

12 December 1978

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Dr. Roles. Oxford didn't win, so my wife and I... (laughter) are all right! You will find in the library two copies of *Letters from Russia* by P. D. Ouspensky which he smuggled out of Russia during 1919 and sent to *The New Age* in England. They are very exciting to read (Mr. Torikian's guide dog here made his contribution to the Meeting!) I'm sorry about the mention of Russia! (laughter) I'm mentioning it now because the publishers have put in the blurb on the back cover a lot of names of books and other remarks which Mr. Ouspensky would not have approved of. In fact, he asked us especially not to read any of those books that are advertised. Some of them are his own books – pirated editions. So if you *do* read *Letters from Russia*, please keep to that promise.

Lord Allan. There is one notice: The next Meditation Meeting will be on 9th January, the second Tuesday in the month.

We are going to have maintenance parties in the House which give people a chance to be in this House together and they will be on January 11th, 18th and 25th at 7.30 p.m. Those are all Thursdays and there is no need to put your name down; just come if you want good company.

We'd like to ask your opinion for something that we might do next term – next year starting perhaps in February. Could we have a show of hands from those people who would find it helpful to meet in private homes to meditate together say once a month? (hands up) Not many, really. If you would like to do that would you send your name and address to the office, we'll try and arrange something for you.

Dr. R. If you send your name and locality to the office, something will probably be arranged. It won't be laid on for everybody.

A. It would also be quite interesting to know of anybody who is now meeting with other people to meditate... just a few. Thank you very much.

Dr. R. We want to approach this Meditation slightly differently in the New Year. Talking with people, one realises that a lot of benefits of the Meditation are so quiet and gentle and gradual that people pass them by. They don't realise that they are getting benefits and they are apt to say: 'Well, I've meditated for years and nothing has happened.'

Some people of course get dramatic effects in the first minute. According to the Shankaracharya, they may not last as well as the ones who go slowly and gradually. What determines this different reaction is as much as anything whether the individual feels a real need for something like Meditation at the time when it is given. It's more or less chance when we get it. If it happens to come at a moment of real need, you get very dramatic effects... like one of the people whom Lord Allan has just initiated who says her husband's attitude to her has changed completely in the first ten days! All sorts of things like that determined by the felt need and it may be latent for years and then suddenly some real need, some disaster, may happen – a real need may arise – and then suddenly the Meditation will work.

In order to bring home to people the subtle effects they may be getting, the Shankaracharya, when we first met him, gave us a list of ten common benefits in answer to the question we asked him in 1961 at the Maharishi's Ashram: 'How can one tell whether the Meditation is really being successful or not, both for oneself and other people?' I don't know whether you have similar doubts in your minds as to whether it is being or would be helpful? I've looked out what we took down in shorthand in 1961 – 17 years ago – when he gave us this list. It was given very lightheartedly – there was a lot of laughter – and it mustn't be taken too seriously. We'll give it to you in his own words as translated by the Maharishi:

A. The question was raised: 'How can one tell whether the Meditation is really being successful or not, both for oneself and other people?'

S. There are two parts to this answer: One is that, during the half-hour, one knows what has in the past been successful. One has had a taste of something one wants to get to, so one judges during the half-hour of one's success by one's own experience. But the main thing to go by is not during the half-hour, but a gradual change proceeding day by day, week by week, month by month.

And the Shankaracharya gave us the following ten signs of good meditation:

Firstly, good physical health. If one's health is getting better, then one must be doing something right.

Secondly, this sense of renunciation of useless, unnecessary things. Useless things seem to one useless, so one isn't interested.

The third thing is a proper sense of proportion in life. For instance, things are done out of need only and not just out of excess energy.

The fourth thing, the five senses of perception, and the five senses of action gain strength. That is, the meditation leads to using and strengthening all our faculties of experience; we are experiencing more vividly. 'If they are not getting strong,' he said, 'how can they keep to themselves?' Because all our faculties of experience tend to get mixed up, one experience blurs another experience; but as they become more vivid and stronger, then each experience is an experience in itself.

