



# Stargroup Meditation

*A vehicle for exploring and working with  
the collective mind*

*Tarchin Hearn*

***Stargroup Meditation***

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### *Preface to the 2022 edition*

This booklet was mostly written between 1979 and 1984 at which time it was shared in the form of typewritten notes. In early 1980s we started "Sphere Publications" which eventually became "Wangapeka Books" and in 1988 we published a coil bound A4 version of the notes. By then I was doing a lot of travelling and teaching and the circumstances were no longer favourable for me to actively continue these explorations which ideally require the consistent presence of a dedicated group of five people.

In April 2022 John Munroe and Iain Verigin contacted me to ask about sharing these notes with people in various places around the world who were embarking on Stargroup Meditation for peace. John had a copy of the original 1988 edition which he scanned and shared with Iain and a few others. Iain rendered the PDF into a word processing document with the idea of making it more widely available. On re-reading it, (I hadn't looked at these notes for many years.) I initially thought that it needed re-writing, as some of the wording, metaphors and emphasises no longer reflect the way I understand and approach the practice and exploration of dharma. In the end, however, I decided to leave the text relatively unchanged as it does still seem to touch people in positive ways, and it gives a sense of historic context for those who are interested in those early experimental days of studying with Namgyal Rinpoche.

### *Acknowledgements to the 1988 Edition*

I want to thank members of the stargroups that I have worked with, and also all the people who have shared with me observations from their stargroup experiences. This has greatly shaped the contents of this booklet, especially the later half. Thanks also go to the beings who helped with the preparation and publishing. Most importantly, I want to express my appreciation to the Ven. Namgyal Rinpoche who in 1974 travelled to the Peruvian Andes with forty students and unfolded the vision of stargroup work. May this booklet further the adventures begun then.

## A New Frontier

One of my favourite television programmes of the last twenty years has been Star Trek. The part I always liked was the beginning and end of each episode when they showed the Starship Enterprise slowly diminishing in size as it accelerated through a vast matrix of stars. Accompanied with spacey pings and beeps there was a feeling of excitement and enormous possibility. Then a voice would announce the mission of the Enterprise; to explore new worlds, to seek new life forms and to go where no (*hu*)man has ever gone before. This would always resonate something deep within me, a sense that life is a great unknown and that all our activities are potentially an adventure of discovery.

Today, many people lack this sense of adventure in their lives. Everest has been climbed; the oceans have been probed. Virtually all the places on this planet have been so explored that when you do travel to, or investigate areas that are personally new, there is always the sense that someone has done it before. It's such a different world today than just 100 years ago. Explorers of new continents didn't carry credit cards or traveller's cheques so that if they lost their supplies they could go to the nearest office for an instant refund.

Pioneering always carried an element of risk. You might not survive, or you may not get the expected answer or solution to your searching. But there was always the possibility of discovering things that were absolutely new and amazing. Not only was there personal adventure but there was also the chance of uncovering things or ideas that would change the shape of history: adventure, discovery and sharing.

I think there is a terrible illness affecting the wealthy world of today. It infects children at an early age, tightening its grip on them up to their mid twenties whereupon it becomes terminal. Then they pass it on to their children. Its symptoms are ones of absence; absence of vision, absence of the sense that life is an open adventure of discovery and possibility. Basically, this is a disease of the spirit, a dullness that comes from living with a future that seems narrow and only too predictable.

In young people especially, there is a feeling that there is no meaningful adventure or exploration that they can personally enter into.

You can sit at home and watch Jacques Cousteau at the bottom of the ocean, or David Attenborough in a New Guinean jungle, or astronauts walking on the moon. It took tens of thousands of scientists and technicians, most of whom were engaged in rather dull, repetitive research, to get seventeen men to the moon. There seem to be no new frontiers to be explored without millions of dollars of back-up. This state has led to an attitude of feeling overwhelmed by life's circumstances. Today there aren't even any 'colonies' to run off to, to begin a new life. The population of this planet is growing in leaps and bounds. There are few empty spaces and people are asking "How can little me do anything significant in this world?"

The Star Trek mission is really the human mission. Unfortunately it has become buried in lives of conformity, ego role playing, one-upmanship and above all, the attempt to render the future free from all uncertainty. We have collectively traded the spirit of adventure and the risky business of discovering the new, for a desperate grab at security and averageness. The age of the individual pioneer-discoverer seems to be ending. Perhaps though, we are embarking on a new age; the age of the collective adventure.

