

15 December 1975

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

Dr. R. said (after the announcements):

We are very thrilled by the fact that so many people took the opportunity to write short answers to the conundrum in Reading 8 – it was one hundred and fifty replies by the weekend, and quite a lot have been coming in today – so the prime objective, which was to establish a link with anyone who should trouble to answer (I didn't think so many would!), has already been richly achieved.

This, as you know, is both a general problem and a highly individual one. While the human condition demands the same fulfilment at all times and in all places (namely that each individual becomes One with the Creator – whatever He is called, whatever the means used), yet the individual must find his own way to get it and do his own work, which simply involves a complete reversal of all that one calls 'I'.

In these one hundred and seventy replies there is every shade of understanding and form of expression which is very illuminating to anybody reading them all; one sees what a lot of different approaches to this main question there are, and how narrow one's own point of view is.

The essence of this exercise is that it is a *'private'* link – not for publication; I'm determined to reply to anyone whose answer implies a need for help. There's a very small number of people with whom the link wasn't established: a) those who didn't put their name on the paper!; b) those who wrote from a great height – 'this is a silly question, and the only way to look at it is my way of looking at it!'; and c) those who wrote, 'That it's absolutely impossible for me to do anything at all now, but if only everything could be different, I would certainly have a try!'

One must begin to do something *now*, in the given situation!

One will be reading these carefully over Christmas and the New Year trying to find a way of implementing this link with the individual.

What I want to say now which is important, is that this sheet of paper (Reading 8a) merely gives the original question – the start of the whole thing. When it became obvious that Miss Cullinan's question as recorded was not as she asked, I wrote to her, and here is part of her reply which is a very good expression of the common problem faced by most of us during a busy life of making it habitual to relate everything to the Supreme Self. Those who ordinarily have a paper from here, I'd like them to take a copy; but I'm afraid we can't supply everybody at the moment. There is no harm in anybody copying for themselves what is available in their part of the world. It is not secret.

All of us, practically, look at this question about the Param-Atman and the individual entirely from the individual's point of view; whereas the miracle comes from taking the Param-Atman's point of view.

So I want Lord Allan to read part of a recent conversation with the Shankaracharya that puts this clearly.

(A. reads):

S. We could say that we are married to the Param-Atman and, in an ordinary marriage, even though each partner has the other in his heart, yet there is often friction between them, and sometimes this state of friction reaches such a degree that husband and wife stop talking to each other.

Dr. R. He then told a story (about Gandhi and his wife) which you will hear sometime.

S. contd. Param-Atman is calling us all the time, and although the individual (Jiva) has a desire to go to the Param-Atman, yet the only obstacle is this – that the Jiva thinks ‘I too am something’. The obstacle to union is the separation in his heart.

This does not mean that the determination to meet the Param-Atman is ever really absent for we are always ready. It depends on the changeable state of our minds which shouldn’t worry us, for Param-Atman being both loving and reasonable knows that it is natural. The root cause of all this, and what we have to get rid of, is the idea that sometimes grows up and takes form – this idea that ‘I am also something’.

Lady A. So the decision has already been taken – one need not worry?

Interpreter Dixit. That is what H.H. means; but the danger is this habit of thinking, ‘I am somebody’.

Dr. R. That appeals to you all – doesn’t it? – you know that must be true from all the great writings you’ve been reading in an emotional state. It’s true about any tradition, for instance – any of the great traditions or religions. It’s when the individual begins to think: ‘I am something’, or ‘I am somebody’, that quarrels and disagreements begin, and unnecessary chains of cause and effect are started. If the tradition is inspired by Param-Atman – by God – and has been preserved for centuries, it is that which should occupy each person’s mind and not ‘I am something’. Seeing it this way would resolve for example, all present problems about the Mukabeleh and the music.

(to Michael Fleming): That deals with your question about Tradition?

M.F. Yes, it does.

Miss Scrutton. How can one get over a feeling of distaste about personalising the Param-Atman? We’ve just read that the Param-Atman understands something or other, the Param-Atman feels something or other? I’ve always been rather worried about this?

