

## THE AURA

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**The human aura: *Man Visible and Invisible* by C. W. Leadbeater**

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ALL members of our Society will be familiar with the idea that every human being is surrounded by a sort of luminous cloud, which we have agreed to call “the aura,” and we have heard from those who have succeeded in developing the special sense by which it is cognised that it has various beautiful colours, and that from a study of it much may be learnt as to the disposition, the thoughts, and even the past life of its possessor. In our Theosophical books, however, we find but little mention of this aura: it may, therefore be not uninteresting to collect and arrange such information on the subject as is at our disposal.

This is by no means so easy a task as it might perhaps be supposed to be, for we have first to face the difficulties which arise from the extreme complexity of the human aura, and secondly the fact that in this, as in so many other cases, the *untrained* sight is practically useless for the purpose of close comparison and exact analysis—a consideration which of course reduces the number of available witnesses. The description which follows is therefore not to be considered as by any means complete or exhaustive; the most it can claim is the probability of being fairly correct as far as it goes. It is the result of a series of investigations pursued for some years by several independent trained observers in the Theosophical Society, and it has also been approved by older students whose knowledge on such points is necessarily much greater.

It is not around the human body alone that an aura is to be seen; a similar cloud of light surrounds or emanates from animals, trees, and even minerals, though in all these cases it is less extended and less complex than that of man. It is, however, with the human branch of the subject alone that it is proposed to deal in this article.

Before considering what may be called the aura proper—that which surrounds as well as permeates the body—it may be worthwhile to glance at certain phenomena observable by the partially-developed sight within the limits of that body. A person possessed of such sight, even to a very small extent, is at once able to assure himself at firsthand of the accuracy of Theosophical teaching on the subject of the seven principles of man, at least as far as the lower five are concerned. What has usually been called in our writings the *linga-sharira*, for example, is clearly visible as a mass of faintly luminous bluish-grey mist, exactly coinciding with the physical body; and apparently interpenetrating it. It would probably not be scientifically accurate to say that *jiva* itself in the abstract can be seen at all, but what certainly is its manifestation in the case of the human race is conspicuous as a constant stream of particles of a beautiful pale-rose colour which seem to flow over and through the whole body along the nerves in the same manner as the blood corpuscles flow along the arteries and veins, the brain being apparently the centre of this nervous circulation.

The absorption and specialisation, for the use of the human body, of the life force which is being continually poured upon the earth from the sun seems to be one of the functions of the organ called the spleen, and it is apparently to its action that the beautiful rose-colour above-mentioned is due, since *jiva* when it reaches the earth is colourless, though extremely active. In a healthy man the spleen does its work in so generous a fashion that the specialized *jiva*, (which is then known as *prana*) is constantly radiating from the body in all directions, forming thereby one of the auras with which we shall deal later. A man in perfect health therefore not only is able intentionally to impart some of it to another by means of mesmeric passes or otherwise, but is constantly though unconsciously shedding strength and vitality on those around him. On the other hand a man who from weakness or other causes is unable to specialize for his own use a sufficient amount of the world's life-force, sometimes, equally unconsciously, acts as a sponge and absorbs the already specialized *prana* of any sensitive person who is unfortunate enough, to come into contact with him—to his own temporary benefit, no doubt, but often to the serious injury of the victim. Probably most people have experienced this in a minor degree—have found that there is someone among their acquaintances after whose visits they always feel a quite unaccountable weariness and languor; and a similar lassitude is frequently felt by persons who attend spiritualistic séances without taking special precautions against the drain upon their vitality set up by the entities evoked on such occasions.

Coming now to what we have called the aura proper,—that which surrounds the body—we find that it is exceedingly complex in its structure. At the first glance it is seen as a luminous cloud extending to a distance of about eighteen inches or two feet from the body in all directions, and therefore approximately oval in shape, whence it is sometimes spoken of in occult writings as “the auric egg.” In most cases it has no well defined outline, but its edges fade into invisibility very gradually.

