

23 June 1980

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

COLET HOUSE

On the platform: Dr. Roles and Lady Allan

Lady A. There are just a few announcements. Would those people who wish to come to the new turners' Mukabeleh on Friday this week, the 27th, at 7.30 p.m. please put their names on the guest list which is on the hall table downstairs.

Dr. R. Remember that traditionally it is a great occasion for them.

Lady A. The usual Mukabeleh for Visitors is at 8 p.m. as usual on the following Friday, 4th July. The next Meditation Meeting will be on Tuesday, 8th July. The next large Monday meeting is on July 14th – the last this term; and the first large Monday meeting next term is on September 29th and Movements start that night as well.

Dr. R. We've had some further very promising questions. (to M.T. entering the room) Mark, you're the man we want up here. From the Guyatts' meeting I've only just had the report because they weren't there and Philip Beckwith had to take it down and send it – very good questions, but I haven't studied them. So we'll have to concentrate more today on Dr. Connell's rather more experienced meeting and all the material next week leads off from a question Mark asked – an observation which I think is very representative of what we all want to know, need to know about more. He said:

I was wondering while driving here tonight about this question of being asleep. Is it possible to say which part of us is asleep when we forget ourselves or is it too diffuse for that?

Perhaps you didn't know it, but that's a real key question and the answer is perfectly simple. The part of us, Mark, which is asleep when we forget ourselves is this part (finger in the centre of the forehead) here. And instead of 'wondering about something' or thinking of anything at all, this part should be *still and alert* especially when driving a car. Whatever the circumstances it has to be still and alert because accidents only happen from the unexpected. The reason they happen is that so many people go to sleep when driving and are asleep or absent-minded at the crucial moment. So *attention* starts when this part is quite still but alert. That's all the first characteristic of what we call attention. We have to resist the temptation to 'wonder about' anything or think of anything when we are actually doing something important. When we're not doing anything (like sitting in an armchair) then is the time we can perhaps think about something but not for too long! It's a mistake that has been made for two of three hundred years in the West at least – we equate consciousness with thinking. Whereas thinking is the main obstacle to consciousness. *At our level we cannot be conscious and think.* I do want to bring this home to us all, myself included, this week. So in this paper I am suggesting that we go back to an exercise Mr. Ouspensky used to make us do with him under varying circumstances, which we've tried out since, but which we haven't tried for some time.

This exercise he used entirely to prove that consciousness is very fleeting; and try as hard as you can, you can only be conscious for something up to two minutes. And not always even that. I want you to try this exercise at your groups and see if it doesn't look a little bit different now from how it looked thirty years ago.

And we're going to start off by trying it now. It was given us, of course, before the time of the meditation and so we do it without the mantra, without meditating. We just sit and try to feel 'I, so and so (one's Christian name) am here *now*' – not the words, but the *feel*. 'I, Mark, am here now.' Try not to be conscious of anything else. Try not to think of anything else. Get it? We used to have to keep time for ourselves, doing it, but I will be the timekeeper tonight and the group takers will be the timekeepers at your meetings so nobody else need worry. Now I'll give you two or three minutes and let's see if we can be conscious of one thing only even for two minutes – one thing only, oneself. Eyes shut or open, as you like. Go!

EXERCISE

Well, that's exactly two minutes. It seemed a long time, did you think? Who would like to say whether they could control their consciousness; could know who they are and where they are for that time?

Miss Scrutton. Yes, but the mantra crept in.

Dr. R. Well, this time we forget it. But were you aware of yourself fully for those two minutes?

Miss Cassini. It didn't seem long at all.

Dr. R. What about you, Bridget?

Mrs. Hall. I was going to say the same.

Dr. R. So the meditation *is doing something!* We used to find that practically nobody could claim to be doing it fully even for two minutes. Anybody else have anything to say about it? Hands up anybody who totally failed to do it? (Dr. Roles's hand shot up) (laughter)

Miss Bolton. I was aware of not knowing quite what it was, a sort of mixture, very difficult to define.

Dr. R. Well, you were thinking of something, you see. You were trying to define something and not knowing what it was. All you needed was the awareness that *I Alice am here*.

Dr. Dewey. I wanted to get rid of myself and not do it. In other words the temptation to think about meditation and losing the individual I and becoming immersed in Samashti is there all the time. I don't see how we can escape the desire.

Dr. R. So you were not mentally still and *conscious of yourself alone for two minutes* – you were thinking. Anybody else got anything to say?

