

21 November 1977

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

After describing the scene at an Audience, playback of the Chanting, and ten minutes' Meditation:

Dr. R. When we hear another verse, almost whispered, we open our eyes to see him sitting on the throne very still, as if he would go on sitting indefinitely until the question was put by interpreter Jaiswal, who is here, isn't he?

A. Oh, yes.

Dr. R. We have ready prepared some written questions to start the conversation going, and we would watch the Shankaracharya's expression which would become more and more animated if the conversation was proceeding as he wanted, and very soon there would be a twinkle in his eye and the atmosphere would become very light and very intimate.

(to Lord Allan) So we start this audience with your question at one meeting:

A. In the Producer's directions for the drama of life, how much scope is left for individual improvisation?

Dr. R. I very much want Mr. MacOwan and any actors or playwrights we have here to pay particular attention and help us, because it is very important that we should overcome our reluctance and become willing to look at life as a drama. This is the only way in which one can do one's job to the best of one's ability with enjoyment, and not make claims about it – like 'we are doing it'. It all has reference to the Producer. Listen to the answer:

S. Every actor is created as an independent individual to do whatever he likes, to act in the way he wants. There is no bondage or compulsion of any sort, because all individuals are given basically all the power and authority and Glory of the Absolute to use in whatever act they are designed to perform.

What the Absolute has reserved for Himself as the Producer of the play, is the right to reward the actor, to offer him extra remuneration; to praise the actor or to reprimand him, and even dismiss or punish him if he has not acted properly.

So, although freedom is there for the individual either for improvisation or for deprivation, nevertheless the result is not in the hands of the actor. That follows from the Producer – in this case, the Absolute.

(Record, 31 October 1977)

Dr. R. Jaiswal somehow remembers what are often quite long answers, and puts it all into an English synopsis; so it is seldom necessary to check on the tape recorder, though it is all being taken on tape.

Now as regards that first part of the answer, is there anything you want to ask? In what sense is life like a play? In what sense is the actor free? In what sense is that actor responsible to the Producer?

Any questions?

Mrs. Reed. I begin to see that there are many ways of doing one thing.

Dr. R. Now, we learnt this time very clearly that there are two chief sorts of play going on. There is the big mechanical drama of life as governed by the laws of nature as laid down by the Absolute at the Creation, where the individual has to take what comes to him. Although it is all under the law of Cause and Effect, and if one knew enough one would know that none of it is accidental, yet this mechanical drama is something which goes on always and about this we have very little say. That drama is on the physical level, and there is good and bad inevitably there – villains and heroes, and the crowd, and all the subsidiary parts and the name parts – all happening as it has to be.

But there is another kind of drama which is a Consciously-produced drama, and this is the drama that we, here, are trying to learn. Trying to learn (each of us) as actors what role we are capable of playing in relation to the Conscious task of helping ourselves and other people to realize the existence of the Param-Atman or Creator, and to do His work.

So, in that second kind of role, Mrs. Reed, there is no room for evil at all. Good and evil exist only in the mechanical drama where they are necessary on the physical level. But everything that comes from Consciousness must be good. There can be no evil, because there can be no evil in the Param-Atman. Is that clear?

So, as regards ourselves here, trying to learn our parts, everything must be good to the best of our ability.

One of the masters at my prep school impressed me very much when I used to go to him and say. 'Is that good enough, Sir?' He would reply: '*The best of everything is good enough for me.*' And this is true about this drama that we are trying to learn. Any questions?

Mr. Barker. How does one receive punishment and reward?

Dr. R. I don't quite understand that. We are inevitably getting punishments and rewards as we go along!

Mr. Barker added: From the Producer?

Dr. R. Well, we are getting punishments and rewards all the time according to the Producer's Law of Cause and Effect. If our actions have good results, the good results are the rewards – whether we make personal claims or not. Then of course we make mistakes all the time, and those mistakes are punished, according to the Law of Cause and Effect. Do something wrong; take the consequences.

Q. Do we perceive the consequences as the results of our actions?

Dr. R. No. This is what we have to learn to do. Ordinarily we think. 'What jolly bad luck. (laughter) I behaved perfectly well; why did these awful things happen to me.' It isn't luck; everything is Cause and Effect.

Miss Scrutton. Is it not possible that if you are given one lesson and you have learnt it, then you are given a harder lesson?

Dr. R. I think it is very likely.

Miss Scrutton. It is a question of learning to accept? (She added) Whatever the result may be?

Dr. R. Whatever happens to one, one tries to have the attitude that this is to learn from.

Miss Scrutton. The point I am trying to make is that some things may not be punishment; they may be a new task?