Stargroup work is an unusual form of exploration. It is genuinely new work. It is a challenge; frontier work. It is really the work of the future. It is an opportunity to enter new dimensions of experience and requires no expensive equipment. It carries the risk of meeting with the unknown because, apart from some general instructions to begin with, the stargroup must feel its own way, guided by each member's honesty, integrity, overall calm and strength of question. As you embark on this exploration, you might feel the excitement of participating in a project at the newest frontier; a frontier where there is more unknown than known, where the routes are mostly uncharted, and dragons of the depth may threaten the enterprise, though treasure

of unimaginable value could possibly be found. We are speaking of the frontier of the collective mind.



Stargroup meditation grew out of the Western Mystery Schools. A form of it was practiced in England during the late nineteenth century through the White Eagle Lodge. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, was reputedly involved in this work. The purpose of the stargroup is to facilitate a study and exploration of three major themes. In general, the overall task is to evaluate the difference between the power and energy of the individual mind and the collective or group mind. What is the feel of the group mind? Is it more than the sum of its parts? Does it have work to do? Can the members of the group contact and direct or participate in its activities? The stargroup gives an opportunity to evaluate these themes in a rigorous manner.

In addition to this, the stargroup can be a vehicle of healing, both for the participants and for people at a distance. Today, many similar forms of group meditation are practised although they often lack the detailed reporting and evaluating of experience that comes at the end of a stargroup session. Once the stargroup begins to function well, the third area that comes into focus is the possibility of projecting consciousness into other dimensions of experience. Is it possible to travel to other planets; to communicate with extraterrestrial beings; to probe the consciousness of plants and animals?

Stargroups are an opportunity to participate in work that is meaningful, exciting and of great value to the planet. It is an opportunity to get a glimpse of where mankind will be a few hundred years from now. These are the early steps of an exploration that will lead humanity to a new level of understanding. With this in mind you should approach this work with great energy and enthusiasm.

## General Considerations

Five people is the best number to work with in a Stargroup. If you don't have five, experiment with however many you do have and see what you can discover about group dynamics. Experience has shown that odd-numbered groups tend to be more dynamic than even numbered ones. Less than four and you'll have discomfort linking hands. Also it begins to lose the richness that a larger number brings to it. Once you have seven or more you'll find the time taken reporting is rather long. Five seems optimal.

If you have the opportunity, try different combinations of people. For instance, you could have a group of similar aged, same sex, similar interest people. On the other hand, you could try working with a very diverse group; wide age range and diverse interests. The different compositions of people will support different types and qualities of exploration. Over a number of years you may get the opportunity to uncover the patterns behind this.

In the course of this work the members of the group will get to know each other in a very deep way. It is important that each person have a sense of warmth and openness towards the others. Very strong emotional attachments of either positive or negative flavour will sometimes unbalance the group. Aim for a state of easeful detachment imbued with loving-kindness. Ideally you should be looking for a group of people that individually appreciate their strengths. In daily life, they stand on their own feet. They come together, not to lean on each other, but to explore collectively into the new.

A last consideration here is time commitment. To do deep work you must form your stargroup from people who will attend regularly. This work requires commitment to others, a rare commodity in this time. You could sit with a changing number of people each week and still bring about healing. But to do evaluation work and to uncover the patterns of the collective mind, you must meet with the same group

over a period of time. I know of some stargroups that have sat together for years. I also have participated in stargroups that have been very fruitful explorations though we met no more than sixteen times. Speaking very practically, there is enough challenge in the exploration of a smoothly operating stargroup. Don't load yourself with problems of broken commitments. It may be better to have a small group that really wants to do this work than to try to include and please everyone. Once the stargroup is going you may want to keep it closed for a time to facilitate clearer study.



Stargroup meditation differs from individual meditation in that you have a responsibility not just to yourself, but to the others in the group as well. Here are a few aspects to keep in mind.

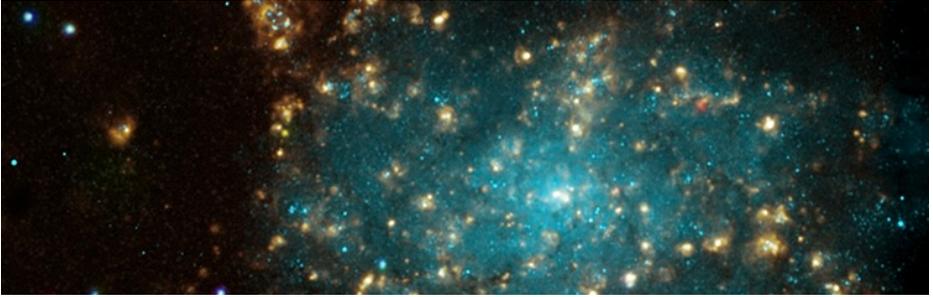
### ***Environment***

Try to meet in an environment that is clean and spacious and as free as possible from noise and distractions. If you sit inside, be sure to have some windows open for fresh air. Avoid stuffy, smoky and too warm places as this tends to dull the exploration. Ideally, find a place that is a pleasure to be in; a place that feels supportive and also encourages a free ranging mind. If the weather is good, sitting outside in nature can be a very fruitful experience.

