

11 October 1977

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Lord Allan began as follows:-

There will be a Work-in on Sunday, 23rd October, that is next Sunday week here and we start at 10 o'clock and go on until about tea time. Usually a special job is selected so it can be done. Will people who would like to take advantage of that put their names on a list which is downstairs in the hall.

Dr. Roles. We would like you to join more in this. It is often better to work together than to talk – much more profitable.

A. Some people will have seen the copies of our Journal – *The Bridge* – No. 2, which is now on sale. Unfortunately, it has been found that some copies are imperfect in that they have blank pages. Would anybody on finding that they have bought such a copy exchange it for another one, but it is very important that we have the imperfect copy back so that we can get replacements from the printers. Copies will be available at the back of this room at the end of the meeting.

Dr. R. You will find that we have been more daring in this second issue. We were very careful and tentative in the first issue; and I think this does give a good read for all types of people coming to us. And you will see that, in spite of the variety – articles, poems, stories – there is a unifying thread running through the whole thing. I have been rereading all those again and again; I find it fascinating. The only thing I can't read is my own article!

We wanted some real life accounts, so asked a High Court Judge (Sir Kenneth Jupp) to write about how a judge works, and here also is Alan Caiger-Smith describing the work of a potter – all variations on the one theme – doing one's own particular job with love and attention. So, what we would like would be for the next couple of weeks or so at our groups, that people bring up at the groups anything that interests them particularly in all this, related of course to our Work, as we want to see which line to pursue in future.

Leading up to it, there is also a verbatim report of last Monday's big Meeting, copies of which are now available; one will be in the Library, and the others sent round to different countries.

Also, for group-takers, there is Reading 2 for this term; but I particularly want you to hold that in reserve until about three weeks from now, because it should follow on your questions and discussions. Is that agreeable?

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Dr. Roles then went on:

Now, we are engaged at present in re-assessing Mr. Ouspensky's Teaching and the Shankaracharya's Teaching in the light of a lot of new evidence, much of it scientific about the human structure, but also current evidence about human life and death.

But this meeting is all about Meditation; so we will try and ask any question which will help us to re-assess: Why is Meditation natural? – a natural need of all human beings, just as is eating and drinking, and dying and being born?

You can get a lot of profit from Meditation even by taking it only as supplying you with energy for everyday life. You are bound to get a lot of good things even if you just take it on that level.

The trouble is that it lacks emotional drive; your desire to do it properly still gets crowded out. Also, one does not take it very far on that level. So, I want to read again to you something bigger – what the Meditation is for; it is something that the Shankaracharya said to the head of the School of Meditation, because our true Self, the Atman, manifests itself only in the stillness, and this has implications far greater than just everyday life – making money and that sort of thing.

A. reads:

S. Stillness at the physical level provides enough energy to be employed in eight or nine hours of activity for any individual. This is how the human race keeps going without much trouble. At least people with common sense appreciate this and provide themselves with physical rest and keep in good health and normal activity through this stillness.

The stillness of the subtle level by cessation of conflicting desires brings another dimension to the idea of stillness. In this dimension of stillness efficiency arises, and this works through all activities – ordinary physical work or artistic work. Thus, stillness at this level between fulfilment of one desire and the initiation of another, will be rewarded with efficiency.

Dr. R. Well, we don't nowadays get much of that stillness unless we do something about it. By efficiency he means something pretty big: appropriate actions in any situation, with maximum result and the minimum of effort. That would be 'stillness on the subtle level'. But then there is something more than that:

A. continues the reading:

This is the third or Causal level of stillness, which is profound stillness or total immobility. This is in the real stillness of the Absolute. Since this Causal realm cannot be described, one learns about it from its effects. One can see it in the activities and dispositions of such men who provide themselves with Spiritual stillness.

Dr. R. And the result of that in action is seen in such men who do everything from the profound stillness of the Causal level.

A. continues the reading:

The physical movements of such people are only geared to natural rhythms, and the result is simplicity, economy of movement. They never rush into any situation; are never agitated, and perform all actions in an efficient, sublime and refined way. Whatever they do will emerge from stillness, be held in stillness, and again submerge in the same stillness which they experience in this great, total immobility.

(Record, 9 November 1973)

Dr. R. Now there is an additional reason why the Meditation has become very much more important than we first thought. This is because there is evidence that everybody – quite ordinary people – in the process of dying come face to face with their Divine Self – the Atman; and they waste this opportunity unless they prepare for it a long time ahead. When

we give the Initiation, every time we give it we say to the person: 'Follow the rhythm of the Mantra; it will take you through all the layers of thought, of memories, of dreams, and everything, to a very *still* place where nothing is going on at all; and in that stillness you will meet up with your Divine Self, who is always there, but we never listen. But once that relationship is re-established, then life is altogether different in a hundred different ways – indescribable, unpredictable.'