A closer study of this cloud soon reveals not only that it has several distinct components, but that these components consist of matter in different states. Each of them is, as it were, a

distinct aura, and would if the others were withdrawn be seen to occupy the same space as the entire mass. They are, however, of obviously different degrees of tenuity and each apparently interpenetrates the one next below it just as the *linga-sharira* is seen to interpenetrate the physical body. No doubt to the sight of the Adept, the aura like everything else, is sevenfold; but to eyes regarding it from the infinitely lower level of ordinary humanity' only five of its component parts are usually visible.

The first of these—beginning with the lowest and most material --- is the one which we must suppose appertains most to the physical body. It is sometimes called the health-aura, from the fact that its condition is greatly affected by the health of the physical body to which it is attached. It is almost colourless, and has the appearance of being striated; that is, it is full of, or perhaps it might rather be said to be *composed* of, an infinitude of straight lines radiating evenly in all directions from the body. That at least is the normal condition of these lines when the body is in perfect health; they are separate, orderly, and as nearly parallel as their radiation allows; but on the advent of disease there is an instant change, the lines in the neighbourhood of the part affected becoming erratic, and lying about in all directions in the wildest confusion.

So closely connected with this is the second or *pranic* aura, that it will perhaps simplify matters to describe the latter before proceeding to consider the relation between them. It was stated above that the specialized *prana* is constantly radiating from the body and it is of the matter radiated that the *pranic* aura consists. But here must be noted a curious fact the explanation of which is not apparent. The *prana* so radiated no longer possesses the rosy colour by which it is so easily distinguished while circulating through the body, but has a faint bluish-white hue. The easiest way to give an idea of it is perhaps to say that it closely resembles both in appearance and in the character of its pulsations the heated air which may sometimes be seen in the summer rising from the ground exposed to the sun's rays. It is often spoken of as the magnetic aura, and it is by its use that many of the physical phenomena of mesmerism seem to be produced. This is probably the magnetic flame seen by the sensitives in some of Baron Reichenbach's experiments. It is perhaps this constant radiation of *prana* from the healthy body that causes the rigidity and parallelism of the lines of the health aura; at least as soon as this radiation ceases, the lines fall into the confused condition described above. As the patient recovers, the normal radiation of this magnetic form of the life-force is gradually resumed, and the lines of the health aura, are thereby combed into order once more. As long as the lines are firm and straight, and the *prana* steadily radiates between them, the body seems to be almost entirely protected from the attack of evil physical influences, such as germs of disease—such germs being repelled and carried away by the out-rush of the life-force: but when from any cause—through weakness, through wound or injury, through over-fatigue, through extreme depression of spirits or through the excesses of an irregular life—an unusually large amount of vitality is required to repair damage or waste, within the body, and there is consequently a serious diminution in the quantity radiated, this system of defence becomes dangerously weak, and it is comparatively easy for the deadly germs to effect an entrance.

It may also be mentioned that it is possible by an effort of the trained will to check this radiation of *prana* at the outer extremities of the health aura, and there to build it, as it were, into a kind of wall or rather shell which will be absolutely impervious to any kind of astral or elemental influence, so long as such effort of the will is maintained.

The third of the auras with which we have to deal is that which expresses *Kama*, or desire. It would not be strictly correct to say that this is the *Kama Rupa*, since that name can accurately be applied only to the image of the physical body which is condensed from the material of this third aura after death; but it is the field of manifestation of *Kama*, the mirror in which every desire, every feeling, almost every thought even, of the personality is reflected. From its material a bodily form is given to the dark elementals which men create and set in motion by evil wishes or malicious feelings; from it also (unfortunately more rarely) are bodied forth the beneficent elementals called into life by good wishes, gratitude and love. From it is formed "that astral body" in which those who find themselves able to do so, travel about on another plane while the physical body sleeps. As might naturally be expected, there is little of permanency about its manifestations; its colours, its brilliancy, the rate of its pulsations, are all changing from moment to moment. An outburst of anger will charge the whole aura with deep red flashes on a black ground; a sudden fright will in a moment change everything to a mass of ghastly livid grey.

It should, however, be carefully borne in mind that though these auric manifestations are impermanent, their records in the *akasa* are not so; though the elemental created by an evil wish will cease to exist after a period proportioned to the strength of that wish, yet the living photograph of every instant of its life remains in the *akasic* record, and all the wide-spreading results of its actions during that life are charged with absolute justice to the Karma of its creator.

