

6 May 1980

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

COLET HOUSE

On the platform: Dr. Roles, Lady Allan and Prof Guyatt (R.G.)

Dr. R. People haven't had time yet to read the first paper which was meant to be looked into for a fortnight. So this afternoon I'll speak about something different, but important, which all through this holiday keeps coming back, showing that it is in some way fixed in the emotional centre which always repeats and repeats some important matter that lies rather below the surface.

We really must devote our spare time and energy more to escaping from the mental prison which confines us within narrow limits of happiness and usefulness. I think many of us have felt frustrated because while there are times when we feel our full potentiality, the rest of the time we don't come up to it. Now we've been encouraged by the growing conviction that this prison is really an artefact, that is self-produced. In the real inner world there are no walls or barred windows. Our minds have wonderful potentiality: when fresh and quiet they immediately give us all we want. There is no need to do things to our minds or put artificial restraints on them. Our bodies also are not machines only and by no means to be despised. In fifty years of medical practice, I found increasingly how marvellous they are if treated fairly. The things they put up with! The way we misuse them! Yet, the compensatory mechanisms they produce when circumstances, or bad habits, make them go a little wrong are quite incredible. In fact, the human heritage of mind and body is capable of producing anything you want exactly when you want it, if you only learn how to use it rightly.

The prison is something different. *The prison is the fake feeling of I.* There is a real and necessary feeling of 'I' which we always have and which we can't do without; for the loss of this genuine feeling results in nervous breakdowns. We don't, and can't afford, to do away with the feeling 'I am, I exist,' but it is of different kinds. It can be small and narrow if applied only to oneself as an individual. It can be rating one's attainments at higher value than they merit; or it can be underrating oneself. I think that we have had such clear teaching about this (which has taken a very long time to understand) that if we don't act on it now, and really understand what is necessary to do, we'll miss out and just stay in prison, studying the prison walls and the bars and the habits of the warders and the disadvantages of being where we are!

This 'feeling of I' which in Sanskrit is 'Ahankar' can be confined to that of one tiny individual, an infinitesimal atom, in which case it is known as Vyashti – like one tree in a forest. Or it can be enlarged, enlarged until it can include the great forest itself and even the universe and see them differently. So the prison consists in escaping from the limitations which the individual has built up for himself, and until he is out of prison for a moment or two he doesn't realize what a restrictive and unnecessarily small and tedious life he has been living.

That was the theme a week ago and this is the question which some of those in charge of the Meditation here at this time – the Marshes, and Dorothy Smith and Jocelyn Rose – have written to me about:

R.G. (reading) ‘You spoke about the necessary movement that has to take place in us all from preoccupation in examining the prison to becoming practical about escaping from it, but we need guidance about how you would like to see this change of attitude manifesting in School work now. We trust the Meditation as being the vital key to escape. Therefore in valuing it so highly as a School, what can be the reason why we do not attract more people to it in our own lives when we have all the facilities available for initiations?’

Dr. R. We shall speak more about this important question at next Tuesday’s Meditation Meeting; meanwhile what has anybody got to say about that? Here we have all the facilities for giving the Meditation which many of us are enjoying and reaping its advantages. Why are we short of people who really want the Initiation which will give our meditators a way of taking a step forward? Helping to train new meditators, helping to assist at the Mukabeleh. We just want a few. We don’t want a great lot of people, but just a continual feed-in of people who have been looking for something which they have not got and see meditation as a way to that. Any views on this?

Q. (rpt) Perhaps nobody wants to change their own prison for somebody else’s; perhaps we are not free enough ourselves to attract others.

Dr. R. I think that’s a very good point! Most organizations which call themselves ‘spiritually disposed’ merely exchange prisons. They give you a fresh prison to live in, like moving from Wormwood Scrubs to Portland Bill! And do *we* do that? We’ve tried not to, but do we in fact? If people saw that we were free, wouldn’t they want to know what made us free and learn about the meditation from us? That’s your point, isn’t it? Well, why don’t more friends of ours ask for meditation?

Miss Randall. (rpt) Having introduced a few people to meditation, I felt I always had to make quite sure that it’s what they really wanted, and I wonder if perhaps we stand back too much?

Dr. R. Yes, I agree Hilary, that everybody really needs it, only they don’t know that. If people can see that their heart’s desire, something they have always wanted and have not got, can be reached through meditation, then they want to have it. This needs quite a lot of preparation and it can only be done these days privately from friend to friend. And that’s how the Shankaracharya wants it done.

At the moment, Dr. Fenwick, you’d surely agree that there are too many people in the field for us to be talking in public about meditation or writing books, or giving lectures. We don’t want it that way. We don’t want a lot of people. What we want are a few really genuine people like the ones we’ve got. Would you agree? And would you say at all where you think the remedy lies? You know us and you know a lot of other types!

Dr. F. I think the remedy is a very difficult one and it is connected with the quality of the members of the School because you can find that meditation societies are two a penny, and they attract different people and what attracts the people are different things. And I think the people who are attracted here are attracted by the people they find here or the people who are here; which relates back to what you said about the quality of the people.

