

Wednesday, 19 November 1975

SES PRE-MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

(This has been found to contain a suitable introduction to Meditation just now.)

Dr. Roles: You've been asked to come along here this evening to be introduced to a form of Meditation, because it is felt that each individual will be wanting now to verify for himself or herself some of what he is taught in the School at your groups, and this is the quickest way to do that. You've heard, I think, a varying amount about Meditation so I will have to speak in fairly general terms.

But first of all I've been asked to say who I am and what this House is about, and how 'The Study Society' comes into it. I am the fellow who happened to introduce to your School about 1950 (after it had got into its stride again after World War II) a System of *Knowledge* which originated in the East but was put into Western form around 1915. That was taught us for some years by our first Teacher, the Russian writer, P. D. Ouspensky, whose house this is.

I was also the fellow that came across a certain Maharishi whom you may have heard about, and took along various people in this Society – the Study Society – and also introduced the School of Economic Science to this Meditation, and was empowered and specially trained to give it by him. He made me promise to give it in exactly the form that it had been given in for nearly six thousand years in India, and that is one reason why you have this Initiation ceremony. Is there anything you want to ask about that? When you are practising the method we will let you have a translation of what is said at the Initiation ceremony and why this is demanded, and so on.

Are there any people who want to know about that already?

(after a pause):

Q. The question that I would like to ask is: why is it necessary to give gifts?

Dr. R. It's part of the ancient tradition in which it is said that unless you give something – put your hand in your pocket and give something – you don't value what you buy!

But there is another side to it. This System of Meditation (because many different things are being called 'meditation') comes from Raja Yoga. It's an adaptation to Western life of a method used in Raja Yoga. Now Raja Yoga is rather different from all the other branches of Yoga taught in Yoga schools in India for different types of people; Hatha Yoga for control of the body; Jnana Yoga for control of the mind (knowledge and the 'scientific' approach); Bhakti Yoga, the emotional approach – the basis of most religious Ways; and there are others, of course – hundreds of varieties. But Raja-Yoga deals with Consciousness – learning to control consciousness, and since Consciousness cannot be defined (it is the 'great unknown') it can't be taught in the same way as the others, and is always taught by word of mouth – by personal tuition. The idea of the Initiation ceremony is that it brings you into a state of Consciousness in which you are more receptive to the technique and, therefore,

you get a good start. If you have a good start, this Meditation tends to evolve naturally of itself

In India, the meaning of the ceremony is that we invite the leaders of the long Tradition – six thousand years – (which is called the Advaita, or non-dualistic system of the Shankaracharyas) to be present, in spirit; and when you invite anyone to your house in India, you provide them with water to drink, water for their bath, clean linen, fruit, sandalwood scent, flowers, spices, light – and camphor which burns without residue and symbolises Consciousness. And so, as promised, we go through and enact this ceremony, and you bring fruit, flowers and linen (handkerchief) which symbolise what the Initiator will be doing during the ceremony. The whole ceremony only takes about five minutes, but it's a strange thing – believe it or not – that the Meditation just doesn't go unless you do something rather special at the beginning to try to *raise the level of consciousness* in each person who is starting.

Any questions about that?

(to David Warner): Does that answer the question? ('I think it does.')

Dr. R. contd: That's all we can tell you now, because we don't like telling you in advance about details of the ceremony or the method; partly because we don't want to introduce suggestion or hypnosis in any form; and also because the effects of the ceremony and of the meditation are entirely individual and different from one person to another. Each person will take it in their own way, and we want to let them do just that, we do not try to have a sort of mass-produced lot of 'so-called' meditators!

Well, I was saying that I was the fellow that introduced the Maharishi to your School in 1960 and the method of meditation which so many people in the School now practise. I, myself, wasn't entirely satisfied that the Maharishi had all the answers, so I was exceedingly grateful to him when (during a meditation course with him in India) he introduced us to the head of his Tradition; and at the very first glance I recognised that this was what I was looking for. From what I'd already experienced I could see that he was a man who always 'remembered himself.' He remains in a state of Consciousness of himSelf, and he can turn on higher states of Consciousness at Will.

