

24 November 1975

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

THREE ASPECTS OF BRAHMAN – THE ABSOLUTE

Dr. R. At these big Monday Meetings we have said that it might be a good opportunity to put bigger questions that are more easily discussed at a meeting of this size than at the small weekly meetings, and just now when we are having to speak to quite a lot of prospective meditators, and are starting on quite a big series of initiations, the question that we are continually getting asked is this one: ‘Why is it, if it is mankind’s birthright to be Conscious, and if everybody is born with a spark of the Divine Consciousness in them, that artificial things like Schools and organisations and artificial methods like meditation have to be used?’ We were asked this, for instance, at the meeting we had for prospective meditators last Wednesday from the School of Economic Science, and I luckily just thought in time of the answer that the Shankaracharya gave when we asked him that question.

He said that it is because of the fixed wrong ideas which human beings get firmly in their minds, and to get rid of these illusions another and more profitable illusion has to be substituted. So he tells a story which you haven’t heard for a very long time which came in very useful last Wednesday to illustrate this point:

In India there was a laundry or dhobi-man who had a fleet of donkeys, and he used to drive the donkeys with the dirty laundry down to the river in the morning and bring them back with the clean linen in the evening.

One day he fell sick and said to his son, ‘Just get those donkeys moving and take the laundry down to the river.’ The son tried everything he could think of – he whacked and shouted at them but they wouldn’t budge an inch; so he went back to his father and said: ‘Dad, I can’t get these donkeys moving!’ The dhobi-man said: ‘I forgot to tell you, I’m so sorry: these donkeys have a fixed idea that they cannot walk, so I’ve got into the way of going through the motions of tying knots round their legs in the evening, then in the morning when I want them to get going, I go through the motions of undoing the knots!’

The son did this and the donkeys stepped off with enthusiasm and confidence.

Dr. R. went on:

We have to realise that *we* are those donkeys, and the Meditation is like going through the motions of untying the knots which stop us from Self-realization which aren’t really there at all.

Well, you don’t seem to be very happy at being called donkeys (laughter), yet it is a beautiful idea you know – it really is – namely that there are really no obstacles to liberation except the fixed idea we have in our heads, and our Welsh friends the Morgans and the Melletts, gave us this morning a cutting from a Cardiff Sunday paper (which reminded them of the donkey story) as follows:

Years ago when they set the lions free to roam at the Whipsnade Zoo, it was said that the lions long afterwards continued to pace up and down where once the bars had been.

Now I heard that, in Cardiff, where they have turned the City centre into a traffic-free shopping precinct, the citizens still religiously cross the road only where the

pedestrian crossings used to be. (laughter)

The cutting ends: Funny creatures lions! Splendid people, the Welsh!

Dr. R. went on:

This is a very distinctive feature not only of the Welsh but of the stolid English as well! We all resist changes.

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This week's material extends the idea of the four states of consciousness (which you heard about last week) and about which both Mr. Ouspensky and the Shankaracharya agree, if you get through the difficulties of language. Let us extend this idea of four states or levels because Consciousness is a very elusive thing. It is profitless to have theoretical discussions or read books about Consciousness; you can only experience it, and really the less said about it the better. Therefore, as Consciousness is one of the three characteristics of the Absolute, not only in the Shankaracharya's System, but in all the major philosophies of India, we shall now name the other two characteristics of the Absolute as (Sat) Truth and (Ananda) Happiness. It is a threefold word – Sat-Chit-Ananda – the basic description given for many centuries of the nature of the Creator of the world.

Now, the Shankaracharya says that any two of these three characteristics will lead you to the third. We notice about our own history in the past, and about other organisations and systems and religions, that people often get one of those characteristics, and maybe they get two, but it is very very rare to get all three of those characteristics into the outlook and practice of any organisation.

But I think we are in a very good position to have everything centred here at Colet on those three characteristics and any of us could make contributions on one or the other.

When we started, the man from whom Mr. Ouspensky learnt our Western System, didn't know anything about the necessity for Happiness; we were really, looking back now, a very unhappy lot of people at that time, and Mr. Ouspensky (due to unavoidable circumstances) remained a very unhappy man after he left England until the last month of his life – especially the last week – when he suddenly came into the clear, and had Consciousness and Truth and Happiness in a state of Cosmic Consciousness.

Then you will see about other groups and people that they may miss out the Truth; they may be unscrupulous in some way; or you may see that they also are unhappy people – that they do things in sleep – so it is really rather a wonderful guide for practical life.

Any questions about that? Are you in any doubt or difficulty about this?