The fifth thing is that the mind tends not so easily to become excited. Curiously enough this leads to forgiveness of other people. If other people don't excite you one way or the other, then you have this feeling of forgiveness, kindness and compassion, which increase naturally into universal love.

Sixth, the sense of 'this is mine' and 'that is yours' tends to disappear; this feeling of separateness between 'I' and 'you' tends to disappear. The feeling of possession, 'this is mine', goes naturally, and with that a lot of freedom from envy, and so on.

Seven, freedom from greed. First of all 'you become less greedy, and then you become not greedy at all!'

Eight is that you lose the feeling of fear; fearlessness increases. And with that:

Nine, self-consciousness increases. You know that if you are reaching – coming to the centre of your Being twice a day – you know that that is all you have to do, that you can then be confident, and lastly:

Ten, gloominess becomes less; general gloom disappears. The mind becomes sparkling and less tired because most of our gloominess comes from a tired mind; everything seems much more difficult when our mind is tired.

These are the symptoms of right meditation, and these are the very qualities that are most difficult to obtain otherwise. They come naturally as when you eat; hunger is naturally satisfied. You don't have to go into the question of eating; you simply eat, and the result is that your hunger is satisfied. And these other ten results come about just like that.

Dr. R. Did anything come into your minds about any of those while they were being read? A lot has happened in 17 years and we might put them differently ourselves nowadays. Anything you want to bring up?

Mrs. Cardew. I was quite surprised the other day when somebody forgot something which was very important to me and I found it was all right. I was most astonished with myself that I didn't react as usual: 'Why didn't you tell me?!'

Dr. R. Yes. Things don't seem to matter quite so much. I remember Mrs. Buscombe saying, fairly soon after she was initiated, that the gardener had come and cut down her favourite tree in front of the house and ordinarily she would have... what was it she would have done, John? (laughter) But she spoke about it to me in a very detached sort of way. (laughter) That's about other people.

The other thing which has been coming up since that time is that when we look at ourselves, there are things we like and things we don't like. And we get into a lather very often about the things we don't like. We think that one is virtuous and the other is vicious. The Shankaracharya begs us to stop that very fallacious choice about characteristics which in ourselves and other people we admire whereas others we dislike. Because these likes and dislikes create conflict and unhappiness. One should take everything about oneself as part of the Divine nature, the Param-Atman, the way things are, Creation. We shouldn't praise one side of our nature and condemn another. Now how does that appeal to you? (It should make oneself much easier to live with! from Elizabeth Guyatt) Don't you think, Cox, that a lot of mental illness comes to introspective people from getting into their heads that something about themselves is wrong?

Dr. C. This is very common and very unfortunate. On the whole it's quite a nice scene, some quite good scenery, and quite good players – quite exciting sometimes, quite challenging!

Dr. R. And this is the great obstacle to Self-realization – realization of one's possibilities – because any negative thought whether about oneself or about other people or things is an obstacle, is a cloud that comes between oneself, one's ego, and the Atman. He doesn't like any of that. Any other things that people would like to mention? Things that seem to be getting in the way of meditation, making their half-hour disturbed when it needn't be?

A. I mentioned to you this evening that I had seen somebody earlier and when I asked how his meditation was going, he said: 'No very dramatic results, but I now realise I couldn't do without it.'

Dr. R. That's another thing – we often don't realise what we would have been like without it. Mr. Ouspensky used to say when we spoke rather depressingly about ourselves to him, 'Just imagine how you would have been without the System.' It's even more obvious when connected with Meditation and especially in this sceptical age.