Regarding that, when I first heard him talk, about seventy Westerners like myself were sitting on the sandy shore of the Ganges, together with a whole crowd of Indians, and the Shankaracharya – the head of the Tradition – was on his throne by the water's edge with the Maharishi translating; I heard to my astonishment that he was saying just the same as our first Teacher – Ouspensky – that 'the whole problem of human life was that man does not remember himself'.

To illustrate this he was telling this story:

At one time ten men were going to swim across the Ganges at about this spot where we are now sitting. At this point the Ganges is coming down out of the mountains and flowing very fast and is also infested with crocodiles. So they were very worried, and when they got to the other side they counted heads; but whoever counted, the number always came out to nine instead of ten. That only confirmed their worry: Had somebody been eaten by a crocodile?

But a Conscious man happened to be passing and when they explained their

problem to him, he said, 'Well, you see nobody counts himself; you see all the other people and you count them, but nobody ever brings *himself* into the picture.

And just to remind them, so that they wouldn't forget in future, he gave each one a whack on the head; the first one got one whack, the next got two, and so on, and the last man remembered for a very long time because he got ten whacks!

It is a very general fact that, in all human life, very few people do know themselves or remember themselves.

Any questions about that?

Q. Why?

Dr. R. It's a trick of Nature because if you ask anybody whether they are conscious of themselves, they will always say 'Yes', because your question has, for the moment, made them Conscious; the next minute, they forget. This is an illusion which causes us to imagine that we are *always* Conscious! Mr. Ouspensky explained this and practised it on us many times.

I'm sure you don't believe any of that; so do come back at me! (Silence.)

In fact, Raja-Yoga defines four states of consciousness. It states that all mankind live in the first two – which are *deep sleep* at night and what we call the 'waking state' in the day, but which they call '*sleep with dreams*'. As I say, most people pass their whole lives in these two states which recur, of course, every twenty-four hours, except that nearly everybody has had from time to time small glimpses of another state of consciousness, especially when they are children. These glimpses that people get are very much in the literature today; they are called 'peak experiences', 'extra-sensory perception', and so on; but the majority of people forget them and do nothing about it, because they get no encouragement.

But you here in this room are obviously among the people who *do* something about it, otherwise you wouldn't have joined the School, you wouldn't be here; and the important thing is to try to answer the questions of people like yourselves who want to do something about it, such as learning to meditate.

Any questions about that?

Q. Why do we forget ourselves?

Dr. R. It is partly because we do not understand what the meaning of Consciousness is. In the West, Consciousness is always *equated with sense-data (physical sensations) combined with thought processes*. This is what produces the ordinary daytime state of 'waking sleep' or 'sleep with dreams'. Our consciousness is continually tied up with changing sensory impressions and changing thoughts.

Meditation is the quickest and most universal way we have found over forty years, of penetrating through those two states for half-an-hour twice a day and reaching the third state of Self-Consciousness. During and after a half-hour, when you emerge, and after practising the third state of Consciousness for quite a long time, you have glimpses of the fourth state, (Raja Yoga calls it 'Turiya' or the State of Enlightenment) which is *seeing the world as it actually is* – seeing things as they are; understanding other people as if you were in their shoes. Many other benefits arise from that.

In order that you should understand why Consciousness is not the same as thought processes, I can give you one very simple example from all those we used to collect before we met the Meditation, and which is probably familiar to you. It comes from an illiterate German shoemaker named Jacob Boehme, and it's a description of the first of his three major experiences of Consciousness (experienced in the year 1600 when Boehme was 25) by his friend and biographer, Hartmann, as follows:

Sitting one day in his room his eyes fell upon a burnished pewter dish, which reflected the sunshine with such marvellous splendour that he fell into an inward ecstasy, and it seemed to him as if he now looked into the principles and deepest foundations of things. Believing that it was only fancy, and in order to banish it from his mind, he went out upon the green, but here, too, he remarked that he gazed into the very heart of things, and that actual nature harmonised with what he had inwardly seen.