You like happy people, don't you, Mr. Kedros? My first memory of you was that you were looking for some happy people! That's especially important for Greek people isn't it? (Mr. K. agreed)

Any questions?

Mr. Eastop. Is it possible to have Consciousness without Truth and Happiness?

Dr. R. No, quite definitely; and I know about myself that *if I am not happy I cannot be Conscious*; and that's quickly confirmed by the friends who surround me! One can't help make other people Happy or help make other people Conscious, and one can't find the Truth!

Lady Allan. In our recent talks the word 'Radiance' was used: this seems to imply a coming together of the three aspects of the Creator.

Dr. R. Yes, very much so! Truth, Consciousness and Happiness together produce the radiance that other people feel, and enables us all to see that every small thing is part of some bigger Whole and has no separate existence in itself – things like that.

Our trouble is that we can't find any words in which to describe Consciousness; this is what blocks communication between people who have such experience. In some Systems they teach without words.

In Zen Buddhism, 'Zen' is just one of those unknown factors that are never defined. And here is a Zen story:

If you go to Chinatown in any of the big cities in America, you will probably see a statue of a fat and very jovial Chinaman carrying a big linen sack. This was a man who was a Zen Master in the Tang dynasty. He was called everywhere 'the Happy Chinaman, or the Laughing Buddha'. He always refused to teach anybody, he had no desire to call himself a Zen Master or to gather disciples round him. He walked the streets with a big sack into which he would put gifts of candy or doughnuts. These he would give to the children who gathered round him to play, establishing a kind of kindergarten of the streets; and whenever he met a Zen devotee looking very serious he would extend his hand saying, 'Give me one cent'.

Once when he was about this business of his, another Zen Master happened to come along, and enquired, 'What is the significance of Zen?' Ho-Tei, (this Laughing Buddha) immediately dropped his heavy sack down on the ground in silent answer. Then the other asked: 'What is the actualisation of Zen?' At once the Happy Chinaman flung the sack over his shoulder and continued on his way.

And if we get asked, 'What is the significance of Meditation?', it is exactly this: you lay aside the heavy load that is on your mind for half-an-hour. And 'What is the actualisation of Meditation?', it is that you shoulder your sack and go about your business, doing all your jobs that much better and that much more happily. So the whole description of the Meditation really could be given like that, without words. I know I use far too many words so I can't be Conscious, but at least I'm much happier than I used to be!

Any questions there?

Q. Being aware of the load sometimes, I'm also aware of my great reluctance to get rid of it! Can you give any advice?

Dr. R. Isn't it funny? Really, we are very funny creatures like the lions at Whipsnade! We don't want to give up our sad cages, and yet that's what Meditation is – what it should teach us to do in the ordinary way. We should be walking about with our minds free of this great, heavy load – the load of the past or the future, and the burden of the load that 'I am somebody'.

(to A.) There are other loads we carry, aren't there, Bobby? (Yes, indeed)

Miss Scrutton. Presumably we can't look for the three aspects you mentioned *separately*, but we can think of the Param-Atman in which all are contained?

Dr. R. Yes, remembering that those are three intrinsic properties of the nature of the Param-Atman – the Creator – and whenever we see a manifestation of Happiness, of Truth, of

Consciousness, we can associate it with that great source of all those three – the Param-Atman.

Q. (a woman) If someone was happy, would this indicate the presence of Sattva?

Dr. R. I want you to realise that what we have been talking about is not to be mixed up with the three Gunas. The three Gunas are running the *phenomenal* universe which is eternally moving and changing, and also characteristic of the consciousness in which we ordinarily live. Tamas Guna – sleep at night and inertia and fatigue by day; while Rajas Guna gets us around during the daytime sleep. If we collect enough Sattva it always gives the feeling of ‘waking up’ and shedding some useless burden, and then we have far more experiences of the third state of Consciousness and of more successful Meditation. But we shouldn’t discuss the three characteristics of the Absolute – who is above all that – in the same breath or on the same evening as the three Gunas in which we all live. Is that clear?

It’s the same as our System used to say: the Absolute creates All Worlds: in one diagram it is called the ‘Eternal Unchanging’. In World 3 the forces are all One – the Gunas are one, and under one Will – the Absolute. It’s only in the world below (the changing Galaxies) that there are six combinations of the three Gunas – all the movement of the manifest Universe becomes apparent – in the Galaxy, in the Solar System, the Planets and in Organic Life on earth. And then we have time and space and change and chance.

I don’t know if I have strayed off the question?