Dr. R. Ah, yes. In fact, you know, I think punishment plays rather less of a part than we usually imagine. The Param-Atman is very benign to anybody who is trying to do his best. So I don't think we need to fear punishment.

On this visit the Shankaracharya said that there are two ways by which one can be brought to Realization of the Absolute. One is by fear – a primitive terror of the greatness of the Absolute; 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom' – that is one way. But that is an inferior way, and the better way is to learn to love the Absolute, and to serve Him happily in every way one can. That is the way we try and follow.

Any comments, Mr. Interpreter? Join in whenever you feel like it.

We owe all this to Mr. Jaiswal, because when we followed the Shankaracharya to his Ashram after my first meeting with him in 1961, we were wondering how on earth we were going to understand, because of the language barrier; and suddenly Jaiswal turned up here having been born and brought up in that very city of Allahabad about a mile from the Ashram. So he could speak not only our language in the System, but he could speak, and has made a special study of Hindi and Sanskrit. So everything was made for us. We couldn't possibly have worked that out or foreseen it.

Prof. Guyatt. The two different sorts of drama you mentioned, must interact one upon the other?

Dr. R. Yes, Professor, they are interacting all the time. You yourself have a trying enough time as the head of the Royal College of Art; but your participation in our kind of drama helps you in difficult situations, doesn't it? (He agrees) And this is how it should be; we should play our particular role in life all the better, with the help of whatever we can pick up of the Conscious drama and its preparatory training.

Any other questions? These are very good questions. Do go on.

Q. (a woman) What is meant by the fact that we are not responsible for the results.

Dr. R. (to Lord Allan) Did we say that?

A. (amid laughter) Yes. Nevertheless the result is not in the hands of the actor.

Dr. R. Every actor is responsible for his own actions but the Play itself is not in the hands of the actor; it is the Producer's.

Perhaps His Holiness's illustration which comes next – how Jaiswal remembered it all, I can't think! – will answer that question of responsibility.

A. I then asked the next point:

A. When one realizes that one is oneSelf the producer, then would you say that there is no desire to improvise?

S. One can take the illustration of a factory. In a factory there are different levels of workers according to their capacities and talents. Some have little talent, are of the labouring class; and there are officers to look after the labourers.

Dr. R. Shop stewards! (Laughter)

S. continues. Then there are deputy managers, managers and ultimately the managing director or the owner – the man who owns the factory.

Each of these levels is given a certain amount of freedom in proportion to what they have to do. Some, particularly the labourers, are required to begin at a certain time, and they have to punch their card which proves the time of their arrival. This means, that compared with the officers or managers, they are not given the freedom or responsibility to be able to come at any time they like. But they will have to obey the schedules stated in their contract.

The higher officers can come at any time or sign in at their own pleasure, because they are taken to be responsible men; they have proved their responsibility, and they carry out their work accordingly.

The managing director or owner of the factory doesn't sign any register at all. He is not expected to follow any of the routine work of the factory because he embodies everything, and is responsible for everything that goes on in the factory. So, whatever this man does is, and must be in the interests of the factory. If he is needed to sign bills, or cheques for payment, or to deal with certain labour problems, or plan for the expansion of the factory, he is the one who will decide on all these things.

The same applies to our drama in the world: Some people have the role of labourers, and their scope for freedom is only within that field to which they have been assigned.

If someone can come (by reasoning) to the stage where he sees that he is both the actor and the producer, then he would also see that there is nothing to gain or to lose, and therefore there can be no regulations for such a man, because he will carry out the Will of the Absolute. There will be nothing for him to report or to gain, and nothing for which he could be reprimanded. He is the boss; he is the Absolute.

Dr. R. Does that make it clearer? We all start as labourers; but our object is to try and come up to the stage where we are the boss. Free for all.

Q. (a woman) How do you learn to love the Param-Atman or the Absolute? (She then added) Without mood-making.

Dr. R. One has to attribute certain things that happen to the right source. If we regard everything as luck – good luck – then it all seems chaotic and we never learn better. But if we try to realise where we would have been if we weren't being trained by the Producer, then we will see that the Atman within is like the Good Samaritan who gets us out of trouble all the time. If we once learn to attribute the benefits we receive (quite unreservedly) to the right Source – the Divine Self within – we cannot help loving that Self. It's a wrong attribution which stops us from loving. We can't turn on love artificially.

Q. Isn't the only punishment the forgetting of that? And isn't the only reward, the remembering of that?

Dr. R. Well, I think that is a good way to look at it. Yes, a very good way. The worst thing that can happen to one is to cut the thread of Understanding with this Producer so that one is left to one's own devices. That is what one would most dread. And the rewards are infinite.

Q. Before one is allowed to go on to the stage, one has to have been to a school of drama or a school of acting. Can you say anything about that?