Dr. R. Yes, rather than indoctrination with some sort of knowledge, or what is more greatly to

be feared nowadays, is some arduous discipline and a time-consuming involvement. Liberation for us has to do with distinguishing between a false and limited attitude – a caterpillar attitude to ourselves – and the true one, namely that we already are butterflies. We already are people of unlimited potentiality. We really are possessors of a three-fold heritage that contains every possibility and has far more potentiality than any machinery that man has invented; our physical, subtle and causal assets are mostly unexplored...

Dr. R. (continues) There was a conversation which has given me the clue as to how to go about this liberation more efficiently in relation to myself; about actually earning a remission of sentence as quickly as possible; not perhaps breaking out of prison, but being liberated by the governor without having to do another twenty years (laughter) and this was the conversation which I'll ask Lady Allan to read.

Lady A. (reading) (Mr. Rabeneck's question in 1970) which he starts by saying:

That when his voice, movements and functions are best at the Initiation ceremony, would it mean that a flow of Grace is coming from the Holy Tradition and that I am playing my part rightly?

And His Holiness replied:

If the ceremony is performed in the way it is described here, if there is a personal feeling of I related to one individual and to one place, a room in New York, then it would be difficult to claim that the forces of the Tradition are in action. But if there is a feeling that this 'I' is only an instrument to enact all this activity, then it is undoubtedly connected with the Holy Tradition and the forces are rightly being passed from one individual to another. And the conclusion is that if the feeling of I is referred to an individual self (Vyashti) only, then it must be false. But if it is for the universal Self, Samashti, then it is true.

Lady A. (continues reading) And then your question:

R. Should we not therefore welcome any blow to the personal pride of Ahankar as the best gift one can receive from above or from life itself?

And the Shankaracharya answered:

When one feels the Ahankar, one always feels a limitation, a small circle, due to this feeling (which changes with the Gunas) and through allowing this, one can come to limit one's I to one's own body or good character or brilliance of performance or one's intellect or knowledge, or whatever one seems to have. These are small circles created by the ego when governed by Rajas or Tamas and are therefore extremely limiting. The other ego which is Sattvic is related to the Samashti. (And the interpreter, Jaiswal, explained: Vyashti equals Jaiswal; Samashti equals Universal I or Param-Atman, the universal Being or Absolute.)

One should regard the limitations only as imposed upon the Atman (individual self) and then one is not possessed by Rajas or Tamas and so not 'identified' with, or 'attached' to, the action or its outcome. So when the feeling of 'me and mine' arises in relation to anything in the outer or inner world, this Ahankar will be governed by excess momentum or Rajas, or excess inertia, Tamas. On the contrary, if the feeling is derived from 'Thee and Thine,' then all activities or all vantage grounds to which Ahankar rises in any individual will be of service to him and to the community.

He then tells a story of Hanuman...

Dr. R. He tells this very amusing story, which always brings a great deal of laughter (from the most popular epic that today attracts the crowds in India, the Ramayana) about Hanuman, the god of monkeys, who returned from Lanka (Ceylon) to report to his Lord, King Rama, that he had traced the whereabouts of Queen Sita who had been abducted by the bad guy Ravana. He described how he jumped in one leap from India to Ceylon, killed some of Ravana's followers and a lot of demons, all single-handed, uprooted many trees and set fire to Ravana's kingdom. Whilst he was describing these achievements, Rama thought. Can it be that Hanuman's ego is claiming all this in the pride of his own strength? But at the end, Hanuman said humbly. 'All this was done only by means of your strength which worked through me.' Which made it all right.

Dr. R. (continues) So let us train our own monkey nature the same way! How many of us get that feeling of freedom from the small and being a part of the universal? For how long does it last? Do you get it when you really need it? As for instance, with something to do with this house. Can't we hurry things up a bit? What do you think, Sean? That's not a very disagreeable prison? It's one we would all like to free ourselves from. A sculptor feels the limitations, doesn't he?

Mr. Crampton (rpt) I think the trouble with our prison is that people are too nice in it!

Dr. R. Oh. (laughter) Is *that* a characteristic, Dr. Fenwick of the members of this Society, do you think? That we're too nice to each other?

Dr. F. On the contrary, I think it's very important and that's why one comes to Colet House.

Dr. R. (laughing) All right then, we can be nice to each other but we must trust each other and we must not take offence if we are shown rather clearly any of these limitations. (to Mr. Hersey) We mustn't stay away, John, or go north or anything like that. We must be happy to see these limitations, which we impose upon ourselves – as the only way to get out of our self-made prison.

Miss Scrutton. I think we can be very helpful to each other. We can be more positive because if somebody one trusts from Colet really makes you see something about yourself, you never forget it.

Dr. R. On the other hand, you know, *we are supposed to be asked before we give advice* to people about their characters, so we ought to train ourselves to ask for help, don't you think Pen?

Miss S. Yes, I do. But I was thinking of a particular instance when nothing really was said; one just saw the reflection in the other person's face of how one was behaving and it has been of enormous importance.

Dr. R. Yes, mirrors. Mr. Ouspensky used to say a School is necessary because there you see hundred mirrors of yourself – different facets of your character.

