

Return to the Source

Francis Roles wrote in November 1960:

When I first began to sit with him (P. D. Ouspensky) alone he would often say, “Something is missing in the System. Either G didn’t know or he forgot. We are told that everything depends on remembering ourselves and the next minute we are told, ‘You can’t remember yourself’. If man is meant to remember himself there must have been some simple natural method. But it’s been lost. I could never find it. Once in India, I heard an echo of such a method.” And he told me, “Try it if you like”, he said, “but I can’t teach it because it’s not the real thing—it’s only second hand. Perhaps you have to find the real thing.” And from that time on he sent me to see anyone who came to London with any claim. I saw the most fantastic yogis, etc. but never anything real until last January.

Then one of our people mentioned to me a certain Indian Maharshi, then in London, who had a very interesting method which her daughter was trying with great success. As usual I went to try it with the scepticism engendered by previous disappointments. Judge my astonishment when I recognized the exact method of which Mr. O. had given me the echo! No doubt about it.

I saw a great deal of this man. He was not a charlatan. He had the signs of higher being; he belongs to a great Tradition; he was sincere. I had hours of coaching in the method which was giving me results beyond anything I could hope for. I got about twenty ‘old hands’ to try it simply as an experiment. They at once got results—they found the method gave them more moments of Self-remembering, more understanding of certain ideas in the system. So then I decided all our people should have a chance. Now 380 people are doing it with gratifying results ...

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June 1961

Extract from a Meeting at Colet House

Dr. Roles. There is certainly no place like home and no people like one's own people and if there is one message I must begin with it is "everything is fine and all our worries are over".

I will try to make myself audible, but there some things one cannot shout about; so it is all being recorded, and you will be able to hear or read anything you miss.

Now, in forming a judgement as to whether this Doctor has got anything from his journey, I would just remind you that I was there for 5½ weeks and, during the first three weeks, it was just a struggle to keep alive at all. We were all ill, with no doctor in the place except Vincent Snell and myself for the large floating and resident Indian population as well as the 30 or 40 visitors from different countries,

Then came the period of the 'quickenings', so to speak, when we began to feel something new starting; so the intensity of the work was stepped up during the fourth week.

But I was only born last Thursday, so I'm just four days old, and though I know how I want to speak and act, I'm far from being able to do it. That will take some time, so have patience.

And I would just like to remind you that there are still some of our people out there, so think of them in those very difficult conditions, (crowded into an Ashram and sometimes prostrated by the heat) and write to any of them that you know very well, because letters make a lot of difference. They are going to stay out there until they get what they want, another month, perhaps five or six weeks. So remember them, for they are all helping to give our Work a good name and preparing to help us on their return.

But for me it was a near thing because, up to Wednesday night last, I hadn't achieved the objective—this thing hadn't come to stay—and the Maharishi was doing everything in his power to make me send a telegram postponing my return. The last thing that he said to me as we walked up from the Ganges together on Wednesday night was, "Send that telegram", and I was put on a spot, because I happen to believe that a promise is a promise. I had promised to come back on a certain day, and I believe that to keep a promise can sometimes be more important than the enjoyment of spiritual experience. On the other hand, what was the point of coming back without getting what I went for?

Well, then, the wonderful thing happened! I went to bed and to sleep and woke up at two in the morning in Samadhi which continued all that night and half the next day, so I went in to the Maharishi at 8 o'clock next morning with all the signs of it on me, he had nothing more to say. From that time it was just a triumph and a wonderful send-off; and I want to assure you that this triumph belongs to all of us together.

You all made this possible for me, and we were given a 'big hand' out there, with the Maharishi never missing an opportunity of showing his gratitude for what we have done for his movement. I can't tell it you all at once, but I would like you to realize that every single person in our Work has played a rôle in this, and that we are one body closely knit together, so that if even one person gets a permanent realization, we are all absolutely certain to get it some day.

So let us from now on stop worrying and fretting and being anxious about tomorrow. We are all moving along even though we may be sitting still, for the train is going and it will take us there. We will all have different rôles to play in this, so don't let us look disapprovingly at what Mr. X or Mrs. Y is doing; let us make perfect our own rôle. Let us begin "to Be what we are". I am afraid I have not helped in the past with a lot of disapproval.

