

14 October 1980

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

On the Platform: Dr. Roles, Lady Allan & Dr. James Witchalls (Dr. W.)

Lady A. There are some announcements. The next of these meetings will be held on Tuesday, 11th November. As there are going to be some initiations on Sunday, 2nd November and on the following Wednesday, now is the time to let us know if you have any friends wanting meditation, as time is getting short. Please let the office have names and addresses as soon as you can, so as to give time for someone to see them beforehand.

People may like to know that there are regular once a month small meditation meetings held in different areas, such as Barnes, Sheen, Rogate, Esher, Brighton, near Oxford and near Cambridge, and in Northumberland. For details of any of these please ask in the office.

We want to introduce another issue of *The Bridge* but won't be able to do so until there is more material to publish – we still need contributions, in the form of poems, essays, short stories, articles, something close to the writer's heart, and particularly from the younger people and those who haven't written for us before. Don't be afraid to try your hand!

Dr. R. Not too highbrow either – I mean what goes best is experience of different aspects of life. We're writing to people who have been getting copies of *The Bridge* delivered to different parts of the world – California and so on – trying to encourage them to write something about their sort of life.

Lady A. One last announcement: If there is anyone we don't know about already who has rooms to let, either long or short-term, please would they let Mrs. Moore have details, as we do get asked by visitors from abroad for places where they can stay. If you don't know Mrs. Moore, would you give the details to the office please.

Dr. R. Any questions about any of that?

I've asked Dr. James Witchalls to be with us on the platform this evening because he has had an unique experience; and chiefly because just lately, as he has got free of general practice and is working regularly in preventive medicine, he wrote saying that the meditation was the great support of his life. And it has never left you all through really but it has come good just lately?

Dr. W. Yes, rather more so.

Dr. R. Just about the time that we were meeting and getting to know the Shankaracharya, he was a non-medical layman working under Dr. Schweitzer in Lambarene in French Equatorial Africa. There were great fights with the tse-tse fly, sleeping sickness, malaria – all sorts of things – and coming under a man like Schweitzer must have been unique because Schweitzer (almost exactly a contemporary of Mr. Ouspensky – he was born in 1875) had four doctorates, didn't he?

Dr. W. Yes; theology, philosophy, music and the last one was in medicine.

Dr. R. And he was, of course, a great player of the piano and the organ; and he wrote a two-volume life of Bach which is still probably the best today. Then he trained as a doctor and went out as

a medical missionary in 1913 to Lambarene where he was during the war. He came back to get a Nobel Peace Prize. Or did he come back before that?

Dr. W. He had been back on various occasions but in 1952 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr. R. And he came over to England in 1955 to get the Order of Merit and made a great impact here. I was asking you, James, what you thought about Schweitzer and you said you thought there was 'something missing'.

Dr. W. Yes. When one has tasted meditation and I think we all know what that means, then anything else is second rate for there is something missing. And it was that something missing that drew me back here to Europe.

Dr. R. It would have been the solution to many things, but he shut the windows, didn't he?

Dr. W. I think that he had been so preoccupied with the hospital and the running of it that he had rather lost himself in the physical side of keeping it all going and perhaps lost touch with the search for reality, I suppose.

Dr. R. Did you ever play music with him?

Dr. W. I used to play the piano there and he gave me one or two lessons, but he liked the organ, of course. That was his main instrument.

Dr. R. And James has done the Movements and played Movements music; also learnt turning under Mr. Resuhi here.

Now about Meditation – we want to raise our sights a bit, I think. We need to be right about the details certainly and about sitting with a straight back and sitting symmetrically and having regular meditation times twice a day whenever possible – all those things. But I think we ought to know about what we're after and have a little more knowledge than we've got, but not too much, just a little more would, I think, help us to get along quicker. Initiation is given to a person on the causal level. Everything is done to rouse him emotionally into a new state of consciousness and then the meditation is started. The most telling results of the meditation are on the emotional apparatus.

