

11 March 1975

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

Dr. Roles. Well, here we are in March 1975, and that reminds us that it was just about fifteen years ago when a certain Maharishi (who had brought a System of Meditation out of India), arrived in London via the U.S.A. and had just given a few of us the Meditation. At that time he explained to us that this System of Meditation was a result of long and careful research before and during World War II by quite a number of experts of whom his own teacher (who is universally called Guru Deva) was the leading spirit. He was known as the Shankaracharya of the North, which is a post held in succession during the past twenty-five centuries.

Later, the Maharishi empowered us to give the initiation and introduced us to Guru Deva's successor, the present Shankaracharya, who took part in those original experiments and through whom we have learnt a lot more about them.

In that fifteen years, of course, this meditation has got long past the stage of experimentation. We see that that very careful research which they did foresaw all possible sides of, and complications, and produced results which are beyond doubt, So, if there are some people not getting anything from the meditation, it is not that there is anything wrong with the method; it must be that they are not doing it as it was meant to be done, and they should ask and go on until they find how it should be done There are many stages of meditation.

Perhaps the most important conclusion we've come to after giving it to several thousands of people and in many different countries, is that it is *wrong-headed thinking* that's the chief obstacle both to meditation and to a right orientation in living under present conditions in the West. We are very ignorant of important things in spite of all our detailed knowledge, and we've lost sight of the most important part of human nature which the meditation is designed to reach and develop. So we must all face up to the fact that '*thinking has no place in meditation*'; it is absolutely not wanted, nor has any sort of knowledge any place in meditation either, in the half-hour. It will brighten one's mind so that one can take in, and discriminate the different kinds of knowledge the rest of the time. But, in the half-hours, neither thinking nor knowledge has any function whatever. In fact, that part of the mind needs a rest which it should get in meditation.

Now none of us are very clever at dodging the thinking! This active mind of ours nowadays keeps going, and if we do nothing else this evening, let's think of other ways of dodging that, which you may not have tried.

The people who take to the meditation are those who just carry out the instructions quite simply to 'give up' everything but the rhythm of the Mantra, and later even that, without introducing any personal ideas or modifications; and who simply allow the method to develop naturally so as to permeate one's nature through experience and not thought.

Any questions about that?

I'm sure everybody here recognises this difficulty of the active mind when you sit and shut your eyes – how deceptive it is; how one minute you're meditating and the next minute you are *thinking about* meditation; then the next minute you are either fast asleep or thinking about something totally different!

Any questions?

Q. I don't know what you mean by 'even giving up the Mantra'?

Dr. R. Well, at a certain point the Mantra gets fainter and fainter losing all the physical characteristics like sound, or pulse – everything – and simply becomes something that's there – undefinable – and there's a tendency to feel that you ought to keep the Mantra going – to hang on to it. That isn't right; it stops the next stage of meditation, which is where the Mantra – the rhythm – disappears below deck, and you float in and out of a nothingness, and in that nothingness a fullness will appear and you enter Samadhi. But while you are clinging on to the physical characteristics of the Mantra, you are staying in this world.

Any other questions about that?

It's 'giving up' other things that's so difficult at first. The rhythm of the Mantra will give itself up if you let it alone.

Q. It's almost like being asleep.

Dr. R. It's like sleep, but must be carefully distinguished from sleep. Sleep in a half-hour is not only a waste of valuable time, but allows the mind to be active in dreams! It dreams away, and if you are really asleep, you wake unrefreshed; whereas this elusive, rather sleepy feeling that you get when the meditation is going well, is something quite different and is recognised because, when you 'come to,' your mind is very fresh and clear and full of energy.

Mrs. White. What are pictures?

Dr. R. Pictures are another activity of the mind – some people go in for these a lot, while others go in for sound. It depends on whether you have a visual memory or not. There are some which are called hypnogogic images – when you are dropping off to sleep lots of patterned images of the time before float across the mind and sometimes keep one awake. They are a sign of entry into ordinary mechanical sleep, so you come away from them; you don't gloat over the pictures!