Very closely linked with this ever-changing kamic aura is the fourth—the aura of the lower manna—the record of the progress of the personality. This is, however, formed of a higher and entirely different order of matter, that corresponding to the lower levels of the mental or devachanic plane. From this material is formed the vehicle in which the personality passes its period of dream-life in Devachan; from it also is made the *Mayavirupa*—the body which the Adept or his pupil uses for work on the astral or lower devachanic planes—a vehicle in many respects more convenient and capable than the grosser "astral body" referred to above. This fourth aura represents indeed the general average of the aura below it; but it is much more than this, for in it appear beams of spirituality and intellectuality which have no place on the lower level. If the flashes of colours formed by the vibrations connected with any particular desire are repeated strongly and habitually in the kamic aura, they undoubtedly set up corresponding vibrations in this lower Manasic aura, which produce there a permanent tinge of the same colour. In this therefore may be read the general disposition or character of the person—his good points and his bad ones: and through currents in connection with this aura are laid open the picture records of the past earth-life of the personality, which some clairvoyants are able to read page by page like an open book. When a man leaves his body during sleep, this and the higher aura are still with him while the whole of the first and second aura remains with the body, together with the pale residuum of the third which has not been needed in the formation of the astral body. Of course if he passes in a subtler vehicle to the higher devachanic or spiritual plane he leaves very much more behind him.

With regard to these third and fourth auras a subject of some interest is the assignment of their various shades of colour to the mental or moral qualities they betoken. Among untrained seers, however, much difference of opinion seems to exist on this point, and we are told that what is called the personal equation enters even more into this question than into most others connected with sight on higher planes. Indeed it is only after a course of careful training and

long-continued and constant practice that an occult student feels he can depend upon the accuracy of his sight upon the astral plane at all. There is of course a higher level of instruction upon which no mistake is possible, but recollections brought back even from that plane may be distorted by the personal equation when an attempt is made to express them in words. The list of colours and their meanings which follow must therefore be taken for what it is worth, as the expression of opinion of two or three persons only.

#### COLOURS IN THE AURA.

*Thick, black clouds* in the aura usually indicate hatred and malice.

*Deep red* flashes on a black ground show anger: but in the case of what is often called "noble indignation" on behalf of someone oppressed or injured, the flashes are brilliant scarlet on the ordinary background of the aura.

*Lurid, flaming red*—a quite unmistakable colour, though difficult to describe—indicates animal passions.

*Dull brown-red*--almost rust-colour—shows avarice.

*Dull hard brown-grey* usually indicates selfishness, and is unfortunately one of the very commonest auric colours.

*Heavy leaden grey* expresses deep depression; and where this is habitual the aura is sometimes indescribably gloomy and saddening.

*Livid grey*—a most hideous and frightful hue—shows fear.

*Grey-green*—a peculiar shade of it which can hardly be described other-wise than by the epithet "slimy"—shows deceit.

*Brownish-green*, with occasional dull-red flashes, seems to betoken jealousy.

*Crimson* indicates love. This is often a beautifully clear colour, but naturally it varies very greatly with the nature of the love. It may be quite a dull, heavy crimson, or may vary through all the shades up to a most lovely rose-colour, as it becomes more and more unselfish and pure. If this rose-colour is brilliant and tinged with lilac, it shows the more spiritual love for humanity.

*Orange*, if clear, seems to indicate ambition; if tinged with brown, it shows pride. But in this colour also the variations are so numerous, according to the nature of the pride or ambition, that it is impossible to give more than a general description.

*Yellow* expresses intellectuality—a deeper and duller colour if the intellect is directed chiefly into lower channels; brilliantly golden, rising to a beautiful clear lemon-yellow as it is addressed to higher and more unselfish objects.

*Bright green* seems to show ingenuity and quickness of resource, and often implies strong vitality.

*Dark, clear blue* usually indicates religious feeling, and naturally varies very much, to indigo in the one direction, and to rich deep violet in the other, according to the nature of the feeling, and especially according to the proportion of selfishness with which it is tinged.

