

13 August 1974

## GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Dr. Roles. There has been so much discovered scientifically in the last two or three decades about our structure which really can help us a great deal in regard to the Meditation and all that is derived from it and, although I cannot go into it today, we hope to study it in more detail in October. But it is related to the latest answer we have had from the Shankaracharya last week, which I want to give you today.

Nearly all the work in psychoneurology which is relevant to Self-study, has centred on this newly evolved part of the mind by which man differs chiefly from animals. I will read you one of the latest pronouncements on the importance of this part of the brain (in depth of course) by Prof. A. R. Luria of Moscow who has been investigating it extensively at the Neurological Institute there:

The reception, coding and storage of information constitute only one aspect of human cognitive processes [Knowledge]. Another of its aspects is the organisation of conscious activity. This task is linked with the third of the fundamental functional systems of the brain, responsible for programming, regulating and verification.

Man [as he should be] not only reacts passively to incoming information, but creates *intentions*, forms plans and programmes of his actions, inspects their performance, and *regulates* his behaviour so that it conforms to these plans and programmes; finally, he *verifies* his activity, comparing the effects of his actions with the original intentions and correcting any mistakes he has made...

(Dr. R. This is the whole basis of learning from experience.)

The structures of the third functional unit, the complex system for programming, regulation and verification are located in the *frontal regions of the hemispheres*.

(*The Working Brain*, 1973, p.79)

Dr. R. (repeated) *The front part* – this familiar part behind our foreheads which we call ‘I’.

Then he commented:

It is necessary *first* to realise how important in Self-realization is this front part of the brain; and *secondly*, that this is the only part to which we have direct access and can transform into our most valuable servant. It is the ordinary ‘programmer’ of the brain’s computer mechanisms – or, in ancient language, it is the ‘Charioteer’ who should wake up and control the horses (feelings) and the chariot (body). So we will now try a couple of experiments to make sure we are talking about the same thing:

I would like you just to sit as you are – quite casually – and shut your eyes, but not repeating the Mantra, and just letting the random thoughts come and turn as they like. We will do this for a couple of minutes and then we will ask you what happened. Remember, it is in no sense a ‘meditation’ – just an elementary experiment.

(First experiment)

[**Note:** On enquiry, no one ventured to say anything! But after the meeting several people told me that (like me) they had been taken by surprise. *While they were observing, there were no thoughts at all!*]

What people won't realise today is that these frontal lobes are not 'the organ of thought', that they should not be thinking at all. In fact, there is *no* 'organ of thought', because thinking is a very complex function and it involves all parts of the brain on many different levels – the resulting thoughts show also many different levels. Those mechanical thoughts which are constantly revolving there are a completely unnecessary burden which we carry about with us the whole time, and which make our minds tired and bored and stop us from realizing our possibilities.

O.K.? Do you go along with that?

Q. It seems hard to say that something which happens to everyone is unnecessary?

Dr. R. Yes, it is hard, and that is why humanity gets into such a lot of trouble! Because this happens to everybody, everybody is asleep!

This part of the mind is really a cinema screen – the screen on which all the different images that constitute our outer and inner life are shown for our inspection, and this is the part of the brain which should *select and learn from experience*. If it will only learn to do that, it will give us a clear, reflecting screen without any personal slant whatsoever. But that takes a lot of doing! We first of all do it for half an hour in Meditation; but after a little time, we can keep this screen clear during ordinary life. We start when we are doing quite simple routine chores, when we are not talking or reading or having to do anything intellectual – when we are just moving about. If we steadily practise this, we shall make it part of our nature before very long! It's the first step that's difficult.

To continue: All the difficulties met with in any sort of psychological or spiritual teaching come from the problem: 'How exactly do we clear this screen?' 'How do we make it pure white like the cinema screen without its being stained by the pictures?' For this screen readily takes the colour of what it reflects; yet, in fact, the screen should be pure white.

So we can try our second experiment, which is to sit as you were sitting and try to force the mind to stop thoughts – just try *by force* to stop all thoughts. We won't do it for long because it is very tiring; we will try it for a minute or two.

(Second experiment)

Dr. R. Two minutes seem a long time when you do that, and Mr. Ouspensky used to say that you could, at the most, clear your mind that way for two minutes; and if you tried it often you would find that it was rather seldom you could do that even for as long as two minutes. I think you will agree also that, if we do succeed, there is such an inrush of thoughts afterwards that 'the last state of that man is worse than the first!' (As in Matthew 12: 43–45, the 'Seven Devils'.)

