

27 February 1978

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

Lord Allan. Professor Guyatt rang up earlier to say that there was a bit of a crisis at the Royal College and so he could only come at the very last minute. So to make sure that we did have two people on the platform, we pressed my wife; and we feel we ought to apologise for being rather a family party! There are one or two announcements, aren't there?

Lady Allan. First of all it's dates: Meditation Meeting on 14th March; AGM 16th March – reminder that the first part is for full Members but Associates may come to the talk being given by Dame Edris Connell which begins about 8.30. Would Members of the Society collect their Notices today from the landing. It's well displayed; otherwise we are obliged to post them and it will save time and postage. Would you mark your name off on the list when taking one to show that you have taken a Notice. Otherwise it won't save the postage or the time! There will be a Meditation Meeting in April – on Tuesday 11th. The next large Monday meeting will be on April 24th. Lastly the House will be closed for the Easter holiday from Tuesday night, 21st March, and will re-open on Thursday morning, the 30th March.

A. Any questions?

E. Lawrence. May I ask if there is another small meeting before Easter?

M.A. This is the last large Meeting and then there will be one more small one for Group-takers.

A. Any other points?

All of us who knew Miss Murphy will be very sad to learn that she died over the weekend. Mrs. Simpson and others had been in with her and they felt that she got much comfort from their presence. She had been associated with this Work for a very long time. She knew Mr. Ouspensky. We owe the whole of the building up of the Library in this House to her great efforts. We know no details about the funeral service or anything, as yet.

Dr. Roles is still in hospital but he is getting on fine. It has been decided not to operate for the hernia for the time being, but to carry out certain treatment. It's very nice that Mrs. Roles feels able to be with us tonight. I think the ban on telephone calls and letters still stands. He said to Dr. Connell just before he went to his Thursday meeting, here in Colet House, 'Tell your people that if they are quiet, they can all be in communication with me.' I think that's the way to help him; he sent a message to this Meeting: 'To all of you good wishes and success. I am slowly proving for myself the truth about things that I have only been told about before. For instance, that it is most possible to keep the door of the Chitta open – in fact it is always open in the direction of the Absolute but one keeps blocking up the entrance, carelessly shutting the door. Just quietness keeps it open. Love to you all.'

A. So shall we be quiet for a while; I didn't necessarily mean meditate, I mean just be quiet.

QUIET

A. Incidentally it has always struck me that the test of a true friend is one with whom you can sit in absolute silence.

We had a bit of a discussion at the meeting I went to – Mr. Koren’s – about why we had meetings at all. Not only small ones, but big ones. I was wondering if anyone here had any ideas as to why they come here or go to small meetings. If we knew something about this, we might be able to conduct the meetings and prepare the material in a slightly different way. Anybody got any ideas?

Mr. Hodge. For me, these meetings give me direction; they tell me whether I am on the right path or not.

A. And you just sense that from the presence of a lot of people, who are going the same way as you, and what is said from the platform?

Mr. Hodge. Yes, particularly what is said from the platform.

A. The questions of other people too?

Mr. H. Yes, my questions – other people’s questions too. And sometimes something in the reading which reminds me of something very old which I should be putting into practice now, but I’m not. An example of that is ‘looking outwards’ which Dr. Roles spoke about earlier this term.

A. Good – those are all very good reasons. Anybody else got anything they want to say?

Q. (a woman) I find that it’s a great relief that here I haven’t got time to be caught up in my whirling thoughts.

A. Awfully important too, when we’re here to learn to listen. Even here, so often, things slip by and one has missed them.

Q. (same) I think too it is the thirst for spiritual water as Christ told the woman that’s the water she needed.

A. And you feel you are getting the water?

Q. (same) Here? Oh yes!

Mr. Anderson. I find the atmosphere is absolutely essential to learning the knowledge we are given here. In any other way it wouldn’t go in to the same depth; one wouldn’t receive it or perceive it.