Mrs. Fleming. Mrs. White is looking very puzzled.

(To Mrs. White) Did you mean it is actually during the meditation (Yes).

Dr. R. Yes, that's what I mean, we are talking entirely about doing the meditation!

Mrs. White. When the Mantra disappears there sometimes seem to come pictures.

Dr. R. Well, pay no attention to them; drop them; go on 'giving up'!

Mrs. White. That's a pity; they are so lovely!

Dr. R. Yes, I know, an awful pity, but you can return to them at the end of a half-hour! If attended to during meditation they prevent the final union with your true self.

Q. If sleep is what your body needs, then the meditation should induce it?

Dr. R. The meditation is for *waking up*; it's what your *soul* needs! Your body gets sleep – or should get it – at night. If the body needs sleep, go to bed half-an-hour earlier! But don't waste the time for the awakening of one's immortal part – the whole Source of one's destiny and possibility.

Q. It's not exactly something you control, and if you try to control it you are going contrary to meditation?

Dr. R. You're speaking about sleep coming upon you in a half-hour? (Q. agreed)
I don't see why you shouldn't stay awake; why should this be contrary to meditation? You keep a thread of consciousness to know the minimum – just whether the Mantra is there or not; that's all!

Q. My main difficulty is that when I sit down to meditate I find I have forgotten!

Dr. R. Forgotten what?

Q. Forgotten how to meditate.

Dr. R. Oh, I see! That mightn't be too bad! You remember that there *is* a Mantra, do you? (Yes) Well, that's all right. So you start the Mantra so that it's got some sort of rhythm – maybe different each time – fast or slow; but as long as you start that, you needn't remember anything else. It's quite good to forget in a sense – one should forget one's personality.

We need to remember that, besides one's physical body and one's soul, the two main divisions of our psychology are one's '*essence and personality*.' The essence is an entirely individual thing like one's fingerprints – no two are alike. It's what you really *are*, what you are born with. The personality is what we pick up from other people in the course of our lives. It gets us around, but it is apt to become too dominant, so that essence gets suppressed.

There are a great many stories which clarify the difference between the two. You've probably all heard the story of the parrot and its owner – the intellectual. That's an example of essence and personality.

There's another story which some of you may have heard, but I think we ought to repeat it. It's a story from the *Mahabharata* – one of the Indian epics – about the Lord Krishna and Arjuna and the great war:

A. reads.

During the great war of India (which is told in the *Mahabharata*) one day Karna was appointed commander-in-chief of the whole army arrayed against Arjuna. On his way to the battlefield, his charioteer said to him: 'Although you are a great warrior and an efficient leader, it would not be possible for you to vanquish Arjuna because he is supported by Shri Krishna, who has achieved this profound stillness.' (Karna was proud of his descent from the Sun God, and also of his own strength and efficiency.) (Dr. R. Personality.)

The charioteer told him a story about a flock of crows. One of them was strong, clever and good looking, so they made him their leader. This king of the crows felt proud of his exploits, and hence looked down upon all other creatures.

One day a young swan appeared in that vicinity. They all assembled round the swan and asked him if he knew about the great deeds of their king. He pleaded ignorance and wished to see their king. The king crow appeared and asked the swan about different types of flight. The swan, in his simplicity, said that he knew only one style.

The king crow then embarked on an exhibition of his 101 styles of flight.

Having performed his 101 types of aerobatics, the king crow wanted to see the art of the swan. The young swan took off in a graceful, gentle and natural flight and, as usual, increased his speed gradually. Since the crow was small and swift he flew fast, and realising that the swan was left behind, he came back to cheer him up. The swan gradually increased his speed, and it was not long before the crow was tired and trembled, and ultimately fell into the waters of the sea. The swan came down and rescued the crow and helped him back to his flock. The crow then became ashamed of his pride, and thanked the swan for his modesty and magnanimity. You see, the swan lived a natural life, while the crow occupied himself in aerobatics and cleverness.