(Pause)

We aren't the only people who centre their needs on getting rid of this false I. For the Zen Teachers – it has been their principal form of treatment of those who come to them. For instance – these 101 Zen stories which most of you know – show all kinds of facets in which this Ahankar shows itself. And I sometimes wish that at our meeting people could be a little bit more direct like this:

A Zen teacher lived alone at a small temple in the country. One day four travelling monks appeared and asked if they might make a fire in his yard to warm themselves. While they were building the fire he heard them arguing about subjectivity and objectivity. He joined them and said, 'There is a big stone, do you consider it to be inside or outside your mind?' One of the monks replied, 'From the Buddhist viewpoint everything is an objectification of mind, so I would say that the stone is inside my mind.' 'Your head must be very heavy,' observed Ho-Gen, 'if you are carrying around a great stone like that in your mind.' (laughter)

Dr. R. I think people ought to burst out more at your meetings if wordy arguments are wasting time. *And each person's* private relation with the Leader can be made to be a very special one – like H.H's relations with those of us he knows:

A soldier named Nobu-Shige came to Haku-In and asked. 'Is there really a paradise and a hell?'

'Who are you?' enquired Haku-In.

'I am a Samurai,' the warrior replied.

'You, a soldier?' exclaimed Haku-In. 'What kind of ruler would have you as his guard? Your face looks like that of a beggar.'

Nobu-Shige became so angry that he began to draw his sword when Haku-In continued, 'So you have a sword! Your weapon is probably much too dull to cut off my head.'

As Nobu-Shige drew his sword Haku-In remarked, 'Here open the gates of Hell.'

At these words the Samurai perceiving the master's discipline sheathed his sword and bowed.

'Here open the gates of paradise,' said Haku-In.

In this relation, no negative emotions must be expressed or even felt, and this was one of the chief things that Mr. Ouspensky laid down as to what a real School was all for; namely to demonstrate to each person where lie their heaven and their hell. We could do much more about helping each other to escape from habitual negative reactions. The advantages of something like this would not be just small or frivolous, but would result in a complete change of being, as shown by a third story:

One evening as Shichiri Ko-Jun was reciting Sutras, a thief with a sharp sword entered, demanding either his money or his life.

Shichiri told him, 'Do not disturb me. You can find the money in that drawer.' Then he resumed his recitation.

A few moments later he stopped and called, 'Don't take it all. I need some to pay taxes with tomorrow.'

The intruder gathered up most of the money and started to leave. 'Thank a person when you receive a gift,' Shichiri added. The man thanked him and made off.

Some time afterward the fellow was caught and confessed, among others, the offence against Shichiri. When Shichiri was called as a witness, he said, 'This man is no thief, at least as far as I am concerned. I gave him the money and he thanked me for it.'

After he had finished his prison term, the man went to Shichiri and became his disciple.

Dr. R. Well, having been recently burgled myself, I know how difficult that would be! (laughter) So conquest of the ego results in a complete change of character. An effort that seems small, even trivial, is very little to pay for so big a treasure.

It comes to this: that we want to devote this term to use what parts of our old System – the Western System taught to Mr. Ouspensky in 1915 – which would help us get out of this prison more quickly if seen in the light shed by a man who has already escaped (the only one we've ever met) the Shankaracharya. So let us make a resolution that whatever material we are given, whatever we hear and whatever we discuss, whatever we are asked to do in this house, whatever way we are training, we use it to escape from our own artificial prison.

Is there anything you want to ask or shall we now meditate for a little?

MEDITATION

Don't you find your mind keeps coming back to the small? It's very hard to drop it all off, and keep remembering *Who one is*.

It's rather over a year since Lord Allan was here last and so I'll get you (Maureen) to read his question and the answer which came at that same meeting from which you were reading before, if you wouldn't mind?

Lady A. (reading)

R.A. Recently I have quite often, when sitting calmly at my desk, felt a tremendous expansion and power which led me to believe that I could, then and there, sort out different problems in the countries to which I travel in the course of business – indeed on occasion it seems to have actually happened. Is this imagination or could it be a manifestation of some activity on the subtle level? And, if so, how can it be encouraged?

And the Shankaracharya answered:

What Mr. A. has described is not always imagination but one can only tell by its consequences and after-effects. If one supposes that the achievements (that come so easily and freely under certain circumstances) are done by one man's cleverness, then it comes from Rajas to be followed inevitably by its opposite (Tamas or disillusion) and then one is the atom, the Vyashti. But if in successfully solving the problems that arise at a given time and place one recognises that one has only been the instrument in bringing the forces together (in the right order) at the proper point, then it must be Sattva (related to the Samashti) through which one is always deriving energy and being re-charged again instantaneously like a battery connected freely with a dynamo.

Dr. R. He went on to draw a picture of what interferes with the recharging of the battery, but stressed that the chief point of all the teaching is that one should think all the time about

what is Real, what is great, what one really is – eternal and unchanging – and not analyse what is keeping one away from it. Not analyse, not go into one's weaknesses and pettiness, but always keep your sights on the great and in any moment to shed anything else and go for that, to look up rather than down.

All success to your meetings which begin this week.

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