In Mr. Ouspensky's hands our Western system gives very precise figures about what that entails. [Taking] The three departments of our psychology – the intellect, the selective mind, works very slowly. It has to have time to weigh the rights and wrongs of a given situation and decide. Its unit of time is the present moment of about 3 seconds – the time of a breath. Mr. Ouspensky produced a lot of evidence about the comparatively 'great speed' (he called it) which we would call 'high frequency' of the working of the physical apparatus in the body. How a sip of brandy could produce an immediate effect but how the body worked with such different times that in an ordinary laboratory it would have eight hours of our usual time to do the job of sorting out and producing the effects. There are many examples which we have tried to study. For instance, if you run downstairs and try to count your steps intellectually, you'll either crash or stop counting! If thoughts interfere when driving a car rapidly through traffic, you make serious mistakes. So for him the frequency of operation of the instinctive and emotional centres of the body was in the order of milliseconds – thousandths of a second (as proved by Prof. Adrian with the E.E.G. in *The Basis of Perception*). The quickest

perception that the mind could have of receiving a train of impressions and knowing what they were, being 1/10,000 of a second. In ordinary people the emotional centre works at about that speed. The sympathetic is tied down by the parasympathetic; and the parasympathetic slows it down and makes it work at the speed of the body. This is because of negative emotions and of negative imagination and thought processes. But when emotional centre is purified and freed from all that, he proved that it worked at a speed of about 300 million cycles a second – 300 megacycles a second – about the speed of very high frequency radio.

So in trying to unite with the Atman who is above anything that we can call time, in what is 'eternity' for us, you've got quite a distance to go. You can't just wish for union and get it. You have to be prepared to stick at it for quite a long time, giving up psychologically everything which hinders the emotional centre from working. [at that higher frequency] Now you've all found that, haven't you? Anybody want to comment about that? You can't get there by calculations, for instance, because the intellect is too slow.

So we have to free the emotional apparatus from all that hampers it and this used to be described very exactly in our system. But our system never showed us the *way to escape* from this prison of negative emotion and false imagination. It's the Shankaracharya's system which enables us to escape from it through meditation and first-hand knowledge of the Divine Self, as advised in the Advaita System – non-dualistic system – of the Shankaracharya's during the last 25 centuries by realising that the individual Self is the same as the Self of the universe and both can make the impact inside an individual. They live in the soul or Antahkarana of every individual whether the person knows it or not. And if one does what one can, makes little efforts persistently, then He comes to our help. Now a lot of people have proved this for themselves. Any questions?

Mr. Hodge. These little efforts you speak about, Dr. Roles – during meditation I try to hold in my mind that I am in the presence of a noble guest, but I can't really develop that technique of being in the presence of a noble guest.

Dr. R. Well first of all, you don't *do* anything during meditation. You mean that beforehand, before sitting down to meditate, you remind yourself that the next half hour belongs to this very important Person, your Real Self, and you don't let anything come between you. That's the aim anyway – the aim of perfection. During meditation you give up, give up; give up thought processes, give up dreams, give up physical sensations, all the time. And the person who gives up most and reaches the peace for longest is one that profits most from this half of meditation. We're none of us very good at it, but we persist. We must persist. And if we don't persist... someone came to see me yesterday apologizing for getting interested in other things. If they don't persist, there is nothing here we can offer them. It's not just the meditation; there are other things we do here which also sweep away barriers which slow the emotions – turning, movements to music, work together, and so on.

Well is anybody feeling a bit discouraged with the fact that all his noble efforts all this time are producing not such good results as they would like? Maybe we feel this from time to time. You do, Sarah (Beckwith)?

Mrs. B. It's not that I feel discouraged by my noble efforts, I feel discouraged by my lack of noble efforts. (laughter)

Dr. R. Are you discouraged about your husband's lack of noble effort? (Mrs. B. Absolutely not!) That's all right then; but it's the internal effort that counts and *one shouldn't really be discouraged at all*, because 'discouragement' is a negative emotion and the more discouraged you are, the slower you'll move. So one should have *no regret* – as he said to you (Lady A). You regretted that you were dreaming for part of the half hour. (Yes) And he said, 'No regrets'.

Lady A. And it also comes to what you said to me which was such a tremendous help in Sydney about the present moment being always lit because you can't then be bothered to waste time regretting, because the present moment is always available.

Dr. R. And we have to forget the past altogether before we get on to the 5th step of the Ladder.

One of the difficulties that we are at last appreciating now in the West, whereas people have known it for centuries before, is that our whole system of education and everything – our whole way of thinking in the West for the last 300 years since Descartes – is done with the dominant hemisphere which thinks in words and which communicates; and the other one is pushed right out like the poor man in the story of Dives and Lazarus.

