

## ABBÉ DE FARIA

(First to explain hypnotism)

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It is controversial as to who offered first the scientific explanation of hypnotism. One of the earliest but not well known contributors to the understanding of hypnotism was Abbé de Faria, a priest, from Goa (Faria L'Abbé 1819, Moniz Egas 1925, Dalgado D. G. 1906) though hypnotism was known and practised by Hindu priests in the temples of ancient India.

### EARLY LIFE

José Custodio de Faria (Faria L'Abbé 1819), later the celebrated "Abbé Faria", was born at Candolism, a village of Bardez-Goa, on 31st May 1756. He was baptized in the Church of Our Lady of Hope and Parish of the same name, on the 7th June, 1756.

His father, Caetano Vitorino de Faria was a native of the village of Colvale, Bardez. He was a descendant of Ananta Sinai, a Saraswat Brahmin by caste, village clerk and Patil of the same village who embraced Christianity at the end of the 16th century.

On 21st February 1771, Faria sailed from Goa in the ship S. José and arrived at Lisbon on 23rd November, 1771.

### EDUCATION

In 1772, the two Farias went to Rome via Genova with letters of recommendation from the Papae Nuncio to various personalities of Rome.

José Custodio Faria continued his studies in Rome as Internee, in the College of "Propaganda Fide" upto 1780. He obtained doctorate in Theology on a profound subject "De Existentia Dei, Deo Uno et Divina Revelatione" (Faria L'Abbé 1819) (About God's existence, About one God and Divine Revelation). He was ordained on 12th March 1780. After completion of his studies, Abbé Faria returned to Lisbon, where he was also received at the court. The romantic fact that his father was a priest and his mother a nun caused a certain stir, mainly in the eyes of the aristocratic public.

### CHANGE IN CAREER

Abbé Faria, convinced that there was no chance of advancement in an ecclesiastical career in Portugal, decided to seek elsewhere an appropriate field for his intellectual activity based on his experiences, practice and to master the art and science of hypnotism. He left for Paris in the spring of 1788, to fulfill his ambitions.

Curiously the first trace of his existence in the big city is recorded in the Registrar of Denunciation (1792) of the Section of Ponceau (better known after 1793, as of "the friends of the motherland") in the National Archives.

Faria arrived in Paris, four years after the departure of Mesmer. But the fashion was still alive, the appeal for

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marvellous things as burning as ever. One would be interested in knowing how Abbé Faria was attracted to Mesmerism. There is a suggestion that he brought the Science with him from India where hypnotism was known and practised by Hindu Priests in the temples of India. Being a Philosopher, he was highly observant and possessed a passion for novelty. It is likely that the mysticism in "mesmerism" interested him.

It is not easy to fix the exact time of the beginning of his public demonstrations of hypotism. The first reference to Faria as a magnetiser is in the "Memoir of Chateaubriand" (Chateaubriand 1768-1848 published after his death in 1843; the relevant passage was probably written in 1802.

It seems, Faria continued his experiments and practice in Paris till 1811. Later he went to Marseilles as a Professor of Philosophy in the Academy "Lyceum" of that city. During his stay there he was elected a member of the Medical Society of Marseilles (Dalgado D. G. 1906, Chateaubriand 1768-1848) in recognition of his contribution to the phenomena of hypnotism.

Later, in 1812, Faria joined the Academy of Nimes as a Professor of Philosophy, but he was not pleased with this new position as it was inferior to the previous one he held at Marseilles. He returned to Paris in 1813, where he was conferred the title of Professor and started a public course on "Lucid Sleep".

On obtaining permission from the Prefect of Police, he began on 11th August 1813 to hold conferences every Thursday at No. 49, Clichy Street. The charge was five francs for each meeting. These meetings attracted the cream of Parisian

society. He was much spoken of and obtained great publicity from the Press for his contribution to the phenomena of lucid sleep and hypnotism.

#### HIS THEORY

As such, Faria (Faria L'Abbé 1819, Moniz Egas 1925) was the true founder of the modern doctrine of suggestion. In order to understand his ideas well, it is essential to compare them with those of his contemporaries.

He refuted all contemporary theories on Mesmerism saying "I can't conceive, all the human species was so foolish, to go to search the cause of this phenomenon in a tub, in an external wish, in magnetic fluid, in animal heat and in thousands of different ridiculous things of this type. There is nothing that can justify the denomination of animal magnetism, to signify the 'Action of Sleep'." He replaced the term 'animal magnetism' by 'concentration', 'magnetisers' by 'concentrators' and 'magnetised' by 'concentrated'.

As for the existence of any kind of magnetic fluid, a remarkable departure from the theory of Mesmer, Faria showed the absurdity of this in the following demonstration.