Now in this case his inward ecstasy was triggered off by a sensory impression – the sunshine on the burnished dish; but many instances of Self-consciousness come without any sensory triggering.

The one thing that all the instances of Self-consciousness (recorded by religious mystics, scientists and artists alike) have in common is that *your mind must be disengaged*; you must be comparatively still, otherwise there is such a physical and mental hubbub going on all the time that we are deaf and blind to the presence of the Conscious Being which inhabits each of us.

That is why this Meditation is a very clever method which will now take the place of the exercise you have been doing, because it gets you through both the daytime state and the dream-state to the third state.

Any questions?

Q. Is everybody who goes through the Meditation able to reach this third state of consciousness?

Dr. R. Everybody is *able* to, yes. I don't say that everybody *does*, because success in meditation lies in *giving up all movement of the mind* and any of the contents of the ordinary daytime state. So if you are really genuinely giving up all those things in a half-hour then we guarantee that you will come into this third state, which will be first of all felt as a very peaceful silence – nothing, no movement of the mind at all going on. In that peaceful silence, quite soon you will become aware of this Conscious Being which inhabits you and which you forget all about in the ordinary way. It's like a car; the scientists, psychologists, physiologists all study the *machinery*; and this gives no indication whatsoever of the driver of the car or Owner of the car. Consciousness refers to Owner-Driver of the car, and the ordinary driver doesn't have to know a lot about the machinery.

Q. Is there a state of Consciousness beyond the third state?

Dr. R. Yes, very much so. The third state is in a way transitional but carries very many advantages. In the third state you can know yourSelf wholly and completely; you can become 'objective to yourself' – you feel yourself as one Whole and not as a mechanism governed only by chance.

In the fourth state you can know the world, or part of the world, as it really is; other people as they really are – a wider, more Universal Consciousness than that of one's own small world. But we have to go through the third Consciousness to get the other.

Well, you don't look awfully cheerful; you are being introduced to this marvellous thing!

Q. (a woman) I want to ask two questions: Does one attain the effects of Consciousness only for the period of meditation? That is the first question.

Dr. R. (interrupting) May I just speak about that?

You may not attain anything demonstrable *during* a half-hour of meditation, except peace and quiet. The advantages of two half-hours a day mostly come during active life in between; then, whenever necessary, you experience the expansion of Consciousness to take in yourself as a Whole and your surroundings, and know what is right *for you* and what is wrong in those circumstances.

Again, you are never *alone*; you are not afraid of anything. One can adapt for these troublesome times in London that Psalm (91):

Thou shalt not be afraid of the terrorist by night, nor of the bomb that
explodeth in the daytime.

There are many other advantages: you are more pleasant to live with – you get closer to your husband or wife and children and to ordinary people as well as your friends in the School. Little things annoy you less, and nice things you enjoy more, for Consciousness is a form of energy – a special form of energy – and the poet, Blake, was absolutely right when he said from his own experience: '*Energy is eternal delight*', because Consciousness always brings with it a strange, new kind of delight which is independent of conditions, and actually Consciousness is the secret of happiness, which somehow or another seems to have been mislaid.

So the answer to the first half of your question is: 'Yes, we experience benefits from Meditation at unexpected times and not necessarily in the half-hour, where you just simply try to withdraw your attention from all the contents of your usual state of sleep.'