Now we are thinking of a reform in the New Year which people who want to help with the Meditation – checking and so on – can take part in. We might even have different forms to fill in concentrating on these various assets. Are you less harassed than you used to be? Are you more gloomy or less gloomy? Something like that; rather than a list of difficulties because think of difficulties and at once all kinds of difficulties appear in your mind. Think of your assets and you get on to a much more auspicious wicket. I've again made them all dumb – what do you do about that? (laughter) I'd like people to join in! It's much more fun!

Mrs. Mayer. (repeat) On that list you gave, I do recognise one or two assets, but a large number of them, although very desirable, I do not recognise and I do still get in a lather about them; what attitude should I take?

Dr. R. Which, for instance, would you mention – one of them?

Mrs. M. Getting upset about things.

Dr. R. You don't feel that it's an asset to get less upset?

Mrs. M. Oh yes! But I'm not doing it!

Mrs. Fleming. Can I speak up for Mrs. Mayer? I think she is imagining this. She has a lot of difficulties which she has managed marvellously! (laughter)

Dr. R. So do I. Also one must take into account that life may be more difficult now than it was when you first had the meditation.

Dr. Cox. (repeat) If you have a picture of the serenity of the people who have meditated throughout the ages, and if that comes to you – the serenity – your own troubles seem very small and parochial and can make you laugh.

Dr. R. Yes, and what's more you get a bit of a sense of direction from that because you trace out what has made you more serene just now. It's possible to find that and you encourage that.

Dr. C. It's the sense of joining something that has gone on for so long gives a serenity to it.

Dr. R. Yes. Dr. Beckett, is there anything that occurs to your mind about things that people suffer from unnecessarily since your experience of meditating?

Dr. B. (repeat) The two most malignant emotions which affect the human mind are guilt and jealousy and both these can be helped very much by meditation.

Dr. R. Yes; well now guilt. I've been feeling guilty ever since I was two. (laughter) Only just lately I've said to myself: 'If I do nothing and the Param-Atman does everything, why do I feel guilty?' (laughter) Put it on to him and it works like a charm! (laughter) He can't have it all one way! (laughter)

Well, we have appealed to the doctors now – I see a pathologist over there – has he got anything to say?

Dr. Hayes. Nothing to add.

Dr. R. What about other people?

Mr. A Kedros. (rpt) The difficulty is to keep doing it regularly. I feel the need and do it regularly and appreciate it very much; but then life gets easier and I don't feel the need so I don't do it (laughter) this is the paradox!

Dr. R. This is part of nature – the dance of the Gunas – not even that is your fault. It's part of nature, these ups and downs, and things don't last long. One has to have quite an armoury of weapons to turn to when one gives out.

Mr. Faires. (repeat) What is the antidote to the strong feeling that one has from time to time that one has the wrong Mantra?

Dr. R. The antidote is to think of the times when you've had the feeling that you have the right Mantra! There are times, Faires, when you have been rather pleased with it; or am I thinking wishfully?

Mr. F. No; that's true.

Dr. R. There are many different people calling themselves Mr. Faires: Some of them don't like meditation at all and they are up to all kinds of tricks. One of the tricks is to say that you've got the wrong Mantra. (laughter) I think it may need a private talk for this. But it has been surprising how, although we have *carte blanche* to give people any one of a whole armoury of Mantras, how very seldom it has been necessary.

A. One antidote might be to convince oneself that no other Mantra would do any better. (laughter) It might be the same feeling if one had another Mantra.

Dr. R. Indeed yes – there have been examples of that happening when people have changed Mantras. It's probably a question of getting to know a little bit of what's going on with Mr. Faires, privately sometime.