### ***Preparation***

In addition to being a meditative exploration, a stargroup is also a time of deep communion and sharing. Each member should try to bring their best to the session. Treat the work as something special. Make a break between the daily activities and the stargroup by having a shower or bath and putting on loose fitting clothing. This will not only make you feel fresher but it will show the others that you value this work and wish to bring lightness and freshness to the session. Before

coming together, spend a bit of time contacting the mind of loving-kindness. Don't bring the worries and cares of the day to this work. Bring a fresh, clean body and an open, loving mind. (See the appendix for two methods of developing loving-kindness.)



## A Session of Stargroup Practice

To make the stargroup meditation easier to learn and to help you avoid leaving any parts out, the meditation is presented in twelve steps. With experience you will find that these steps flow quite naturally, one into the other.

### ***Step 1. Physical Exercise***

Do some vigorous stretching exercises and get the knots out of the physical system. Let the movement be pleasurable and work with it until the heartbeat and breathing has deepened. A lot of negativity and tension can be released in this way.

### ***Step 2. Posture***

In the stargroup you will be linking hands, so it will be most comfortable if everyone sits at the same height. Generally speaking, it

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is best to use straight backed chairs, but if all the people prefer to sit cross-legged on cushions then this is fine. The most important thing is that you feel relaxed. Whether you are in chairs or on the ground, form a close circle so that your knees are just about touching. If you are in a chair, sit with your back straight and your feet flat on the ground, about shoulder width apart. You want to feel very stable and solid on your seat.

Try putting a two inch wedge of padding under your tailbone and this will tilt the pelvis and throw your back upright with very little effort. Fold your hands in your lap or place one on each thigh and then quietly and sensitively become aware of your posture. Feel your way into the body. All kinds of messages are resounding. What are they saying? Are they speaking of relaxation and alertness? Does your body feel vibrant and balanced? If not, shift a bit and find a posture that does.

### ***Step 3. Breathing and Relaxing***

Take four or five full inhalations and exhalations and then allow the attention to rest on the breathing as it finds its natural level. Become very still and feel the texture of the breath.

Sense the beginning of the in-breath, the body of the in-breath and the end of the in-breath. Sense the beginning of the out-breath, the body of the out breath and the end of the out-breath. Sink right into the breath and be carried by it. When thoughts arise, note them but don't pursue them. On each out-breath allow the muscles to relax and gradually settle into a quiet state.

Occasionally you may feel a need to further deepen the positive quality of mind. A simple way to do this is to recollect a situation or experience from your life that was very positive in tone. Bring it clearly to the mind's eye. You can draw on any experience for this.

It could be a scene from nature, an activity, an interpersonal involvement, anything that brings forth good feelings. Using your creative imagination, enter into this and feel the positive effect,

especially as it resonates in your body. Immerse yourself in the good. This will bring you to a state that is calm, clear, bright and ready to move to the next step.

#### ***Step 4. Aspiration - Question***

It is important to formulate a question or to state your aspiration at the beginning of each session. Too often people approach meditation with the idea that it consists of sinking into some floaty state and remaining there, vaguely hoping for something marvellous to happen. This drift may provide a needed rest for the first few times but eventually it ends up being an escape into a kind of self hypnotic sleep. Meditation is a work of focussed exploration. It involves bringing the mind again and again to a particular theme in order to deepen one's experience and insight. Two aspects are necessary for good meditation; calm and question. The calm allows the depth mind to use this question-probe to reveal new directions. Essentially all you have to do is to pose the question, enter into a calm focussed state and trust that the mind will spontaneously turn to the theme.

When stating your aspiration you may find it to be a two levelled affair. First state your personal aspiration in an overall sense. What am I living for? Why am I doing this work? Let it be big - to develop wisdom and compassion; to awaken speedily for the sake of others. Whatever it is, hold it in the mind and see if you can feel the strength and determination resonating right down into your body.

A second level of aspiration may arise in the form of a question posed by the stargroup. What do we want to explore in this particular session? You may have spent a few moments before the sitting deciding or clarifying this theme. Silently reaffirm it to yourself and feel the effect it has on you. Eventually the group will find that experiences arising in one sitting will set the question for the next one.

