

13 September 1977

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

As Dr. and Mrs. Roles were still away on holiday, the meeting was taken by Lord Allan and Mr. Alan Caiger-Smith.

A. I am glad to say that Dr. and Mrs. Roles are having a holiday in Majorca where by all accounts they are enjoying excellent weather.

During the summer I was asked this question:

‘What is the real meaning of Self-realization, because this is what all this is about, isn’t it?’

The value of a really basic question like that is that it makes one think about phrases or concepts that we bandy about and sooner or later take for granted. So it is quite a good thing to be forced, as I was on that occasion, to sit down and think out these ideas we have come to accept almost automatically.

Thinking it over, it seemed to me that Realization in its simplest form is the product of Knowledge and experience in much the same way as Mr. Ouspensky used to say that Understanding comes from a growth of Knowledge and Being.

For example: children can be told that it is dangerous to cross the road except at a zebra crossing; but until they have some experience of traffic, they do not *realize* the danger. Adults, as a result of experience use such phrases as, ‘Till then I never *realized* how complicated it was,’ or ‘I *realize* now that it has to be done in a certain way.’

About people too, we say. ‘Since I have had this experience I fully *realize* her problem’ or again. ‘I *realize* now what he must have gone through.’ It is only when experience unites with Knowledge that we get Realization.

I know that is elementary but it does offer in everyday terms a clue to what Self-realization might mean. First we have got to hear about and get to know about the difference between false ‘I’ – ego – and our true Self. After that we have got to experience it by catching ourselves out – by seeing that we have done something or said something which was not what we really meant at all. Do we not often catch ourselves saying. ‘Gosh, I never meant to do that,’ or, ‘I would not have said that for the world...’ ‘If only I had realized...’

When one catches oneself out frequently enough one *realizes* – because one knows and has had experience – that for most of the time our false ‘I’ dominates, and through it we are at the mercy of external events which control our actions and reactions all the time. When we realize this – further intermediate steps towards Self-realization are possible. I say, ‘intermediate steps’ because it seems that the Seven Steps which we are given in the Ladder of Self-realization are more like stages or, if one wants to keep the simile of the staircase, the landings on a stairway. Between each of those seven stages – landings – there are many smaller steps. These are the ones that we try to mount day by day.

So going back to what I was just saying, most of us by now do realize – not only from the Knowledge given in this House, but from our own experience – that we do act in a purely mechanical way most of the time, but that, all the time, there is within us a place from which

our actions could be directed according to the wishes of what we sometimes call our better Selves or our true Selves.

If we see this in ourselves it should help us to recognise it in others. If a man reacts angrily, shall we say, to some event in a manner which irritates us, and even perhaps makes us hate him, then our knowledge and experience should help us to *realize* that if the same thing had happened to us, we would have reacted in the same way. If our response is then based on that realization, the effect on the man and on the situation is obviously totally different than it would have been had we responded mechanically to our irritation or hatred. This recognition of ourselves in another's action is by no means uncommon; it is the sort of thing Robbie Burns was after when he wrote: 'Give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us.'

Another more objective side of the same thing can be recognised in such phrases as: 'She has a lot of her mother in her.' By this we mean that in certain circumstances the daughter would react, shall we say, obstinately as would her mother have acted. I am not looking at my wife as I say that! But, as we learn and experience these sort of things, we come to realize more clearly that we all have something – however small it may be – of each other in us. The practical result of a *realization* like that is to make us more tolerant, and we become able to restrain – at least the expression – of our irritation or hatred.

Another step quickly follows for, if, as it were we contain and are contained in each other, then that man's anger is *my* anger; that daughter's obstinacy is *my* obstinacy; and in that event I cannot be irritated or hate.

Most of us grasp this, I think, intellectually; but it is when we experience it in our hearts (for from now on we shall be talking about experiencing things emotionally) that there comes the realization of our essential unity which turns irritation or even hatred, into love. That all-embracing love, seeking nothing, seems selfless; the ego-self has left us when we are in that state. Without the weight of ego a sense of expansion grows so that it begins to seem that all that happens takes place within us. It almost appears, for instance, that we are both the lover and his mate sitting on the park bench, that we are both the frightened child and his angry mother.