A. Do you think it’s volume, Bill? In other words, do you think that more of us create atmosphere or is it possible at a small meeting too?

Mr. Anderson. No it isn’t volume; I get this atmosphere almost more at the small meetings, but of course there are some great meetings here which are very charged, but it’s mostly at the small meetings.

A. That’s interesting. Any other points?

Q. (a woman) (repeat) This is the only organisation where I find there is this working together. We all have to go to work and are involved with other groups and communities in our lives

and there is friction and slander, but not here – that is not allowed. This discipline actually creates love where it is least expected. When I first came to the Work, it was finding other people looking in the same direction as I was. Yes, and I expected automatically to find that they were all like me and to my astonishment I found that they were all very, very different – all individuals – and I had to get over the problems of getting along with all these different people just the same as in ordinary life.

A. Yes, again, very interesting. You mentioned discipline in the terms of not expressing what we used to call negative emotion. But the marvellous thing, I think, about this Society is that this discipline is not imposed – it is a self-discipline. And somehow or other, Dr. Roles has built up in us this feeling that we have to exercise self-discipline so that we do not *express* the kind of things that you were mentioning.

Q. (same) Yes. And you find that where you had an instinctive dislike for somebody, as you do in ordinary life, because of this discipline here, it is transformed into love.

A. That's marvellous. I don't think there is anything to add except that if we are working together, in an organisation such as this and in a way such as this, we do begin to see the reality of individuals underneath their different facades.

Mrs. Roles. Wouldn't you say that it gives us the opportunity to carry it one step further to help us get on with people we don't find particularly easy?

M.A. (repeat) And Mrs. Roles is pointing out that this is a discipline or practice which we can then try and carry out into our ordinary life and practise this same attitude to people whom we may not like very much and not create a duality between what we do here and what we do in the rest of our lives.

A. Thank you very much. Anybody else want to say anything on that?

Q. (Man) I'd like to say that we come away from a very busy turning world where very little new goes into the heart. In the community very little new enters into the heart because of the turning bustle, but I feel what we do here enters into the heart of the community.

A. A new finer energy. But again, we can do as Mrs. Roles says, we can take it with us when we leave here.

Q. (same) I don't have the opportunity to come very often. This question that you ask is one that I often ask myself (Mr. Saggs?). It seems to me that these meetings are confirmation that we belong to a living tradition. It's a very live thing compared to say, just reading a paper. The atmosphere, the vibrations that one can take in here can be remembered. It's all I have to a certain extent. And in the silence one is aware of the connection which is made with this House as I remember what I experience at these meetings.

A. Yes, thank you very much. That's true and it refers back to what I was saying last week that Mr. Resuhi once said to my wife that we have a flame burning in this House and we must make sure that it never goes out.

[That was very interesting. On the material this week which those of you who are meeting takers will have, may I say a couple of things. Except for the first paragraph which is my own,

the rest of the paper down to the end of the second paragraph on p.3. is all quotations from the Shankaracharya. I think you might say when you are reading the first page, 'let us examine these one by one using quotations from the Shankaracharya.' And then the paragraph which begins 'when we meet' is of course my own writing. One other very small thing – there is mention of the tamarisk tree; it should be tamarind. I can't blame that on the typist because it certainly was my fault. I wrote tamarisk. Never having seen a tamarind tree but having seen these great big tamarisk leaves I thought that was what it referred to. Has anyone seen a tamarind tree?

Man. They're just the same really.[†]

Mr. Hodge. A tamarind tree is a very big tree.

Man. It's only a climatic difference.

M.A. repeating: Well it means a very big tamarind tree!