#### ***Step 5. Linkup***

Now lightly join the palms of your hands; the left palm facing up in the position of receiving and the right one facing down in the position of giving. In this work you don't grasp the hand but just allow the palms

to make gentle contact. Sometimes people experience a lot of strain in the shoulders from holding the arms too high. You can eliminate a lot of this by lowering your hands and letting the shoulders drop. It may be a good idea to begin with your hands at about knee level. Sometimes we begin by resting the joined hands on alternate knees, for instance your right hand on the right person's left knee. Eventually though, when the energy of the session has begun to build, the arms and hands may feel so light that they begin to float up by themselves. When this takes place there is no effort to hold the hands anywhere. Let the arms be loose and if they begin to move, allow them to do so. Imagine the stargroup like an undersea creature with all its tentacles slowly moving in the energy currents. The physical contact is something each group must explore and eventually find what works best for them.

If the members of the group are very closely linked, you may find that they can do stargroup work without actually holding hands. At this stage the group may meet without even being in the same room. At the beginning though, the physical contact helps to forge a stronger link.

### ***Step 6. Hollow Body***

While gently noting the breathing, allow the awareness to spread to your whole body. Be-know-aware-feel the body as one piece; feet, legs, abdomen, chest, arms, hands, neck, head, they are all connected. Study the way the breathing moves the body, and the body affects the breathing. As you become quieter, you will begin to perceive this in terms of energy movement. This is very subtle work. As you sink into the body, feel that it is becoming completely hollow. This feeling of hollowness or emptiness strengthens until it is present from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. It has a quality of lightness and freedom. See if you can taste the hollowness. Study it and the breathing very closely until you are quietly absorbed. As this deepens you may realise that your attention has dropped down from the head area and has become centred somewhere in the abdomen. Hollowness, Lightness, Breathing, Stillness!

### ***Step 7. The Blue Light***

Now, without losing the hollowness, imagine that above the group at the ceiling or even higher is a diamond blue light. This is a living light; electric blue or blue-white or like a radiant cornflower blue sapphire. Throw your mind up to the blue light. This light is the most basic focus for stargroup work. For the remainder of the session hold the mind in the light. If thoughts come or if your attention wanders, gently note this and bring the mind back to the light.

The biggest hindrance that you may have to face in this work is that of inner dialogue. By this I mean an inner conversation or running commentary which distances you from the direct experience of the moment. It often serves the purpose of revving you up especially if you feel a bit dull. The whole meditation then moves from being a study of what is, to a speculating about what might be. You'll probably find that when this does take place, your body will gradually feel uncomfortable and an overall agitation will be born. If you find this happening, straighten your posture, remember your aspiration, and re-contact the blue light.

See if you can be very still. Allow the quiet to deepen, and study or observe the phenomena that arise. Simply let the mind be open and record. In particular, note the body feelings, the energy movements, the overall quality of the mind as well as any phenomena that may arise in the body of experience. Immerse yourself in breathing, hollowness and blue light until the end of the session.

### ***Step 8. Ending the Session***

A stargroup usually sits for fifty five minutes which, when you allow five minutes for review, is a one hour sitting. You may wish to make it a bit shorter though, if the people find it too long. Eventually, the group may want to sit for more than an hour, possibly up to two. However long you decide, have someone time the session and when it is over they could say "time".

It is important to end the session in an orderly fashion; to seal it so that the energies don't dissipate. Although there are many ways to do this

and you may even wish to invent your own, the following method works very well. When you hear the word “time”, keep your hands in contact but gradually let go of the experience that is happening at that moment. As soon as you are able, begin to do the mantra and visualisation of Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva means Diamond Being and it refers to the unshakable diamond clear state of consciousness, ‘the light that lighteth every being into the world’. This is a meditation from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition which clears the unwholesome and leads to contacting the diamond state of mind. Vajrasattva is the essence of non-clinging awareness.

A very simple form of this is to imagine a crystal waterfall of light descending from the blue light. This diamond lightfall enters the crown of your head and pours down through your body, dissolving any residues of clinging. Gradually the light fills your body until your whole experience is living crystal light. As you visualise this you can murmur the mantra Om Vajrasattva Hum. Say it audibly and allow the mantra and visualisation to merge. When you can hear all the others saying the mantra, then as a group you let go of the meditation and very gently and awarely break contact with your hands. Bring your hands together in your lap and sit quietly for a moment with your eyes open and then begin your review. Ending the stargroup in this way becomes a kind of consecration that seals the experience. It also ensures that everyone is ready to break contact and that no-one is left hanging with a feeling of incompleteness.

Occasionally people experience a bit of anxiety that they might go so far in the meditation that they won’t be able to get back. This method of sealing the work ensures that everyone is grounded in the room, on their chairs at the end of the session. Hearing the mantra being said by the others often helps to bring people back when they don’t hear the word “time”. You will value this part of the meditation the further you go with the stargroup work. It is a sealer and safety net.