Mr. Hodge. Dr. Roles, I find it much easier to do it if I am in the presence of someone who has had a lot of experience, for example the late Mrs. H-P. It was done quite naturally in her presence.

Dr. R. That's thinking! I want to know what happened just now in those two minutes! Were you aware only of Ray Hodge?

Lady A. On his reply (rpt) Mr. Hodge is still referring to other occasions.

Dr. R. Yes I know! (laughter) Very interesting.

Mrs. Buscombe. I felt as though everything stopped, as if there was no time.

Dr. R. All right, as long as you didn't know even that until afterwards! (laughter) Who else?

Mr. Weigall. Could you say something about being aware of where you are? And at the same time I find that that helps to concentrate.

Dr. R. All right, we can say something about all of this later. What we want at the moment, Mark, is what happened during *this* two minutes?

Mr. Tyou. I found impressions creeping in of what I imagine myself to be.

Dr. R. All sorts of things creep in, yes. So you can't claim that you were conscious of one thing only. We're trying to measure, you see, the duration of consciousness in the ordinary person like ourselves; because we use the word 'consciousness' in a thousand different senses and we want to make quite sure that we here are all talking about the same thing. And that's the reason for this experiment. More observations please.

Lady A. I was surprised...

Mrs. Gould. I felt my physical self very strongly.

Lady A. Joan Gould and I started to say the same thing at the same time!

Dr. R. That's a start anyway. To be conscious it is necessary to feel your physical self called 'Joan' or 'Maureen' without words. To know 'I am here now' means to *know your physical self as physically here, first of all.*

Miss Newington. I found I could only believe in the statement if it was repeated at a different pitch inside me, a different sound level.

Dr. R. O.K. but it all adds to the thesis – confirms the thesis.

Q. I was so surprised at how easy it was.

Dr. R. Good, good! It *is* easy. Then why don't we do it?

Lady A. I think John Buscombe is going to own up to something too.

Mr. B. I felt as if I was spending the whole time fighting off intruding thoughts.

Mr. Anholt. I wasn't aware of thoughts or impressions but I was aware of a constant movement within me that was looking for a place to rest. The two minutes absolutely flashed past.

Dr. R. Yes, aware of a lot of movement. Now the reason for all this is that there is a good deal of worry going on – and I wanted you to hear this, Peter Fenwick. There is concern in the circles which are adjacent to the non-dualism 'Advaita' tradition of the Shankaracharyas as to the effects of, what they believe to be, the wrong meditation which is going the rounds in the West. Today we have many examples of pseudo-meditation which is being done in all sorts of different groups and localities in the West and the people who have this tradition very much at heart are anxious to find out exactly what people are doing and what the

remedy is. They are not hostile – they want to get the thing right. We had a very impressive visitor in this house who came to see me at very short notice ten days ago and who was on commission by one of the Shankaracharyas (not ours) to take a look at what is going on in the West. Somebody (who had only been here once ages ago) had given people in southern India my private number and name and this address. So it's a pretty thorough investigation and I must say we welcome it, only we very much want to make sure that *we ourselves are doing it right because otherwise it may bring discredit on our Shankaracharya who is sponsoring us*. Have you got the general reason for this? It's high time there was a check everywhere on what people call Advaita Meditation – mantra meditation – and its effects. But the chief obstacle is what Mark described in his observation, namely that meditators are *thinking* about meditation, which leads to the *superficial* not the real deep Dhyana.

Miss Bolton. Isn't the only way we can hope to be successful, to use the name of God? As we do in meditation – that seems to be the only way I can think of being successful in being aware of myself.

Dr. R. Well of course meditation isn't the only way. On Mt. Athos they use continuous internal prayer. Any valid way and there are many, they all require to *take into account how we're made* which is shown in this symbol.

(Referring to diagram on screen) There are three divisions: the outward physical division; the inward mental division – our own private life that nobody knows; and the emotional or spiritual which is ordinarily confined to the body when it is simply instinctive and regulates the works. But in the developed man that causal level is the link with the fourth room and the Divine Self. So it is not necessary that everybody here should be using our mantra meditation. We have never insisted on that. But *they must use something*. We used for many years continuous internal prayer. We recited inwardly The Lord's Prayer, very often in Latin, under Mr. Ouspensky's direction. Some people now have learnt The Jesus Prayer on the Greek Islands near Mt Athos. I'm not asking what people do. It is necessary only to have stillness inside us and carry that stillness whether we're doing anything or not.