"A certain number of people were placed near the tree of Mesmer and Puysegur, (Dalgado, D. G. 1906) but nothing happened; the same people were placed near another tree and were convinced that tree was magnetised without it actually being so; it was observed that many fell into deep sleep." He concluded that the supposition of magnetic fluid as suggested by Mesmer at that time is completely absurd, whether one considers its nature, its application or its results. Faria understood the mechanism of hypnotism and it was he who first marked out its natural



**Abbé Faria hypnotising a Woman  
(Statue in Goa)**

limits. His opinion was firm and unshakeable. In his own words "nothing comes out in hypnotic sleep that is not natural." He not only observed facts but also scrutinized hypnotic susceptibility. He was quick to appreciate that some people succumb quickly while others remain refractory. He gave more importance to the hypnotised than to the hypnotiser. He explained that people who are anaemic (fluidity of blood), who sleep easily, who sweat much, who are much impressionable and hysterical, are more susceptible to somnambulism. These observations by him are very important, considering how little was known about the physiology of the nervous system at that time. He thought that women are better hypnotic subjects than men, and that practice improves performance, i.e. hypnotism works more easily on subjects who are often hypnotised. Susceptibility in short, was not seen by him as fixed and static attribute.

Faria considered that the immediate cause of hypnosis lay in what he called "The concentration of senses" of the hypnotised person and for this "Mental peace and physical calmness is essential." He added "One can't be put to sleep as long as the mind is occupied either by the agitation of blood or worries or troubles, etc."

He admitted that suggestion played an important part but also said it was not the only factor.

While many later writers continued to attribute the cause of hypnosis to such things as 'concentration of attention' (Preyer; Moniz Egas 1925, Dalgado D.G. 1906) connection of sleep (De Jong; Moniz Egas 1925) autosuggestion (Ochowski Varsovia; Moniz Egas 1925), others acknowledged their debt to Faria. Liebau

for example writes, "the cause of hypnotic sleep lies in the retreat of attention out of the senses and concentration of the mind on one idea which is the main point." He rightly states that this insight was gained first not by James Braid (Moniz Egas 1925) as was commonly supposed but by Abbé de Faria.

#### FARIA'S TECHNIQUE

Faria employed the following procedures for hypnosis :

1. *First Method* : Faria used to sit comfortably and ask the person to sit likewise, to close his eyes and imagine himself going to sleep. When the person was calm, he would exclaim in a loud voice "DORMEZ" (Sleep) and the person would fall into lucid sleep.
2. *Second Method* : Faria used to ask the person to fix his gaze on his (Faria's) hand. From a distance he would slowly approach until his hand was close to the eyes of the person who would sometimes thereupon fall into lucid sleep.
3. *Third Method* : Faria used to touch the frontal region, the bridge of the nose, the chest upto the epigastrium, the knees and the feet and slowly the person used to fall asleep.

If the first trial, did not induce sleep, he used to repeat them. If the fourth attempt also failed, he would declare that the individual is incapable of falling into lucid sleep.

The procedures are entirely suggestive and psychical. According to Bernheim (Moniz Egas 1925) this is the sleep by suggestion, which is insinuated in the mind of the patient. There is no doubt, that Faria is the founder of the method.

Some English writers who were not aware of Faria's contribution have attributed discovery of hypnotism to James Braid, an English Surgeon.

It is obvious from the above facts that Braid's discovery of Lucid Sleep, was secondary to that of Faria, who discovered the same 30 years earlier. It is also interesting to note that Braid first practised his technique in Calcutta, India, and not in the West, again showing that India had a prominent role to play in influencing his ideas on the subject.

Faria's work "De la cause Du Somneil Lucide" (Faria L'Abbé 1819) about the cause of lucid sleep, is divided into four volumes, out of which only one was published after his death. It was written in French and published in 1819 (Faria died on 28th September 1819 due to apoplexy) by a publisher of Paris and it was re-published in 1906, by one of his Goan friends Dr. Gelasio Delgado, also in Paris.

Le Abbé Faria is one of the Principal characters of Alexander Dumas' (Dumas Alexander 1959) famous book "Count of Monte Cristo". Le Abbé de Faria is also mentioned by the celebrated chateaubriand, (Chateaubriand 1968-1848) another great French author, in his book "Memories de Alem Jumule" — this work has been also translated into Portuguese and English.

It is clearly evident from the available records mentioned, that Faria was the first :—

- a) to deny the existence of magnetic fluid.
- b) to attribute the phenomenon of somnambulism to the anaemic condi-

tion and the psychic impressionability of the hypnotised subject.

- c) to discover the suggestive psychic procedure for provoking somnambulism.
- d) to employ the same suggestive procedure to step the somnambulist state and the division of the personality.
- e) to observe and describe some new symptoms by suggestion.
- f) to propose a psychological theory, explaining the phenomenon of somnambulism.
- g) to give experimental and therapeutic suggestions in a really extraordinary fashion.

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