So, let us meditate for a little – dropping off everything that interferes with stillness. Then I want to give you a little bit of the recent evidence that brings more emotion to bear on our attempts.

MEDITATION

Dr. Roles afterwards:

Well, I believe even in that short time we were getting quite a degree of stillness – one could feel it. Perhaps we can do some more before we part.

Now I want to bring this added dimension into our relation with Meditation. It is about human life and death.

There has always been a deep down certainty in a human being about continued existence in some form or another. But there is no language to describe it between ordinary people, and so it goes by default; and the active hemisphere, which deals with ordinary language – words and concepts, numbers, denies all such possibility because there is no factual evidence to hand that seems to convince it.

Nevertheless, the quiet hemisphere goes on believing in this. It has its own language of harmonies and rhythms, and patterns; and there is always the difficulty of uniting the two, and the disharmonies derived from that conflict.

During the last few years of Mr. Ouspensky's life, those who sat with him were trained in non-verbal communication. We had to read his thoughts, and he read our thoughts, and he said very, very little. The same is true of our audiences with the Shankaracharya because quite apart from the question and answer out loud, a lot of communication is going on inside; hence our very close association with him thanks to our past training. If this kind of communication develops between us as a result of Meditation, the Dervish turning and so on, a lot of evidence does present itself to make us believe this fact of continued existence.

Direct evidence might be expected either to come in early childhood or at the end of life in the process of dying. For Mr. Ouspensky it was early childhood. We had two meetings about all this in this house before he left for America; and then in New York I was at a meeting where he said:

The study of (here I use the words 'continued existence' instead of 'eternal recurrence' because he says that existence would be different for everybody). The study of continued existence begins with the study of children's minds, particularly before they begin to speak. (Dr. R. That is before the dominant hemisphere gets going.) If children could remember this time, they would discover very interesting things and remember a great deal.

But, unfortunately, when they begin to speak, they become ordinary children and forget after about a year. It is very seldom that people remember what they thought before that at a very early age.

If they could do so, they would remember themselves such as they were when grown up. They were not children at all. Only later did they become children. If they could remember their early mentality it would be the same mentality as grown-up people have.

But who of us can remember how he looked at things before the age of two?

(*A Further Record*, 21 March 1938)

Dr. R. But he used to describe how he and his younger sister looked at things at that age and knew what was going to happen. It became a great game which they kept up later (when he was about 5 and she was 3). Then he would say:

‘Should we tell grandmother?’ And little sister would say:

‘What is the use of telling grandmother? She would not understand.’ (Laughter)

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Dr. R. went on:

Then there is the other end of life: Owing to recent advances in technology, very many more people are now resuscitated even when they have passed through the stages of clinical death with heart arrest and stoppage of breathing and pronounced dead by the people around them and their doctors – they can often be resuscitated by modern methods.

There is a doctor, Raymond Moody, who has written a best-selling book in the United States called *Life after Life*, whose interest in this was aroused when he was studying for his Ph.D. at a university. Then when he became a medical doctor and began to lecture he would refer to this subject in his lectures, and every time somebody would come up to him afterwards and recite some experience of theirs. It would be about one in thirty people – the same proportion that Maslow described as ‘Self-realizing people’.

Now to Dr. Moody’s great surprise, all these stories – of which he has collected 150 – in the main said the same thing. They differed in detail; no one person described everything; but there was a remarkable similarity of certain things. So he gives a sort of composite picture.

Here it is in shortened form:

(with Dr. R. reading):

A man is dying, and as he reaches the point of the greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced ‘dead’ by the bystanders and his doctor. At the same time he feels himself moving through a long, dark tunnel. After this, he suddenly finds himself apart from his physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment. And he sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempts, from his unusual advantage point, though he remains in a state of emotional upheaval.

After (what seems to him) a while, (but is really very quick) he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his strange condition. He communicates with various beings, but he is unable to communicate with the people around him.

In particular, he meets with a loving, warm Spirit of a kind he has never encountered before – a Being of Light they call it – who appears before him. With this Being he communicates, but not in words. This Being asks him a question non-verbally – some question to make him evaluate his life and helps him along by

showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life, particularly stressing his relations with other people and whether he has been kind or unkind. But never from the point of view of threat or accusation.

At some point he finds himself approaching a sort of barrier or border – apparently representing the limits between earthly life and the ‘next life’.

All *these* people, of course, were resuscitated and at this point they come back to their body and are rather resistant because these experiences are so overwhelming – such lovely intense feelings of joy and love and peace that they don’t want to leave them and go back to bodily life.

Later he tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words adequate to describe these unearthly episodes. Then he finds that others laugh at him or regard him as mad, and so he stops telling other people. Therefore, not one of these 150 people realise that they were not the only ones in the world to experience this. Hence, all this goes by default – all this evidence.