‘The ultimate victory goes only to natural, steady, still and simple man; while the clever, smart and arty-crafty waste their energy in trifling pursuits only leading to their destruction.

‘So, my great master, you must keep in your mind the steady, still and natural Krishna, for no man can ever transcend Him or anyone He likes to support.’

Dr. R. contd:

So the Shankaracharya was using it to describe the experiences of each of us – of the ‘crows’ and the ‘swan’ – in meditation: I think we’ve all probably witnessed (during the beginning of a half-hour at any rate) the competition between personality and essence, and it’s that steady, natural, simple part of us which gets on with the meditation and transcends and achieves results. Of course, our ‘crows’ are always fighting back – and the King Crow doesn’t like being displaced from its habitually important position – and that’s the cause of all these thoughts which trouble us and cause difficulty.

Now what I would like is just to read the short passage with which the Shankaracharya introduced that story and then for us to go into meditation just after it.

A. reads:

One would say that *stillness* is the real experience of Meditation: that... when one comes out of such a state then one emerges with the treasure, and this treasure is without end. In ordinary physical rest and sleep one regains only a little of one’s expended energy, but having reached this stillness in meditation, one is never without energy and love. (Dr. R. Reached it repeatedly.) Such a man always does everything fresh and new, as if for the first time... This is because all parts of his Nature have been brought together in Unity to face any situation. So that when he attacks any problem, all his forces work through one-pointed attention.

(Record, 9 November 1973)

MEDITATION

Dr. R. went on:

I wonder if we all had the same experience then? At the beginning, of course, the ‘crows’ were very active, and (in my case) the King Crow was full of well-planned aerobatics to try out on you.

After a little, this quieter part took over, the ‘swan’ began to fly, and one did get to the deep stillness for a short time. In that stillness, a further stage in meditation can start (as it did then), because the Divine Self – the Atman in every individual – begins to rise up, and

He can pass through the 'seven gates' to the Param-Atman – the Lord of Creation – and receive the keys of the Kingdom.

So the first part of meditation is like an exhalation, a breathing out – 'giving up', relinquishing everything – until there is complete stillness. Then this stillness becomes a fullness; one starts inhalation until one gets to a stage which is referred to as 'Abundance' – the 6th stage of the ladder; one is occasionally given such a treat! I'm liable to get it when people like you are meditating with me and not at other times so much!

Well, it doesn't help really to talk about it, but in any half-hour there can be surprises, and the more you 'give up' the more you can be surprised!

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Now, I've been asked to speak about one or two of the difficulties people are experiencing and, as I said before, all these difficulties come from not 'giving up' these thoughts during meditation. It's not a question of pushing them out, but just letting the Mantra bypass them.

Some people in a group out of London are worried because they are not getting so many of those 'life-enhancing experiences' that they used to get. You know the kind I mean – similar to those we quoted to Marghanita Laski last Tuesday:

Waking from a bad dream in the morning, I had a feeling of relief and said to myself: 'Thank goodness that wasn't real!'

There was a corresponding feeling of relief when I begin to wake up from the ordinary daytime state. I seem to have acquired an amber light which often flashes for me at the critical moment helping me to come to a little.

We've all had those and they, in fact, probably brought us to have the meditation, etc. Are we now getting them, or have they changed their character in some ways? What do people think about that?

(to A.) You were saying something to me about your own experiences in this way. You remember that one used to have an experience that was dramatic – the heavens would open – a long time ago?

A. Yes, as one's aim grows, perhaps one uses these great excesses of energy more, or tries to channel them in a more useful direction instead of dissipating them. I think that's what I was saying.

Dr. R. So the 'life-enhancing experiences' which I know you get, are a little different now?

A. They certainly are used differently, perhaps.

Dr. R. Yes. What do people feel?