Now for the second part of your question:

Q. (second part): Do we retain it?

Dr. R. Later, it becomes permanent, as I said about the Shankaracharya. But the great thing about Consciousness is to acquire *control* of all the four states. The Shankaracharya who is recognised everywhere as a 'fully-Realized man', goes to sleep at night – goes into the first and lowliest state of consciousness – sleep at night; he transacts his business in the ordinary daytime state; but he *remembers himself all the time* – is never far away from the higher states of Consciousness, the highest of which requires special conditions. For that, the Shankaracharya says of himself that he has to go sometimes to a place where nobody knows where he is. In his young days he retreated to a Himalayan cave, but he says that is not necessary with the Meditation. He still has to have a week of complete peace and freedom from everyday affairs, to get the full Cosmic Consciousness. I don't suppose you have very great ambitions to do that just now – it doesn't matter!

Q. Where does the attention go during meditation?

Dr. R. Where does it go the rest of the day? That's the problem! It's shattered into a thousand pieces, and one of the first things one learns in meditation is that the attention becomes one-pointed – single. It's a tremendous saving of energy. During the day our attention flits from one thing to another and the mind with it, and this finer part of the mind never gets a rest. So, the first great benefit that anybody can get is to rest this delicate part of the mind and become single-minded for a few minutes. Two or three minutes of *that* sets you up for the whole day.

Q. You have spoken tonight about how the meditation has come down to us sitting in this room tonight, but where did the meditation originally come from?

Dr. R. I wasn't there so I can't tell you first-hand! There's some account of it in the small book *A Lasting Freedom* which you can buy here.

The tradition that we've been told is that it was given by inspiration to a man in pre-history, but about whom some things are known, and it has been passed on in this long Tradition – Shankaracharya means 'Master-pupil' Tradition. But there's constant desire to meditate; it arises in human nature naturally, and if that man hadn't been given it by inspiration, hundreds of people would have discovered it by this time. It's a natural need of human nature to be alone with one's Maker, with one's true Self, and human nature has invented all kinds of ways of doing this.

There's another theory that in his original 'state of Grace' – like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – Man was naturally in a state of Pure Consciousness until the serpent came along; but having eaten of the Tree of Knowledge – men need special help and special methods to eat from that second Tree – the 'Tree of Life' and become like gods and live for ever – methods to recapture what was once lost. Hence, you have to have Schools and Systems; the Eightfold path of Yoga is much more strenuous than anything you know about – all these artificial things have been done because mankind, having been given the power of knowledge and free will, gets into all sorts of trouble. Animals and ignorant people have to take whatever comes.

There's a story about this, explaining that you mustn't take even two half-hours a day too seriously, it's just a means to an end.

You are all looking terribly serious, and the idea of Consciousness begins first of all with light-heartedness! So lift it a bit. In answering the question 'Why is an artificial technique such as Meditation necessary to get what should be innate in human nature', the Shankaracharya told this story:

There was a laundry man (called in India a dhobi-man), who had a fleet of donkeys, and the donkeys used to carry the soiled laundry to the river in the morning, and bring back the clean laundry in the evening.

One day he fell ill, and said to his son, 'Just get these donkeys moving and get the laundry down to the river.' The son tried everything he could think of – he whacked them, and shouted at them, but the donkeys wouldn't move. So he went back to his father and said, 'Dad, I'm sorry but the donkeys just won't move.' So the dhobi-man said: 'Oh I forgot to tell you, the donkeys have got it firmly fixed in their heads that they can't move, and I have got into the way of

going through the motions of tying knots round their feet at night and then they stay still during the night, and undoing the knots in the morning, and then they set off.' The son did that, and the donkeys stepped out at once!

This applies to all of us – we're the donkeys.

Q. Is this type of meditation progressive?

Dr. R. It depends on what sort of donkey you are! One can only promise that if you don't have any fixed ideas of your own; if you just honestly carry out the rather simple instructions, then it is undoubtedly progressive. It goes through a natural course of evolution which takes you up the Ladder of Self-realization; and the final stage is the state of the man who has control over all four states of consciousness – can have them when he wants them – and that is known in Raja-Yoga as 'Turiya' or Enlightenment.

But, don't be impatient! Take it slowly, and don't listen to anything anybody says. It is *entirely individual*; things happen in a quite different order for different people. Just take slowly what one is asked to do, and in due course the seeds will come up.