A. No, I don’t think so.

Dr. Michael Cox. This is really a reference to an Indian medical book which breaks down the members of the body into elements which you have already discussed and described; but it does say that *these elements in themselves are not part of Consciousness, but that Consciousness may enter*. In hearing what you’ve been talking about, I am very much aware of them separately, and I’m anxious to see if these elements can’t get together on Consciousness – the eye conscious, the ear conscious. As a result, this feeling has stayed with me and, as a result of that, I have found enormous sense in what you’ve been saying just now, and it seems to be a question of allowing or wanting Consciousness to enter.

Dr. R. Yes, Dr. Cox; this is very important for all doctors. If you can’t give your patient reassurance and any possible happiness and confidence – then, though you may be a terribly clever doctor, and do all sorts of clever operations, you won’t cure them! So it is very important in all walks of life – practical life – but we, of course, aren’t directly concerned with that in our groups here immediately. I suggest that each group should be like a Cabinet where there is a Minister of Consciousness – the one who takes the group, a Minister for Truth – checking up on him, and a Minister for Happiness – seeing about the general state of the group from week to week.

(to A.). Do you think it would work?

A. (firmly) No! (laughter)

Mr. Barker. Is there room for a Minister without Portfolio?

Dr. R. (laughing) Yes, surely!

Any other questions designed to see the inferences which arise from this. It is really very important in the world today.

Do any of our people in education – Mellett, Bullough – feel that even in a comprehensive school there might be a more comprehensive idea about Truth and Happiness in order to achieve a real learning situation, where young people can be brought into truer values than those usually taught at that age.

(to Mr. Mellett.) Would you agree, headmaster Mellett?

Mr. Mellett. I agree very much, Dr. Roles.

Dr. R. (contd.) Painters, too, and poets. There's painter Hersey sitting very near poet Griffiths at the back there. In both those arts isn't there a good deal of happiness missing today in the various disciplines of artistic creation, wouldn't you say? (No reply) John Hersey is trying to look very small for once! (laughter)

Mr. Eadie. For me, one of the most important things that the Shankaracharya has been teaching is to take a positive view. We used to tend to dwell rather on the problems, but now that is not allowed by the Shankaracharya. Is this the reason why it is more happy?

Dr. R. Yes, that is one of the reasons, Peter. The thing he says is that this strange state of happiness has a different taste from other forms of happiness. It arises when you have approached a Realized man and are in his presence, or hear his words, or remember him even when physically separated; just as it arises when in Meditation or at some other time you approach your own Divine Self, you feel this strange kind of happiness and self-confidence. This is what I am sure Mr. Ouspensky would like his Society and this house to stand for; and it is not by teaching as we have said, it is by example.

I've watched the Shankaracharya under the most varied conditions over fourteen years and I've never seen him perturbed or put out, and I've never seen him unconscious in the sense that his movements are not purposeful and controlled. And I've not heard him tell any lies yet! So it is example that is wanted all round and that only comes by practice and experience; moreover, he recently said that, whatever you might be doing, you get these three things *depending on what you are doing it for*. You can be farming, or you can be 'turning' – whatever you are doing – if you are doing it for the Param-Atman and not for some worldly transient reason, then you will in due course meet up with all these three manifestations.

These are very good questions; now keep it up!

Mr. Bullough. You mentioned the ingredients of this Sat-Chit-Ananda. One can sense the wonder of these, but the thing above this – the Param-Atman – is something that one cannot seem to grasp.

Dr. R. No, it's not that the Param-Atman is above; it's simply that these are three characteristics which are in the small world of each man's own small nature – the microcosm – and extended to embrace the Universe – Param-Atman; but the Param-Atman is that for the Universe just as the Atman – the Self – is that for Bullough or Roles. It is of the same nature with the same three characteristics. So you appreciate this Divine Being through these different characteristics.

Mr. Bullough. I'll have to settle for the characteristics.

Dr. R. No, you don't have to settle for anything! You are not going to persuade me that you are tying yourself up like a donkey; you *are* a manifestation of the Creator – settled or not settled!

Miss Cullinan. Can one be doing something just for the joy of doing it? Has this the same sort of quality as doing it for the Param-Atman? – even though you are not thinking you are doing it for the Param-Atman?

Dr. R. Yes, there's a danger in that, you know, if you do things just for the hell of it, for Truth and Consciousness should come into that. In other words, is what you are doing useful – likely to be useful for the Divine Self – is it the right way to do it, is it the right moment?

Miss Wright. Supposing it is all that? I think the Shankaracharya said at one time there was a difference between these two – that it wasn't the same thing.

Dr. R. Oh, yes, I think he frequently implies this. The two being in this case – which?

Miss Wright. The joy of doing it, and doing it – as it were – thinking for the Param-Atman.

