

9 October 1979

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

On the platform, Dr. Roles, Lady Allan and Michael Fleming (M.W.F.)

Lady Allan. The next Meditation Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 13th November. We would like to have names of any of your friends who are very much wanting the Meditation. Please give their name, address and telephone number to the office; and also to help you, there are notes for sponsors which you can collect from someone who will be on the landing after this Meeting.

There have been enquiries as to when there will be another number of *The Bridge*. We should very much like to produce another one but will only be able to do so when there are enough contributions. So this is to encourage anyone here to try their hand at writing something, preferably based on their own experience, or their own understanding, in the form of a short story, or a poem, or article, and then send it in to the editors. It needn't be long – as short as you like!

Dr. R. It has a fairly wide circulation, but only to people who have a link with us; and they are encouraged not to let it lie around, or spread it about. So it can be close to our subject of study, but we don't use any special language. It's rather good to make yourselves try to write, especially the professional writers, on such a subject – that's really why the Journal exists.

There are a number of people here from all parts of the world and therefore the conversation has to be pretty general. A lot of you aren't studying regularly and won't have heard what we actually do week by week. And yet there is plenty in a general way which could help the Meditation which always needs help; it always needs lifting up every now and then. So I've chosen as a theme for this afternoon, first of all to mention (for those who don't know) that our party of eight has just returned from India where they have had some very happy audiences with the Shankaracharya. I'd like Lady Allan to read one or two things he has said when she set the ball rolling. Somebody said to me, 'I can't think he often meets with a nicer collection of people.' I agree!

Lady A. I just thanked His Holiness for the invitation and I said that Dr. Roles had asked me to introduce Professor and Mrs. Guyatt and Dr. and Mrs. Fenwick and to help them. But I said that I thought that they felt the introduction was made a long time ago through these Meetings here; that this visit was to confirm this and to ensure that we tried to carry out His Holiness's and Dr. Roles's wishes in the future.

He replied that he welcomed all of us:

He welcomes everyone here and he much appreciates the enthusiasm that he finds for the search for the Self and the devotion to Param-Atman. And he hopes that whatever you want to enquire and whatever help you need, he will try to offer the necessary knowledge; and hopes that all *that* will be used for your own development and the Society which you have been destined to serve in your country; and that you will look after your people and try to help them so that they also can improve their being and knowledge.

Then at the very end Professor Guyatt gave a very splendid thank you which very much expressed what we all felt. He said that speaking for all of us, he would like to thank His Holiness most sincerely for the kindness with which he had received us.

Dr. R. They were given the red carpet treatment with chairs and special arrangements. (laughter)

Lady A. He was very kind when there was a blackout and all the fans and everything stopped – the temperature was 104! And he moved it all out of doors but under cover where there was a through breeze, and he said, ‘Now we are in the hands of nature!’ At the end Richard Guyatt thanked him very much for the kindness with which he had received us and for the inspiring answers that he had given to our questions adding, ‘These we will treasure; and I am longing for Dr. Roles to read them when we get back to London, as I know that his insight and knowledge will help us to understand them better. We are profoundly grateful for the generous amount of time His Holiness has given us and we are hoping against hope that some day, he will allow some of us to repeat this marvellous experience.’

And His Holiness replied:

He always prays that what has been exchanged during these discussions will be taken home and put into practice. Although there is a difference of time and place and physical body, that we respect, but nevertheless on the subtle level, he is always together with us, because the subtle world is very extensive and continuous. On that level he will always be with all of you and all other members of the School and the leader of the School.

Dr. R. So, it comes to this. He regards us as all one family of people. We are in a train which is going somewhere definite, and all we need to do is to *keep going*. Don't leave the train; don't give up the Meditation (even though it may not seem rewarding); don't give up doing what has worked for you in the past like remembering the Param-Atman. Just keeping going is all that we basically need. But some of us would like a bit more than that.