Dr. R. Well, Michael MacOwan over to you!! Here is the recent head of LAMDA, which trains would-be actors and actresses. He has had many years of training people; he is also a producer; and has now taken up acting again for the BBC. Michael, it is true, isn't it? LAMDA students are carefully picked?

Mr. MacOwan. Oh, yes, carefully short-listed for interview out of many applications on paper with their recommendations. Then they are interviewed and some are given auditions.

The school is not an absolute necessity. It may be a help, but it can be done without a school.

Dr. R. Nevertheless, you have some distinguished pupils whom we meet up with now on television and elsewhere who have been greatly benefitted by you or your nearest rival the RADA? (Agrees)

Any comments you feel like making – chiefly on the line I mentioned: 'Why is it good to regard life as part of a drama?' Or, what is there in the training of the actor which could be profitable spiritually? For one thing, he is not allowed, is he, to play the fool with his ego; he has to learn to play the role assigned to him? Mr. MacOwan agreed, but said he would like to think about those questions.

Q. (a woman) Isn't the true realization of one's role in life determined by one's Consciousness?

Dr. R. Well, yes; if you know what either of those words mean. It is like trying to relate two unknowns.

But what really practically it is, is to be true to oneSelf. To be natural in your dealings with people; to be consistent. Mr. Ouspensky used to say that the result of this Work was shown by reliability; that we try to keep our promises. The Shankaracharya describes it as consistency: that we try to say what we believe, what we feel; and we try to do what we say. That makes for success whether in ordinary life, or here in this other kind of drama.

Q. (a woman) Is a period of purification or preparation required? – before one comes under the Will of the Absolute?

Dr. R. It is all that. There is no question of going to a monastery and being segregated for purification.

In the Fourth Way everything you do is for preparation and purification. It takes quite some time for most of us – it was for me a very long time before I was ready to apply to myself what I taught others. This is the great difficulty. One sees other people and orders them around but it took some time – didn't it, Jaiswal, before one began to look at oneself?

At a certain stage H.H. told me a story which quite upset me, about a Moslem teacher who was not a very good teacher. One day he was having his elevenses at a wayside cafe and the woman looking after it kept wiping the table with a dirty cloth which left marks.

When the teacher complained, she said. 'I am just showing you yourself because you are a man full of impurity, yet you teach others; why not clean yourself?' And she got a clean cloth and wiped the table clean with it.

(Record, 2 February 1971)

So this is the real problem in this Fourth Way which is very free. We aren't given

discipline as in a monastery, or anything like that. We all have to use every opportunity to apply the Teaching to ourselves.

Q. In the drama, do people find that they are typecast? It is difficult to learn a new role.

Dr. R. Yes; there speaks our psychiatrist – Dr. Beckett. It is absolutely true. Everybody is different. In each person, as you have been hearing, there is Essence and personality; and we are, in that sense, typecast. Not only do we inherit certain qualities good or bad; but we also have made our own limitations and our own possibilities in this life and in former lives. So, how would you go on from there, Dr. Beckett?

Dr. B. How does the actor learn a new role?

Dr. R. Chiefly from necessity. Perhaps he has to emigrate or gets called up. But it is not imperative in every case that a man has to learn a *new* role. He has to play his usual role – the role for which he is ‘typecast’ – more consciously; do it better, and better, and better, that is, more consciously. In certain cases new roles are required, and also as Shakespeare said in *As You Like It*: ‘One man in his life plays many parts’.

But it is very individual, isn’t it Dr. Beckett? Mr. Ouspensky used to be rather interesting about this and about great poets and painters – creative artists.

He used to say. ‘What use to make a great poet walk the streets again and again and do the same poems which are already perfect? He is given something else to do.’

Q. (a woman) Would you say that if you learn to act from Essence rather than ego, then you are playing a real role?

Dr. R. One cannot learn to act from Essence only. You see, all the learning is done from personality. In the course of that time something will sink through into the Essence, but the Essence has to learn through personality. And if the two are not allied, if the two hemispheres are not working in harmony together, the Essence remains at the age of six or seven; so it has to grow up. And really it is said that part of our Work is to help Essence to grow up, so that Essence can reveal what we really are. Personality is what we borrow from other people – the fashions we adopt, and it usually masks the Essence (the silent hemisphere) effectually. The Shankaracharya when I first heard him, said. ‘In Meditation we begin to be what we are.’ Meditation is for the Essence: personality doesn’t want to do it at all because then it would cease to dominate. It is what we really are that has to grow for one to play one’s true role in life, Dr. Beckett.

Lady Allan. At the Meditation meeting you quoted the answer which the Shankaracharya gave this time about not being able to tailor the physical body, but being able to tailor the subtle body. Is this the way to play one’s role better?