One more important thing I would like to say first before you ask me anything you want to know. I had this strange urge that I must go because I felt that it was something to do with 'finding the source'. I didn't know

what that meant really; I only knew that when the moment came I had to go at once; and as it happens I went at exactly the right moment.

Now this expression—‘find the source’—can be taken in two ways, either, ‘find the source within yourself’, attain realization of your possibilities or, on the bigger scale as Mr. Ouspensky so often told us we had to do, find the source of the System. Most unexpectedly we found both, and I would like the main theme this afternoon—I should give you sufficient evidence for you to accept that—that we have found the source of the System, and we have returned to the source.

Well, now, is there anything particular you would like to ask?

Mrs. Grazebrook. Does the Maharishi’s method free man permanently from negative imagination and identification?

Dr. Roles. Most certainly yes. You cannot reach full success in the Meditation unless you are allowing it to take you for at least part of your half-hour to a state of freedom from negative imagination and identification; the repetition of such half-hours makes that happy state permanent. But they themselves say, he himself says, that two things are necessary. One is a system of thought and one is the Method. On their Way they start with the Method, and don’t teach you the system of thought until you have got a certain realization, and they tell you their System of thought in accordance with your understanding. So two things are admitted to be necessary. Although I myself have become more than ever convinced that for us our System of thought is best, and that it’s true meaning cannot be realized without successful meditation. I do not expect everyone to agree with me. Each one has to make his own bed and lie on it.

Miss. Wright. What does the term Realization mean? Is it like consciousness; something with a scale, relative steps, or is it one particular thing, we speak of as ‘realization’?

Dr. Roles. Yes. One thing which includes everything, and that one thing to realize is oneself. But this is hard to understand and I hope that as I quote to you something of what has been said the true meaning will become clearer gradually, but before I quote to you about what has been said I have to tell you what I mean about the source.

During the third week, towards the end of it, the Maharishi told me that the Head of his Tradition, the present Shankaracharya, (Shankaracharya means ‘Shankara’s Master-Pupil Tradition’—the Acharya Tradition) was in the neighbouring city of Dehra Dun twenty miles away, and said he was going over to see him, in a little trepidation perhaps as to whether they would see eye to eye! But he came back very well pleased; found they agreed, so he had invited the Shankaracharya to stay with us, and he was due to arrive on the following Tuesday.

On the Tuesday morning we all collected together with the Maharishi—the house had been decorated from top to bottom all the day and most of the night before, and scouts had been posted along the road with gongs and bells, and about 12.30 (because everything can be 2 or 3 hours late in that appalling heat), about 12.30 gongs began to ring and we all collected at the main gate. First of all a car arrived with some of his entourage and they unpacked a great throne of gold and silver, and a red and gold umbrella which fitted into the back of it, two silver maces and plumes to keep the flies away, and tridents with drums of Shiva; and then a big brake drove up after it. Meanwhile, much of the population of the surrounding country had collected there, when out of this second car stepped this man with his closest people around him. He looked just like a Khan, more Tibetan (to my ignorant eyes) than Indian, with jet black hair, long greying beard, square, very firm step; a little bit frightening at first; and immediately he stepped out of the car there was this press of people putting garlands over his neck, trying to kiss his feet, pressing and pushing forward, gongs, bells, conches blowing, and he was completely ‘withdrawn.’ You could see that he was holding himself unaffected by it all, and he strode through the crowd to his room and we waited for him to come in to talk to us an hour later.

Then again there came the sounding of drums and loud shouts of “Make way for the Great Master”, “Make way for the Divine Guru”, and his entourage and he would stride in and he would sit on the throne with the plume bearers behind and the mace holders at his feet, and there we would all be standing, with the Maharishi standing below the platform in front of him holding a tray of lights, and dozens of little lighted wicks in oil on trays all around. And then a chant would begin with a high tenor voice taking up each verse and the deeper refrain sung by all the Indians, and this chant rang such a strangely familiar bell in me. It came from one of the Vedas, not the Rig-Veda, but from the Ayur-Veda, and stirred something deep in me, so that more than once it gave me a taste of Samadhi, and I can hear it at this moment. It went on for many verses and gradually it lifted the atmosphere out of the everyday hum-drum. When it came to an end we all sat down with the Maharishi close to us, and were encouraged to ask questions.