(During the following discussion the point of the question remained obscure.)

Miss Wright. Can I put it in another way, or are you bored with the question?

Dr. R. No, I think it is absolutely fascinating to all the men in the room. This is obviously a very feminine question!

Miss Wright then asked: Do you have to think – have in your mind 'I am doing this for the Param-Atman' – in order to be doing it for the Param-Atman?

Dr. R. No, if you have love in your heart for the Param-Atman that is much more effective than having the thought in your mind. That's where the women are often more liberated than the men! For the ultimate is doing things for love of the Param-Atman.

Mr. P. Stebbing. You said just now that all was not well with the arts. I couldn't agree with you more! I have a feeling that, today, the signature is larger than the painting!

Dr. R. Meaning that a person has to do something that nobody else has done in order to make himself known – regardless of whether it is art or not? Is that the 'signature' you mean?

P. S. It's all personal.

Dr. R. Yes. Well, the Shankaracharya agrees with you that the arts are in a rather sorry state along with the other non-technological activities of mankind – but he says the only way we can help in the matter is, first of all to *create men*, and from among those men will come creative art. The way to create men is to show, by example, and teach how to meditate properly, and to answer the questions to which the Meditation gives rise.

But a one-man show would help a bit, Peter, and we'll support you, won't we, Crampton?

Gay Burdett. Regarding the different states of consciousness: There seems to be many ways of approaching the three states, but is there, in fact, only one way of getting the actual experience?

Dr. R. No, I think there are many ways; people are very different. There are certain main ways

and there are many varieties of those main ways – many things which each individual has to discover for himself to help whatever Way he's on.

Climbing of this Ladder of Self-realization has these two sides, collective and individual.

By the way, I would like to say on behalf of what I understand of the Param-Atman, that the Param-Atman cannot be thought to be displeased with the state humanity is in at the present time. I have it on excellent authority that He feels that mankind is in the stage of an inky schoolboy – he is getting into the chemi-lab for the first time and tending to blow himself up, and that is all part of his education.

He tells a story about the brother of Rama – that Lakshman who dived for the ring in the story you heard a week or two ago – that when he was a small boy and his father was a King, one day Lakshman got into an awful bad temper and broke up everything he could see that was breakable. He smashed the chandeliers and anything else that would break; and when this was reported by the Prime Minister to the King, his father, he was astonished when the King said: 'All right, let's have a feast; this is simply marvellous!'

The Minister said 'Do you really mean it? – do you know what this naughty boy has been doing?' The King said: 'Yes, it just shows he's growing up and has a lot of strength; he couldn't have broken all those chandeliers a year or two ago; so let's have a feast.'

(as the room was silent, Dr. R. said) That's beaten you, hasn't it! We just don't get it do we?

Mrs. Simpson. Does that mean that it is better than being lukewarm?

Dr. R. Nothing is better or worse for the Param-Atman; everything depends on laws. Those laws, which are beautiful in themselves, and give infinite possibilities, have to work themselves out, and schoolboy man is learning slowly to be '*Homo sapiens*'.

We have rather rigid ideas of good and bad, right and wrong. It's really impertinent on our part to judge what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, *except in relation to ourselves*. This is very important: I, myself, must know what is good or bad for me and people I know.

Mr. Miles. In this respect, therefore, it is very important to understand the personal aspect?

Dr. R. I would rather say 'individual' aspect, Miles.

And remember in relation to some of the questions Miss Wright was asking, Consciousness is being too much related to intellectual knowledge. It may mean 'knowing all at once', knowing the Source of Knowledge; but remember that the word 'conscience' comes from the same two Latin words, and that it is possible to *feel* everything at once; the 'Emotional realization of Truth' is much more moving and much more potent – but it needs to be checked by Reason.

Q. He is a little concerned about the difference between grasping intellectually and the understanding of the meaning of something which comes through feeling?

Dr. R. Well, this is exactly the point where I would like to establish the use of a word that means *both* – 'comprehension'. In Latin this meant 'grasping', and it was also used for 'grasping the hand of somebody' like the story of the man who wanted to grasp the hand of the King.

'Comprehension' has both these ideas – everything altogether – and I feel that if we could establish this word instead of 'knowledge' or instead of 'understanding' it would be much more in keeping with the way we think nowadays.

Do you think, Sean, that the word 'comprehension' may be a good equivalent for the word 'Buddhi' – one of the functions of Mind that we value? (he nodded)

Dr. R. then went on:

Could we now spend the last two or three minutes like those donkeys – just untying the knots on our legs through Meditation?

MEDITATION

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