So today I'm leading off with the fact that this Tradition of the Meditation maintains... ‘that in the chain of life after life, a man's next life, or a woman's next life, is determined by their *last dying wish*.’ Many of the stories apply to that very important moment, particularly those in the Tradition of the Meditation because that refers to the subtle level which goes on when the physical body dies. The stories can be taken either literally on the physical level, or they can be understood on the subtle level as well.

Now this last dying wish... It has obviously got to be your deepest and dearest wish which has been there a long time, if it is going to survive all the tedious business of dying and all the emergency what-nots that are going on at the time. And therefore we mustn't let it go by default, so many people don't know that they have this chance. They don't know what to wish for, and that, maybe, explains why a lot of people's lives are miserable. *Let's make sure that we gradually get more and more clear as to what we really want and will always want above everything else.* That's one reason why on these forms that you fill in for Initiation, the question is asked, ‘*Why do you want this Meditation?*’ It is being stressed (isn't it Michael?) beforehand that you should give thought to that before you fill in the form, to try to mention an important wish. You wouldn't believe what things people write! We gave it to a lot of children about 10 years old and over and all the girls asked for ponies or large families!

(laughter) Every sort of temporary wish is asked for, but even that's better than an artificial wish, just asking what you think will be expected of you. Try to express a real wish and an important one.

I don't know if anybody would like to ask about this, before we go deeper into the matter? (pause)

Just think back to when you first came... you would have put your wish in one way; after a year or two you would have put it in quite another way, wouldn't you? You would get nearer the bone. This is right. It should go on, strengthening and simplifying itself and becoming more and more fundamental. But we have to begin now, however young we are. Any questions? Or remarks? (pause)

I'll ask Lady Allan to read two stories connected with this.

Lady A. The first was told us by His Holiness in 1974:

In the epic, *Ramayana*, there is a story that when King Rama, the incarnation of God, wanted to cross the river Sarayu near the capital of his kingdom, a boatman refused to take him.

Dr. R. Fancy refusing the King... refusing to take the King on your boat! Over his own river! So that boatman became pretty famous.

And much later a Saint was being taken across the same river when he remembered this old story and in an ecstatic mood, he said to his boatman, *'Ask anything today. I will give you whatever you want!'* The boatman answered mechanically, 'I just want enough cash for today's meal.'

Dr. R. This is typical of what happens at death. The Saint is the Divine Self, the Being of Light, who asks the dying man what he wants, and all the dying man can think of is his next meal! You just go on in the way you have been thinking all your life.

The Saint was amazed that when offered *anything*, he could only ask that; but realised that the poor man had no vision beyond his daily bread, so how could he ask for something he doesn't know.

Dr. R. Contrast this with the Indian story told in *A New Model of the Universe*:

A beggar who was born blind and lived a celibate life on other people's charity was long and incessantly assailing a particular deity with his prayers. At last the god responded but took care to bind him by an oath to ask for no more than a *single* blessing. It puzzled the beggar for a long time, but finally his professional ingenuity came to his aid and he replied as follows: 'Generous Lord, this single boon is all I ask. Namely, that I should live to see the grandchild of my grandchild playing in a seven-storey palace, being helped by a train of attendants to his meal of milk and rice out of a golden cup.' And he ended by hoping that he hadn't exceeded the single wish required (laughter). So the deity, seeing that he had been fairly done (laughter) granted him everything! Long life, marriage, posterity, restoration of sight and considerable wealth. (laughter)

Dr. R. Well, maybe somebody would be able to have such a request available in that dread moment! But we've got a better thing. To begin with, the *Mantra* is designed for this very purpose: that if it goes deeply into one (so that the first thought on waking up or the first

thought in an emergency is the Mantra repeating itself) it will do so at the time of death and will be the first sound with which one wakes into the next life. But also the principal thing this Tradition of the Meditation tells us – it's the non-dualism Tradition, Advaita – is that if you can do away with all dualism of 'myself and God', *eliminate 'oneself' completely* so that at the hour of death you have nothing between you and this Being of Light, only love and gratitude, that would ensure Heaven forever!