Mr. Faires. I get a feeling that they are almost as accidental as they were in the beginning.

Dr. R. But you *are* getting them? (Oh, yes.)

Of course to personality they will seem accidental, but nothing is accidental, in fact. It's whether your life is being enhanced by something a little out of the day's round (Yes).

Dr. R. That's all right, then, though I think more along a line – perhaps more connected with the experience of the Presence of this Divine Self, and not as fantastic as they used to be.

Anyway, it's just a question (if you think you are not getting them) perhaps of recognising a change in character. In any case don't worry about it; ask somebody if you are meditating rightly, or if you are substituting thinking during a half-hour for actually meditating, for that will stop these experiences altogether.

(To Mrs. Fleming): There's another question you've asked me to speak about.

There are people who think about what they call 'their religion' (probably instead of practising it!); they are apt to worry and imagine that this meditation conflicts with it. They really shouldn't imagine that! In reality, every *true religion* is a direct communion with the Supreme Being – whatever He may be called, or in whatever form He may be otherwise worshipped. It is communion with the Supreme Being that is religion, and this communion is what the Meditation will certainly bring about if we let it. But don't please worry about anything like that.

Any questions there?

Q. Nothing puts me more off than the idea when meditating that I am going to have access to the Supreme Being!

Dr. R. All right! Drop it, just relinquish that; and, in fact, I think you are quite right that anticipation of that kind puts a stopper on it!

I am just mentioning that true religion consists in trying to achieve the state of coming to yourself in silence by *other* means: if *that* is helped by meditation – fine!

Q. This is really a question of why is it that I'm very often aware of the Mantra during the day when I am walking about with crowds – whereas I feel that it ought to be reserved for meditation.

Dr. R. Not necessarily 'reserved' at all! You shouldn't do any sort of *set* meditation controlled by your will when you are walking about at other times; but one of the happiest things about it is that one never feels lonely – that every now and then the Mantra may float into the mind, or one gets little spurts of energy, of happiness, or something.

Don't do anything about it – just let it come and let it go. It's a bonus!

Mr. Michael MacOwan. When we first learnt to meditate we were really encouraged to notice how we felt and thought – how the meditation affected that. Now it seems as if we are facing things the other way round – that how we feel and think affects the meditation.

Dr. R. Well, either way can help; we're supposed to have come to a stage beyond self-analysis. At the beginning of a new method we try to see how we are getting on, and so on. Now we relinquish that, too. Any thought about ourself is taking our attention off the Object of Meditation – namely the Supreme Self, with which we want to merge through meditation.

So any thought about yourself, Michael, (and that is one of your problems) can be safely dropped at any moment.

A. Mr. MacOwan says that I rather got his question wrong: he wasn't talking about when we were meditating (I didn't think he was actually!). What he was really saying was that we are now encouraged to think that how we feel and act is important to our meditation?

Dr. R. Yes, and I wasn't taking your question as referring to meditation, either. Quite apart from a half-hour, anything like that – turning one's attention away from what one is doing back on to, 'Am I doing it rightly?' or something like that connected with 'I' is a loss of attention. If you succeed in not doing that at other times then it is a great help in not doing it during the half-hour – you don't have to take in the slack for the first five or ten minutes! We should help the meditation by catching ourselves in the act of self-analysis in ordinary activities, and putting our attention back on what we are doing

Q. You mentioned 'thinking' during meditation. Often I catch myself having been thinking!

Dr. R. Fine; if you don't then go back to thinking, you are all right – in the clear! You caught yourself *having been thinking* – so now you're not – that's enough! You should not be thinking now, but be returning to the Mantra – going for the quiet!

There's one aspect by which the Shankaracharya approaches this subject from another angle:

If you accept the limitations which you experience as *imposed upon* the Supreme Being – the Absolute – then you will not be possessed by Rajas or Tamas (excitement or inertia – sleep, or depression); one will not be identified with one's actions and their outcome, so that the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' is all the time being replaced by that of 'Thee' and 'Thine'. Then all the activities in which the personality indulges can be brought into service and made of use to the Creator and to other people.