That first time, the Shankaracharya was still completely withdrawn, He answered questions immediately, without having to think at all; very precisely and tersely; often in one sentence; beautiful formulations; he didn't change his voice very much, but you could tell by the happy laughter which went up that the Maharishi was enjoying them as much as anybody, before he translated them to us. Those answers were very witty and his stories were absolutely beautiful; almost anything could be illustrated by some story, and if the atmosphere needed lifting he would tell a story that would make us all laugh, and if it was the right atmosphere he would speak about serious things, and so on; but we all had a little fun poked at us in a very benign and gentle way if we exaggerated or dramatised! These terse and beautiful formulations, said in his soft voice, (so unlike it's setting of 2,500 years old) said in a very modern way, very simple language, made an extraordinary impression on us all.

I'd like to give you two illustrations of the sort of answers we get. We would, by the way, have meetings twice a day, one formal meeting in the big hall with 30 or 40 Indians of all denominations and 30 or 40 of us sitting round, and the Indians would ask questions and they would be translated for us by the Maharishi, and we would ask questions and they would be translated into Hindi and the answers back into English by him; and this arduous task (for which he took notes in Hindi during the longer expositions) the Maharishi performed so beautifully and with such command of both languages, that surely in the wide world there could exist no such perfect combination as this one.

The evening meeting would be much more informal and held in the most congenial setting available. One early evening we were meeting after dark down by the river and we asked him, I think, a question rather like Miss Wright's just now, and he said:

“If you begin to be what you are you will realize everything, but to begin to be what you are you must come out of what you are not. You are not those thoughts which are turning, turning in your mind: you are not those changing feelings: you are not the different decisions you make and the different wills you have: you are not that separate ego: Well, then, what are you? You will find when you have come out of what you are not, that the ripple on the water is whispering to you ‘I am That’, the birds in the mango tree are singing to you ‘I am That’, the moon and the stars are shining beacons to you, ‘I am That’: you are in everything in the world and everything in the world is in you since for you it only exists because it is mirrored in you; and at the same time you are that—everything”

... speaking in this clear, simple way, full of poetry; speaking from himself, not from books.

There were also very amusing stories that came up spontaneously like this:

He had been speaking about his ancient Tradition and your impetuous brother, John (Holmes) said, ‘Well, if it has all gone on all that time why hasn't it produced more results?’ and, quick as a flash, he said, “Every spiritual truth, however simple, is at once distorted when it reaches an unrealized person. I will tell you a story.

“A man went to a teacher and asked him about God, and the teacher said, ‘I will answer your question in the simplest possible way, in three words—God is everywhere.’ Well satisfied, for of course he now knew everything, the man went away. Going along the road he saw an elephant coming towards him with the mahout riding on its back and he thought to himself, ‘God is everywhere, God is in the elephant, God is in me, can God harm God? I will walk straight on,’ and he got a little nearer the mahout first asked him to move out of the way, and then shouted at him, but he said, ‘No, God is in the elephant, God is in me, I am going on.’ When he reached the elephant, the elephant took him in his trunk and threw him across the road where he arrived much shaken, bruised and damaged. So, when he recovered a little, he hobbled back to the Teacher and said, ‘I have been trying to act according to what you said and look at what has happened to me,’ and the Teacher said, ‘Recount what happened,’ and he told the story, and the Teacher said, ‘You should understand fully before you begin to act. It is quite right that God is in everything—God was in the elephant, God was in you, but God was also in the mahout and the mahout told you to get out of the way and you disobeyed God and you received what you deserved.’”

Well, now, what else do you want to know about? Dozens and dozens of things are there which burnt into one’s memory, one doesn’t have to consult one’s notes. Full notes have, however, been taken and will come back with Mrs. Gill and Mrs. Milich.

Mrs. Henry. About realization. This expression, a realized man, seems to explain what happens when you reach completion.

Dr. Roles. It means realization of your possibilities and, of course, there are very many degrees. Everybody in this room has some degree of realisation which makes them, and has made them all this time, want to get more. There are many degrees of realization, but when they speak of it they mean permanent realization which you can return to at will to get the full flavour; but that flavour you are aware of in the background all through the day as always there; it is always there in each of us, and always has been there, only we have not realized it. Once you realize it you don’t go away from it so much. It is you, it is me, who is going away, not the Reality, the Truth, the Kingdom of Heaven. It is we who go away so much.

Mrs. Henry. May one ask when you reached this high point last Thursday, was it as you expected or was it quite different?

