighted, or truly clairvoyant persons, whose powers of psychic perception are as highly developed as are the ordinary senses of the average individual. And, the reports of these persons, far apart in time and space though they may be, have always agreed on the main points of psychic phenomena, particularly in regards to the human aura.

To the highly developed clairvoyant vision, every human being is seen as surrounded by the egg-shaped aura of two or three feet in depth, more dense and thick in the portion nearest the

body, and then gradually becoming more tenuous, thin and indistinct as the distance from the body is increased. By the psychic perception, the aura is seen as a luminous cloud—a phosphorescent flame—deep and dense around the centre and then gradually shading into indistinctness toward the edges. As a matter of fact, as all developed occultists know, the aura really extends very much further than even the best clairvoyant vision can perceive it, and its psychic influence is perceptible at quite a distance in many cases. In this respect it is like any flame on the physical plane—it gradually fades into indistinctness, its rays persisting far beyond the reach of the vision, as may be proved by means of chemical apparatus, etc.

To the highly developed clairvoyant vision, the human aura is seen to be composed of all the colors of the spectrum, the combinations of colors differing in various persons, and constantly shifting in the case of every person. These colors reflect the mental (particularly the emotional) states of the person in whose aura they are manifested. Each mental state has its own particular combination formed from the few elementary colors which represent the elementary mental conditions. As the mind is ever shifting and changing its states, it follows that there will ever be a corresponding series of shifting changes in the colors of the human aura.

The shades and colors of the aura present an ever changing kaleidoscopic spectacle, of wonderful beauty and most interesting character. The trained occultist is able to read the

character of any person, as well as the nature of his passing thoughts and feelings, by simply studying the shifting colors of his aura. To the developed occultist the mind and character become as an open book, to be studied carefully and intelligently.

Even the student of occultism, who has not been able to develop the clairvoyant vision to such a high degree, is soon able to develop the sense of psychic perception whereby he is able to at least "feel" the vibrations of the aura, though he may not see the colors, and thus be able to interpret the mental states which have caused them. The principle is of course the same, as the colors are but the outward appearance of the vibrations themselves, just as the ordinary colors on the physical plane are merely the outward manifestation of vibration of matter.

But it must not be supposed that the human aura is always perceived in the appearance of a luminous cloud of ever-changing color. When we say that such is its characteristic appearance, we mean it in the same sense that we describe the ocean as a calm, deep body of greenish waters. We know, however, that at times the ocean presents no such appearance, but, instead, is seen as rising in great mountainous waves, white capped, and threatening the tiny vessels of men with its power. Or again, we may define the word "flame" in the sense of a steady bright stream of burning gas, whereas, we know only too well, that the word also indicates the great hot tongues of fiery force that stream out from the windows of a burning building, and lick to destruction all with which it comes in contact.

So it is with the human aura. At times it may be seen as a beautiful, calm, luminous atmosphere, presenting the appearance of a great opal under the rays of the sun. Again, it blazes like the flames of a great furnace, shooting forth great tongues of fire in this direction and that, rising and falling in great waves of emotional excitement, or passion, or perhaps whirling like a great fiery maelstrom toward its centre, or swirling in an outward movement away from its centre. Again it may be seen as projecting from its depths smaller bodies or centres of mental vibration, which like sparks from a furnace detach themselves from the parent flame, and travel far away in other directions—these are the projected thought-forms of which all occultists are fond of speaking and which make plain many strange psychic occurrences.

So, it will be seen, the human aura is a very important and interesting phase of the personality of every individual. The psychic phase of man is as much the man himself as is the physical phase—the complete man being made up of the two phases. Man invisible is as much the real man as is man visible. As the finer forms of nature are always the most powerful, so is the psychic man more potent than the physical man.

In this book, I speak of the human aura, and its colors, as being perceived by astral or clairvoyant vision, for this is the way in which it is perceived and studied by the occultist. The occult teaching is that, in the evolution of the race, this astral vision will eventually become the common property of every human being

—it so exists even now, and needs only development to perfect it.

But modern physical science is today offering corroborative proof (though the same is not needed by the occultist who has the astral vision) to the general public, of the existence of the human aura. In Europe, especially, a number of scientists have written on the subject of the aura, and have described the result of the experiments in which the aura has been perceived, and even photographed, by means of fluorescent screens, such as are used in taking X-Ray photographs, etc. Leading authorities in England, France, and still more recently, in Germany, have reported the discovery (!) of a nebulous, hazy, radio-active energy or substance, around the body of human beings. In short, they now claim that every human being is radio-active, and that the auric radiation may be registered and perceived by means of a screen composed of certain fluorescent material, interposed between the eye of the observer, and the person observed.