I thought it might make you laugh – because I don't like seeing people too serious – to read you a poem written not very long ago called 'The Psychoanalyst'. I want you to realise that I'm not tilting at the analysts (laughter) or even doctors. But from my point of view this is a good description of the dominant hemisphere in the intellectual:

The Psychoanalyst

His suit is good, his hands are white,
He smiles all day, and sleeps all night
Because he's always, always right.

He states his theory. You agree?
Well then, of course, it's plain to see
That he is right as right can be!

You disagree? Ah, that is mere
Resistance to the facts you fear:
Truth is confirmed, the case is clear!

So you are free as air to choose,
Take his advice or spurn his views,
But heads he wins and tails you lose.
His fees are large, his cares are light,
His analytic eyes are bright,
He glows with pride as well he might.

The analyst is always right.

John Tessimond (1902-1962)

Well, anyway, that's *my* dominant hemisphere! (laughter) You seem to agree Mark Tyou! (I recognize that!) So we have a lot to do in simply weakening the power of this dominant hemisphere and of the talking to oneself that goes on during meditation even, and trying to reach this silence. Because the other hemisphere knows the way to the Atman and has no way of expressing it. So that's why we try in a half hour to reach silence, stillness. Any views? Are women better than men at this? The Shankaracharya says there is no difference in this respect! Are all the analysts up in arms?

Lady A. It's funny you should read that poem, Dr. Roles, because Bridget Hall and I were talking together a week ago and I was saying to her that one thing I had just recently been finding helpful was to go round saying to myself, 'I *don't* always know and I'm *not* always right' and we both agreed! (laughter)

Dr. R. The point one wants to make is that the human mind is fine. It has everything needed. One mustn't tamper with it. One mustn't try and do things to it. One mustn't try and restrain it. What one has to do is attack one's false personality – 'I'M always right' – this part of you speaking for the rest. So we simply attack this ego and get rid of that and we don't put trammels on the mind or discipline the body or anything like that beyond a certain minimum that is necessary.

I think we'll now approach it the other way round, shall we? Would you James, read...

Dr. W. These are words of the Shankaracharya to us in September 1975:

One has to realise two aspects of the existence of Param-Atman: One is the idea which says that there is a God somewhere, and you connect yourself with the God at a particular time, and only when you call him does He come to help you. When you pray, then you unite yourself with that God; but after that when you go back into the worldly life, you are *there*, and God is somewhere else. So you are apart from God.

This (dualistic) concept of a far-removed God is not working in this (sceptical) scientific age and makes no appeal to the average man of today who has acquired (so-called) scientific knowledge, so we don't need to talk about that kind of God.

According to us, today, the need for all of us is to understand and explain the Absolute consciousness or Param-Atman, who is immanent, always present together with us, guiding and helping, at each moment in every walk of life. We need to present this picture of the Absolute to ourselves and to our people at home.

Dr. R. And we should set our sights very high. To make emotional centre work as it should we have to have a *Deva-ista*, an ideal object of devotion. Something we could worship *and* love. It is this picture of the God within, the Self within, which is going to take us much more quickly to our destination and get help from this Divine Self much more quickly because every step from now depends on help from the Atman, the Grace of the Atman. We've done all the slogging and have long had enough information to whet our appetite; but *we're thinking too much of ourselves the whole time* – *my* meditation, my limitations, my failings or my successes. If we think of the Atman and of what the Atman within wants – and he wants love and happiness and laughter (even under the most adverse situations) and courage. And so in our actions we try to do them remembering that He is looking on. In our meditation

we try and do it for the sake of this Self, always remembering its supreme benevolence. We try to be magnanimous in our dealings with other people because He is always magnanimous.

Mrs. Fleming. It came to me today – transparency. There is a feeling of both the silent hemisphere and the active hemisphere that the mind should be transparent – one doesn't need to divide it.

Dr. R. Yes, transparency (or 'innocence' which the Maharishi used to say is the most important need in meditation) and then we will realise that we have *one* mind, one heart, one faith, one God. So let's now meditate and go for stillness.

MEDITATION

We'll do a little more shortly. But I want to remind you about setting our sights very high. To the true Christian, Christ is born within him and lives within him and the Gospels can purify his emotional centre, especially reading the Gospel of St John with emotional energy. To the people in India from whom the meditation came, the Vedas, the scriptures perform the same function and to many, Krishna is *within* a person and is the embodiment of the Param-Atman. I'll ask Lady Allan to read part of a passage from the best known one – the Bhagavad Gita:

Lady A. This is a description of the Divine Self within, in Chapter 10 of the Gita, W. B. Yeats's translation and it starts at verse 17:

17. Arjuna asked: My Lord how shall I know you after constant meditation? What are the manifestations to which meditation will lead me?

