

11 February 1975

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

Dr. Roles. We would, of course, like some participation, but may I say that small questions – technical details and so on – you can ask your checker or at the small weekly or monthly meetings. Here, at these biggish meetings, the record goes all round the world to hundreds of hungry people; so we want the bigger questions such as those about the meaning and purpose of meditation. The more we understand the meaning and purpose, the more rewarding it will be.

The chief thing we all need stems from a fairly recent answer to a question which you, Allan, asked the Shankaracharya, and which you worded rather like this:

The meditation leads to the discovery of the treasure which lies within all of us. What one wants above everything is to keep this treasure away from anyone who will waste it such as – from within, the false 'I', and from outside, the wrong kind of people who will just waste and spoil it.

He sometimes calls those wasters 'bad company'. His answer was:

(reading):

We were given a ladder of the steps of Knowledge and of Self-realization. (Dr. R. I won't detail those steps; you can find them out from anybody.) But it is in the first step that the Way lies. This is what we call the 'Impulse'. In the 'impulse' is enough energy and momentum to lead one towards understanding, or getting, or knowing some of the Truth – better ideas to advance more quickly. If one gets 'good company' within and without, it is natural that the progress will be regular and much more rapid.

(Record, 9 March 1970)

Dr. R. So I would like to corroborate from one's own experience that his expression 'good impulse' refers to moments when one gets this impulse to do with Self-realization or Meditation, for these are what brought you all to the meditation – the various impulses or experiences you had as children and all through your lives. When you begin meditating you get more of these impulses. Never neglect them; wherever you are, whatever time or place, if you get an impulse, *do something about it* – even if it is only to pronounce the Mantra to yourself once or twice, or to collect your attention if you are active and in public; or, if you are alone, you could just close your eyes and repeat it a few times. But always respond to it, because then these impulses come more often and with greater intensity so that you get a voice like the 'voice of conscience', which is loud and sharp. But if you neglect them, then for a long period they'll get fainter and cease to come until you get another shock to get you back on the ladder!

Any questions about that? You all know what I mean about these impulses which come from somewhere deep inside?

(As no questions were asked) Dr. R. said: Universal assent! – no answer means assent! (he laughs) But I'm sure at heart we all agree even if it is difficult to speak about it!

Aren't there any questions, though, about recognising these from all the other impulses

that one gets? or in what way can one regulate one's life in order to get more? – and so on, a lot of questions really centre on this most important point!

Professor Guyatt. I do feel a difficulty, Dr. Roles. I am not quite sure how to put it, but because your life is smoother, you tend to take it to yourself.

Dr. R. Yes, rough or smooth, we take everything to ourselves. But really what I want to know is whether, if your life is smoother, do you get more out of these impulses? Personally, I get them more cogently when life is rough and difficult – not too smooth for too long.

We are speaking about the impulse to come away from trivial things towards your Supreme Self. I am putting it back on to the Professor!

Prof. G. It's split; it's a bit of both!

Dr. R. Mixed, perhaps, but they all have something to do with the Supreme Self – some flavour of Self-remembering. It doesn't matter if it's mixed with other things or anything; it's just this taste, this flavour, which the Sufis refer to as 'wine'; 'Come, fill the cup!'

[We learn to distinguish the taste of the 'good wine'. And the Param-Atman can turn water into wine, as Christ did at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.]

Q. Surely it's a question not so much as to whether the impulse is there, but how to bring it out?

Dr. R. No, no! The all important thing is that an impulse is an impulse! The Atman may be there all the time and *is* throughout your life, but if He is giving you instructions – sending you an impulse – you must respond to it.

Mr. Torikian. Does the intensity of the impulse vary?

Dr. R. Oh, yes, very much; and the more you respond to it, the greater the intensity.

Mr. T. Would you say there is a chemical change in the body when one gets this impulse?

Dr. R. If the impulse is strong enough – intense enough – then there is. One suddenly feels totally different. But even if the impulse is weak and feeble – not strong enough to produce much chemical change – you must still pay attention to it and distinguish it.

It happens in many sort of ways; such as an impulse to help somebody – suddenly you remember that a person you know is in trouble. The impulse which triggers that may also come from the Divine Self and must be responded to if you possibly can.

Again, if you remember something good you have read, find it and turn to it again at the earliest opportunity.

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We will perhaps come back to that, but now I would rather like to lead up to another subject about the meditation. Meditation is a journey of many stages; we must not be impatient and expect everything right away. Each of us consists of a number of parts – a physical body, a personality (and those two are all we know of ourselves and other people until we start meditating); but, beyond that, there is an Essence which is the bridge between the personality and what we can call the Soul – the 'inner organ' – the more permanent part of us.

Most of us come to the meditation through personality; we hear about it from other people; we want to know what is going on and are curious about it. All these things are superficial, but that's the way most of us start. So, then, we are given the method and told a little about how to meditate. This is the first stage, and it can be longer or shorter in different people.