Q. It is said that the Absolute created by meditating; what is meant by that?

Dr. R. Well, it is an unscientific notion – let's grant that – but isn't it impossible to take an unprejudiced look at the Universe without realising that there is an Intelligent plan of some Mind behind the Universe; and it is impossible for a Mind to work without Consciousness. So, one must infer that there is a Consciousness in the Universe; and we are told in this non-dualistic System that it isn't a 'God out there', but that each of us has a spark of the Divine Consciousness which is of the same Nature as the Creator of the Universe. So we come first of all (by giving everything else up) to our own spark of that Divinity and practise substituting for the feeling of the limited 'I' or ego, a feeling of the Universal to which everything belongs; then you will in three years experience that. On average it takes that long, but what are three years of a long life of some seven or eight decades?

Now the word 'Consciousness' means nothing to us at the moment, does it? But nearly everybody wants something that they don't get, and Consciousness, being a special form of energy, may give you what you want, unless it is a complete fake or something quite ridiculous. You may want money; you'll get more money the more Conscious you are. (laughter)

I have worked with you, and at the 'School of Meditation' for a long time, and we get every sort of thing written on the forms you have already filled in in answer to the question: 'What do you want?' It doesn't matter to us; we give you the meditation. It's up to you what you use it for.

I get rather tired of people writing what they think they *ought* to want 'I want to help the School', 'I want to be holy' – or something like 'I want to help mankind'. But it's a great help to the person giving you the Meditation if you are able to put something genuine! A lot of children put on their form: 'I want a pony', or 'I want a big family with lots of children', 'I want to get free from my parents' – things like that. (laughter) So I say to them, 'I'm afraid we can't really promise everything but we do say that if you meditate properly, you will probably find some way to get that pony!'

Q. I think what led to this point is why we first came into the School and that was to know the Truth.

Dr. R. Yes, well, Consciousness, by derivation is from two Latin words: 'con' and 'scio'; it means 'Knowing altogether and at once – knowing the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth'. So this is the way; but 'knowing' doesn't only mean *intellectual* knowing; the same two words also give rise to our word '*conscience*' which means '*feeling* all our inconsistencies together – those we ordinarily brush aside'. So there is an emotional realization of Truth as well as an intellectual realization of Truth.

Are there any other things that most of you have wanted – a general want?

Q. How is the Meditation related to the School's teaching?

Dr. R. Well, I don't know what your School *is* teaching! But each person can find a way to relate, at least something that the School is teaching with the Meditation. Wouldn't you think so, David?

Mr. Warner (from platform): In truth, there is a very close relationship between Meditation and the School's teaching in-as-much as they both have the same end – the end is the same. The question is, therefore: 'Can they – the Meditation and our Teaching – operate independently?'

Dr. R. Oh, there are a lot of good meditators all round the world. They don't belong to the School. I'm sorry, but there are! (laughter) But people are very different – some need a School – they like not to have to think for themselves; others can operate singly or in groups. People are very, very different, but the *Meditation is for everybody*. Personally, I do think that if you belong to an organisation which has an aim and a definite object, you keep going at the Meditation long enough so that it has the desired effects. We notice that a lot of people who get it casually, and don't have any help, and think they can go it alone, don't keep it up; it gets crowded out.

I think you here are very lucky. But do try and connect this with *something you really have always wanted but haven't been able to get*.

I'd like to read something the Shankaracharya said to us – a short thing:

All living things seem to be crying out for something or other. There's a story about the great Mogul Emperor, Akhbar, who, while out hunting, once had to spend the night in the jungle. Unable to sleep because of the crying of the jackals, he asked why they were crying? He was told, 'because of the cold'. So he ordered blankets to be distributed to them. (laughter)

But still they went on crying, and when the Emperor asked the reason, he was told it was 'because of their joy at getting the blankets'!