So, in Meditation, we learn not to do either of those two things – neither to sit letting random thoughts come in, with a casual posture and restless movements; nor to force the mind to stop those thoughts by some effort of will; for the Meditation we have been given

is a much cleverer and more effective way of clearing this screen or mirror if you do it rightly.

What do people observe – or are we already free of all that?

Roy Tomlinson. By thoughts, do you also mean mental images and pictures?

Dr. R. I mean *everything* that is showing on the screen – not only visual images, but reflections of sensations and sounds – everything.

Q. When I am listening to these – to the actual physical sounds – I find that the mind won't be still.

Dr. R. Yes, remember that the inner noise (which is self-produced) is more disturbing than the external sensations of sights and sounds and the memories arising from them. It is *attending* to all these reflections on the screen which effectively stops the rhythm of the Mantra going deep in Meditation.

Isn't that what we have all discovered at times?

Q. Sometimes the Mantra itself gets stuck in this part of the mind – with those turning thoughts – how do you let it flow?

Dr. R. Yes, this is the common problem of all who try to meditate. The answer is 'by *giving up*', and the subject of our talk tonight is this 'giving up' – what it means, what we have to do – and the Shankaracharya's latest guidance on the subject.

You first of all *give up noticing* those thoughts – you 'give up' noticing anything else but the Mantra; you relinquish anything else, let go of it, bringing your attention back to the rhythm. That is why it is a very clever method, because it gives you a focus for your attention which you don't have if you sit and shut your eyes without a technique.

Any other questions? We are all alike in this; none of us is very good!

Mrs. Wendy Wilks. Can you do something like setting the Mantra running very fast if you get stuck?

Dr. R. That's one good way to begin a half-hour – do it *before* you 'get stuck'! There are all sorts of ways like that for everybody; one way will work well one week and other methods have to be used at other times. The object of all these is to withdraw the attention from all *intellectual* processes whatsoever.

That is at the beginning, for the Mantra should be self-regulating – once you have set it running – let it do what it likes; but don't let your *attention* cling to anything else.

Another way is to change your posture. If you have got into the habit of 'meditating' with all this running commentary going on, change your posture rather than embark on psychological struggles.

We should 'give up' all struggle of *any* kind.

Any other questions? There are various ways of doing this which each person finds for himself.

Mr. Hodge. Said that he found it was much connected with relaxing facial muscles and the hands.

Dr. R. Yes, the facial muscles, the lips and tongue are important sites of small movements and

tensions which have been found to be a cause of turning thoughts. The trouble is that starting with *physical* groups of muscles doesn't take us far – for physical relaxation only follows *mental* relaxation.

If we attend only to the rhythm of the Mantra, the breathing, circulation and metabolism automatically change so as to bring about mental and physical relaxation. Any other attempts to exert the 'will' only increase the tension.

The most important thing, however, and the one on which all efforts depend, is to 'give up' the 'I-ishness' – that this is *my* meditation, *my* progress or *my* lack of progress, *my* attention, *my* Nirvana, *my* progress to heaven!

That is why the Shankaracharya suggests dedicating each half-hour to the Supreme Being, 'your own Self that lives in the hearts of all', because it will develop a love for that which will enable the Supreme Being to come to our help.

Now *giving up* is a recurring topic in his latest talks with us and in his letters, and at one point on our last visit to India I asked him:

(19) 'Giving up', you have said, 'can be done emotionally and intellectually at all times and in all conditions. Practise 'giving up' all the time, by considering the body, the mind and the heart as belonging to Param-Atman and so offering all these back to Him.'

I said then: 'Even a little of this is found to be more effective than anything else. How can I make myself do more of it at other times, as well as during the Meditation?'

Dr. R. And as part of his answer to that he told a story, with which some of you are familiar, but some have not heard it.

Tonight we have friends here from far parts of the world, New York, Mexico, New Zealand, as well as others in and around London who don't come regularly; so we will have to tell it again! Allan will read this story now:

(Reading) It relates to Prajapati, who is the teacher of the Gods, the priest of the Gods. His son, Kach, having gone through the proper education in the Vedic and Upanishadic texts, and having acquired all the knowledge that was to be acquired, came back to his father. His father asked him what he was intending to do. He said, 'The essence of all I have learnt is that renunciation is the best medium for life, so I would like to go by the way of renunciation.' So he would not take up the activities of the priesthood, and he would not help in the household activities either;

Dr. R. In fact, he just 'dropped out'! (laughter) he just stayed in the house.

After some time, the father asked him whether he had really renounced everything? As far as the father could see, his son had renounced all work, but he still keeps on moving, eating, and using the amenities of the house. 'So what about that?' The son said, 'All right, I will renounce the house,' so he left the house and went into the jungle and stayed there.