*Light blue* (ultramarine or cobalt) shows devotion to a noble spiritual ideal, and gradually rises to

*Luminous lilac-blue*, which indicates higher spirituality, and is almost always accompanied by sparkling golden stars, which appear to represent spiritual aspirations.

It will be understood that all the colours are subject to almost infinite combinations and modifications, so that to read the detailed indications of an aura perfectly is a, very difficult task. Then of course the general brilliancy of the aura, the comparative definiteness or indefiniteness of its outline, and the relative brightness of the chakrams or centres of force--all these points and many more have to be taken into consideration. It should perhaps be mentioned that developed or developing psychical faculties seem always to be shown by the colours which lie beyond the visible spectrum—by the ultra-violet when used solely for unselfish purposes, but with gruesome combinations of the ultra-red in the case of the intentional dabblers in black magic. Occult advancement shows itself not only by colours, but also by the greater luminosity of the aura, by its increased size and more definite outline.

We now come to the consideration of the fifth aura—that of the Higher Manas or Individuality. Needless to say, it is not round every one we meet that this aura is to be distinguished. In those cases in which it is visible it is of almost inconceivable delicacy and beauty. It is perhaps less a cloud of colour than of living light; but indeed words fail one in the attempt to describe it. It is composed of the still finer matter corresponding to that of the higher devachanic levels, and is in fact the Karana Sarira—the vehicle of the Reincarnating Ego, which passes with him from life to life, and shows by its condition the degree of his advancement. In the aura of an Adept it so immensely predominates over the aura of the personality that the latter is practically non-existent; but the Adept aura is a separate study, quite beyond the powers of those who stand but at the commencement of the Path. In it, for example, an all important consideration would be that obscure and mysterious factor, the influence of the particular type to which the Adept belonged; and strangely enough, considering the recondite character of the subject, a tradition—a perfectly accurate tradition—of this fact has been preserved in many of the roughly-drawn pictures of GAUTAMA-BUDDHA which one sees upon temple walls in Ceylon. The Great Teacher is there represented with an aura the colouring and general arrangement of which would be grotesquely inaccurate and in fact impossible if intended for that of an ordinary man, or even an ordinary Adept if one may without irreverence use such an expression), but which is a rough and material representation of the actual state of the facts as regards the Adepts of the particular type to which the BUDDHAS belong. It is noteworthy also that the lines of the health aura are drawn in some of these pictures.

The sixth and seventh auras no doubt exist, but no information about them is at present available; and indeed it is quite sufficiently difficult for one who has not seen, to image to himself even those already mentioned. It may perhaps help towards the realization of the idea if we remember that all these constituents of the aura are simply the manifestation of the one entity on different planes—not so much emanations from the man as expressions of him. The very man himself we may not see, but the more our sight and our knowledge increase, the more nearly we approach THAT which veils Itself in him; and if we suppose for the moment that the highest vehicle of his which is perceptible to us is the Karana Sarira, that is then the nearest to a conception of the true naan that our sight will at present give us. But if the same

man be -looked; at as from the standpoint of the lower devachanic levels, only so much of him can be ,seen as can be expressed in that fourth aura which is the manifestation of the personality; examining him on the astral plane we find that an additional veil has descended, and only that lower part of him which can find expression through the kamic vehicle is visible; while here on the physical plane we are still worse off, since the true man is more effectually hidden from us than ever, And though to the opened sight all these manifestations are visible at once, it is still true that the highest of them remains nearest to the reality; so that in fact it is the aura that is the real man, and not that aggregation of physical matter crystallized in the midst of it, to which we in our blindness assign such undue importance. Of course this little paper has no pretence to do more than brush the surface of a very large subject, but it may serve to show that the aura is not an uninteresting field of study for those who see it; and since the sight of it is often one of the earliest evidences of the opening of a supernormal sense, it is not unreasonable to hope that a large number of our members may shortly find themselves in a position to supplement by this more direct method of observation, the information which they are deriving from the study of our Theosophical literature.