### ***Step 9. Review***

After you have broken contact then spend whatever time is necessary reviewing the session. This is not supposed to be a picky analysis but simply a review; a viewing it again. If you are new to this work it is useful to review in the light of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Firstly, what happened in the physical body; loosening, tightening, temperature changes, shaking, what ever. Then review feelings; the ebb and flow of likes, dislikes and neutrality. Then review the states of mind. This refers to the overall flavour of the mind in the midst of the experience. Emotions usually come into this category, happy, sad, angry, confused, clear, etc. Finally, review the fourth category which is the phenomena, or what happened. This really includes everything that wasn't covered in the first three categories. It may include things seen, heard or smelt on the inner plane; insights and intuitions, anything of interest.

Reviewing in the light of these four categories will provide a framework that brings more detail and clarity to your work. If you are doing a rigorous stargroup over a period of time, it may be useful to write out your review so that you have the details to report later. (The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are clearly expounded in 'The Heart of Buddhist Meditation' by Nyanaponika Thera.)

### ***Step 10. Re-state Aspiration***

When you have finished your review, then again internally state your aspiration. You may discover that it is different than it was at the beginning. Simply bring it to mind and feel it throughout the body. This new statement may then be your aspiration for the next time you do this work.

### ***Step 11. Reporting***

The reporting of your experiences to the group is the aspect most unique to stargroup work. Before beginning this, you may wish to stand up and stretch but don't get into talking. When you are all ready, then you can begin to report. The main purpose of the reporting is to find out which experiences were shared by the group and which were

of a more individual nature. One at a time, describe the main features of your experience. Try to be brief and succinct and avoid getting into speculation about what something might mean. Simply describe what occurred. The rest of the group just listens quietly without comment. They may however jot down on a piece of paper aspects which they feel correspond to their own experience. After everyone has finished reporting the group can make a list of similarities; four people experienced this, three that and five the other. As the Stargroup sits together more often they will develop greater skills in reporting. The most important thing to keep in mind is for the reporter to speak from the heart, from the feeling of the experience and not to get carried away in intellectual speculation. The listeners should listen attentively and sympathetically without comment. They could encourage the reporter to speak if they are reticent and remind them to stay on track if they are getting carried away with excess verbiage.

### ***Step 12. Sharing the Merit***

At the very end collectively aspire that whatever positive energy has arisen through doing this work may be for the good of all beings. At this point the Stargroup session is finished.



## Further Considerations

A very interesting question arises after being involved with stargroups for some time. Do stargroups progress or develop according to predictable patterns or laws? In one group that I explored with in Canada, we identified seven possible stages of development. It is very early days for stargroups to be defining stages. There needs to be a lot more exploration. Our first three stages seem to correspond to the experience of many other groups though the remaining four are more speculative. We'll look at them here, not to define where the stargroup should go but to raise questions for your own exploration. I would be interested to hear from you as to your experiences in stargroup growth and development.

### *Stage 1. Communication*

The first stage of stargroup work involves communication; getting to know each other in a much deeper way. A level of trust needs to exist within the group so that there is less inhibition in reporting and more confidence to let go into experience. Learning how to report and how to evaluate the reports of others requires setting aside a lot of ego game playing. It helps to periodically remind yourself that this is a new area of exploration, an opportunity to discover many new things and to communicate and share with others in a very deep way. It destroys the whole purpose of the stargroup if it becomes yet another place to prove yourself to others.

The problem comes down to one of comparison and conceit. The ancient teachings describe three types of conceit that must be transcended for complete awakening. The first is the conceit of thinking that I am better than or greater than someone or something'. This is the ego strutter who often lives with hidden fears of failure. The second conceit, equally widespread but not so often recognised, is the conceit of thinking 'I am worse than or less than someone or something. This is the person who walks through life believing that

they are the most incompetent or lowly creature in existence. They identify with struggle and are often afraid of success. The conceit of equality is the third one. I am equal to. Neither hot nor cold, they reduce everything to a lukewarm middle. Of the three, these are the most controlled, constantly measuring everything to make sure that no-one gets more or less than their share.

All three conceits are based on comparison and are a real hindrance to stargroup reporting. While concerned with what others will think of you, you fluctuate between jealousy and defence and are then blind to what is really happening. The more rapidly you can recognise this tendency and drop it, the more rapidly the stargroup will develop. Aspire to be a scientist, an investigator of natural law and make your report without embellishments and without diminutions. Allow an element of detachment to enter and speak factually and from the heart. Trust the others to receive your report in the spirit it was given.

Once the inhibitions of reporting are overcome another challenge of communication becomes apparent. People express themselves in different ways. For example, after sitting together a number of times, you may notice that one person reports with many visual images while another may emphasis the sense of touch. Not only are certain sense modes emphasised but the four Jungian Functions of feeling, thinking, sensing and intuiting will be revealed very clearly along with whether the person is introverted or extroverted in their outlook. Stargroup work makes you aware of how people experience things and express themselves. Gradually you get to know each other's screens and language systems, and appreciate them too. You may recognise the vision that you saw corresponds to the feelings another had and the sounds a third person heard.