Then, after another interval, the father visited him there and asked him what the situation was? The boy said, 'I can't say I have acquired complete peace, so it seems I have not yet renounced everything.' The father said, 'Yes, of course, it seems so – your renunciation is not complete, otherwise peace

would descend on you.’ So he renounced the clothes he wore, the food he ate, and all activity, yet he still could not get the real peace of mind.

‘Now,’ he said to himself, ‘the only thing left to renounce is my body, so I must renounce the body,’ and he prepared a funeral pyre intending to jump into it. The father suddenly appeared from behind a bush and asked him to be sure that this would be the final renunciation. The son asked, ‘But once I have given up the body, what else will remain to bind me to worldly things?’

The father replied, ‘Your subtle body is not going to die with your physical body, and the activities of the subtle body (which has desires) will make it keep on wandering, and will not subside after this body is burnt. You will get another body when you are dead because there will be some desire in your subtle body, so burning the body is not the final answer – you are not going to get rid of this creation.’

So the son said, ‘Well, what should I do if I cannot renounce, what else should I do?’

The father then said: ‘At last you have asked me a question, so now it is possible for you to learn something! Give up all your learning, and the final giving up – the final renunciation – will be the *giving up of the very idea of renunciation*. You are not giving up anything; you have nothing of your own, so there’s nothing to give up! By the idea of renunciation you are holding something in preference to other things – in fact, you are not renouncing; you are holding on very tightly to something lesser.’

(Record, 19 January 1974)

Dr. R. afterwards:

Later (on 4th July 1974), I wrote and asked him for some more advice on this subject, and this was the answer I got last week:

S. Giving up is nothing except to understand the real meaning of ‘giving up’. Ordinarily if we give up a certain thing we immediately develop an attachment to something else. As Kach’s giving up (in the story) was originally a giving up of external things, therefore he did not get peace even when he gave up all of them. But when he understood the real significance of giving up, he found that by giving up the very ‘I-ishness’ (Ahankara) of giving up, the giving up of all the things connected with the Ahankara (all the ‘I-ishness’) followed as a natural consequence. That is true giving up.

Subsequently, Kach’s practical life was that of an ideal man, namely carrying out all the duties and obligations of a practical life without any feeling of ‘I’ in his mind.

Dr. R. We are pioneering in quite a new world. Nobody has ever got this across except a few very great men with their immediate disciples around them. The *New Testament* is all about it. Many teachers talk about this; many Saints have practised the physical side of ‘giving up’ (such as St. Francis of Assisi) as a means of acquiring the ‘spiritual poverty’ – the ultimate ‘giving up’.

So don’t expect to understand this right away, because the manifestations of this ‘I-ishness’ are so varied and different for different people, and different for yourself at different times, that no general discipline could ever accomplish what the individual has to find for himself by patient exploration.

I think the best way really of understanding what he means by this Ahankara (or 'I-ishness') is to read you one or two stories. It so happens that the real Zen discipline (in the best hands) concentrates on the 'giving up' of this 'I'; almost every story in *101 Zen Stories* illustrates this in one way or another, so we will have to choose the first two that come along:

A. reads:

The Zen master, Haku-In, was praised by his neighbours as one living a pure life. A beautiful Japanese girl, whose parents owned a food store, lived near him. Suddenly, without a word, the girl was with child.

This made her parents angry. She would not confess who the man was, but after much harassment at last named Haku-In.

In great anger the parents went to the master. 'Is that so?' was all he would say.

After the child was born, it was brought to Haku-In. By this time he had lost his reputation, which did not trouble him, but he took very good care of the child. He obtained milk from his neighbours and everything that the little one needed.

A year later the girl mother could stand it no longer. She told her parents the truth that the real father of the child was a young man who worked in the fish market.

The mother and father of the girl at once went to Haku-In to ask his forgiveness, to apologise at length, and to get the child back again.

Haku-In was willing. In returning the child all he said was, 'Is that so?'

Dr. R. No artificial penance or discipline was applied; he did not make *external* efforts except to look after the child. The change which made him so different from ordinary people was *internal*, and he would have to have worked a long time before he could remain detached under such provocation!

The next story illustrates another aspect of 'giving up' this Ahankara:

There was a famous teacher called Ban-Kei, whose talks were attended not only by Zen students but by persons of all ranks and sects.

He never quoted Sutras nor indulged in scholastic dissertations. Instead his words were spoken directly from his heart to the hearts of his listeners.

His large audiences angered a priest of the Nichiren sect because the adherents had left to hear about Zen. The self-centred priest came to the temple, determined to debate with Ban-Kei.