Every half-hour is in a way a preparation for that thing. One should make every half-hour stand on its own (not think of the troubles one had the last time, or some future success) as a preparation for being confronted, face to face, with one's Divine Self, with nothing in between. Should we do that now? Eliminate ourselves completely for ten minutes.

MEDITATION

Well, we try not to make you meditate too long. At the same time, good company like this helps so much. What was it he said about 'good company'? In good company like this, we are a great help to each other.

Lady A. He used the word 'Satsang' in relation to a long answer to a question, but one just asked at the end, that before this had been translated as 'good company' and did it mean the same in this answer as well?

And he replied:

Satsang is good company. But good company is of three types. The compound word 'Satsang' consists of 'Sat' meaning truth and 'Sangha' meaning company. It can be the company of the Truth of the Absolute or the Atman; or it can be the company of true literature, Scriptures; or it can be the company of true men – holy men; or your teacher or a nice group like you have.

Dr. R. Anyway we're a nice group. (laughter)

Lady A. (reading) 'This is the way Satsang is treated as good company.'

Dr. R. Well now, let's hear what you have to say. Or are you going to be like that boatman, thinking only of your next meal?

Mrs. Weaver. (from Scotland) Could you explain exactly what is meant by 'remembering yourSelf'? How one sets about it, in fact?

Dr. R. Mrs. Weaver, if you hadn't spoken, I was going to have asked you to, because that's a very real question of yours based on many genuine attempts. They don't use the term ('Self-remembering') in the Meditation Tradition at the beginning because it's too difficult to understand. You have to *discover yourSelf* first. The first stage is Self-discovery. And when you have eliminated everything that's not I, everything changeable, everything to which you can apply the word 'this' or 'that', only then will you know *who you really are*. And when I first heard from the Shankaracharya about the Meditation, he said, 'In Meditation we begin to be what we are.' Everything else drops off and we are just ourselves.

In his chapter on 'Eternal Recurrence', [*A New Model of the Universe*] Mr. Ouspensky quotes the remark by his favourite poet, Lermontov, on the Caucasus:

...I was exhilarated to feel myself so high above the world. It was a childish feeling, of course, but when we get away from artificial conditions and approach nearer to Nature we cannot help becoming children. All that we have acquired falls away from our being and *we become once more what we were, and what we shall one day assuredly be again.*

(From *A Hero of our Time*)

When you've done that part of it and have discovered who you are, there is no difficulty any more because the Atman is so marvellous that you will never forget Him for long. You can't.

Mrs. W. Somebody told me that in order to remember oneSelf, one had to concentrate a hundred percent on whatever it was that one was doing.

Dr. R. No, no; I shouldn't listen to everybody! (laughter) It's useful, as a preparation, to think of nothing else except what you are doing because you will then not have random thoughts. But this is not remembering oneSelf; it is only attending to what you are doing. If you are doing nothing and your attention is free and you are silent inside – you are still, you have this stillness – then the Atman may reveal His presence to you. You can't produce Him; you can't make Him come. But if you fulfill all the conditions, in due course if He thinks it is good for you, He will show Himself to you in some way or another. The thing is to get on really good terms with yourself, because your own Self is called 'the Son of the Father' like Christ in Christianity. And the Father here is called the Param-Atman – the same Self that lives in the hearts of all. So everybody in this room is under the Param-Atman containing all those individual Atmans. And the combined effect is great because, as in The Lord's Prayer – 'Hallowed be thy Name' – if you can make the Name of the Divine Self holy, really important, and our Mantra is one of His Names, then it works magic. But as long as it is just trivial, the idea of the Divine Self becomes obliterated and we don't get anything very much. Does that answer your question at all?

Mrs. W. Yes, thank you very much. It made it much clearer.