Mr. Dunjohn. Dr. Roles, the exercise brought back the memory of the realisation of one's inability to do this that set one into this Work 25 years ago.

Dr. Roles. May I chip in at this point because 'realisation of one's inability to do this' is exactly the point Mr. Ouspensky made, that this was the only way to do it – to realise that you never remember yourself, you are never conscious; but what a wonderful thing it would be if you were! And this was to him the main driving force and he said that it was 'thinking you are conscious when you are not' which stopped anybody ever doing anything about waking up.

Mr. D (rpt) It brought also that this was somehow connected with time and the need to enter into a different time scale to achieve this aim.

Dr. R. You are right – we have to enter a new world with a different space-time. But one can't achieve that by any process of thinking only. It comes *with* the experience as a great surprise.

Now I just want to say that we have had very carefully explained to us by our Shankaracharya what it is that prevents us from getting to the stillness of realization. He has

mentioned that there are three common obstacles, psychological obstacles going on. The first is *diffuse thinking*. The mind going on and on about this and that and the other, associative thinking which is really the curse of the age, of the twentieth century. It was mentioned especially by Mr. Ouspensky who used the word 'imagination' in the sense of destructive imagination, not creative imagination. As he said, whenever we remember ourselves, something in us starts imagination and imagination is incompatible with Self-remembering. By imagination he means turning thoughts and images, one following the other, which H.H. refers to as 'dispersion of mind' (Vikshepa). That's one obstacle. That's easy to understand, isn't it? The next obstacle is not so easy to understand. In fact our interpreters don't understand it. It is what is called in India '*attachment*'. It's usually taken to mean as external attachment, attachment to external objects, and you're advised to give up your attachments, give up your wife, give up your house, give up your possessions, give up your money – external things which we have no intention of giving up at all! But its cause and remedy are really *internal* – giving up the clinging to habitual thoughts and ideas which turn and turn inside, so that our attention, like a fly on flypaper, cannot extricate itself from this identification or attachment, an internal process. The other obstacle is sheer bloody-mindedness! (laughter) Call it 'self-will and wilfulness' as Mr. Ouspensky did; you deliberately want to do something because you shouldn't. So in theory the two Systems agree very well. But how to achieve it? That takes a good deal of discovery in oneself and it has to be done with other people to help one, because *we go on thinking we're conscious when consciousness has disappeared*. It's very evanescent; and we go on being attached or identified with something and don't know it. So that's why a School is needed; that's why Mr. Ouspensky wanted us to have a School here; because people can shake each other by the shoulder and say: 'you're not conscious old fellow!' (laughter)

Now, after talking about these obstacles I would like you to meditate for two or three minutes and then listen to something the Shankaracharya said which, I think, clarifies – just two minutes with the mantra.

MEDITATION

It's so nice but we'll have to tear ourselves away. The purpose of what we're going to read is that one should always approach things from above, not from below. We should somehow or other remember the Param-Atman at those naturally-occurring moments we have been calling 'gaps'. Since he was this time addressing the general public he used words in general use like 'God' instead of Param-Atman.

Lady A (reading)

Attachment means to consider as 'ours' what really belongs to God. Our body, our house, our wealth, our son, etc. Give up this feeling, and you get rid of all troubles.

Do not think that the world around you, i.e. your house, your money, your body, etc., are unsubstantial. Rather, it is your feeling of attachment to them that is unsubstantial. Whatever is happening around you is right, but what is wrong about it is the *view* you are taking of it. If you could correct your viewpoint, you would be happy.

The world is a great show which God is staging round you in the shape of the universe. But it is a mere show. Your birth is a show, your death is a show. Actually there is neither birth nor death. Know that, and you would be happy.

The common outlook is that the world is everything, and that Param-Atman is nothing. It is a crime to hold this view, and the punishment for it is to be imprisoned in this physical body. You cannot be happy while undergoing a term of imprisonment.

Our mind has the property of thinking of something or other all the time; it cannot remain idle. If it does not remember the Param-Atman, it would think of the world. Remembering the Param-Atman leads to happiness, and thinking of the world leads to unhappiness.

It is true that people do not find it easy to hold the Param-Atman in mind. The reason for that is lack of practice. As long as the ability has not been acquired, there would be difficulty. But the ability can certainly be acquired.

Dr. R. And it's high time we acquired it! Good luck with your experiment this week and to the next. We want really to learn something because none of us really understands what is needed.

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