Dr. R. Oh, yes; because we really do think most of the time in terms of the physical body only; and we can’t do very much about the physical body, Dr. Beckett. It has a certain shape, even down to its finger prints. Each person is individual. By the time one is talking – about four or five, one’s physical body has already assumed a certain pattern.

But, we are in complete command of your department – our psychology. That is our property; we can learn to train that, and it is that which will connect us with the Causal level or the Light of the Absolute.

- Dr. R. then noticed Dr. Fenwick was present, so he said: Dr. Fenwick. Do you agree with that?
- Dr. Fenwick. Yes.
- Dr. R. Thank heaven! (laughter)
- Mr. Lucas. What interests me is what the Shankaracharya said about arriving at this point by reason. Could you say anything about this?
- Dr. R. Here we have to look to our interpreter. (to Mr. Jaiswal) The word for reason, is it like what we refer to as 'sweet reason'; and discriminating between what is appropriate and possibly within our power to do from what is just empty dreams and inappropriate to the occasion? Is that what the word reason means?
- Mr. Jaiswal. The usual definition for reason is: 'Whatever is useful to the Self', and anything unreasonable is what is not useful to the Self.
- Dr. R. And that part of man's endowment in Sanskrit which looks after this is Buddhi. It has to learn to distinguish what is useful to the Self and what is not useful.
- A. Do you think that this is anything to do with the Way of Knowledge as opposed to the Way of Devotion?
- Dr. R. I rather felt that he meant reason as essential for practical decision-making for whoever you were; whether you are emotional or intellectual or a man of action. I thought he was speaking in general terms then.
- The word Buddhi doesn't really mean highbrow, egghead intellect, does it?
- Mr. Jaiswal. *The word by itself means 'waking up to the situation'.*
- Dr. R. The Sanskrit root Budh – means waking up to a given situation – Yes. That is an excellent way to look at it; waking up to the given situation. It is what we all have to learn to do.
- Mr. Haisman. (A. to Dr. R. He is, as you know, an author)
- There is an important role in Drama which hasn't been mentioned, and that is that of the director. The producer chooses the play and casts it; but then the director has to direct the actors. Would you say that the director's job is to make the actor wake up to the situation?
- Dr. R. Well, is that what the director's job is? I ask you. I bow to your experience in that matter, for the terminology has changed a lot since I was around.
- (to Mr. MacOwan). You would agree, Michael?
- Mr. MacOwan. The term which we use now for director, meant, in fact, twenty years ago 'producer'. One does get very great confusion.
- Dr. R. (to Mr. Haisman) But still, let's be up to date – say, TV 1977? There is the author (like yourself). In the case of a novel like Anna Karenina – there must be a dramatiser, there are also scriptwriters, make-up experts and others until we come to director, and, last of all producer. Some might think the author was the most important!

Dr. Roles then continued:

Now what is more important than all this is: *What is our play all about?*

Why was this House and this Society created by Mr. Ouspensky, who was part of a chain of people who led to this happy situation we find ourselves in today. What is it all for? Because unless we know what drama we are supposed to be playing, we won't be very intelligent actors. And we won't respond to the author, director and the producer, who in our case may all be one Absolute.

I think what Madame Ouspensky used to be very fond of quoting – is very apposite here. The 'harvest' is referred to in all four of the Gospels, pointing out that 'the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few'. But, as usual, in the Gospel of St. John it is taken more emotionally and put more fully; and this is what she used to have read to us quite often before they went to America during the real war just after the Battle of Britain, leaving us in England:

A. reads:

Jesus saith unto them. My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work.

Say not ye: There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest.

Behold, I say unto you: Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white already to harvest.

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life Eternal. That both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

And herein is that saying true: One soweth and another reapeth.

I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour. Other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours.

(St John 4: 34–38)

Dr. R. then said:

And this is the position in which we are: to keep doing the good work that has already been done. The Shankaracharya's Tradition has lasted twenty-five centuries in its present shape (though it started back in prehistory), and it has been kept in pure form all that time, so that what the present Shankaracharya says is exactly the same as the original Shri Shankara.

Then the System came to the West – bits of the System, fragmentary, just before the Revolution in Moscow; and Mr. Ouspensky faithfully took and made more of the essential points of this System; and we are entering into all this labour.

He got this House for us, prepared it; made this Society; and we have the ball at our feet; and 'the harvest truly is plentiful'. *There are people all round who ought to know of the existence of the Param-Atman*, who ought to know about the Meditation, and be given it. They just don't know. That is what really I believe we are here for – to continue this Work.

Well, it's half-past seven. Shall we shut our eyes again for two minutes?

MEDITATION

On leaving. 'Remember one thing; we have to help ourselves before we try to help others.'

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