Dr. Roles. I would describe it as intensification to the full of something very familiar. But the fullness makes it feel totally different.

There are two stages to this. One is reaching the source in yourself, and the other is the action in the external world which follows that, so the next question is, “How does the man who has realized his possibilities think and speak and act? How does he behave in his life?” The answer is that he behaves like himself, like no other person in the world, and everything he says and does is from himself, and nobody else in the world can change that or do anything about it, and he relies on nobody else, and he speaks in his own way of his own experiences, and he acts naturally. All artificiality is gone. He does what he has to do in a natural way, So we’ve got quite a lot to re-learn. We have just got to be natural—to do what we have to do as we alone do it—but full and permanent realization has to come first before we shall succeed. That is why it was said, “Begin to Be what you are”. Did you ask something Allan?

Mr. Allan. I want to ask if you could tell us anything particular which has made you feel that this was the source of our Teaching?

Dr. Roles. I hoped you would ask that. I’d like you to listen to the answer given to a question that I put to the

Shankaracharya. I said to him, “When the original Shankaracharya founded these four seats of learning, North, South, East, and West, in India, what were they and what are they now? Are they religious places, are they schools of philosophy, are they practical schools of yoga? How should they be described?” And he said, “The Truth was given by Brahma to Narayana long before all that, and our Tradition was made to be a beacon light from which many other religions and philosophies and methods have branched off, and these, by whoever holds this office, have to be put right when in any of them the balance is upset at any given time. It is not either religion or philosophy or yoga. It is a beacon light to set right what is wrong in all aspirants to spirituality.”

This was completely borne out by his conversation, for you could see that he was speaking from all the different systems and not bound only to one. In his words, of course, one talk would be from the point of view of the *Eight Noble Truths of Buddha*, with his own illustrations and examples; another time it would be a talk like the background of Christianity: He would be asked what would be a proper code of life for somebody who has not got full realization.

He said: “A good general code would be to do nothing to anybody else which you would not like being done to you. If, for instance, you would like to expose somebody else’s sins in public, stop and think for a moment, how would you like your own sins exposed in public”.

Q. I have heard a lot about righteous anger—what does it mean?

Dr. Roles. He said: “A realized man can make a show of anger to achieve a particular result. If a realized man wishes to help somebody, he may cause tears; why should he be angry? He causes tears in this man out of a loving desire to help him. If a surgeon causes tears in his patient, does he himself get angry? If he got angry his knife would slip. Certainly there is unrighteous anger, and unrighteous anger is that anger which enters into your own soul; the anger which poisons you is unrighteous anger; but the righteous man, if he is helping somebody, doesn’t get angry.” (*Compare St. Luke, ch.VI, verses 27 to 45.*)

Then, on another evening, he would speak in a more Persian way, with variants of stories one comes across in the Mathnavi. Very much also of the Vedanta, mercifully greatly simplified for us!

Well, one evening he completely electrified us. It was the last evening I sat with him, about two or three days before I left, and he suddenly said, “*The whole thing is that we never remember ourselves. All our troubles come from not remembering ourselves, only we can’t talk about this at the beginning because it is never understood. You will have to reach realization before you can understand it. I will tell you a story:*”

“Ten men were sitting on the Ganges bank, as we are sitting now, and they decided to swim across to the other side. On the way over they got nervous because of the current, and the crocodiles, so, when they came to the other side, they began to count heads. They counted up and, to their horror, found that there were only nine, and, whoever counted, the answer was always nine. They almost began to prepare for the funeral, but the tenth man was always himself (the man who was counting), and always forgotten, not counted.”

“Only, this is difficult to understand. It is as if each of us possessed two houses. One is a tiny little house, no furnishings, bars on the windows, and in that house we live all our lives, we forget that we also possess a magnificent house, full of costly rugs and furniture, everything we could want, servants at our command. If we could only remember that we also owned this other house, we would not be content with living in the little house all the time. When we start to meditate we come out, gradually, out of the little house, and we sit for a time between the two houses; when we transcend everything that belongs to our personal life, and reach the stage of absolute silence, we are sitting between the two houses without yet realising the big spacious house. If we come out of the little house often enough, and sit for long enough, the memory of the big and spacious house will

begin to come to us; we will begin to walk there; we will get a glimpse of it; we will be able to go in; once we realize what a wonderful house it is we will never want to go back to the little house. So, memory of this great big house is Self-remembering, but it is not the same as realization. Self-remembering is remembering the existence of this big house; realization is when you go in and live there.”