Then we begin to see that the Mantra in a half-hour is like a little lantern – a very small light – and we are often discouraged and in a state of frustration because it's so dark and the journey seems to be so long. But the Realized man explains that we will be carrying this little lantern of the Mantra *along with us*, and it will be enough always to illuminate the next step, or the next two steps. So all we need to do is to hold on to this lantern and start walking. After a time the darkness clears and the Light of Consciousness – like the rising of the Sun – will come to our help. But we start from where we are, and let the Mantra light the next step during a half-hour in a state of passive attention, not asking for anything.

(to Mrs. Fleming): It is just as you said, being transparent? (Yes). Being transparent this Light tells us how to meditate at this moment.

Well, a story illustrates these two stages, and we will have to repeat it again, as apparently the Shankaracharya attaches great importance to it as an illustration between the time when our personality starts us meditating and later when our Nature gets interested in it.

A. reads:

S. Once a King wanted to see a real Mahatma so he sent out his men to find one. They tried for a month and failed, so they devised a trick to save themselves further trouble!

They made one of the servants (the personality) impersonate a real Mahatma; so he dressed himself up, grew a beard, and sat under a tree eating nothing and observing complete silence. Then they told the King that a very great Mahatma was sitting under a tree nearby, and that he neither spoke nor slept, nor ate anything.

Dr. R. That's a sign of holiness in India among the common people – someone neither speaking, nor sleeping, nor eating!

The King went to him, bowed down at his feet and offered baskets of fruit and flowers. The false Mahatma motioned to him to sit down, so the king sat for a long while before humbly taking his leave.

After the King had gone, his men told the servant to get back into his usual clothes and get on with the job. But he said: 'When even a false Mahatma can make a King bow down at his feet, how much respect would a real Master of Meditation command! Now I have experienced the Light of Wisdom I shall try to become a real Master of Meditation.'

(Record, 25 August 1964)

Dr. R. 'And stop being your servant', the story ended!

I think we've experienced that – we're just the ordinary person when we start the meditation, and sometimes, if we're lucky, our inner Nature begins to become interested and has a certain zest and a feeling for the Object of Meditation, which is the 'I', the Self. Then it's possible that the Self (if He feels like it) will come and help – will take over.

Any questions about that?

(Pause)

Mrs. Brunsdon. I'm always slightly worried by this story, Dr. Roles, because the assumption is that you act something you're not?

Dr. R. Well, that's what you *are* doing all the time my dear! (laughter) That's what your job at the B.B.C. depends on as you've so often told me! Acting something we are not, is just what our personality is doing. '*Persona*' (the Latin word from which 'personality' comes) is the 'mask' which the actor holds in front of his face all the time, and all of us have these masks!

The real meaning of this story is that you may start good work for all the wrong reasons, but if you persist you will discover the real reason for doing it. This is a story which illustrates P. D. Ouspensky's teaching on the subject also.

Mrs. B. But you know in yourself that you have to put away the actor?

Dr. R. Yes, but you don't do it! That's what I mean by a 'good impulse'; you *know* you ought to do it, but back comes the mask!

(to Mrs. Fleming). You wrote me a letter, which must have been a case of thought-transference, because the words of H.H. you quoted have been very much in my mind also. You say in your letter: 'I have been trying to improve my Nature and put what I feel about this into practice. Apart from the always-rewarding result of turning as often as I remember to the Light, I have found this quotation you gave us on the 13th May constantly coming to mind:

There is a verse in one of the Scriptures, the gist of which is that a good man who wants to go on the Spiritual path, speaks what he feels and does what he speaks; that is, he speaks from pure feeling. But when he has impure feelings he tries not to speak, or express those feelings, or rush into action.

...But if one tries to speak from pure feeling and do exactly what one says, then this would build up one's inner strength and one's Essence would grow; then because of this *transparency* of one's Nature (which is dropping the mask) and the unity of one's mind and the sincerity of one's heart, the Way will become clear.

(Record 18 January 1974)

(to Mrs. Brunsdon). So recognise the 'mask', and if convenient (if not at the B.B.C.), drop it!

(to Richard Weigall). You know what I mean, Richard?

R.W. I think so.

Dr. R. You can't play in an orchestra if you are holding this mask up!

R.W. It's gradually going if I am playing in an orchestra.

Dr. R. It's a wonderful way of dispelling it. In fact, anything that makes you keep attention – demands a lot from you – will be too demanding to allow this 'personality' to get in the way. The danger is present when the mechanical mind is free to run round on personal things without our attention.

Any other questions? There are a lot of people here that I know have views on this subject!

