

14 October 1975

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Dr. Roles to Mr. Michael Fleming: There are a few things you want to say about the Meditation, aren't there? (Yes)

M.F. The first thing we wanted to ask you was that we are anxious now to close the list of people who might want the Meditation in this current term – between now and Christmas. Actually it would need to be in about three weeks' time; so if anybody has a friend in this situation could they give us an idea possibly now by putting a hand up.

(contd:) Fine, so if they could possibly get in touch with the office very soon about that, because we need as you know to see them – have an interview first under the new arrangement, and then we like to arrange a meeting for them so that they can ask general questions in plenty of time. So please let us know very soon.

Dr. R. May I ask Anne-Marie, whom I see there, when Alan (Caiger-Smith) is coming back? (9th November, she says)

Dr. R. (to M.F.) That's all right?

M.F. Yes, I think that would fit in all right.

Dr. R. He's so good at those meetings that we would like to have him take the next one.

M.F. The second thing is that quite a number of you have at times, at any rate, been going to occasional gatherings about the Meditation in houses round about London. To some extent the numbers have rather declined and what we wanted to say was that it is rather hard on the people who have these houses and arrange these things to have to run after people all the time. It's rather important to have a place where people who don't want Knowledge meetings can go, and it is nice for the people who have these occasions to know that you are coming. So we would like to put the responsibility on the people who would like to go to these places to telephone (as we asked you before) and simply say that they are coming. A list of those places is on a table outside the second door on the landing which gives the day of the month which is the regular occasion and the time of that; also the telephone number involved.

Dr. R. Let me just remind you that there are a lot of people who want Knowledge and we have a good System now which they can get at weekly meetings; but just as good are the rest of the new Meditators who don't want any more Knowledge and just want to meditate. Anybody really needs a boost about once a month; otherwise other things crowd the meditation out. So we have these little meetings in private houses in and around London because the Shankaracharya's words and the 'good company' of other people struggling like oneself is very beneficial. That is why we hope that you will take the initiative yourselves about seeing that you get included once a month in one or other of these.

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PART 1

Dr. R. We have quite a nice programme for you, but I want to start with just an ordinary enquiry into what we do in a half-hour. Things have become much clearer because of meditation with the Shankaracharya at each of our eight recent sessions and the experiences we have had during those. I think there are a number of misconceptions that should be cleared up, so what *do* we do? The time for meditating has come; we sit down in a symmetrical but relaxed position; we shut our eyes and pay no attention to noises if any come. Thus we come away from the sensory world. Then we set the Mantra running usually; either it starts by itself at its own speed, or we coax it to start running like a poem sounding in one's head. Then, having coaxed it to get going, we keep the maximum attention on the Mantra sounding it as loud as possible within oneself during the first five minutes, so that there is no room for anything else to come in. Then we gradually relax our efforts and let the Mantra take its own course – it will either go quick and disappear, or it will go slow and long and gradually fade. The whole success of a half-hour – what is rewarding – is proportional to the amount that one *gives up* – how much of one's ordinary mental luggage one jettisons – throws overboard.

Well, is that people's experience? I would like newer meditators to ask anything they like; now is your chance! Is that what generally happens or sometimes happens? None of us are very good at it and it doesn't happen every time.

Does it still happen to you, Thomason even though you have been living at a distance – in Huntingdon?

Mr. Thomason. Yes, Dr. Roles, sometimes.

Dr. R. Every now and then as a kind of little reward? So there's nothing anybody wants to say about that? We can more or less take it for granted that is what we try and do?

Mr. Koren. (as repeated) It quite often starts off like that, and then when the Mantra goes for a bit and becomes more quiet, suddenly all the thoughts come back again. What does one do then?

Dr. R. Ah, yes; that often happens. Then it is a good thing to change your position to freshen it up, and sound the Mantra loud again to yourself, just as you did at the beginning. On an average day one has to do that several times probably.

The other way is just to let it subside; when the Mantra gets slow and you are a little more peaceful, don't mind about the thoughts, just sort of 'swim in the water in and out'. You may not know even that it is going on. As long as some sort of peace is there, it is going on – it's doing something. In fact, Samadhi is a very happy state when you *don't know anything* – you don't know whether you are meditating or not, whether you are Koren or not, you know nothing. You just *are* the Bliss of the Absolute and nothing else. But directly the mind starts saying, 'Is this Samadhi, or am I Koren?', you're sunk!

Any other questions?

Mr. Melidis. Could you say something about preparing to meditate?

Dr. R. Usually the less preparation the better. It's a good plan to wash off the office and get a

little calm. The Maharishi advised us to refrain from strong drink just before a half-hour and have it after. (laughter) So we have to give up that excuse 'I can't meditate unless I have an aperitif' – that is *not* part of the preparation! But, in general, take yourself as you find yourself and just have a feeling that you want to get away from it all and have some peace and you want to meet this marvellous Being which is yourSelf. You will meet that marvellous Being in peace and quiet; because although it is there all the time, you don't hear, you are not aware of it; there's so much noise going on inside! That's really all the preparation.