Dr. R. We can only put ourselves in the path of revelation from the Atman. It's something above us. So He will come if we deserve it and the great thing is to know how to deserve it! Any other questions? (Pause) How do you deserve it, Bill? (Hersey)

Mr. Hersey. I don't think I do. (laughter)

Dr. R. But you do! (laughter) Now look here, one of the main evidences of False I nowadays is not sticking your chest out like a pouter pigeon and saying, 'I!' It's despising oneself and running oneself down, saying one never does anything, that one is a miserable sinner and so on. I don't know how you put it... how does he put it, Iris? (laughter)

Anyway, it's the same with prayer. In this Advaita Tradition, there is a contrast with many other Traditions. In many Traditions your prayer consists of saying what a miserable sinner you are and how you've done this wrong, and haven't done that, and 'there is no health in you' and all this sort of thing. We're told that God doesn't altogether like that! He gets a bit bored when thousands of people do that the whole time! (laughter) And *His food is Joy*. It's much more profitable to leave yourself out of your prayer altogether and attend to *Him*. And think of all the good things He has done for you in your life. And think of the good

things you have seen in this world and how beautiful the Creation is, until man spoils it. Think of Him and not of oneself.

You'd say, wouldn't you Prosser, that is rather in key with what you felt during your recent visit to Turkey? From the Sheikh there and his mother and the people round them? (He nods) Because this young Sheikh, Sitke Celebi, is very like his parents who were marvellous at exhibiting this kind of love that you felt there. So any fully Realized person and his circle has this same kind of love and sympathy and light. And that's what we want to be ready to receive any moment; and at death. (to Michael Fleming) You were talking about people who were not getting very much reward (as one does for several weeks at a time) how to freshen things up? How to discover what's missing?

M.W.F. Yes. And also how to remember the feeling which people have had from time to time – that they have felt a Presence which they would give a very great deal to get back to, but they have forgotten the way.

Dr. R. It's understood that we forget. Many people have trouble because they had this at the Initiation and haven't been able to get it back since. But we shouldn't worry about that; because worrying about it just puts it further away. So don't think negative thoughts about yourself; don't pick on yourself; don't nag yourself. That's one thing. Another thing is that negative thoughts arise from strains and pressures in the body very often. That's why we do things like the turning and the 'Movements to Music' and so on. And why, in Meditation, you are asked to sit comfortably and symmetrically. At the same time, I'm sure it's allowed that if you get cramp in one leg, or pain in the hip or something, you're allowed to shift it, because quite frankly I have to! Otherwise my thoughts are all about hellfire! (laughter) So one puts the body, don't you think, so that it just doesn't interfere? (Yes) And it's the same during the day: you try to move and sit and walk and stand in such a way that you don't put a strain on your body. That goes for you, Joan, doesn't it? (laughter) (Lady Clwyd had one wrist in a sling)

M.W.F. People often ask if there is anything else they can do during the day to help to keep them a bit nearer.

Dr. R. The Shankaracharya mentioned reading something good, even if it is only five or ten lines of something from Higher Mind; looking at a great picture; hearing some music. All those things can help if you know *why you are doing them*. It's not so much *what* you do. You can listen to music endlessly but unless you know *why* you are doing it, namely that you regard it as part of Param-Atman and part of the glories of Creation, it won't have the desired effect.

Then the other thing for people who come to groups every week and are studying regularly, is that *during the day consciousness goes up and down*. The daytime state of consciousness is changing all the time. We only notice the big changes such as waking up from sleep, and we occasionally get glimpses of a higher state of consciousness above that. So one should get into the way of remembering oneSelf at moments of change – the smaller changes as well as the big ones, night and morning. As, for instance, when have finished with one job and are starting another, or even going from one room to another, this is the moment when the curtain can be drawn aside and we may get a glimpse of what we're after.

Questions about that? Does anybody find that? Does anybody do that? (long pause)

It will be quite different for different people. We've got to have a certain amount of initiative as to how we do this. Any way we do it, any way by which we remember ourSelves more often and for longer is fair, is allowed, encouraged. Doing something for somebody else without any return or hope of reward. The only thing that is getting in our way, between us and the Atman, is the usurper, the usurping part of us, the imaginary part, which says, 'I am doing everything. I am bad. I am good. I will go to Heaven. I will go to hell.' Everything that says 'I' is complete fiction; *there is no such I*. It's some other actor in the repertoire of the company talking for you and calling himself 'I'.