He quotes rather an amusing story (from the *Ramayana*) about Hanuman, the Monkey God, who went to Ceylon (Lanka) and had a high old time! He burnt the palaces and all the possessions of Ravana; killed a lot of his warriors and also a good bunch of demons, all entirely single-handed in his search for Rama's bride – Sita – who had been kidnapped and held in captivity. (Rather modern!)

When he came back to his chief, Rama (who is a picture of man as the Absolute – a fully Realized man), he described how he had jumped in one leap from India to Ceylon, killed those warriors and demons, uprooted many trees, and so on. While he was describing his achievements to his master, Rama thought: 'Can it be that Hanuman's personality is just claiming all these adventures in the pride of his own strength?' But at the end of his description Hanuman said: 'All this was due only to *your* strength which worked through me.'

That is why Hanuman has been worshipped in the past as the God of human as well as Monkey Nature, who has been brought under the discipline of a fully Realized man and is now a faithful and valuable servant; and that is what should happen to our personality.

You can see that vividly expressed in two small statues in the Oriental Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum. I often go and look at them and brood on the way human nature at the present time acts when the 'monkey' has got loose and lost its restraining disciplines of the past. Monkey man is going through a period of extreme freedom, and lots of innocent people are suffering because of that. This situation was foreseen by the people who did the research for this Meditation and was why it was released in the West, so that ordinary people could exert a little gentle restraint on the 'monkey' – the personality. I hope I haven't insulted you! (laughter)

(to Mrs. Fleming). Is there anything further you've been asked to enquire about?

Mrs. Fleming. One thing is that people are concerned when they find that they have to miss out on their regular times of doing the meditation. They feel distressed about that because (as you were saying) the ideal is two half-hours, but many people's lives make this so difficult.

Dr. R. Oh, I know! The great thing is *not to feel distressed* – the meditation is to deliver one from that very feeling, and it's contrary to its aim that you should be distressed about missing the meditation! Just do what you can; nobody expects you to do more than that! There are difficult periods in everyone's life – just make the best of any opportunities you get, but never feel distressed about anything!

We are none of us very good about it – none of us anything like as persistent and as wholehearted as we should be! I remember the Shankaracharya once saying 'The world wants your body; all right, give the world your body; but Param-Atman – the Creator – wants your love only!

Following that, I wrote to him: 'My love is so feeble that it is practically non-existent'; and he said: 'You shouldn't dwell on that for that is taking your attention away from the Param-Atman and putting it on yourself – your own deficiencies. You should realise instead that the Way of Love is the very way upon which the Param-Atman is shedding His blessings and graces all the time!

We often tend in these trying times not to be elated about ourselves, but to be the other way – too despondent and self-critical! That is loss of attention on the Supreme Being, who alone we should call 'I'.

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Now, what are we going to do? It's twenty past eight! Who's had enough? Is there any last question before we disappear to have our supper?

Mr. Cheesman. I was very struck by your remark about the 'thread of Consciousness', and it reminded me about the golden thread wound into a ball as quoted by Bacon. Had Bacon anticipated meditation?

Dr. R. Maybe; and it also reminds one of the story of Theseus and the Minotaur, of Ariadne's thread. The meditation enables one to pick up that thread which otherwise one forgets. Without it one never finds one's way out of the maze of King Minos, and so one gets killed by the 'minotaur'!

There are a lot of myths about that. The meditation is very much associated with the thread of Consciousness and Memory.

(to A.): I think we have probably had enough, don't you?

We'll meet on the 8th April, then; and if you like to write in before then about anything that interests or troubles you relating to Meditation; anything that you think big enough to mention at a meeting of this size.

I must say I was rather encouraged by the ten minutes of meditation we did together; I felt, 'We can't all be too bad!'

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