Imagine your reporting if you all spoke different languages, maybe English, Swahili, Cantonese, Russian and Urdu. First of all you would have to identify the language that is being spoken and then learn to translate it into your own language. What is the language of thinking, feeling, sensing or intuiting? The fact that everyone is using the same

spoken language confuses the issue. It lulls you into believing that the same words spoken by different people will always mean the same thing. This is not always so. Good reporting work requires you to listen very carefully with a wide-open mind. You must listen with your heart and body, and acknowledge the feelings that reverberate within you. See if you can enter into the other person's experience and know it with certainty and clarity.



When you realise that each member of the group has their own way of reporting and experiencing, you begin to drop being envious of others' experiences or conceited about your own. As you get to know the others more intimately you will value their modes of knowing and expressing. When it comes to sorting out the difference between the group phenomena and the individual you may find yourself questioning much more deeply what really happened.

Could it be that even though the reports sound different they are referring to the same thing? The stargroup is a superb opportunity to study communication in a very deep way.

A common trap that many fall into when reviewing their meditation is to have rigid expectations as to what constitutes a noteworthy experience. They are looking for the big happening, the visions, the ecstasies. The working of the group mind can be very subtle. With more experience you will pay more and more attention to details. Even seemingly insignificant wanderings sometimes turn out to be group phenomena. What appears to be itchiness and inability to focus on the blue light, accompanied by some inconsequential verbalising may be shared by the group at large.

Try to keep your mind on the blue light but if you have a lot of wandering, instead of seeing it as a failure of concentration, report and see if there was some correspondence in the group. You must become very humble in this work and acknowledge everything that happens.

“This is what I have experienced.” “This is what I have to offer.”  
Become very scientific. “I as part of we am going to report.”

One final suggestion in this area. After a while, it will become obvious that this method of reporting and sharing experiences reduces everything to the verbal faculty. Often it is extremely difficult to put a subtle experience into words. Occasionally, in addition to reporting verbally, it may be revealing to paint your experience or compose music to illustrate it. Use some other medium of expression to convey your experience. This will often open up new channels of communication with the others and it will certainly deepen your own understanding.

### ***Stage 2. The Link***

Once the group develops greater skill in review and reporting, interest begins to deepen into the whys and wherefores of the group connection, the linkage. What is a group mind? How do minds link? What type of energy, how, when, and with what time sequence does this linking take place? What conditions stimulate the sharing of experience and what factors discourage it? These questions and others emerge strongly at this stage when people are amazed at the number of correspondences. Sometimes a stargroup becomes so linked that there continue to be shared experiences in between the stargroup sessions. If a stargroup is able to work together for a long time, it can be very interesting to keep your records of each session, both the individual reports and the collective one. These will help to show long term development patterns.

Identifying and recording the collective experience presents its own challenge. In one stargroup I sat with, we found that when one person recorded the similarities, then the whole interpretation passed through the screen of their personal experience. To get around this, we each noted on paper the similarities between our own experience and the one that was being reported. By the time everyone had reported, you had a list of similar happenings according to your own perceptions. We would then collectively go through our lists. “I experienced ...” and

then whoever else noted that would speak up also. Anything shared by three or more we would record on a separate summary sheet; three this, four that, five the other. After a number of sessions, a confidence began to build in our ability to recognise many of the shared elements.

### *Stage 3. Intensifying the Question*

Eventually the group becomes so connected that the link is taken for granted and the interest in the second stage begins to wane. This seems to be quite common but when it happens, groups sometimes feel that they are losing their direction for a while. Hopefully you'll recognise this and not think that the momentum of the exploration has run out. This is the time to strengthen the mind of question. What are we exploring?

“At the beginning the major theme of stargroup work revolves around healing. You may have already been working at this through the first two stages. Initially we bring healing to the people sitting in the stargroup itself. Raise the question or aspiration for healing and bathe the whole group in blue light. Through this you will come to experience a cone of light enveloping the group, with its apex at the centre above. This is sometimes referred to as the cone of power. If anyone has a specific problem they need help with, this can be mentioned at the beginning and the group can bring it to mind during the session and direct light towards that person. Gradually the energies of the group and its individual members will strengthen and increase until the cup, or in this case the cone is overflowing. Now the healing work for people and situations not directly present at the Stargroup can begin.