A. So you could let it stand then? I hope this will last two weeks – it's six pages so it jolly well ought to. (laughter)]

To stimulate interest, I thought you might like to ask people not to give examples from their own experience but to try and find quotations from the scriptures as here defined which is practically any work that treats this subject seriously. I had about thirty-nine letters and I was extremely grateful to everybody who wrote. I've only been able to use extracts from eighteen letters but the others are in reserve, should they be needed. I'm very grateful for the response. Leaving the paper aside, what I was really trying to show in it was that one of the other things that is available at meetings is the presence of our Teacher. You just heard what Dr. Roles said to Dr. Connell, so we can feel his presence in the same way as we can feel the Shankaracharya's presence. I have given various quotations on the Grace of the Teacher and the Teacher's presence which you will be able to hear at the meetings. The main one is 'my blessings *and* I will always be with you.' I am quite sure that is meant quite literally – that he is always with us, provided we see him or hear him. Another quotation is fairly long after I asked a question: 'Is one guided towards a Teacher or is it luck?' He goes on to describe the connection of a teacher and the establishment of that connection which doesn't depend on what he calls 'contact in flesh and blood', but mental contact. At the end of a fairly long answer I said to him: Can we assure our friends in London that they are also connected with this relationship?' And he said, quite simply, but very firmly, 'Yes, they can be assured.' This is an extra element in meeting together. You remember what Christ said: 'When two or three are gathered together, I will be amongst you.' We can feel equal confidence that we can have the presence of the Shankaracharya or Dr. Roles with us. The Shankaracharya says that what he means by the Scriptures are, 'the Bible, the Koran, the Hindu scriptures and all books which speak on these subjects.' So we can define the Scriptures fairly widely. My wife was thinking we could also include some poetry. I think we know when poets are inspired. Then their poems do speak the same truths as the more orthodox Scriptures.

Then there is this good company as the third reason for a meeting – the presence of our Teacher, the reading and then the good company. I have given here, under the heading of

[†]Tamarind (*tamarindus indica*) and tamarisk (*tamarix aphylla*) are different species.

Good Companions eighteen extracts from those people who sent in personal observations about sleep and the possibility of waking from it. I hope this will be useful. Anybody got anything they would like to say? Shall we meditate now for a few minutes.

MEDITATION

A. I've heard it said by some that they don't like meditating for ten minutes only, on occasions like this. They feel it's neither one thing nor the other. All I can say is that when we meditate with the Shankaracharya, we very, very seldom meditate for more than ten minutes. Does anybody share that view?

Mr. Geoffroy. Yes. Two minutes can seem like half-an-hour.

A. You don't need more than ten – it's all right? Do most people feel that?

Now, being unaccustomed to doing all the talking, I will ask my wife to read something. The last extract that we sent out in Reading 5 – the end of it related to stillness. It said: 'In complete peace or stillness there is no 'I''. And then was told a story that most of us have heard before but it's always refreshing to hear these stories again.

M.A. (reading)

Prajapati is the teacher of all the gods. His son Kach was sent to the Ashram for study. He was taught the Vedas and the Shastras and also the Upanishads and the essence of all his knowledge was that he should give up everything to be at peace.

When he came home, he didn't start any work. So his father asked him as to why he was sitting there lazily. And he said, 'I have realised from reading the Vedas, the Shastras and the Upanishads that to be at peace one must give up everything, so I have decided to give up all work in order to remain happy.' The father said to him that he was still enjoying being at home and the services of the servants.

So Kach left the house and went to the forest to live alone with nature. But when he found that he was not at peace, he asked his father for advice. The father said again perhaps there was something else which he could give up. The son gave up the tree under which he lived and he also threw away his garments and moved around the banks of the Ganges.

Even then, he was not in complete peace. So he thought that his body should also be given up; and he collected wood and lit a fire and was about to jump into it. His father came out from the hiding place and asked him to answer a few questions, before giving up his body. The father said that according to nature and your being, you will have another body when you have left this one by burning. This means you will only exchange one for another and this cycle will go on through eternity. Should you then give up this body? The son was now completely at a loss and asked his father for guidance. Then his father said to him, 'To give up all, you have only to give up the feeling of giving up. This, your Ahankar, who is trying to give up everything else, is still with you. Once you give up Ahankar, then there is nothing of yours to give up.'

