

Enlightenment Darkness Retreat - Annabella Morelos-Chan

In the spring of 2001, the Enlightenment Darkness Retreat was announced by the Universal Tao Center. On a glossy black sheet, stark white letters described the February to March 2002 event and the hard science behind the targeted breakthroughs for the two and three week cycles. The plan was to cloister people in an Inner Alchemy laboratory to achieve access, during their waking consciousness to the unconscious normally possible only in deep sleep. A highly controlled environment premised on the total absence of light, carefully designed nutrition and meditative practices, could stimulate brain glands to amplify hormone utilization and production usually associated with the heightened consciousness.

In the complete saturation of darkness, natural neuro-pharmacology would be programmed to mimic the experience of sages who traditionally retreated to caves for years in the search of Illumination. Based on comprehensive research, the darkness would rest the eyes, possibly the most sensitive part of our body containing 125 million rods and cones, and free twenty percent of the brain from dealing with visual imagery to focus on more profound processes. The other program architecture utilized rest and scientific knowledge to concentrate blood supply and energy to the deepest centers within the brain referred to as the Crystal Palace in the Tao. This, the area of the pineal, hypothalamus and pituitary glands where the 'Spirit Molecules' are thought to reside and connections are made to the Universal Energy.

While society today remains dominated by major institutions of business, science and medicine who deem what is acceptable, new frontiers are opening up, driven by people's concern for their own well being. Fully conscious that mainstream medicine fails to fully provide all the options, that science can be incomplete and at times flawed, there is a ground swell asking to examine the metaphysical foundations underlying our world view.

This world abounds with busy, successful people who yearn for revitalized lives, bliss, and insight to the great mysteries. For centuries, spiritual traditions accessed total darkness to achieve biological shifts rapidly. And although the ancients instinctively understood the power of the dark, it remained inscrutable. However, with the advances of scientific knowledge into the workings of our body, Master Mantak Chia developed a Darkness Inner Alchemy program that is likely to be the cutting edge in approach, size and setting globally.

Based on the teachings of the Tao dating back 2,600 years ago, Mantak Chia, has been a tireless and visionary interpreter of the compendium of ancient wisdoms originated by inventive minds that probed universal truths. His continuing contribution of incorporating science and technology into them are contained in nearly 50 books and booklets that have been translated into 37 languages. These include Tai Chi, Chi Kung, Tao Yin, Fusion, Chi Nei Tsang, and Cosmic Healing among others. Around the world, his Tao meditations are taught by over 2,000 instructors/practitioners from Alaska to Brazil, from Philippines to Russia.

Forty years of study, many trips to foreign lands in search of natural caves and a year's preparation were devoted to creating the modern cave in Northern Thailand, a culmination of Master Chia's personal dream. Using hydraulics to press the local red earth into bricks that resemble the properties of natural rock in a cave, the recently built brick condominium was encased from light and sound, a womb where one could withdraw from the world in safety and five star comfort with other seekers. The setting was at the Tao Garden Health Resort in Chiang Mai, Thailand near the Myanmar border. In the early spring, the mountain air made for crisp evenings in the verdant 80-acre site where one kilometer of rushing streams water 10,000 trees, many heavy with fruit and aromatic blossoms. It was the primary source of the organic meals that were bountiful with the professional kitchen ensuring variety and an amazingly delicious cacophony of flavors that intensified when consumed in obscurity.

It was an unforgettable experience, life changing for some of the 45 participants. They were pioneers from 16 countries who came prepared to see the Light, convinced that once they see the Light, they could become the Light. They came alone and in pairs, each one an explorer on a Vision Quest urged by their inner voice. Many had booked immediately, waiting for a year with mounting eagerness. In the cultural and professional diversity of the participants gathered for

the tutelage of a proven Master, there was a critical mass of a collective unconscious that promised potential beyond anything previously imagined. They came from diverse backgrounds - medical practitioners and woodworkers, physicists and businesspeople, housewives and artists, young and old.

While a 15-year practitioner of Chi Gung energy work and a graduate of the Gay Luce Mystery School, I was new to Master Chia's meditative practices. Intrigued, I had been interviewed and accepted six months earlier as an observer/participant who wanted to chronicle the event. To avoid any bias, I scrupulously stayed away from the easily accessible materials including the Darkness manual prior to actually entering the Darkness. Thus, my colonial Catholic background with its deeply rooted taboos reacted with unease initially to the Master's thematic preaching of harnessing multi-orgasmic energy, bonding it to the heavenly bodies with compassionate love to achieve the optimum state of microcosmic orgasm.

Although it is widely accepted that human life originates from the sexual union of male and female adults, unlike the Tao, few harnesses this orgasmic energy that starts at our conception. The Taoist view sex as a powerful source of Chi, the body's life sustaining energy and recognizes its role in the well being of the body, emotions, mind and spirit. Specific practices cultivate this ever-present resource to enhance the quality of life. Master Chia's system has long expanded this basic premise into advanced levels, knowing well that the perfect laboratory environment of the Darkness promised a potential quantum leap beyond that.