Before linking hands, mention the names of those that you know need healing. During the session, hold the person's name in the blue light, or if you know the person, picture them in the blue light. An alternative to this is to send the blue light out to them. This work can also be done in general, sending the light to people and places on the planet wherever it is needed. Throughout the meditation remain in a non-verbal state. Contact the blue light. Briefly invoke the memory of the person and

absorb yourself again into the light-energy, allowing the overflow to take place. Don't fall into the trap of speculating about the person or their condition. Verbal speculation is really no use in healing. In fact, if it is accompanied by worry or fear, it may even be a hindrance. Invoke the question and get out of the way.

Many stargroups start out with healing as their primary focus. After a while though, they gradually fall into a routine that becomes a bit dull and repetitious. If the tone of your work is going flat, then it's time to inject a new spark. For a Stargroup to deepen its experience, it must have a feeling of vitality and aliveness. This applies to individuals as well. Sometimes you need to make efforts to keep the level of interest up. Never mind thinking that you ought to be interested in something, even for example, healing. Accept what is happening and recognise you have ebbs and flows of energy-interest. If you can learn to ride your interest, you will have discovered the speedy path of awakening. If the theme of healing becomes barren, then acknowledge where your interests do lie. You will come back to the theme of healing another time. Let this interest guide the group and go with the question. A stargroup that is questioning and discovering is a field of healing.



Stargroup work can be used to explore anything. Before starting, have the group decide on a question or theme of exploration. Then go through the preparation, focus on the light, and allow the depth mind to reveal its wisdom. The entire story of evolution is within you. There are innumerable threads to investigate. You could question the nature of time and space, see if you can go down into the body and experience cells, molecules and atoms. You could explore basic laws of physics. What is light? What is communication? You could explore colour and elements and different manifestations of consciousness. If you were

very well grounded but at the same time filled with wonder you might try to project your minds to other planets and contact other forms of intelligence. You could try to track the whole flow of evolution. The possibilities are beyond listing.

This phase of questions can go on for a long time. In fact most stargroups don't get beyond it. The stargroup is your vehicle of exploration. Ride it and see what you can discover.

Gradually you may ask about the nature of question itself. Groups occasionally will sit around before the session discussing what to explore. Five people mention five different topics and one is chosen. At the end of the meditation the group is disappointed to find that there was little occurring that seemed relevant to the question. It's clearly not enough to verbalise a question. The question has to be really there in the depth of each member. You have to be involved with it. When the mind is quiet it will turn to whatever is the dominant theme of the moment. What are the deeper questions that move you? Listen to the collective experience from the stargroup and see where it is going. The experiences of one session will suggest themes and questions for the following ones.



To name further stages is difficult and probably misleading. It is possible that your experiences will be quite different and lead in another direction though I suspect that many differences are really in the language we use to describe them. The following is what arose in a stargroup I participated in, in Canada.

After a period of indulging in many different types of questions and explorations, a pattern or overall quality began to emerge that everyone in the group recognised. It had the feeling of a place which somehow was the centre of the collective experience. We called it the platform. Although each person perceived it differently, we felt certain

we were sharing the same fundamental experience. At this point we abandoned the formal technique and after completing the general preparation work we would all "get to the platform" by whatever method best worked for each person. This platform had both a feeling of a stable meeting point and also a launching pad. We would go there and observe and afterwards, when we reported, we discovered a wonderful number of corresponding experiences.

Gradually we began to discern what could only be described as an intelligence, dwelling at the platform. It seemed to be quite autonomous and quite different from the individuals making up the Stargroup. It had no physical shape. It was more a presence and it had definite work to do. The overwhelming realisation of the group was that this work was the work of compassion and healing.

Our sessions now focussed on and around the platform. It was the key. We would do what was necessary to bring it into being and then just experience the work being done. Sometimes beings appeared to come for healing. Other times the light-intelligence reached out to those in need. At this stage it seemed that we were somehow lending ourselves to a greater purpose. Our main contribution seemed to be getting out of the way to allow this intelligence to function. It was as if we were cells in a larger happening but we were somehow aware of the larger happening.

The last stage we recognised was a group desire to develop more insight at the platform; to begin to watch the rise and fall of the energy-mind. It felt as if the collective mind was meditating, studying itself. At this stage our particular group had to disband due to members travelling. For a few more sessions though, we sat at pre-arranged times, each member in a different part of the world, and had interesting results.

This stargroup raised many new and compelling questions for us. What is mind? Is it one or many? Are there beings present here that we can't see experience with the five senses? What is space and time, and what are its constraints? What is evolution? And what is evolving? Is

there really a collective mind, or as Teilhard de Chardin named it, a Noosphere. Should we think of it as a conscious living being? Assuming it is, then who does it communicate with? Does it have the equivalent of peers? These questions came through to us in a powerful non-verbal way. In sharing them with you, I hope they inspire you to take the work even further.



