

Body Dowsing – Releasing The Unconscious Wisdom

By Tony Crisp

Every movement we make is an expression of our feelings, of what we think and will to do, of our unconscious emotions and ideas. Very often our movements express habits, such as when we are walking along a road and without thought take the turning for home when we really want to go to the shop. Through movement we show what we may not yet have fully thought or understood. And it is because of this aspect of it, especially as it arises through spontaneous movement, that such practices as dowsing are possible.

In various forms dowsing has been known throughout history and the world. In early European history dowsing became associated with a rod or forked stick, and was used to help find water, precious metals in the soil, coal, and lost objects. Despite the scientific scepticism of our times dowsing is still widely used even by government departments – because it works.

Dowsing is not always connected with a stick or rod though. Navaho Indians in the United States practise what they call ‘trembling hands’. After a simple ritual they allow their hands to move spontaneously. From these movements they understand questions asked of them. The American anthropologist Dr. Clyde Kluckhohn and his wife investigated a practitioner on a Navaho reservation. Mrs. Kluckhohn had lost her handbag three days previously so asked the practitioner, Gregorio, if he could find it. Standing in the open air on a hill, and after rubbing corn pollen on his hands, Gregorio was able to tell them the location of the handbag. This was later confirmed.

Dr. Paul Brunton, in his book *Search In Secret India*, tells of meeting an Indian ascetic who used his arms to answer questions. He would allow his arms to move spontaneously, and from their movements could give a yes or no response. Indian dowsers do not use a rod, but experience powerful changes of sensation in their body, and are thus able to detect sources of water and minerals.

While investigating the intuitive faculties of Australian Aborigines, Ronald Rose tells of a more refined form of body dowsing. In his book *Living Magic* (Chatto and Windus, 1957) he says that the tribesmen he lived with used different areas of their body to represent relatives. So their father might be represented by their right forearm, their mother by their left forearm, their first uncle by their right bicep, and so on. In this way, if an unaccountable pain or sensation developed in a part of the body, they were able to tell which relative was hurt or needed help. Rose witnessed this in action and describes it as extremely accurate and reliable.

All these forms of dowsing, even when a rod is used, depend upon the involuntary responses acting through the body in answer to a question. Taken overall they demonstrate the wide range of ways such responses can be sought or experienced. All are ways to call upon the information we have perhaps unknowingly gathered in our unconscious, or upon our intuition. It is now understood that the most fundamental way information or feelings not yet conscious are expressed is through gestures or body movements. The next level of expression for unconscious content is through symbolic behaviour such as mime or drama. Freud demonstrated that slips of the tongue were another way we let our inmost but inhibited feelings show. This explains how knowledge we cannot yet vocalise clearly can be expressed through subtle body movements such as dowsers experience.

Within the practice of Subud there is a technique which synthesises all these approaches. It is called ‘testing’. In testing it is accepted that clear and helpful information can be gained by allowing inner-directed movement to arise in response to a question. Members of Subud often use this method to clarify the suitability of a new member to the practice, or to find what may help a sick member. It can be used to explore any question though.