There were many other things, chiefly in his behaviour, and the way he went about things, and the way he and the Maharishi transacted everything, that reminded me of the principles of our System, and convinced me that this indeed was a School of the Fourth Way and on a very high level. Remind me to recount some of these things.

But there is one other thing I'd like to tell you: when everything had turned out happily for me, the Maharishi said we would spend our last night together, and so he sent away the other people as we sat by the river, and we had a heart-to-heart for two hours. He seemed by the frankness of his answers to want to have no secrets between us. I asked him various intimate questions about his relations with his Master and about the Shankaracharya, and he then said, “You know I have never had a chance to ask you about Mr. Ouspensky's System.”

I said, “First of all it was not Mr. Ouspensky's—it is almost as old as your own System and I believe that it came from your great Tradition originally as did so much else.” He said, “What makes you think that?” and I replied to him what the Shankaracharya had said about Self-remembering and explained that this was the keynote of our System but, just as he had said, it was very difficult to understand, and we had misunderstood it very often. He began to be interested and said, “And what else?” and then I said, “It describes just what you and he have been speaking about, a house of three rooms (intellect, emotion, instinct) and hidden in it a fourth room containing, again what we have been talking about, Samadhi and cosmic consciousness; and many things the Teaching gives about it; and it says in essence just the same things that you have been saying”, and he said, “And what else?” and I replied: “It would take me three years to begin to tell you about this System, so come and stay with me for three years! Another side of it is the cosmic side consisting of two approaches—one from the point of view of vibrations, another from the point of view of atoms. This second one gives a wonderful description of ‘worlds within worlds’, each world being an atom of the world above; of cells in a man; and men and animals in Nature (organic life on the earth); of planets within a solar system; and sun-stars within starry worlds (the galaxies)”, and he said, “And what below?” And I said, “And molecules within cells; and atoms within molecules; and electrons within atoms; everything with a precise relationship.” And I believe he would have liked to continue, but just then we looked up and there was a crowd of Indians sitting in the darkness all round waiting to speak to him, so duty called and we said goodnight.

But I would like to make it clear that I believe that originally this System and the Meditation went hand in hand, and that the Meditation was lost, and the System became ‘fragments of an unknown system’, partially understood, and that now we have indeed returned to the source because a firm connection has now been established on the following evidence.

On the Shankaracharya's very first evening, the Maharishi told him all about us in a most generous way; how we had made everything possible in London; we had a big organisation in other countries; we had contributed 40,000 rupees for the site; and from that moment there was a close connection established and I was encouraged to start up each meeting and, if I didn't, he might say, “And what is Dr. Roles thinking?” This was just a rôle one had to play on your behalf—as your spokesman. This relationship got closer and closer and better and better and, although one could never have any direct personal communication—there was a charmed circle which one could never, or didn't have any inclination to, pass—yet, on my last morning (the taxi was coming at 11 o'clock) I went in to the Maharishi and said, “Wouldn't it be a nice thing if I went and asked His Holiness for his Blessing,” and he said, “Yes, it would be a very nice thing”. So he spoke to the Brahmin standing there

who went up to the other side of the house and spoke to one of the Shankaracharya's entourage, and the answer came back—"In ten minutes".

In ten minutes the message came down, "He is ready", and the Maharishi gave me a garland of white temple flowers which I took up, and making my bow, I gave it to him. I shall never forget the warmth of his smile and the radiance that came from him. He made a gesture, and one of his people put an enormous garland of orange flowers round my neck. I sat down, and he said, "You look well." I said, "I have never felt better, thanks to you." He went on, "You must write to me from now on—any questions you want to ask about matters that have not been cleared up; write and ask me," I said, "May I speak about you to my friends in London because they will have questions too." He said, "Yes, write as often as you can, and I will be here every year." This is all frankly egotistical, for indeed everyone out there has forged his or her firm connection.

So one felt that there is this close connection established now and that must be a rare thing, for I heard of one Englishman who has been out to India five times to find him, and has never got near him. When he found these strange animals from the West were intensely interested in the same things as he was, and moreover understanding what he said, he told the Maharishi that he was as pleased as we were.

That is all I'd like to say this evening.

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