'It's the same,' the Shankaracharya said, 'in human life. Everyone is crying out for something. When one is a child one wants toys; an older boy or girl may want other things, for example they want education. When one's education is finished, one wants a career – employment – or marriage and children; when one gets employment, one wants promotion. As the time goes on when one reaches sixty, one wants to retire, and in old age as one's body gets more painful and decrepit one wants to die. Thus, from beginning to end, there is never contentment.

Dr. R. contd: But, if you develop this relationship with the Source of all your energy and the Source of all your happiness, your Divine Self, then there is contentment in spite of conditions – whatever is happening physically to your body or mentally on the subtle level, you are still connected on the Causal level – your Soul with this Divine Nature.

Another example of the expansion of Consciousness which Meditation brings about is that you understand great writers and works of art in the way that the author of that work of art was inspired. I just happen to know that Shakespeare's sonnets are an intimate record of his own states of consciousness; and the poet – the late W. H. Auden – agreed about that, for he had been through many of the same experiences; but he didn't believe in 'dark ladies' or attractive young men – the way non-poets usually interpret the sonnets!

Shakespeare is writing about his experiences of consciousness all the way through. Let's take Sonnet 29 for instance. I'll read part of it:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone bewep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,

(and so on)

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Dr. R. contd: I don't know whether he meditated, but that's the state that one often gets as the result of meditation, only as one doesn't happen to be a poet one can't express it.

Q. suggested that there are no disadvantages?

Dr. R. No, there really aren't any disadvantages in the Meditation, and over these fourteen years my wife and I have given it all round the world in different countries, and we've never occasioned any tragedy that we know of. The worst disadvantage is that you won't do it, and you'll stay looking just as happy as you do now! That's the worst that can happen to you.
(laughter)

(Pause)

So do approach Meditation in a rather *light-hearted* way, because this spark of Divinity reveals Himself more easily to light-hearted people. Done with an open mind and simply doing what is suggested without expecting anything or demanding anything, we can all get what we are looking for very often – people differ very much, but some get something rewarding in the first minute; some may take a week, or two or three weeks perhaps. In this case we were told that as in the children's fable of the hare and the tortoise, it's the tortoise that usually wins. The hare may outrun the tortoise, but gets tired and falls asleep again, but the tortoise keeps patiently plodding along until he gets there.

It's difficult to talk about these things and I'm not blaming anybody at all. I've talked too much!

One of the burdens on the mind – this delicate part of the human mind by which man differs from animals – is that it is always weighed down either by the past, which is over and done with, or by some future which may never happen; we live all the time in the past and the future, and the mind gets very tired. This is one of the reasons for our unhappiness – a dreadfully harassed and tired mind, and the meditation does relieve one's burden for two half-hours a day – a mighty big thing in itself.

There's a story told about this by the Shankaracharya – several stories in fact – but one of them was:

There was a husband and wife who kept arguing about what career their son should adopt. He was a lawyer and she came from a family of doctors; she wanted him to be a doctor and he wanted him to be a lawyer like his father.

Hearing the row that they were making arguing, a meditator who happened to pass their house asked them what the trouble was about. They explained to him, and he said, 'All right, fetch the boy; let's ask him.' And they looked at each other and turned very pink and confessed, 'The boy is not yet born!' So he said, 'Well, just use your energy in getting him born, and when he comes to be about nine or ten, we can see for what sort of career he is suited.'

This is how we waste precious energy all the time; and if you watch you will see that your mind is continually going off on to something 'to come' or something that has happened 'in the past'. But if you withdraw your mind from *both of those*, both also from the favourable and the unfavourable alike, then in between meditations we learn to see things impersonally and attend to the present moment, so that your response to this *present moment* is entirely appropriate. Then Consciousness appears in the present moment. It is not associated with time or distance; it's Eternal Being – timeless – and is associated with Unity and Happiness.

Well, I hope that some of you will sign on and that I will see you again soon. Don't go away with the idea that 'this is not for me, so-and-so will do it much better!' I assure you that every one of you can do it if he or she wants to.

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