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Now about some of these misconceptions: what for instance does the expression '*going deep*' mean to you? It doesn't mean 'going deep' anatomically so that your heart is in your boots! It means 'going deep' in a psychological sense – namely, getting to the peace and quiet – away from the surface ripples into the silence of the deep sea.

Now I know a lot of people who try and force the Mantra anatomically downwards. Do any of you still do that? It has nothing to do with that. There are two main stages which can happen several times in any half-hour: you shed all your luggage, give everything up, and come to nothingness – the peace and quiet with nothing going on. All right! The next stage is up to this marvellous Being, and if you really have given everything up, then a lovely thing can happen; your heart becomes lighter, your state of Consciousness comes up gradually through the seven centres. Those seven centres (or Chakras) are well known: the lowest one is in the pelvis, the next one is below the navel, the next is the solar plexus, the next is the cardio-pulmonary – the one round the heart, the next is in the throat round the voice, the next is what the Canadian neurosurgeon Penfield has called the 'great central headquarters' in the centre of the brain, and lastly the Yogi knows that the final one is felt above the head where everything is working as it should and one *is nothing but the Supreme Being*.

Well now, that's where the energy of Consciousness goes and it will vary. So wherever the level of your Consciousness is on a given day in a given half-hour, if you get burdened with care, thoughts and worries, it sinks down to the pelvis. If, on the other hand, you feel light-hearted and gay, it will rise automatically; you can't *make* it rise. But that is what happens so often when one is meditating in His Holiness's presence and it can happen quite often *anywhere*.

Is that at all clear? Are there any questions about that? You don't think about anatomy, you just try and get quiet and enjoy the peace.

Q. In relation to what you have just said about going deep, is it right to try to direct the Mantra in any way during meditation?

Dr. R. No, that is really what I am saying. You *let the Mantra take you* away from surface ripples to the deep blue sea in the quiet centre of your own Being; you just let it take you, and you help it by not letting your attention fragment and get caught up with this or that. O.K.?

Then the rest is looked after. All these seven centres or Chakras are looked after by our System of Meditation; we don't have to consider them at all. People notice that their breathing changes – it becomes economical, and their circulation too; that's the heart chakra working; it's all looked after, and the less you poke about and analyse the better.

I'll just read H.H's comment when this first happened to me in his presence while meditating with him ten years ago. At that time he said:

In a state of happiness the life-force or Consciousness rises upwards, and in suffering and strain it is pressed down. At the lowest level it is activated in the pelvis; then below the navel; then in the solar plexus; heart; larynx; middle of the head behind the forehead, and then above the head. That last is called the Sahasrara. Here, at the top, it swings on the waves of bliss. The pains and the strains, the flurry and the worry are heavier substances – they press the Consciousness down – weigh it down to the bottom, where it feels limited, constricted, heavy and powerless.

In the first part of meditation all this is stilled, and then with the stillness the heart becomes lighter, and the energy of Consciousness rises higher according to the degree of stillness and happiness.

(Record, 22 August 1964)

Dr. R. All right? So, if you can, be as light-hearted as possible when meditating, and you'll experience all this from time to time.

(After a pause)

Now if there is nothing anybody particularly wants to say, I'll just mention that this time we were in the Shankaracharya's private room – a party of six of us – and although one or two people came in (the Shankaracharya's brother, for instance, who is a wonderful old man whom we knew already, and our other translator, Dixit), it was all quite private; so he could say things intimately that he wouldn't dream of saying in public. After we have meditated later this evening, there's a very delightful and rather racy story that nobody has heard (because he would never have told it if there were any of the orthodox present as it would have shocked them). I hope it won't shock *you*; I don't somehow think it will!

At each of these audiences we would make our offerings of flowers and fruit and then sit still. Then he would murmur something from one of the Upanishads – just barely audible – and then we would go into meditation for twenty minutes; and at the end we'd hear this low chant – scarcely audible. (We tried to record it, but it didn't come out).

I thought we might do this together now because we are in the presence of the Shankaracharya here and now, so I'll say one of those 'mantras' that he uses, as we shut our eyes:

Dr. R. said softly:

Let us work together, let us move together,
so that we shall be able to get the radiance
together which will light us on the Way.

(about ten minutes' MEDITATION)

and very softly:

Peace for the causal body, peace for the
subtle body, peace for the physical body.
Let peace and peace and peace be everywhere.

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Dr. R. Koren, did you find that the same thoughts crowded in when it began to get going?

Mr. Koren. It wasn't so bad.