I want to concentrate this evening on the question: 'Who does all this picking on oneself?' It's very interesting. Who is it who keeps attacking one and nagging one and so on? The Shankaracharya answered this: he said that those who, like Sanyassins who have taken the vow of celibacy, for them their Buddhi is their wife. They protect and look after the Buddhi. If their Buddhi from the start has been a nice wife and has welcomed them home, cooked a good meal for them and been sweet to them, then Self-realization is very quick and easy. But if the Buddhi starts by being a nagging wife, is always pecking at you, then it's more difficult. So, it is when the Buddhi loses its function of being a faithful and good wife, who is your chief servant and does things for you, and does things out of love; and has become a tormentor, this is because you have laid far too much burden on your Buddhi. You keep making Buddhi tired. You keep thinking of the past with regret and the future with foreboding. Instead of lifting all that burden off the Buddhi so that Buddhi is free and fresh to attend to the needs of the moment.

This way of looking at things has the advantage of not saying 'I'. There is only one thing which is 'I' and that is the Atman which is divine and perfect. All the others are qualities, faculties, servants if you like. Don't say 'I' to all those. Look at them dispassionately as if they were somebody else. In fact, you see reflections of other people in your own qualities and faculties.

I want in the second part of this meeting to read you something entertaining from the Shankaracharya about the mind – the Buddhi – if it follows the automatic mind – the automaton; whereas it should be separated from the Manas, the automaton, and be quiet and still in order to perform its function and decide on a course of action. So let us now meditate and then we'll read an account of this meeting.

MEDITATION

Dr. R. I feel that a lot of you have dropped a burden just in that five minutes. This is the gist of the method of the long tradition of the Shankaracharya that you do away with duality. There is only one Reality in the universe and that is the 'I', the 'Self' of the whole universe. Each of us is an atom of this 'Self' of the same nature. So when some uncomfortable thought, some bad thought comes into your mind, you can use it as having been given to you by this Real Being, the Param-Atman, as a test. The Param-Atman wants our Love only – not interested in anything else. It's our Love that is needed for the union. 'He who loves Me,' said Shri Krishna, 'and only Me with unfaltering devotion.' If you falter, if a bad thought or a fear or something comes into your mind, that is *not* unfaltering devotion. So anything that comes into one's mind or one's heart is a test. You can quite quickly acquire the art of taking it as a test and rising above it.

Now let's just read what was one of many Sunday evening talks which the Shankaracharya gave to his people in the Ashram. Anybody could come in from the forequarter around and it just happened that one of us was there and our translator gave us this version.

A. (reading)

There are endless suppositions about the world and about Param-Atman. These relate to the practical life as well as to the spiritual life. The Shankaracharya has accepted both. All these diversities of thought are only recognised in the verses of the Vedas. They recognise the infinite, formless Param-Atman, as well as the finite, personified Param-Atman. Hence, the Vedas are a complete repository of all ideas, accommodating all shades of opinion and leaving out nothing. The undisciplined mind is greedy and grabs anything within reach with no discrimination.

Dr. R. It will take up all these ideas from writings, from the Gospels, everywhere; just grabs it and then drops it.

A. (reading)

It can only contain to its capacity, and discards or forgets what it held before in order to snatch some new thing.

A monkey sat on the roof of a railway carriage and when a passenger put his head out of the window, the monkey quietly descended and pinched his cap and climbed back on to the roof.

The bystanders advised the passenger to give the monkey something to eat in order to get his cap back. When he passed up a banana, the monkey held the banana in one hand, but hung on to the cap with the other.

When offered a second banana, the monkey took it, but dropped the cap on to the railway line where it was irretrievably lost.

Dr. R. The monkey is the mind – the undisciplined mind – of every one of us.

A. (reading)

We are all temperamentally greedy like the monkey. There are innumerable temptations in the world that attract our greed. The force of these attractions is irresistible and we continue to fall victims to them all the time. These forces are: desires, sex, anger, attachment, greed, vanity, jealousy, which keep on beguiling us and we find it difficult to escape.

Dr. R. It's attachment or identification with these forces that do the harm. The forces themselves could be quite innocuous and very valuable.

A. (reading)

The only way out is renunciation. It looks difficult but it comes with practice. Just practise transferring your love of these attractions to Param-Atman.