He goes into the various items in these descriptions; but what interests us at the moment (and I should not pay too much attention to the blurb or to the commentary) is this ‘Being of Light’ which he describes in these words:

What is perhaps the most incredible common element in the accounts I have studied, and is certainly the element which has the most profound effect on the individual, is the encounter with a very bright Light – typically, at this first appearance, the Light is distant and dim. But it rapidly gets brighter until, as death deepens, it reaches an unearthly brilliance. Yet even though this Light is of this indescribable brilliance, many make the specific point that it does not in any way dazzle them, or keep them from seeing things around them, perhaps because at this point they don’t have physical eyes to be dazzled.

Despite the Light’s intense brilliance, not one person has expressed any doubt whatever that it was a Being – a Being of Light, and a strangely personal Being. The love and warmth which emanates from this Being to the dying person is utterly beyond words and he feels completely surrounded by it and taken up in it. He is completely at ease and accepted in the presence of this Being. He senses an irresistible magnetic attachment to this Light.

(Raymond Moody, *Life after Life*. Mockingbird Books, 1975)

Dr. R. continues:

Though the description of this Light is invariable, yet the identification of what this Being is varies from one person to another: Christians may feel it is Christ; to a Jew, it is an angel; even to some Christians it is the Messenger and not our Lord Himself. The identification varies from person to person; but it is always a description of warmth and a light.

This is how the Shankaracharya describes the Atman; the Atman for the individual, and the Param-Atman, who is your own Self that lives in the hearts of all.

Well, you read this; it is very convincing if you read the actual first-hand experiences. In Reading 2 I have put some more that we have come across ourselves, because one has been interested in one’s own experiences of this sort for a long time and compared notes with other people.

It is noteworthy, though, that we may come very near death at an operation or a car accident, or something, but if the idea of death doesn't occur to us we probably don't get any of these experiences. A doctor in Canada, a meditator, with whom I exchange letters – an old friend – had a fortnight of constant cardiac arrest, and the medical staff had to take it in turns to sit with him for four days and nights and keep him alive; but he never thought for a moment that he was going to die, so he did not get any of these experiences. As he has now read this book he feels rather disappointed! (Laughter)

So, don't feel disappointed, but believe that there is a treat in store, and nothing to be afraid of. Because these records come from quite ordinary people who know nothing at all.

The only question is: What we, as meditators, can do between now and the unexpected time – the unpredictable time – when we make this final journey – so that we learn to stop everything coming in the way between us and this Light.

Any questions about all this? Is anybody brave enough to say anything?

Mr. Torikien. (a blind man who comes with a guide dog) Is it not possible to experience this sort of thing before one reaches a final experience like death?

Dr. R. That is the whole idea – Yes; and I think we probably all have had smaller degrees of it; but we have forgotten or find no way to describe it. Don't you think that you have from time to time experienced something like that?

Mr. Torikien. I feel that I actually had this experience while you were reading this text.

Dr. R. Well, that is why I read it; I hoped quite a lot of people would.

He (Mr. Torikien) has certain advantages over us. I don't know if your dog is getting anything? (small growl from his Alsatian guide dog!)

Q. (a woman) Is it possible that one might experience something like this for a moment before one goes to sleep?

Dr. R. Yes, something like that; but with me it is the first moment one wakes up before the other hemisphere gets going.

The way to go on experiencing it, is *not to think* – not to think and talk about it. It is precious. You must not let this dominant hemisphere get hold of it and create a barrier.

So, if we could only lead our lives by remembering the Param-Atman and doing what we have to do with full Attention – with the appropriate attention – we would have many more of these experiences. It is all these layers of thought and analysis and conversation which prevent us.

Q. (a woman) Do you feel that dreams are a part of this process?

Dr. R. Dreams belong to the intermediate level. The physical level is one thing. The dying person leaves his physical body behind; that is finished with. He has passed from it; he is free of it; but between him and the Light – the Causal and the Divine level – comes the subtle level of dreams, psychology, thoughts and all the rest of it. It is this subtle level that we have to purify and change. We must not trust the dreams; we must get beyond them to the silence. You know that in Meditation?

Q. (also a woman) In the peace of the Causal level which you read about, this relationship must be present all the time?

Dr. R. Yes, it *is* present all the time, just remember that. Now we should read here of the conversation with H.H. describing results from experiences of the Causal level.

About the people who provide themselves with this Spiritual rest on the Causal level, there are three prominent features – one we have mentioned – their movements. Then:

A. reads:

S. They show love and affection towards everything they encounter. All activities will be initiated with love and then held and nourished with love till they come to their fulfilment. All relationships with individuals, all activities – direct or indirect – will be lighted and guided only by love and affection.