This aura, so discovered (!) by the scientists, is called by them the "human atmosphere," and is classified by them as similar to the radiations of other radio-active substances, radium, for instance. They have failed to discover color in this atmosphere, however, and know nothing, apparently, of the relation between auric colors and mental and emotional states, which are so familiar to every advanced occultist. I mention this fact merely as a matter of general interest and information to the student, and not as indicating, even in the slightest degree, any idea on my part that the old occult teaching, and the observed phenomena

accompanying the same, regarding the human aura, require any proof or backing up on the part of material scientists. On the contrary, I feel that material science should feel flattered by the backing up by occult science of the new discovery (!) of the "human atmosphere." A little later on, material science may also discover (!) the auric colors, and announce the same to the wondering world, as a new truth.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRANA-AURA

Many writers on the subject of the human aura content themselves with a description of the colors of the mental or emotional aura, and omit almost any reference whatsoever to the basic substance or power of the aura. This is like the play of Hamlet, with the character of Hamlet omitted, for, unless we understand something concerning the fundamental substance of which the aura is composed, we cannot expect to arrive at a clear understanding of the phenomena which arises from and by reason of the existence of this fundamental substance. We might as well expect a student to understand the principles of color, without having been made acquainted with the principles of light.

The fundamental substance of which the human aura is composed is none other than that wonderful principle of nature of which one reads so much in all occult writings, which has been called by many names, but which is perhaps best known under the Sanscrit term, *Prana*, but which may be thought of as Vital Essence, Life Power, etc.

It is not necessary in this book to go into the general consideration of the nature and character of Prana. It is sufficient for us to consider it in its manifestation of Vital Force, Life Essence, etc. In its broadest sense, Prana really is the Principle of

Energy in Nature, but in its relation to living forms it is the Vital Force which lies at the very basis of manifested Life. It exists in all forms of living things, from the most minute microscopic form up to living creatures on higher planes, as much higher than man as man is higher than the simple microscopic life-forms. It permeates them all, and renders possible all life activity and functioning.

Prana is not the mind or the soul, but is rather the force or energy through which the soul manifests activity, and the mind manifests thought. It is the steam that runs the physical and mental machinery of life. It is the substance of the human aura, and the colors of mental states are manifested in that substance, just as the colors of chemical bodies are manifested in the substance of water. But Prana is not material substance—it is higher than mere matter, being the underlying substance of Energy or Force in Nature.

While it is true, as we have seen, that all auras are composed of the substance of Prana, it is likewise true that there is a simple and elementary form of auric substance to which occultists have given the simple name of the prana-aura in order to distinguish it from the more complex forms and phases of the human aura. The simplicity of the character of the prana-aura causes it to be more readily sensed or perceived than is possible in the case of the more complex phases or forms of the aura. For whereas it is only the more sensitive organisms that can distinguish the finer vibrations of the mental and emotional aura, and only the

clairvoyant sight which can discern its presence by its colors, almost any person, by a little careful experimenting, may become aware of the presence of the prana-aura, not only in the way of "feeling" it, but in many cases of actually seeing it with the ordinary vision rightly directed.

That which is known as the prana-aura is of course the most simple form or phase of the human aura. It is the form or phase which is more closely bound up with the physical body, and is less concerned with the mental states. This fact has caused some writers to speak of it as the "health aura," or "physical aura," both of which terms are fittingly applied as we shall see, although we prefer the simpler term we have used here, i. e., the prana-aura. For the prana-aura does show the state of the health of the individual radiating it, and it also really contains physical power and magnetism which may be, and is imparted to others.

The basic prana-aura is practically colorless, that is to say, it is about the color of the clearest water or a very clear diamond. By the clairvoyant vision it is seen to be streaked or marked by very minute, bristle-like lines, radiating outward from the physical body of the individual, in a manner very like "the quills upon the fretful porcupine," as Shakespeare puts it. In the case of excellent physical health, these bristle-like streaks are stiff and brittle-looking, whereas, if the general health of the person be deficient these bristle-like radiations seem to be more or less tangled, twisted, or curly; and, in some cases present a drooping appearance, and in extreme cases present the appearance of soft,

limp fur.