Dr. R. At this moment I see that your particular difficulty (which we all have) is due to too much coercion of the mind during meditation – *making* it quiet, suppressing it. The mind rebels and fights back. Leave your mind alone to do what it likes, and just attend to the rhythm of the mantra only.

(Pause. No questions)

So Dr. R. added: I may say this: lightening of the heart happened several times just now with me. Thoughts would crowd in about what I might be going to say or what ought to be said; but I dropped them overboard and my heart got that much lighter. When more thoughts come in, drop them again, and one gets lighter still! Did people feel that?

Mrs. Reed. The outside world disappears, but I then come to a place which I can't leave; it's full of very nice things – people are there. (She repeated): I can't leave it.

Dr. R. You *can* – but you don't want to! This is a well-known obstacle that stops one from going into Samadhi. You like this lovely warm feeling so much that you won't leave it; so you have to say firmly: 'Thy Will not mine'. You have to give yourself up wholly to the Creator, the King, and then will come the full thing, *if He likes*.

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PART 2

Dr. R. Questions were asked by each of us during those audiences and we would record the question and the translated answer, and then Lady Allan would type the record. This was checked by the translator each day; then perhaps in the evening we would sit out under the stars in the hotel garden and discuss it a little.

Now I'll get John Sampson to read my wife's first question, because it seemed to us then to be one that women have always asked all through the ages:

J. S. (reads):

J.R. Many housewives like myself have a day that could be filled many times over with jobs to be done. I enjoy all this work, and when the remembrance of the Param-Atman comes my heart is warmed instantaneously. But why do I so often let things separate me from the real Doer, and why does this little lion revert to behaving like a sheep?

Dr. R. That's a reference to the first answer he ever gave her 'You are really a little lion, but you behave like a sheep.' So this situation of the busy housewife has been a universal question at all times and in all places, hasn't it? It was described, as you may remember in this little story in the Gospel of St. Luke:

J.S. (continues):

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, 'Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.'

And Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha thou art careful and troubled about many things.

'But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'

Dr. R. Many teachers have pointed to a psychological interpretation of this story – the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, Meister Eckhardt, the Sufis and others. But in the light of the Shankaracharya's teaching of non-dualism, we now know that Martha and Mary *psychologically* represent two states of mind and both these states are indispensable. It also corresponds with modern 'scientific' research into the function of the two halves of the brain. The story applies equally to men and to women of course.

But this is only *my own interpretation* – the Shankaracharya has never mentioned the story. Moreover it misses the point of my wife's question to which H.H. gave a much better answer which will be given you next week in Reading 3.

Q. (a man) Can Martha and Mary ever function as one, or must they always be two?

Dr. R. That is exactly the point – they are meant to function in harmony, and become *one* on the way to Self-realization.

Q. (same man) But the activities of the one seem to displace the activities of the other?

Dr. R. Yes, that's the usual state of affairs; but the more Mary listens to her Lord at times like meditation, the more efficiently and happily will Martha get through her work without 'being cumbered about much serving'.

Mrs. Brooks. I like the explanation of the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* better than this one of yours.

Dr. R. You're very welcome to do that in private – this is only an attempt on my part to add relevance to my wife's question in today's language of 1975. But remember that the medieval author of *The Cloud* was a hermit and a what d'you call it (Fleming: celibate?) Yes, celibate – he lived in a cell (laughter) to which women were not admitted! So what could he know of contemporary psychology or of the relations of men and women today?

PART 3

Dr. R. I expect you are perhaps wanting to hear that story I mentioned, and I am wanting to tell it to you! (laughter)

It started with a question of mine which we had discussed a little between us. You know, when you hear our Mantra spoken casually (as you do everywhere in India), it has no weight at all; it can perform no magic. And, at first, when we hear the idea of Param-Atman it's just a word. So it's important gradually to give weight to the Mantra and to the idea of the *benevolence and immanence of this Divine Consciousness* within each of us. Then it begins to work a magic.

The same idea comes at the beginning, I said to the Shankaracharya, of the Lord's Prayer of the Christians: 'Our Father in Heaven, we pray that Thy name be made holy'. It seems to us that a summary of all that you've taught us over the years is that you have been making the Name of the Creator holy for us – the Param-Atman; and that our Mantra – which is His favourite name – has assumed power, and both can then work their wonders.

How can we join more in this enjoyable work? (You get the idea? What you want, you give glory to; you make holy, you sanctify; what you don't want, you pay no attention to, make it of as little account as possible.) The Shankaracharya answered that:

He agreed about this and he said that it's far more important than petty rules and regulations about the discipline in Meditation. To make the idea of the Param-Atman and the Name that you are pronouncing holy is far more important than dealing with lots of little difficulties and laying down the law.