Secondly, their ideas, intentions or motives will be pure and simple. Purity and simplicity widen the horizon, and they think and work for the whole of humanity, and only through the Laws of the Absolute. The divisions of groups, races or nations disappear, and only natural laws are employed. Their thoughts naturally encompass the whole of the human family and its intrinsic goodness.

Dr. R. That is the sort of feeling one gets as one comes into the Shankaracharya's room and in all that one sees with him.

It is also the feeling one had at times with Mr. Ouspensky. He got them rather too infrequently for his own satisfaction; but in the last week of his life, he passed that threshold and had it almost continuously, seeming to us quite transformed.

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So it's Now. However young we are, and however much we have the feeling 'it won't happen to me; it couldn't happen to me' we ought to begin to remember the Param-Atman all the time.

This Being of Light only wants recognition, appreciation, love, and an attempt for the individual to be like Him. It is on every page of the Gospels, of course, where this union is described sometimes as a *wedding*. It can't be taken just physically; it refers also to the union of the individual with the Father in Heaven at death. The message of course is:

Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.

(Matthew 5: 48)

That is the same as the message of the Shankaracharya and of all those who have had this stillness on the Causal level.

It is not far away; it is right within our reach. It is only because we don't believe it; do we?

We have been so trained and brought up, taught, that we are a simple being and cut off from God since Adam and Eve were in the Garden. We just don't believe any of this.

Mr. Melidis. I do recognise this because I had exactly the same experience when I was a child of about seven.

Dr. R. Yes, and if we could only get the stillness we would remember many more such experiences from our childhood than we remember now. In fact, several parents have

written in to me that they have overheard their children at about that age talking together in a way that takes continued existence obviously for granted by them; only they have to keep it dark from the grown-ups.

Mr. Melidis. I didn't tell anybody until I was about fifty!

Dr. R. Very good! Very wise... (laughter drowned his remark)

Then Dr. Roles said:

Well, life is really much better than it looks on the surface, so let us cheer up and keep good company, be in the company as far as possible of Self-realizing people, and try to get into the way of dedicating your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions – even the smallest action – to this impersonal Param-Atman, the Divine agency, which is yourSelf.

It is now about quarter past eight. Are there any last questions? Remember, that in our System there is an aphorism:

Prepare to die tomorrow, but look after your body as if it had to live a hundred years.

So if you were just going to die the next minute, what question would you ask?

Q. You mentioned just now this friend of yours in Canada who was a medical man who suffered these cardiac arrests, but had not experienced anything.

Dr. R. No, I said that he hadn't experienced the glories of the Being of Light, but he did experience something.

Q. (same) Does this mean that only those who are on the Way have these experiences?

Dr. R. No, no, no; all these one hundred and fifty people were quite ordinary people not on the Way at all anywhere! (laughter)

The question is, whether big nobs like us who are on the Way, whether more will be required of us than just that. But we are assured by the Shankaracharya that it is going to be all right! But this small book is giving descriptions of quite ordinary men and women of different ages and types of life.

Dr. R. reads further extract from *Life after Life*:

While I was serving in Vietnam (a young man said) I received wounds and I later 'died' from them. Yet through it all I knew exactly what was going on. I was hit with six rounds of machine-gun fire and, as it happened, I wasn't upset at all. In my mind I actually felt relieved when I was pronounced dead. I felt completely at ease, and it wasn't frightening at all.

At the moment of impact my life began to become a picture in front of me, and it seemed that I could go back to the time when I was still a baby and the pictures seemed to progress through my whole life. I could remember everything; everything was so vivid. It was so clear in front of me; it shot right by me from the earliest things right up to the present, and it all happened in such a short time.

It was not anything bad at all. I went through it with no regrets – no derogative feelings about myself at all. The best way I can compare it is a series of pictures like slides. It was like someone clicking off slides in front of me.

Dr. R. Mr. Ouspensky discussed this subject at two meetings in this house before he went to America and again at some meetings in New York:

Q. What is it that becomes immortal?

Mr. O. Only memory can be trained to realize our immortality. We are immortal already. Body is born again, Essence is born again; personality is created again. So it is not a question of immortality, but the cultivation of Memory – long-term Memory.

We may live ten thousand times without any advantage if we do not remember; (and to remember means to remember yourSelf – this Being of Light).

Well, I have already used far too many words. It should be entirely a message of hope and confidence.

Mrs. Fleming. Could we have another few minutes of Meditation before we go?

Dr. R. What does everybody feel? How about the physical body and its supper?

All right; it is twenty past eight.

MEDITATION

Dr. R. afterwards:

Then at our next meeting, the 8th November, we will have more to communicate to each other.

Don't forget that I would ask you not to use Reading 2 at once but keep it up your sleeve until you have had time to assimilate this new dimension.

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