Q. I very much like the idea of feeding the Param-Atman. That makes it a much bigger idea.

Dr. R. Yes, it does. Our usual attitude is like a little bird with its beak open, being fed by the Atman. But really *we* should be feeding the Atman Who is living in the cellar – of no account at all. We should be liberating the Atman so that He realizes that He is King and our house is His palace. That is really the meaning of Christ in the Gospel drama and the meaning of Life. So we should think in terms of what we can do for the Atman (in a small way because we can't do very much) rather than what we can get out of Him. Meditation is giving up, not acquiring. Two half-hours a day are for giving up, more and more, in return for remembering something bigger – the Divine Self. If we can approach a half-hour as a means of giving up everything else in order to meet the Beloved, it's more successful than if you think, 'What can I get out of this half-hour?'

Any questions here?

Mr. Richard Weigall. Dr. Roles, there is one question I would like to ask. If I find myself in an unpleasant situation temporarily, is it useful to say, 'This is not I?'

Dr. R. It may be in such a situation that you haven't time to *say* anything! You have to take avoiding action! It is always helpful to have the feeling that this is not mySelf, not real: but you may not have time to *think*.

At the start of last term while speaking about something else, I told a story.

There were three people searching for the Truth who went out for a walk together in India and suddenly they saw a tiger. As the tiger came at them, one man panicked and ran away and he got knocked over right away. The second man was rather like myself – he sat down and thought about all he had learnt in the past (laughter) and he didn't survive! (laughter) But the third man got hold of a branch of a tree just above his head and said, 'I'm for this tree!' and slung himself up out of reach of the tiger. And he was the survivor! (to Lady A) (Such as your husband!)

So it depends on the circumstances, Richard, do you see? You mustn't stop as you cross the road here and enquire (laughter) how your soul is.

Nurse A.W. Is it possible to go to sleep saying the Mantra without damaging your neck? (repeat)
You mean while you are meditating?

Dr. R. Go to sleep at other times! Have a good sleep before meditating. It's very damaging to go to sleep during a half-hour. To begin with, it's a waste of time; secondly, you will get what

the nurses at my hospital call ‘meditation neck’ (laughter) because one’s head gets crooked or falls forward. So don’t go to sleep during a half-hour.

Q. I was meaning that you said one that one could say the Mantra before going to sleep... (repeat) presumably you would be lying down then!

Dr. R. Yes, so you aren’t likely to hurt your neck. One way to go quickly to sleep during a spell of insomnia (a way which is used in this Tradition) is to repeat the Mantra as loudly as possible to yourself, once, twice, three times and gradually diminish its loudness inside yourself and by the time it has lost all sound, you are asleep. You mustn’t do a set Meditation before going to sleep in bed, because the Meditation is for waking up! And you *now* want to go to sleep. But used in this way, diminishing the loudness of the Mantra, you are both remembering the Mantra *and* going to sleep.

So coming back to how we began – what about this dearest wish? That we have to cultivate and establish so that it is the deepest thing in our nature and that last thing to disappear when we die.

Lady A. Dr. Roles, if one had developed what I can only describe as a taste of happy innocence when one can give up, and sometimes after the Meditation one is content with whatever life brings one. If one could develop this, one feels that there would be very little to fall away at the moment of death because it would have been achieved beforehand. Is this right?

Dr. R. I completely agree. Our work does away with the turmoil ordinary people describe in that dark tunnel of death.

I have here the latest account from another American University – the University of Connecticut where they did a study for 13 months from May 1977. It’s becoming a favourite subject for (what do they call it?) ‘Workshop’ in the Psychological Department and over 100 people were questioned about ‘near death experiences’. They confirmed the other books that have appeared. 60% had a feeling of ineffable peace at death and lost any fear of death thereafter that they had suffered from’. And various other percentages. 17% meet with this brilliant glowing light and 10% go even further and enter a world of preternatural beauty, guided by this Being of Light. So there are all sorts of possibilities and it’s different for everybody.