As no other questions were asked, Dr. R. went on:

But to continue this theme that 'the meditation is a journey': I will ask Allan to read some more from a recent talk to the head of the School of Meditation – Whiting:

(A. reads):

S. The Meditation is a journey of the individual consciousness (Vyashti) to the Universal Consciousness (Samashti, the Absolute). One starts repeating the Mantra at the level of the individual personality, but this repetition of the Mantra is leading on to the transcendental Meditation in the essence, which is called Dhyana. This movement is aimed at only one thing, and that is to cut out, or diminish, all activity during the half-hour – to get rid of the Rajas set up by the outer life. Slowly and gradually this march towards non-activity takes place and one reaches the realm of union, which is the stillness of Unity. This is experience of the Self as Universal; here there is no duality, and there remains no *place* to move on to, and there is no time to change to, for the Supreme Self is the place, the time, and also the substance. In this profound silence, or Yoga, all knowledge, and all movement stop, and there is only 'One without a second', and that is the Self, the Ultimate Observer. This is Samadhi when the bliss of union becomes complete.

This doesn't mean that all relationships and agitations would have disappeared from our inner universe for there are levels of consciousness – deep sleep, dream state, daytime state, etc. But this particular state which we are considering is unique; when one comes away from it, then one feels joyful – just as when one goes to see some great man and returns with indescribable joy and enthusiasm seeing good in everything...

Thus, the practice of Meditation is not an isolated act; it is a journey from the start of the Mantra to the end of all agitation. It is like walking along a bridge, over which one needs to throw all one's belongings, desires and activities till one reaches the other end. The practice of meditation between these two points is to pick up the Mantra, embark on the activity of repetition and, with its help, allow everything – even the Mantra – to disappear without doing anything extra. The rhythm of activity will gradually settle down to a complete stillness – not a void, but of a fullness, which is the presence of the Self.

(Record, 9 November 1973)

Dr. R. This is the way the twenty-five-century-old System of the Shankaracharya's describes the progression towards Unity, and the original Sri Shankara told his followers that he would describe the whole of this Advaita (non-duality) System in a single couplet of verse:

Brahma satyam	Jagan mithya	Brahma jivaiva naporah
Brahma is real	the world is a mirage	Absolute and individual are not different

This happiness before and after Samadhi is the realisation that one is not different from the Supreme Consciousness.

I'd like to meditate now for a few minutes – not trying too hard, but placing oneSelf in the hands of the Divine Self as His plaything or kitten – not thinking you're doing it yourself! One needs to abandon knowing or thinking anything at all.

MEDITATION

Afterwards Dr. R. asked A. to read the following passage:

(reading): In 1971 R. asked about a sentence from the *Book of Golden Precepts* which Theosophists use:

‘He who would hear the voice of Nada the soundless sound, and comprehend it, he has first to learn the practice of Dhyana (Transcendental Meditation).’ Is this a correct version and what does it mean?

The Shankaracharya said:

Our Mantra has three sounds, R – A – M (pronounced of course as one); and the last sound M becomes continuous, getting subtler until it comes to a ‘soundless sound’, experienced as the most subtle of vibrations.

In our Meditation one starts the Mantra which repeats itself, becoming subtler until at one stage it is experienced as One with the meditator and the Object of meditation – the Supreme Self. In fact, this is not just a subjective experience, for it is the real state of the ‘I am’ (Sat) – one of the three aspects of the Absolute, so that it is the causal or purest ‘sound without a sound’.

(Record, 4 February 1971)

Dr. R. You don’t have to cling to the sound; the Mantra starts as a sound, then it loses all its physical characteristics gradually and just becomes something that’s there, after which it sometimes disappears altogether.

Now are there any questions which have come up since we meditated when the mask of considering has dropped off? Probably you’ll answer these questions internally; if so, you’ll get an answer much better than you would get from me!

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Mr. Peter Stebbing. One has to question oneself about what one is doing – whether it is the seed of a ‘thorny bush’ or not – is that sufficient?

Dr. R. That is absolutely right; it can only come from experience in self-observation. It’s much more important than most of what we’re taught at school!

If we have no attention, we are just automata – puppets pulled by invisible strings – and all our actions are involuntary, and just typical of each puppet – my involuntary actions are typical of me; your actions are typical of you! They are mostly subconscious, so it is necessary to have attention in order to know what’s going on – not to keep sowing involuntarily seeds of thorny bushes!

Meditation is a marvellous way of developing attention – in a half-hour to the rhythm of the Mantra, and then to the Divine Self; and in the rest of the time attention to what one is doing – to the needs of the situation. Then one won’t have unpleasant consequences of one’s actions which one didn’t expect!

Mrs. Fleming. What you said about the ‘good impulse’ comes in again doesn’t it?

Dr. R. Yes, the ‘good impulse’ is to attend; very often it says: ‘Attend; what are you doing?’ It’s not a sentimental impulse, but quite sharp! One such impulse is coming to me now: ‘You’ve talked too much!’

My American mother used to tell me a story about a parrot who was teasing a dog who was chained to a post. The parrot kept saying, 'Wouldn't you like to catch me? You have got an ugly face!' At last, driven frantic, the dog broke loose from his chain, and as the parrot was going down its throat tail first, it could be heard to say, 'I talk too damn much!' (laughter)

It's twenty past eight!

This is being recorded 'for better or for worse', so you'll have a chance of reading what the Shankaracharya said.

The next meeting is on 11th March; and tonight is Shrove Tuesday, so get back home to your pancakes!

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