(Of the 23 descriptive verses – 20 to 43 – which follow, we'll quote only these few)

20. Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, and the life, and the end of them all.

21. Of powers I am the Creator; of luminaries the sun; the whirlwind among winds; and the moon among planets.

23. Among the vital Forces I am Life itself; I am Mammon (wealth) to the Godless; I am the Energy in fire, wind, sky, sun, moon and planets...

34. Of Time inexhaustible I am the Eternal Present...

35. I am all-devouring Death; I am the Origin of all that may happen; I am Fame, Fortune, Speech, Memory, Constancy and Forgiveness.

42. Whatever is glorious, excellent, beautiful or mighty, be assured that it comes from only a fragment of my splendour.

43. But what is the use of all these details to you Arjuna? Enough that I sustain the universe with my little finger.

Dr. R. Now, let's meditate again.

MEDITATION

So each of us has to form for himself as complete a picture as possible of his Deva-ista, of his ideal object of love or worship. And it will be in accordance with how much he understands, how much he knows what it is that he or she has to do. The Shankaracharya said once:

That Sri Ramana Maharshi (who was the principal saint in India in the first half of this century) spent 14 years asking himself the question: 'Who am I?' He never let it far from his thoughts; it was behind his meditation and so on. As soon as he was on the right track, it took him only a few moments to get what he wanted.

So though that may seem a big distance if you go into detail, yet it's really close at hand if you do it the right way. I think that perhaps one should tell a story which you have heard and which is often told to show that though some very big aim like 'having the Param Atman always in mind' may seem very far away, yet to make small efforts persistently commands his admiration and he comes to your help.

This story is about the two sea birds who were very angry with the sea for washing away their eggs. They determined to fill up the sea and they took in their beaks a little sand and put it in the sea and took a little sea-water and dropped it on the sand. Quite a few other birds, seeing them, started to imitate them. As H.H. said, it was a curious sight to see. And when a great saint called Adastya came along, he was very struck by this, full of curiosity to know what they were doing, and he went and asked them. When they told him, he said, 'Do you really think that your efforts during this short life will succeed in filling up the sea?' And they said, 'No, not in this short life perhaps; but we're prepared to spend all our lives, and many many lives, doing this because this frightful injustice must be punished.' He was so struck by their persistence and undaunted determination that (having miraculous powers) he commanded the sea to give them back their eggs; and they were duly deposited back on the rock.

H.H. says we must determine who is who in this story, in this fairy tale. The saint was the Param-Atman. The birds were men. The eggs were man's true and high aspirations. If man makes little efforts over a long time, then the world will see that all his tribulations will be conquered by the Param-Atman for him and the waves of the sea will lie down in submission.

Dr. R. But we won't get that by *thinking of ourselves*. Not even at dinner time! (laughter) It's ten past eight. Any final question to end all questions? Like a final meal to end all meals or a final bath to end all baths!

Miss Scrutton. (rpt) You spoke of the Atman always watching, but does this not mean that we're rather separate. Should we not be thinking that we *are* the Atman? And we have lost this realization.

Dr. R. Yes, it was my mistake. I shouldn't have said that. The great thing is to realise that nothing we ordinarily call 'I' is oneself. The only thing we can call 'I' is something which never changes, being on the lines of 'Now' which is not in time at all. And we call that the Atman – something always present. But the Atman is continually being hampered by neglect. Nobody remembers HimSelf – the one real thing is forgotten all the time. All the energy which He would need to carry out the ruling of His Kingdom is taken from Him and

He continually has to turn in this state of bankrupt energy to the Param-Atman, the great Self of the whole universe of which He is a single atom.

And that is another Vedic example – this story of the *two birds on a tree* in the Upanishads:

Two birds of identical plumage have made their homes in a single tree: the one eats of the sweet fruit the other looks on, not eating. The first is the individual self – the Atman – who feels discouraged and sad because of the neglect and gets too interested in small details. But as soon as he looks at the other bird and realises that their plumage is identical, he lifts up his heart and there is joy all round.

Dr. R. The true food of the Atman is joy and he is getting mighty little of it today.

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