(Record, 17 April 1972)

Dr. R. A very repaying practice, this. Worth all the other things, disciplines and rituals and everything that mankind can devise. Do you get the idea? Train the mind to regard everything as part of one single Param-Atman, dropping all duality whenever you think about it.

Mrs. Guyatt. Is it possible to love the Param-Atman if the Atman is not there?

Dr. R. The Atman is always there, so it's perfectly possible to love the Param-Atman at any moment. There is a natural affinity between the Atman who is always there and Param-Atman – the Self of the Universe. It's the most intimate of any relationship between two identities in the universe. It is always there whether we know it or not. The thing is to know it! And encourage it.

In this scientific age the scientists all think that being specially trained they are immune from these monkeyish characteristics of the mind. But on the contrary, they are among the worst offenders. A wave of interest comes like a tide through science and everybody goes after it and they forget what they discovered two or three years before. We've had a succession of these waves since 1967 where a chance discovery led to the great advance that there is in everybody an alerting system – a system alerting to consciousness – which can be encouraged and expanded. At the present moment, there is another wave which has only come to the surface, as far as I know, in one particular school and that is at Harvard University which shows the real meaning and significance of the bilateral symmetry of the human body, mind, brain; the whole of the human organism and, indeed, of many animal forms in life is based on a bilateral symmetry.

Here is what we will put in the Library – a way by which one man has used this idea to show that there is only one Param-Atman in our terminology; and that the fact of the process of knowing that you belong to this is Self-realization. It comes from the sudden union of the two halves of our nature. That is Yoga; and when these two halves come together, that is Self-realization. There is nothing else, because that will lead to greater and greater possibilities as it comes more often and more and more intensely. Very likely this wave will pass, and some people will get the real meaning of this bilateral symmetry, and the majority won't; and they will pass on to some other craze.

So, the final answer is that more and more people realise the undisciplined mind as the source of all our troubles; it introduces the duality between the individual and the totality – between the tree and the forest – between the drop of water and the lake – between the atom and the whole cosmos. It is always this undisciplined mind which interferes and puts up a smoke screen. So that is, I'm sure you'll find if you practise it, in support of the Shankaracharya's recommendation to try and substitute the thought of one single Param-Atman for any personal thought whenever you see it – notice it. The Meditation is a marvellous short cut because it is incompatible with personal thoughts – you just don't get anywhere at all, so you drop all the personal thoughts in meditation and you gradually come to the stillness; and sometimes that stillness becomes a fullness – a different dimension.

Mrs. Fleming. Is one of the dangers that if you get a little taste of this fullness, one gets easily satisfied and forgets to go on so that it lasts longer?

Dr. R. No, I don't think it will be a danger, Mrs. Fleming, if one realises that this feeling of fullness doesn't last long – by its nature, it is volatile and disappears. You can't expect to have it for more than perhaps seconds or a few minutes. But the memory of it can last a lifetime. It is the effect of it which you hang on to but not the thought: 'I must keep it'. That's against nature.

There will be some changes in the New Year. We won't always go on in exactly the same way for ever and ever! And then a lot of other people will come up and flower. There is a marvellous lot to be discovered and just at hand. It's quarter past... Any last question from, for instance, your guide dog? (laughter)

Mr. Clayton. Has the mind always been out of control or how did it get like that?

Dr. R. That's a question the first shoemaker asked – who first made shoes? Who first made *sikkes*, Don? It's unanswerable, isn't it? The fact is that the mind is the resultant of the external forces and the inner nature and it is changing all the time. Civilisations rise and fall and at different high spots the mind has not been like that – the mind of the majority of people; then comes a low spot and then again up the mind rises, always going higher and higher in the long run (as knowledge grows).

Well, a very happy Christmas to you. I'm sorry to have struck what seems to have been too serious a note perhaps, but I hope you will enjoy your Christmas because it is just as legal to enjoy Christmas (laughter) as it is to sit in solemn silence in the dull dark dawn!

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