[Editor's Note: — The above most interesting and useful essay will make our readers acquainted with the fact—hitherto known to but few—that certain advanced students in our Society have long been pursuing a course of careful researches in the department of Nature's finer forces and their manifestations. It is too early yet to accept without reserve the categorical identification of auric colours with phases of character, since observers differ in their reports. Long observation has almost convinced us that the seer's own temperament has something to do with the affair, and that, while one will take one bright colour as indicating a given degree of spiritual, moral or intellectual elevation in the individual, another will instinctively associate that state with another hue. There is, however, a perfect agreement in the belief that brightness and tenderness of colours go with elevation and ideally perfect human character ; blackness and murky greyish clouds with moral debasement ; blood red with cruelty and savage passions generally, and slimy (not clear and bright) green, with deceit, treachery and selfishness. Even the crude intuitions of the untrained artist have, from times immemorial, led to the painting of angelic and other high spiritual entities.as .effulgent with light, and demons and. demoniacal characters as black, forbidding in aspect and - surrounded with dark clouds and the glow of red flames. Mr. Leadbeater's paper will have special interest for the reader, who is acquainted with Indian literature, who will not fail to test his list of colours with those used in the worship of the higher devatas and the ceremonial invocations of spirits of the lower orders. His statement that inanimate objects, such as stones and rocks, the members of the vegetable kingdom and the animals have each their auric envelopes as well as man, is fully borne out by the reports of Baron Reichenbach's sensitives' on the universal prevalence of the odic incandescence in the several kingdoms (*vide* his "Dynamics of Magnetism, Electricity, etc., etc." Ashburner's Trans. Ed. 1851, pp. 251 et seq), and of the fact that plants as well as minerals divide themselves into two groups of which one is odically (i. e., aurically) positive, the other negative. The Baron reached the generalisation that "where nature is least busy—where the growing activity is slackened, negativity prevails—where propulsion shows itself, positivity." Applying this to the human aura, it should follow that the more intensely active is any phase of character the more intense should the aura be seen to be, the more passive the phase of character, the more subdued the colour. Taking this for granted, for the sake of argument, we should then expect that a man's

character should betray itself in the relative brightness or dimness of the auric colours which belong to the various aspects of character. It remains for us to try to discover by fuller observations by many more observers what colours absolutely indicate the higher and lower qualities of soul, mind and heart: and here opens out a wide field of profitable research. Our Indian readers will do a most useful service by sending us for publication extracts from the Shastras and other works, translations of passages which bear upon the present question. The Tantras ought to be the most promising branch to examine. The Atharva Veda has, we believe, an injunction against coming within the distance of two cubits of a patient suffering from certain diseases, because the maladies are likely to be communicated to one. This, of course, would mean that they would pass through the two auras when they touched and interblended; and that this would occur when the two individuals—each with an auric envelope of one cubit's radiation—came within, two cubits' distance of each other. The recent experiments of the learned Colonel De Rochas, Director of the Ecole Polytechnique, of Paris—which we were permitted by him recently to verify—have a most distinct bearing upon the existence of this human aura. In fact, Dr. Baraduc, of Paris, has shown us a collection of photographs, taken in the dark with the help of a powerful electrical apparatus, which go to prove its existence and its capacity to be affected and modified by the exercise of human willpower.

One more observation may be made before dismissing the subject for the present. Various observers have noticed that the aura of an Adept is not only silvery bright and intense, radiating infinitely further into space than the aura of ordinary men, but is constantly pulsating and arranging itself into geometrical figures. Whether this actually occurs or not we cannot say; perhaps it is but an impression made upon the spiritual vision of the seer. Yet it seems strange that such should be the case: the more natural inference would be that these geometrical figures actually form themselves in that divinely pure aura. Can it be that this explains the meaning of Plato's aphorism that “God geometrises?” Can it be that these geometrical manifestations in an aura as pure as that of the Universal Principle, whose pulsations beget all forms in objective Nature, show us how to understand the mysterious occurrence of identical geometrical arrangements of matter in the mineral, vegetable and animal world? Are these concrete presentations that we find in visible matter, in a word, the physical outcome of the connection with Akasha of the primal geometrical arrangements which pulsate in the Divine Mind?]

O.