As explained in the Darkness manual: "In the Darkness, our mind and soul begin to wander freely in the vast realms of psychic and spiritual experience. When you enter the primordial state or force, you are reunited with the true self and divinity within. You literally 'conduct' the universal energy. You may see into the past and future, understand the true meaning of existence, and begin to understand the order of things. You return to the womb, the cocoon of our material structure and Nature's original Darkness.

Complete darkness profoundly changes the sensory sensibilities of the body/brain. We are deprived of all visual reference. Sounds begin to fall away as we lose contact with the external world and turn the senses inward. The effect of darkness is to shut down major cortical centers in the brain, depressing mental and cognitive functions in the higher brain centers. Emotional and feeling states are enhanced, specially the sense of smell and the finer senses of psychic perception. Dreams become more lucid and the dream states manifests in our conscious awareness. Eventually we awaken within ourselves the awareness of the Source, the spirit, and the soul. We descend into the void, into the darkness of deep, inner space."

It was a singularly wondrous experience for the participants thanks to the consummate planning of the management and the cooperative, respectful attitude that prevailed. Using a partner system in lodgings where all amenities were provided in each room, fear of the dark and the unknown were easily overcome. The food was efficiently served in convenient, individual containers to overcome sightlessness. It deliberate was loaded with natural enzymes including Tryptophan to assist the brain in producing Pinoline, a super conductivity hormone since darkness obviated the normal bodily utilization of Melatonin and Serotonin.

At least 95% of the participants did get the predicted light shows from the "Spirit Molecules" of 5MEO and DMT synthesized by the brain. My experience included displays of multi-colored squiggly lines that danced to a silent ballet tune. Just like the tiny schools of fish that are my companions in my island home, they would converge at an unknown signal, do complex, synchronized movements and just as suddenly disperse. It was fascinating enough by itself yet made more awesome as it continued with eyes opened or shut! At times, there were also klieg lights, huge tunnels of nearly blinding light that crisscrossed and then would disappear and appear unpredictably. Just as human nature adjusts even to the most unusual circumstances, soon, these were simply taken for granted as ordinary.

At first, many thought that the lights came from an external source – the night vision goggle-equipped cleaning staff turning on the light or using flashlights. However, realization came when they noticed that often times the direction was from the back of their heads, and try as they might to turn around to catch the light source, it always remained behind them. A few had so

much light that they became mildly irritated because they were distracting from their personal focus. Others remained thrilled, relishing each vision as a separate gift – glowing silver light, multicolored spectrum, violet moons and gleaming heavenly bodies. Beautiful gardens and the whitest of lights surrounding an amber butterfly were so real that they would reach out their hands only to touch air. Some saw structures from unknown progeny, of different epochs and possibly from another planet. For some, visions were so pervasive that they became an ordinary part of daily life in the Dark Room.

A few remained in the dark, yet were rewarded richly in other forms of unusual experiences. In place of seeing auras, there were profound insights into past events, closure of traumatic passages previously found to be disturbing. Inner knowledge rose to the surface to provide new meaning and a shift started in emotional levels to more joy, profound forgiveness, acceptance and compassion which continue outside of the Dark Room, permeating the many facets of one's life. For some, solutions are more apparent, life more simple post-retreat.

The guided imagery succeeded like clockwork. I was among many who began 'seeing' very real rays of violet (through the crown of the head) and infrared (through the third eye). These would stream from the North Star and the Big Dipper into my body during the traditional "steaming" process. Sounds unreal right? Yet these come from centuries old Tao texts.

Step by step, we visualized cleaning out physical defects organ by organ; bone by bone until we reached squeaky clean on the cellular level where genetic modifications can transpire for a healthier, improved vessel. Even as a first timer, it was easy to follow the technique as perfected by Master Mantak Chia given his winsome ways with English and a clear voice that rang true. A generous teacher, he had no hesitations in responding to the many questions, reassuring all that once the template is achieved, it is theirs for always.

He claims that meditative practice can actually enhance the DNA genetic code so that when our new cells re-grow, it will be superior by eliminating past defects. Well, that was a giant leap for this card-carrying skeptic. That is, until the fifth morning when we were deep in medication, flat on our backs. Dutifully following the guided imagery despite insect on my elbow, I wiggled my arm but the critter was persistent. Forgetting the total blackout, I instinctively looked only to find that there was miniature, blue crackling lightning bolts of static electricity running from my elbow down my arm.