We can begin to understand how the Indian saint could see God in the cobra snake. This, in turn, points to the final stage which is that of union with the Creator when beyond time or movement all is One – single without a second – no diversity. Even a taste of that experience would help us, at least partly to realize our true Self as being One with God. If this were fully experienced intellectually and emotionally then we would come to realize fully that ourSelf is in truth God. That would be full Self-realization. Then, freed from the strife which necessarily accompanies diversity, we would be at home; we would be secure and as the Christians pray, 'We would *evermore* dwell in Him and He in us.' That is the kind of definition I would give to this question of what is Self-realization all about!

We have got an appropriate quotation which Alan Caiger-Smith will read in a moment from the Shankaracharya; but I don't know if anybody would like to say anything now?

A. then turned to Mr. Caiger-Smith and asked him to read from the Shankaracharya. But A.C-S. asked A. if there could be a pause for a moment or two in case questions were turning. He then said:

A.C-S. I have been following this and I think it is very nice and for your own answer to the

question of what does Realization mean to me now? – I think it is absolutely valid. But at the same time, other people if they put the same question to themselves at a certain hour or day, might express it differently. You may express it differently next time – probably will. I think it takes a little digesting. I would just like to pause a moment before going on the reading.

A. Has anybody got anything they would like to say?

Mr. Lucas. I thought it was a wonderful description of what the Meditation can do, because I, for one, would not have been able to understand that without the experience of Meditation.

A. I entirely agree Colin, and I am sure we all agree. Certainly this realization can come following Meditation, or during Meditation, when the Mantra quietens down. It is then that one experiences. That is what the Mantra does – it leads one to experience – or the possibility of it.

Mr. Torikien. One is reminded of the story of the laughing Buddha, who when he was asked, ‘What is the meaning of Zen?’ – he dropped his bundle on the ground, but when he was asked, ‘What is the realization of Zen?’ – he picked up his bundle and went on his way. This story gives one a feeling of the consequences of Meditation.

A. Yes, that does give the idea. The Meditation is putting down the bundle and getting rid of all burdens, giving up. Then, after Meditation one has the strength to shoulder the bundle happily again.

Q. (a woman) What is the connection between Self-realization and that other expression, Self-remembering?

A. Well, the way towards Realization is through remembering. The phrase Self-remembering is not, in fact, used by the Shankaracharya but Self-realization is. In the process of Self-remembering one remembers this true Self within and then when that remembrance and the experience come together one can realize.

Miss Scrutton. In fact, didn’t the Shankaracharya use that expression in the story of the man who was crossing the river and they had to count how many of them there were when they got to the other side of the river? They were always counting one short because they forgot themselves.

A. It is difficult to say, whether the Shankaracharya actually uses the phrase Self-remembering because we are, of course, entirely dependent for the choice of words and phrases on an interpreter.

The interpreter may have used the phrase Self-remembering because Mr. Jaiswal has certainly has a grounding in our System. However, I would prefer to keep that phrase for Mr. Ouspensky’s teaching.

From the room. It was, in fact, Mr Ouspensky’s expression.

A. Yes.

Q. Is Self-remembering imposing some kind of burden on the ego, as it were, adding or

putting something upon it? Whereas Self-realizing is just straight experience and could not be a burden?

A. We mustn't allow ourselves to follow this hare. Self-remembering is a technique of remembering your true Self, so that when you are on the verge of reacting mechanically you remember that you are a mechanical person; and that you have a true Self.

Self-remembering is not concerned with ego. It is, in fact, remembering that there is a true Self beyond ego. I think we might read now.

A.C-S. This is from 1965. The Shankaracharya was asked this question:

Q. I know and understand that the Atman is the Universal Self and this affects my life. I do not fully *experience* this in Meditation, though I often seem on the brink. What stops me there?

S. In everyone's life one does experience unity with the Atman but one does not know. During deep sleep the Self merges with the Universal Self. This happens in ignorance but is a natural phenomenon.

If during active life or Meditation one does not feel this merging, it is because of a sheath. This sheath is natural too.

The Unity which is experienced is the Light thrown by the Atman on this sheath and recognised by the Antahkarana. If the sheath is transparent and pure, then all is well; but if it is cloudy or dirty one only gets a glimmer. This is the brink of direct experience.