'Hey, Zen teacher!' he called out. 'Wait a minute. Whoever respects you will obey what you say, but a man like myself does not respect you. Can you make me obey you?'

'Come up beside me and I will show you,' said Ban-Kei. Proudly the priest pushed his way through the crowd to the teacher.

Ban-kei smiled. 'Come over to my left side,' The priest obeyed. 'No,' said Ban-Kei, 'we may talk better if you are on the right side. Step over here.' The priest proudly stepped over to the right.

'You see,' observed Ban-Kei, 'you are obeying me and I think you are really a very gentle person. Now sit down and listen.'

Dr. R. went on:

Yet another aspect appears in this very short story:

A Zen master... asked a young student to bring him a pail of water to cool his bath.

The student brought the water, and after cooling the bath, threw on to the ground the little that was left over.

'You dunce!' the master scolded him. 'Why didn't you give the rest of the water to the plants? What right have *you* to waste even a drop of water in this temple?'

The young student attained Satori ('enlightenment') in that instant. He changed his name to Teki-Sui, which means 'a drop of water'.

Dr. R. continued by saying:

So this '*giving up*' leads to *Enlightenment*. One would not have enough determination to 'give up' something consistently (by remembering to do it over a long time) unless something very big was to be had at the end of it, and the rest of the Shankaracharya's answer to that particular question was:

S. At the beginning, when a man in training goes on duty for the first time he finds difficulties, but with further practice he is able to act naturally and smoothly [appropriately] as his experience ripens. Ultimately he achieves mastery and purity in this art.

By continuing practice of this kind *we are able to discover our own powers*. This is the advantage to be got by 'giving up' in practical life.

Dr. R. added: That's it: to 'discover our own powers,' and what a wealth remains undiscovered!

To begin with, we discover that we are constructed on a plan of bilateral symmetry – physical as well as mental. One half of the mind is always dominant, and if one wants something different from the 'rat-race', that dominant half of the mind has to be completely quiet and let the other half (which sees things quite differently) turn towards, and find the Source. Each of us consists of two entirely different people, each viewing the same world on his own screen and drawing different conclusions. (But herein lies a way of civilising the uncontrollable autonomic nervous system.)

I won't go into all that now (there is such a lot of evidence about it which we shall be studying in the Autumn). For now, in meditation, the first thing is to let the rhythm of the Mantra take us away from the dominant half so that it (the rhythm) can awaken the other half which has connections with our emotions, our Essence, our *inner* life, and can take us to the Source of our Being – the Atman. That is the theory, now safely established, which can make our meditation so much easier, if we understand it.

So now we will do about ten minutes of meditation, remembering that in meditation we do absolutely nothing, because anything we do is done by this dominant part of us. We let the rhythm of the Mantra run by itself, remembering it, and simply letting it complete itself. We give up all attempts to direct it – all mental operations whatsoever – and just keep in our hearts a love for our true Self whose Name we are repeating.

## MEDITATION

Any questions now?

Well, we are not asked to give up our sense of humour, but there is one thing we *can* give up and that is *worrying about the future*. It so happens that we have something rather

amusing on that subject (which has reached us by a devious route from New York via South Africa). Here is a cutting from a South African paper, July 1974:

In New York a business man organised the Wednesday Worry Club, and the rules were that you could only worry on Wednesday afternoon at 4 p.m. Every time a member had a worry he was to write it down on a slip of paper and place it in the Worry Box. When 4 p.m. arrived on Wednesday the members examined the worries and found that 90% of them had not happened, or had solved themselves, so these were all dumped in the waste-paper basket.

What did they do with the remaining 10%? They put them back into the box to be worried about on the next Wednesday afternoon at 4 p.m. if they still existed then!

(laughter)

Dr. R. Worry is, of course, only a manifestation of the 'I' which has become separated from the true 'I', its Creator. When the 'I' – the Ahankara – becomes connected again, all worry goes. There is nothing to worry about; we have had plenty of experience to confirm that. I cannot let you go off on your holidays without stressing one most important point. We could never have discovered for ourselves this wonderful way out of the prison of mechanicalness. Only a fully Realized man (who is also a great Teacher) could have made us understand. We've met, in the course of our search, a number of *partly* realized men who have big reputations – but every single one of them has been found to retain some of this Ahankara or 'I-ishness' which, in the end, has brought his adherents up against a brick wall. Do appreciate and make full use of the great privilege we have been granted.

(To Mr. Allan) You experienced this as you walked into His Holiness's private room on this last visit. Didn't you feel for certain that we have nothing to worry about? (Allan assents.)

\* \* \*