People occasionally ask why some groups have great depth of experience while others hardly get off the ground. What is the determining factor? Basically the direction of the exploration depends on two things. One is the degree of question that is present. In Zen it is said "The greater the question, the greater the awakening. No question, no awakening." The other factor is the degree of basic overall wholesomeness in the members of the group. Are they fundamentally good beings? Do they live interesting lives? Do they share with others? Are they compassionate by nature? The collective experience will reflect the overall tone of the group. The more wholesome the lives of the individual members, the more likelihood there is that transpersonal and transcendent levels of experience will arise. Straightening up one's day to day life, living in a way that recognises the positive in yourself and others, making the effort to explore something new every day and then to share with others, living life with passion and compassion, this will prepare the ground for very rich and rewarding stargroup explorations.

This booklet certainly doesn't say everything that could be said about stargroups. However I hope it conveys the instructions and the overall flavour of the exploration clearly enough for you to be able to embark on the journey.

***BON VOYAGE!***

# Appendix:

## Two Methods for Developing Loving-Kindness

### *A Classical Buddhist Practice*

Do a bit of stretching and then take up a posture you are comfortable with. Become aware of how the posture feels and see what it is saying to you. Is it speaking of relaxation and awakesness? If not, shift it. Then take a few deep, breaths and let your awareness settle on the breath until you feel calm. Spend a moment reflecting on your aspiration to develop loving-kindness.

Now, feel a glow of rose-coloured light in your heart area. Bring all your inner senses to it. See it. Hear it. Taste it. Touch it. Smell it. Think that this warm rose glow is the essence of loving-kindness. As you breath allow the light grow until it fills your entire body. On each exhalation let go of any tensions in the body. Sink into the awareness of the breathing and the rose-coloured glow. Eventually your entire body will be filled with rose light of loving-kindness. At this point the light begins to radiate out from your body until you find yourself surrounded with a rose globe of light. Gently studying the dialogue between the breath and the light, allow the globe to expand. Think that any being who comes within the rose globe is being bathed in the light of loving-kindness; let the light expand until it embraces the whole planet or even further. Remain with this for as long as it is appropriate and then let the light contract until it is once again contained within your heart. Then with the loving-kindness glow still radiating but now invisibly so, continue with your activity. After a bit of practice you may find that you can carry this meditation with you into the midst of any activity.

## *The Inner Smile Method*

This is a very healing meditation which can be done as a formal exercise, but as you become more familiar with it, you'll find that it is very effective in the midst of activities.

- (i) Smile a genuine warm smile. Do it right now as you are reading this. Now, feel the sensations around your eyes. You don't smile only with your mouth. You smile with your eyes. Identify the feeling around the eyes. They may feel light, twinkly, quick-moving, warm, humorous, spacious, crystal-like, etc. People describe the feeling in different ways.
- (ii) Once you have contacted the feeling of the smile in and around the eyes, bring that feeling down into your cheeks and your jaw. Have a feeling you are smiling into your face. Feel it relax a bit. Then smile down into your throat. Spend a few moments there, smiling and relaxing and then move down into your heart. At each point rest for a few breaths and smile a warm, friendly feeling into the area. The point of the work is not so much to relax the area but to come to a warm, loving acceptance of whatever is taking place there. Don't linger too long if it feels that it doesn't want to let go, just move on to the next point. Smile into the heart and the circulating blood, then smile into the lungs. Feel the smile in the breathing. Smile into the liver, the pancreas and spleen, the kidneys, the adrenals, the bladder and lastly the genitals. This sequence is called smiling down the front line. If at any point you lose the feeling of lightness or goodness, then return to your eyes, physically smile a real smile. Contact the feeling and continue where you left off.
- (iii) When you have finished the front line then return to the eyes and smile your way down the middle line. This begins with the eyes and then you smile into your

mouth, tongue, down the throat, into the stomach, into the pylorus and the bile ducts, down through the small intestine, through the large intestine, into the rectum, finishing with the anus.

- (iv) Come back up to the eyes and re-contact the feeling of the smile. Now smile warmly down the back line. Direct the smile to the right or left side of the brain. Smile around in there and then go to the other side. Then smile into the middle of the head to warm the pineal, pituitary and hypothalamus areas. Then slowly smile your way down the spine; if possible, one vertebrae at a time until you come to the base of the spine.
- (v) Lastly, return to the eyes and smile outwardly to the world. Warm, open, clear-seeing acceptance.

## Stargroup Meditation Check Sheet

- Physical Exercise
- Posture
- Breathing and Relaxing
- Aspiration - Question
- Linkup
- Hollow Body
- The Blue Light
- Ending the Session
- Review
- Re-state Aspiration
- Reporting
- Sharing the Merit