If the water in the Ganges were Universal Atman, then water taken from the Ganges and put into a bottle would be the individual Self, although the water is the same. Once you open or break the bottle letting the water flow back into the Ganges, you would no longer see any difference, and you would not be able to take that water back for it will have merged with the Ganges again and for ever. The only thing that was made different was the sheath, so Antahkarana separates the individual Atman from the Universal Atman.

Q. What purpose is the bottle?

S. The Creator created the Universe in all its different aspect and forms. He observes the Drama which he has created. All who take part in this play and know its mystery and essence are detached. They play their part and enjoy it. Those who do not know its mystery become identified with their parts and are bound by them. When they lose their identification they, too, can enjoy playing their part in the grand Drama without being bound.

A.C-S. Then he tells a story which is very familiar to everybody so we won't read that now, and the conversation continues with another question:

Q. Going back to the Ganges, when a man becomes fully Realized is his bottle emptied back into the river?

S. When ignorance is gone, one can see through forms to Reality. Similarly, when considering the relation with the Atman to the Universal Atman, body is the illusion and should not be allowed to separate the real Unity which exists.

A.C-S. Later the conversation returned to the idea of the Drama:

Q. May I return to the great Drama of the Creator? Are there any roles which are

particularly difficult to play, and if they are played with detachment do the actors get a special reward?

S. This play is a pleasant play; there are no difficult parts. Difficulties are when actors take the play to be real through ignorance. Then, even ordinary acts become big and terrifying and cause fright and pain.

If the act is pleasurable, then these ignorant actors become infatuated by the pleasure.

(Record, 19 October 1965)

A. We will meditate for ten minutes now.

MEDITATION

A. afterwards:

It is very refreshing, isn't it, to meditate together after a longish break?

Has anybody got anything they would like to say?

Q. (a woman) We were given in the holiday programme the story of the elephant and the blind men, and carrying the message that all Truth is One. Would you tell us how we can ensure that in trying to follow this Truth in our own lives we are not deluding ourselves about our inner experience?

A.C-S. (to Q.) Have I repeated you right?

Q. To check our own experience?

A.C-S. How can we check our own experience in keeping the Truth pure?

A. The point of the story of the elephant was that one must go by one's own experience, but one must not then say that everyone else who has experienced something different is wrong. The Shankaracharya ended the story by saying:

The same thing holds in the case of Param-Atman. We must each go by our own experience, but stop calling other people wrong.

From the point of view of our own experience, we can only judge its Truth by the touchstone of our own true Self. We know whether something is right or not provided that the sheath, which we have just read about, is pure. If the sheath isn't pure then the Truth will be obscured.

The clearer or purer the sheath, the truer will be our experiences.

We, alone, can judge. It is no good coming to me and saying. 'Is this a true experience?' It is a true experience if it is true to you.

(to A.C-S.) You were going to add something to that?

A.C-S. Yes; one possible thing worth adding is something that was told me by a person here about things I understood, and he said to me. 'Don't try to write those sort of things down,' because at that time I always tried to write everything down in case I would lose it, you see. If what you have felt and seen is true, you will come back to it in another form, some other way, some other time. And I think this is perhaps one of the ways of distinguishing between the things where you either see for yourself if you can; and where you are not going to see.

For if it is a true thing, you will come back to it in another language and in another form through some other experience. It is the same thing.

- A. Yes; that is very helpful.
Are there any other points?

(Pause; but no questions were asked)

- A. continued:

The series of questions which we have read were ones that I put to the Shankaracharya and his answers, as you have heard, were marvellous. But they were not quite what I was after so I raised them again slightly differently:

- A.C-S. reads:

Q. The Shankaracharya no doubt appreciates that I am really after the answer to a question so often asked in the West, which is. 'Why does God allow poverty and suffering and cruelty?'

S. After all, what is misery? Give someone one suit of clothing or a hundred; will they be satisfied? Will they not hanker for different or better ones?

Happiness or misery are not caused by lack of food or clothing; they are both products of the mind. As long as one allows oneself to be identified, one can be miserable without food or with plenty of food. Who really knows that the poor or the unsheltered are living in misery?

Equally, who knows that the rich are happy? As often as not, they lack the zest to enjoy the things they buy, or can't digest their food, or health to enjoy natural surroundings. One should not judge the position of the Atman by poverty or sickness. One should always look to the cause – what brings misery? It may be covered in silk or it may be naked.