Is that understood? He went on to say something very interesting. I had referred to the Lord's Prayer, so now he said:

S. In relation to prayer, some people find it helpful to use prayer at certain times to make the Meditation get on its way if it gets stuck; other people don't. There's no necessity to use prayer, but if you *do* use prayer – at that time or at others – remember that there are two kinds of prayer: in one kind one concentrates on oneself as a miserable sinner – recounting one's own deficiencies and begging for forgiveness.

In the other kind of prayer you leave *yourself* right out of it and concentrate on the Glory of the Creator to whom the prayer is addressed. To illustrate the fact that the second of these is much more positive and rewarding, he told the following story (which I would like you to lighten your hearts and take it gaily, as it is not meant to be taken very seriously. It's like a Greek myth. It was said with a twinkle in his eye and plenty of laughter).

Dr. R. I don't know what would make you all look a little more light-hearted – in preparation? (In the general laughter people looked more receptive).

S. said:

There was once a Mahatma who lived in a secluded place under a tamarind tree. (This is an evergreen tree much cultivated in India for its wood and its fruit; it gives a very good shade; it has brilliant yellow and red flowers; and its fruit when preserved in syrup has gentle laxative properties. So what more could a Mahatma want?)

So there he was, this Mahatma, doing his devotional act of daily meditation.

Now there is a deity in India known as Narada, who is supposed to be the messenger of the Absolute; and he keeps on descending to earth to collect information (as a sort of feedback) so that the Absolute is kept fully informed as to what goes on.

While he happened, on his rounds, to come by this Mahatma, he got into conversation with him and asked him what he was doing. The Mahatma said, 'Life is all a drama, so I am engaged in the drama of Meditation; but anyway, who are *you*?'

Narada explained that he was the messenger of the Absolute and came to earth to collect information about all the devotees of God and report back about their well-being.

'Splendid,' said the Mahatma, 'Would you mind taking him a message from me?' Narada didn't see why not, so the Mahatma said (a question which we quite often hear): 'Ask Him when there will be a meeting?' (laughter)

Narada went off and, in course of time, returned to the Mahatma, who asked him if there had been any reply?

Narada admitted that there was a reply, but it would be a bitter pill for the Mahatma and dash all his hopes, so he would rather not give it.

The Mahatma said: 'Well, if there is *any* reply from the Absolute my heart would never sink; don't worry just tell me the answer.'

Narada said: It went like this: 'Look at this tamarind tree; it has very small leaves – millions and millions of them – and as many leaves as there are on this tree, will be the number of years that you will have to wait before the Absolute would come to meet you.' I am sorry, but that was the message.

At this, surprisingly, the Mahatma went into ecstasy; he completely forgot himself and started dancing with bliss. Narada, thoroughly baffled, tapped him on the shoulder and said: 'Wait a moment, have you really understood what I said? What does that answer imply to you?'

The Mahatma stopped dancing (rather reluctantly) and said: 'Yes, I heard: "as many leaves as there are on this tamarind tree, so many years will I have to wait, and then He will come."'

'Then why on earth are you dancing?' asked Narada. The Mahatma replied: 'What do I care about the number of leaves and years? All that matters is that I have had a message from the Absolute, and He is going to meet me; He would never let me down. That's why I feel so gay.' And again he started dancing.

While Narada was wondering what to do, at that moment the Absolute Himself descended and embraced that Mahatma. At this Narada became very disturbed: 'My Lord,' he exclaimed, 'I am your Messenger and now you have proved me a liar in front of this man. In spite of the message you gave me for this Mahatma that it's going to take millions of years, you've broken your word and come down immediately – within half-an-hour in fact! What will people think when they hear about it?'

But the Absolute said: 'Such things as time and space and Gunas are for ordinary people, and for them those laws of Mine must be fulfilled. But for somebody special those laws are bypassed, and the meeting must be instantaneous.'

His Holiness commented:

The same thing applies to all people whether they are devotional or intellectual or active; but if there is a rare case where there is only devotion to Consciousness and the Knowledge of the Truth through Me, *and nothing else*, then the union with Me can take place without any delay.

Then Dr. R. himself commented:

So we don't count the years, and the distance, and all the rest of it but we go on steadily trying to eliminate anything that stands between us and the Truth, the Happiness, and the feeling 'I am'.

With that, and perhaps a little lightening of the heart, let us do two or three minutes more Meditation and see if it doesn't go more happily.

(A further short Meditation)

Afterwards the words of the Absolute were repeated – and the date of the next Meditation Meeting mentioned as the second Tuesday in November (November 11th).

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Note. After the meeting someone asked me what was supposed to be so shocking about the story? The reply probably is that to followers of the Vedanta (still the main scriptures of India) Narada is a very sacred figure. Moreover the orthodox of *any* religion are quite as strict as he was about how the Absolute should or should not behave!