Lady A. Dr. Roles, there’s something I’ve had very much in my mind while you’ve been talking and that is perhaps through the good company and the Meditation and the coming to oneSelf, I think the Shankaracharya once said to you fairly recently that the situation you would meet would not be strange because it would be so familiar. I felt that is the important thing – that we do it twice a day and we reach stillness or silence which we don’t necessarily know, but we are meeting something very familiar.

Dr. R. Yes indeed, quite familiar. And it’s not only in meditation; many of our people get it on waking up from deep sleep in the night or in the morning. In the *Mathnawi*, you remember, it says, ‘Dawn is the little resurrection’. Night and day are a small-scale replica of death and life.

Mr. Bullough. The idea of the wish at death would somehow be inseparable for me from one’s

loved ones, creation as a whole. It couldn't be just a personal liberation for oneself. It would have to embrace everything.

Dr. R. It depends on who you are calling yourself. It's the Atman that has to be liberated from Mr. Bullough.

Mr. B. I just can't put it into words...

Dr. R. But to remember Param-Atman at that moment *includes* your wife and family – they are all one with the people you know intimately and with whom there are bonds which will continue (when the body dies) in some form. But Clifford we must get out of the way of thinking in too narrow terms. Think in terms of 'Who am I?' 'I am really the Divine Self', who has to realize that he is the same as the Father, the glorious Creator, and be free from all narrow personal confines even of one's own family.

How goes the time? It's about seventeen minutes past eight. What did he say about being hungry? (laughter)

Miss Cassini. Do you think that everybody, when they die meets the Being of Light, but doesn't necessarily remember it?

Dr. R. That's probably true. You always have that opportunity and by not paying attention, by forgetting all about it time after time, you lost the importance of it and you lost even the memory of it and so in life after life either the impression of this Being of Light becomes stronger and stronger or it gets less and less and disappears. It's really only a very small percentage who can recall enough even to talk about it – only 100 out of all the people questioned during that 3 months of study at the University. They probably questioned a lot more people most of whom didn't know what they were talking about. So it's very important not to talk to anybody about anything you've experienced of that sort, unless you know that they have had the same. It is a rare thing even to remember that much; just the same as having prepared a Wedding Garment in the Bible story. For death can be like a wedding with the Beloved.

Miss C. Can we prepare it consciously or can we prepare it just by being good in our lives?

Dr. R. I think it is done better and more certainly *in a School* because it needs really three lines of Work – work for yourself, work for others, and work for the School as a whole. You can't, just as an individual, make wedding garments.

Lady A. Would you say that the good company the Shankaracharya spoke of is a good garment factory, perhaps? (laughter)

Dr. R. Well, he often says that this house, our teaching here, the System we still study, our first teacher, and the company we keep is amply adequate for this purpose: Self-discovery, Self-realization, Self-remembering.

Dr. Cox. Could you say anything more about the day and night?

Dr. R. I can only talk about my own experiences, Doctor. Ever since what a few of us were put through at Mr. Ouspensky's death, I have woken almost every night with this Samadhi for a period of up to an hour. If, at that time, I repeat the Mantra, I don't just fall off to sleep or

take a sedative or something, I wake in the morning with same. But, one isn't supposed to work *in order* to get that at night! One is supposed to go to bed and to go to sleep. And if one has meditated right during the day, one will get most refreshing sleep – deep sleep, dreamless sleep. But it will happen at unexpected times during these changes of consciousness, that the curtain will be drawn aside and also in all moments of emergency as Lord Allan described when in the Navy during World War II.

Dr. Cox. Can the day sometimes appear quite instantaneously, quite fresh, as if it didn't come from anywhere?

Dr. R. Yes. There are a thousand ways the individual can feel it. Only you would know – of course it can, if you say so.

Well, we're getting rather out on deep waters, don't you think, and we've got to remember that we must eat. Even eating is allowed, you know, it's not immoral. (laughter) We are supposed to remember ourSelves and enjoy the food. You can't enjoy the food unless you remember it is you who are eating! (laughter)

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