And then Dr. Roles said: 'It seems to take a long, long time. Some people perhaps are more egoistic than others,' which made H.H. laugh. Then you (A.) asked:

‘What is it that gives up?’ ‘What is it that surrenders?’

And H.H. answered: ‘That which is never absent from anywhere.’

And you (A.) asked again: ‘And part of that substance is in me?’

S. Yes, a part of that substance is within you; and also you are within it. It is like the water of the Ganges and Ganges water in a bottle. Break the bottle and there is no individual trace of that water when mixed in the Ganges. As long as we associate the Self with the body sense, Manas, Buddhi, desire or the feeling of ‘I’ which is Ahankar, we are separated and bottled up. Cut out Ahankar and there is no separation.

(Record, 4 November 1967)

A. Does anybody want to say anything about that? No.

Naomi Stern. I once met a nun who had really given up the small self. She lived entirely and one hundred per cent for Christ.

A. We have been told that in our tradition or the tradition with which we are associated, that we can offer up everything to God. All our work can be made an offering to God and we have been told that we should keep Param-Atman in mind all the time. Anything else?

Eleanor Reed. Is that what is called ‘decision’ – the second step on the Ladder?

A. What does anybody else think about that? I don’t think it’s quite the same. It must be part of the decision. We can decide to offer all our work, everything we do to God.

Mrs. Gil. It sounds more as if a decision is a decision to try.

A. I think so, it’s connected with effort. It can be an effort and we can make the decision to offer all our work to God.

Pen Scrutton. I’ve thought about the quotation in the paper last week a lot and it seems to me that it’s very difficult in activity and the only thing you can do during activity is to be as passive as possible and let everything happen. Is that right?

A. Yes. But there is the question of the observer too. And there is the question of the honoured guest – you do things not for yourself but for God in the presence of an honoured guest and that’s fine. You won’t then fuss. So you will do things more passively.

M.A. What you said to me in conversation during the week, when we were trying to find a description of the idea of Sattva during action because the Shankaracharya had said you could act with more Sattva and you could have Sattvic sleep – Sattvic Tamas; and you mentioned serenity and calmness and this helped me a lot. It resolved the conflict because one knows perfectly well that one can be very busy but serenely busy.

P.S. This acceptance seemed to bring a little of that serenity.

A. Yes.

Man. Giving up this sense of ‘I’ – does one forego one’s sense of existence?

A. I don’t know. It seems to me that when you get into complete stillness there is a merging and certainly I feel that one loses one’s identity. I feel that in the end when one is completely

liberated, one will exist in something that is a bigger whole. But I'm only talking theory. This idea of surrender is very relevant to the period of Eastertide in which we now are. It celebrates one of the great examples of surrender and re-birth. When Christ says 'Take up your cross and follow me,' he is in fact inviting us to give up our ego completely. I once asked the Shankaracharya about this and he said although of course everything that Christ said and did was true, he felt that Christians attached too much importance to suffering, which seemed to him to carry an undue weight throughout the Christian teaching. He felt that Christians had lost the feeling of joy in surrender – a feeling of joy, which he says, frees one from sorrow and unites one with the Power and Glory of the Absolute. It must be said of course that in that part of the Gospel drama which is called the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane the pain and the difficulty of suffering is recognised. However, perhaps, through the very mystery of Christ's life, death and resurrection and through divine inspiration of the great masters of the Holy Vedic Tradition with which we are now associated – perhaps because of those things, the crosses of those of us who try to follow the Supreme Way have been made so light that we can carry them with joy. Perhaps we might think this Easter with gratitude for all that has gone before and welcome Easter with real joy.

Nice to think, too, that after Easter, we might have Dr. Roles with us.

Thank you very much.

M.A. And send our Easter Greetings to him too.

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