Dr. R. We all have our worries about this – various difficulties. I’m not going to give any snap answers about anything, having learnt my lesson from reading all that you’ve sent in; it’s for the individual to get over such a difficulty. We’ve got quite a lot of time to do it in; but any silly fool who lightly tries to answer somebody else’s question deserves what he gets!

Any other remarks or anything?

Mlle Costaz. When we say, ‘I am something’ what does ‘something’ mean?

Dr. R. Well, a great big Mademoiselle getting in the way of what You really are! You know yourself what immense resources you really have inside, and that there is nothing in you that is separate from the Creator. Anything like that doesn’t exist – it’s a mirage.

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Well, this 'I am something' is very insidious – in the very act of exclaiming 'O Param-Atman' this 'I am something' comes in; and the original Shri Shankara twenty-five centuries ago describes this as the chief constituent of Maya (or illusion) which separates us from the Absolute – the Creator. It's like the illusion of a man who, in a poor light, imagines a rope to be a snake or vice versa. If we have a poor light of Consciousness we imagine this thing – this ego – as 'I' and it isn't true at all. It's this illusion.

Now Colin Lucas has just sent me in an amusing story which, very aptly, takes this simile further. (On enquiry, C. L. was not present).

A. reads:

There was once a Jew who was found by his Rabbi sitting by the side of the road trembling with fear. 'What is the matter with you, Isaac?' said the Rabbi, 'Why are you so frightened?'

'Oh, Master, Master,' said the Jew, 'I thought I saw a snake in the road.' 'What do you mean, Isaac, you thought you saw a snake?' 'Well, Master, it wasn't really a snake, it was a stick.' 'Then what is the need for fear, Isaac, if it wasn't really a snake?'

'Well, Master, you see I took up a stick from the grass by the side of the road to kill it with, and this time it wasn't really a stick, it was a snake'.. (laughter)

Dr. R. And that really is happening all the time to each of us!

When I sent this to New York I told Mr. Rabeneck, 'Perhaps we had better tell the story about a Russian being found by his staretz!' for its application is universal.

That's really why 'good company' – a large number of people working closely together – is needed. Any individual is all the time mistaking a stick for a snake and a snake for a stick! Any questions about that?

Anthony Kedros. Can you say what is the real function of the ego; it's there; what is its purpose?

Dr. R. I can't, (to A. Can you?) My guess is that this is the whole point of the game and how dull it would be for the Absolute if everybody was the same – mass-produced off some production belt! Human nature, at any rate, craves for a variety of all kinds. Look at all the different cars there are; all the different styles of clothing; variety is the spice of life! For the Param-Atman, too, we might suppose that it is much more interesting to have all these different kinds of people. Even I appreciate this!

(To A. Kedros) But why not go above what I say and put the question to Him: 'Why did you do this thing? – Why did you create this infinitely variable ego?'

And don't belittle the idea that for everybody it seems to be imperative that they have their own sense of individuality, for if you lose confidence in your individuality you get a nervous breakdown. So it is there for some reason.

A. I suppose you could say it is to be an instrument of the Divine plan or Will?

Dr. R. Yes. Each of us might ask that question. It's only the illusory part that is getting in our way.

Mrs. Cardew. We need to recognise a snake for a snake and a stick for a stick?

Dr. R. Yes, and I think you – as you get around and see quite a lot of people have a pretty good idea about that?

One must be careful, though, about forming a hasty judgment of people. It is about oneself that it is important to distinguish snake from stick.

But this seeing the difference between things that look alike but are different, things which look different but are really the same, this was the basis of Mr. Ouspensky's idea about the six triads and the six activities of man, and the faculty of distinguishing those differences he rated very highly. It could be cultivated through Conscience, through the Emotional Realization of Truth – a flash of intuition can help one distinguish snake from stick.

I don't think there is really very much more to be said at this stage; you have got some time to digest the real problem, which is at the basis of asking you to write in. Each person must delve a bit and over the holiday period they may have a chance of doing that.

Mr. Weigall. In replying to this questionnaire, most of us were trying to keep it pretty short; but he wasn't sure how much you wanted the detail of individual daily examples – whether these were too long and too personal?