Nor should one conclude that death is the ultimate answer for the relief of misery. Release from misery comes from true Knowledge which takes no account of riches or poverty, sickness or health. Discrimination is the key. Through it one can see one's own desires for things one lacks; and one can also see that those who have the things one covets are not happy. Neither happiness nor misery dwell in things, but in one's own decision made through discrimination; that the acquisition of worldly things will bring neither.

Following that decision, detachment comes, releasing from misery and bringing happiness.

(*ibid*)

- A. Well, I am sure that strikes home to most of us, doesn't it?

Q. (a woman) It is the discrimination that cleanses or purifies the sheath that we were speaking about?

- A. Yes, exactly.

I remember just after the War when I was working in the City I used to come by the Underground train from Liverpool Street through Moorgate. At that time they were rebuilding the bomb damage all round Moorgate. The carriage would be full at Liverpool Street of city 'gents' in bowler hats and rolled up umbrellas with tight lips and grim looks. Then at Moorgate a whole bunch of very muddy dirty working labourers from the building

sites would come aboard. They laughed and chuckled away as happy as could be; they were going probably to some still damaged and uncomfortable flat at the end of their journey; whereas the city gents were probably going somewhere comfortable and nice. But there was no doubt as to who was happy and who was not.

When I was the member of Parliament for Paddington the constituency ran from Hyde Park to Notting Hill Gate, and we used to attend some parties in the Hyde Park area where there was really no happiness.

But what my wife and I really enjoyed were the tea parties with old ladies in Hornead Road in the poor area around Paddington station. There, there was real happiness. They were all on social security, but they were happy. (laughter)

At the same time one saw that in the shabbier areas of Bayswater some people who tried to maintain standards. This was fine and one admired them. But there were others who were just trying to keep up appearances. That was very different for you could see that they were loading on themselves the burden of their ego. Often it was such a heavy burden that it crushed the sparkle out of life. Pretence is a very great obstacle to what we are after.

Are there any other things anybody would like to raise?

Q. Is it true that any good fortune or ill fortune that happens in your life is actually earned?

A. I wouldn't know, but we do know the law of Cause and Effect. We are creating causes all the time and they have their effects. However I don't know whether we can say we have earned our good fortune in being able to come to Colet House. As long as we recognise it as good fortune and don't forget it then we may put it to good use.

Q. (a woman) One sometimes gets a beautiful feeling of being free from this ego, but do you suppose that this ever stays with people all the time?

A. Yes, I think it definitely stays with the Shankaracharya all the time. But he is fully Realized; and as I said earlier, if one were fully Realized one would evermore dwell in Him and He in us.

But as it is, every now and again we get to the fringe of that feeling of complete Unity.

I remember a question Mrs. Koren put to me – she had said that sometimes she felt that she was right inside the Shankaracharya during Meditation and sometimes afterwards. And I told her that I had had the same feeling, and I asked H.H. about it. He said that that was right, and that we should get this feeling of being in each other. But it won't last until we are fully Realized. However, we mustn't be depressed on that account. I would like to read you a couple of quotations which we might go away with in our minds.

Dr. Roles asked the Shankaracharya about a question which had come to him in London, and he said:

It is often asked whether the Mantra remains with us in the next life?

Supposing we don't escape from the wheel of life in this life and have to return, is the Mantra still there?

S. This is a defeatist attitude. There is no rule that people will have Realization in the next life or after that. But why consider that? Why not this life? This is the great opportunity. Seize it. Try to Realize yourSelf now. Don't look beyond. It is unnecessary.

Questions like this mean that you just want to sample without the full experience. There is no need to postpone. There is no law that people can't have Realization in this life, so don't think about the next.

(ibid)

- A. concluded: I asked the Shankaracharya about the feeling of expansion which I have already mentioned this evening. He said:

It is not only a feeling or a thought; it is a fact. The macrocosm and the microcosm are both created of the same elements. What is in the universe is in us too. Let the mind go; release tension. This is fundamental. Unless you do expand you remain limited.

One should remember that one is bigger than one thinks. If one does remember that, one embraces everything, one can draw strength and power from everything. Fear nothing, for nothing is bigger than you.

(Record, 18 August 1964)

- A. I always find those words very comforting. If one could remember them life would be much happier and we would move towards Self-realization.

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