It may interest the student to know that minute particles of this prana-aura, or vital magnetism, is sloughed off the body in connection with physical exhalations such as scent, etc., and remain in existence for some time after the person has passed from the particular place at which they were cast off. In fact, as all occultists know, it is these particles of the prana-aura which serve to give vitality to the "scent" of living creatures, which enables dogs and other animals to trace up the track of the person, or animal, for a long time after the person has passed. It is not alone the physical odor, which must be very slight as you will see upon a moment's consideration. It is really the presence of the particles of the prana-aura which enables the dog to distinguish the traces of one person among that of thousands of others, and the feat is as much psychical as physical.

Another peculiarity of the prana-aura is that it is filled with a multitude of extremely minute sparkling particles, resembling tiny electric sparks, which are in constant motion. These sparks, which are visible to persons of only slightly developed psychic power, impart a vibratory motion to the prana-aura which, under certain conditions is plainly visible to the average person. This vibratory movement is akin to the movement of heated air arising from a hot stove, or from the heated earth on a mid-summer day.

If the student will close his eyes partially, until he peers out from narrowed lids, and then will closely observe some very healthy person sitting in a dim light, he may perceive this

undulating, pulsing vibration extending an inch or two from the surface of the body. It requires some little knack to recognize these vibrations, but a little practice will often give one the key; and after the first recognition, the matter becomes easy.

Again, in the case of persons of active brains, one may perceive this pulsating prana-aura around the head of the person, particularly when he is engaged in concentrated active thought. A little practice will enable almost any one to perceive faintly the dim outlines of the prana-aura around his own fingers and hand, by placing his hand against a black background, in a dim light, and then gazing at it with narrowed eye-lids, squinting if necessary. Under these circumstances, after a little practice, one will be apt to perceive a tiny outlined aura, or radiation, or halo, of pale yellowish light surrounding the hand.

By extending the fingers, fan shape, you will perceive that each finger is showing its own little outlined prana-aura. The stronger the vital force, the plainer will be the perception of the phenomenon. Often the prana-aura, in these experiments, will appear like the semi-luminous radiance surrounding a candle flame or gas light. Under the best conditions, the radiation will assume an almost phosphorescent appearance. Remember, this is simply a matter of trained ordinary sight,—not clairvoyant vision.

This prana-aura is identical with human magnetism, which is employed in ordinary magnetic healing. That is to say it is the outer manifestation of the wonderful pranic force. It is felt

when you shake hands, or otherwise come in close physical contact with a strongly magnetic person. On the other hand it is what the weakly, human vampire-like persons unconsciously, or consciously, try to draw off from strong persons, if the latter allow them so to do from want of knowledge of self protection. Who has not met persons of this kind, who seem to sap one's very life force away from him? Remember, then, that the prana-aura is the aura or radiation of life force, or vital power, which is the steam of your living activity, physical and mental. It is the pouring out of the vital "steam" which is running your vital machinery. Its presence indicates Life—its absence Lifelessness

CHAPTER III.

THE ASTRAL COLORS

The term "astral," so frequently employed by all occultists, is difficult to explain or define except to those who have pursued a regular course of study in occult science. For the purpose of the present consideration, it is enough to say that over and above the ordinary physical sense plane there is another and more subtle plane, known as the Astral Plane. Every human being possesses the innate and inherent faculty of sensing the things of this astral plane, by means of an extension or enlargement of the powers of the ordinary senses, so to speak. But, in the majority of persons in the present stage of development, these astral senses are lying dormant, and only here and there do we find individuals who are able to sense on the astral plane, although in the course of evolution the entire race will be able to do so, of course. The colors of the human aura, mentioned in the preceding two chapters, and which arise from the various mental and emotional states, belong to the phenomena of the astral plane, and hence bear the name of "the astral colors." Belonging to the astral plane, and not to the ordinary physical plane, they are perceived only by the senses functioning on the astral plane, and are invisible to the ordinary physical plane sight. But, to those who have developed the astral sight, or clairvoyance, these colors are as real as are the

ordinary colors to the average person, and their phenomena have been as carefully recorded by occult science as have the physical plane colors by physical science. The fact that to the ordinary physical senses they are invisible, does not render them any the less real. Remember, in this connection, that to the blind man our physical colors do not exist. And, for that matter, the ordinary colors do not exist to "color blind" persons. The ordinary physical plane person is simply "color blind" to the astral colors—that's all.

On the astral plane each shade of mental or emotional state has its corresponding astral color, the latter manifesting when the form appears. It follows then, of course, that when once the occultist has the key to this color correspondence, and thus is able to perceive the astral colors by means of his astral vision, he also is able to read the mental and emotional states of any person within the range of his vision, as easily as you are now reading the printed words of this book.

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