Dr. R. No, I've got exactly what I wanted; if anything, it could have been shorter in some cases.

One of our very senior people puts it in these few words: 'I recall the Param-Atman, and find I am recalled by the Param-Atman more and more frequently.' It puts a lot in that very short way, and these answers show one thing very clearly – that ever since we started thinking and talking about the Param-Atman, people have had experiences far more frequently, and that is what the Shankaracharya is doing to us – what the other things we do, like the Mukabeleh, are doing for us.

Mr. Healey. What exactly is the Param-Atman?

Dr. R. repeated. 'What exactly is the Param-Atman?' Would somebody give him a copy of the 1972 Programme after this meeting? It is defined in that.

Just as each individual has Real 'I' in Mr. Ouspensky's terms, so there is a Real 'I' of the Universe, and the idea of having the Param-Atman in one's heart and in one's mind – the Consciousness of the Universe – means that anything we put up beside that is inconceivably small – too small to be counted. Whereas if one says Real 'I', it is easier to make mistakes such as mistaking a snake for a stick! But you cannot confuse Mr. Jack Healey with the Lord of the Universe!

All right? (Yes) That's the marvellous thing about this non-dualistic Tradition – this Advaita System of the Shankaracharyas – that they don't admit dualism in any form, and that there is no difference between the individual and the Creator of the Universe.

Q. (a woman) When one begins to get any understanding at all of Real 'I' it is clearly something lovable. If you can see the Real 'I', in another person, surely that ought to be lovable too if it is genuine?

Dr. R. It surely is lovable. If you see Real 'I' in another person, then it is genuine and it is lovable.

The fundamental idea of the Param-Atman is that the Lord of Creation is lovable – is the most lovable thing that it is possible to conceive.

The evil we see around does not come from the Lord of Creation; it comes as the inevitable result of the diversity of creatures arising out of the beautiful laws which

originated this Universe, and when the Creator said: ‘Let there be Light,’ it is understood that there must be darkness, if there is loveliness, there must be unloveliness too.

Bill Anderson. This is a quotation from a thirteenth century poem which he came across recently:

Thou art the love wherewith the heart loves Thee.

Dr. R. Fine; worth committing to memory. I was sent recently a similar kind of quotation used by Dr. Ramsay when he was enthroned Archbishop – very much the same thing. It was a prayer of St. Augustine that Dr. Ramsay quoted at his installation.

Take my heart from me, for I cannot give it Thee,
Keep it for Thyself for I cannot keep it for Thee,
And save me in spite of myself.

So, the people who wrote in about this fundamental question have to learn somehow to put the Param-Atman first instead of second – as many of their notes did.

Q. Have you let the cat out of the bag or is there, in fact, a Programme for everybody? This was in your answer to Mr. Healey.

Dr. R. I haven’t let any cats out of bags that weren’t out already! There is no secret at all about this. This 1972 Programme which many of us have returned to recently, gives at the beginning a definition by the Shankaracharya of what he means by Param-Atman. It was in the first version of that Programme, possibly only the January one.

Dr. R. then remarked. As some people are only now arriving, because of the fog, let me repeat that, while the human condition demands the same fulfilment at all times and in all places (a hallmark of Creation being Diversity in Unity), yet the individual must find his own way to get it, and must do his own work to achieve it, because it simply involves a reversal of all that he calls ‘I’.

Now I think as some of us are faced with an ordeal to get home at all tonight, we won’t sit about long. Supposing we just do five minutes together, then we will be in better form for making this risky journey.

MEDITATION

Dr. R. concluded:

Now we should be getting home.

In wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year I’d like just to mention that it all depends on what one wants, how much one wants it, and how often one wants it.

Yesterday, amongst others, we gave the Meditation to some children, and there was one very confident small boy of ten who put on his form: ‘I want to be a fully Realized man’. The next little boy of ten was the smallest I think I have ever seen – he was so small we had to give him a footstool, for his legs dangled in the air when he was trying to meditate! On his form he put in writing so small that it almost needed a magnifying glass (you’ve guessed it) – ‘a hamster’! (laughter) It will be very good to see who gets what! (more laughter)