Amused, I was totally unprepared for what happened next. Suddenly, I underwent convulsions for what seemed to be a very long time. They were so strong that my teeth turned to clicking castanets, and my back was arched away from the mat. Although I remained fully conscious, experienced no discomfort, it was as though I was observing myself from the outside. After it was over, there was an electric buzz all over my body and I was awash with soap bubbles of light, frothing up and bursting with a tickle. It was all rather pleasant and I basked in that glow for some minutes, with no desire to move or do anything else. Since lunch break came soon after, I nonchalantly found Master Chia through the crowd. When I told him what had just happened, clarifying that I was not an epileptic and I had just had a seizure. His matter of fact voice responded with "Oh, that's just a cosmic orgasm. Now you can repeat it at will". He made it sound so ordinary, so mundane.

Well, it blew my mind! That afternoon when practice resumed, I went through the triggers I remembered and there it was again. Violent shudders with teeth chattering and spinal column in an arch that lasted many seconds. Just as he had preached, it could be replicated at will. Not content with one position, I shifted to one side, repeated it, then the other side, and repeated it the third time. Next, I curled into a fetal position and succeeded once more. Lastly, I put up both my feet on the column near my pad until they were totally vertical and still, the cosmic orgasm happened on demand! That evening, as I was showering in the dark, luxuriating in the readily available hot water and herbal soap provided, my abdomen felt strangely sore until I remembered my activities of the afternoon. The more advanced students who could see infrared lights probably noted my extra gleam at supper that night. Wow, was I proud! The following day produced a seminal moment. As I was getting struggling to get my head through the tight opening of a shirt, I noted a sensation change in my lower lip. Over three years earlier, I had 3

implants done simultaneously and the mandibular nerve was traumatized twice. Not knowing any better, I resignedly accepted what I was told - that the numbness would disappear within six months. A year after, I still had the feeling of being anesthetized from the middle of my lower lip to the corner of my mouth, unable to feel whether I had food or saliva pooled on that side of my mouth. I was chagrined to learn that the procedure should have been stopped after the first time the nerve was hit or the chances of recovery would vastly diminish, which it did. By the third year, with the paralysis deemed permanent, I had developed a slight droop on that side and compensated for the numbness by automatically and frequently wiping my mouth.

However, that day in the Darkness, just as surely as the sun rises from the east, I could now feel a finger wide area from the middle of my lip with restored sensations. With heightened motivation, I practiced cosmic orgasm repeatedly, deliberately clicking my teeth as the sound produced vibrations in the brain that were healing for the jaw area. Someone even volunteered an anecdotal report of Indian spiritual practices that re-grew a third set of teeth in some. Encouraged, I practiced assiduously. Every day, there was progress until today, only a point in the corner of my mouth radiating to a small triangle of about an inch towards the jaw line remains numb. The personal testimonies post Darkness covered a wide range from minor to life-changing. A Bucharest participant experienced a Lucid Dream for the first time in her life. It was so real that she could still feel her favorite cat brushing against her leg, somehow urging her to touch her sleeping son. When she felt his fiery arm, she was so distressed and awakened at that point. Hastily, she phoned him for the second time in 12 hours. True enough, the picture of health only some hours earlier now had a raging fever of 40 degrees Centigrade. Since then, she has since taken bold steps in relationships with a new found intuition that is serving to eliminate confusions of the past. A German man learned to smell the walls and obstacles in his path in the Darkness with his ability improving in distance daily. By the end of the second week, he could smell them a full meter away. He also enjoyed calling people to his room telepathically and have them magically appear at his doorway a few minutes after he sent them the silent message. There was a strong sense that his life has been altered for the better with deeper serenity and joy within. A couple whose stay was unexpectedly cut short by a severe back problem, had developed emotional bonds so profound that words were no longer needed to communicate between them. Now, even the briefest of spatial separation has become intolerable as they reached such a depth of love between them that makes each moment together precious. An older Austrian adventurer experienced what had evaded her most of her life – exquisitely fine feelings. What amused her is that another person whom she had formerly been adverse to transmitted these. In a psychic dance they both participated in, the shifts were departures from their former selves so notable that even voice quality and speech patterns had been altered. Overall, the success of the Darkness might be measured in the responses of whether the graduates might come back next year for a longer Darkness Retreat. The resounding yes has been unanimous. Already, many have begun making plans already to adjust to realities and obligations for the needed time away to devote to this retreat in the future. Christian Scientists emphasize healing through spiritual means and underscore pure and divine goodness as underlying the scientific reality of existence. While consensus may not yet be reached as to how our body harnesses consciousness for health and well being, there is increasing interest even within the establishment to explore these new frontiers.

Potentially, the Darkness provides the matrix for the replication of what heretofore has been regarded as an anomaly. As a hothouse for rapid self improvement, the overwhelming testimonies of the graduates underscores that the system involved is beyond the individual into the collective. In a world filled with challenges, the Dark Room technology surely broadens the worldview of healing, of internal and exterior peace and compassion, of love prevailing.