

10 March 1981

## GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

On the platform: Dr. Roles, Lady Allan and Mr. Roy Jacob (R.J.)

After some announcements:

R.J. We want to thank everybody who responded to the appeal last year for financial contributions, particularly those who hadn't given anything before. In case anyone else wants to make a covenanted donation, there are forms for this purpose at the top of the stairs.

Dr. R. It's gradually sinking in to a few intellectuals like myself (although it has already been seen, I'm sure, by a number of other people here) that the less you allow the ordinary thinking mind to have anything whatsoever to do with the meditation, the better. I've had so much experience just lately of letting the inward-looking hemisphere get on with it, without prompting from the other – how much more satisfactory that is! A lot of the reasons why the Shankaracharya says the things he does is because he is seeing it that way and we (in the common run of life) are more and more making everything complicated by specialising in what represents our 'personality' – the left hemisphere where all the speech is. Whereas the 'essence' that really knows all the answers and has the hot line to the Param-Atman really knows intimately what the meditation is about and what the Self that is within us all really needs and wants. So I thought we would read first of all a passage which we included at the end of last Monday but make it a basis for more discussion.

R.J. (reading) Divine emotion is entirely positive. That is to say it cannot turn negative. Therefore human emotions are created in their origin perfect.

Dr. R. I rather like the idea of taking the word 'bliss' to mean 'positive emotion'. However it feels – love, joy, peace, faith, which doesn't turn negative – because this is the key point of our Western system and positive emotion is the necessary thing for Self-realization. Do read that again.

R.J. (reading)

Divine emotion is entirely positive. That is to say it cannot turn negative the way human emotions do. Therefore creation is in origin perfect and complete. And yet in order to manifest the existence of Divine love and bliss, this creation is evolving according to certain laws which we call the Laws of Nature.

Dr. R. One of them being the Law of Three Forces.

R.J. (reading)

The Absolute, creation itself, is very much like a children's game of hide-and-seek. In this game a number of children get together, and one of them is selected to hide himself. All close their eyes and that one goes into hiding. Then the others start looking for him and each of these children seeks the hidden one in their own way.

Dr. R. And this we must stress – that everyone has their own way of developing this connection with the inner Self and the Self of the universe. You can't dictate to somebody else how they ought to think about it – what way they *ought* to choose. So each of the children is taking part in this game of hide-and-seek and *seeking in his own way*, which may not seem at all right to a lot of us but feels right to the individual concerned.

R.J. (reading)

This seeking is proceeding all the time. Some people find and some don't and one also observes that many forget what it is that they are seeking. Most people in their ignorance have quite forgotten what the game of hide-and-seek is for – what they are here to seek – and so they are wholly absorbed in worldly affairs in which permanent happiness cannot be found.

Dr. R. There is nothing wrong in dealing with worldly affairs and having a busy life, but one's world mustn't be entirely filled with that. One must have a little room for one's next journey.

R.J. (reading)

They are wandering. And this too is part of the game because without it there would be no game. Just as without an audience there would be no play, no drama. Some fortunately remember what they are to seek is actually in itself a manifestation of bliss.

(Record, 24 September 1975)

Dr. R. Yes, great joy in seeking. In life there is nothing to seek. If the majority of people didn't wander and some few get clues in this treasure hunt, there would be no game, no excitement or interest.

Mrs. Wheatley. I was just wondering is it the Overseer who tells us if we're getting warmer?

Dr. R. *You* have to answer that because anything I say about it is (for you) mere theory. Does it matter all that much? Something tells you if you're getting warm. That's good enough. Something tells you if you're getting colder; and then you have to stop what you're doing at once and turn the other way. I think that's enough.

Tony Anholt. At the beginning of the reading it was said that Divine emotion can't turn negative. But one does on rare occasions have a brief taste of that feeling which disappears and can be replaced by negative emotions. What is happening there?

Dr. R. Oh yes; it's very evanescent, the Divine emotion that can't turn negative. It is replaced by something rather less divine! (laughter) And you deceive yourself because you think you are still feeling that pure emotion.

But I wanted to ask *you* something. I don't quite get the full implication of H.H.'s remark that 'it's like an actor and an audience'. I think there is something missed in the translation; that this game of children's hide-and-seek doesn't seem to quite tally with that. Do you get... ?

T.A. No, I've always been a puzzled where to put the audience in this simile of the theatre.

Dr. R. I'm sure the puzzle is where the audience is going to put you! (laughter) But I know this is rather difficult. It is, I think, because the religious play-cycles that you see in India are so very different from anything we see here. The actors are special people, very often all males, not sex differentiated in any way, and they are trained in the long tradition of the two epic dramas (those of Krishna and Rama) and they are very different from anything we call drama here. So it may be that this introduces a difficulty.

Lady A. The Shankaracharya seems to use it very much to describe different roles – that they are all equal but they are like parts in a drama.

Dr. R. Yes. One person plays Krishna in the Krishna play-cycle one time and he plays the villain another time and so on. They're not specialists.

The essence of what meditation is supposed to do is of the utmost simplicity. Every child really knows it. So why the difficulty? It is our half-hearted efforts to convince this knowledgeable external character that tries to become like all the other external characters, all the other personalities it meets, which causes the difficulty. There's a story in the same series of audiences, but it was led up to in this way.

Lady A. This was in answer to Dr. Roles.

Ordinary man does not have much basis from which to respond so he is given very simple incentives and through these simple incentives it is expected that he will get the impulses and begin moving. The nature of this incentive is that the God within is available to everybody everywhere and in the most simple way, but the simplicity has been lost. So people feel separated. Not that they are in reality separated, but they feel separated because they have forgotten that the unity exists. It is forgetfulness that comes between the Universal and the individual. Otherwise He, the Universal or the God within, is simply available to everyone who desires him enough.

And the story:

A Mahatma was approached by an ordinary man and asked what he should do. He didn't feel he could undergo much discipline so what was the simplest way it could be done? He was told he could find Param-Atman if he just kept running and when he fell exhausted he would find Param-Atman. So the man asked, 'If the Param-Atman can be found by running, why not just by sitting?' 'Well,' replied the Mahatma, 'will you tell me how long it will take you to fall exhausted by the effort of just sitting?'

(Record, 26 September 1975)

Dr. R. The point is that you must prove that you want the Param-Atman above everything else. You will not take 'no' for an answer. You will not be put off or change to anything else. Are you seriously doing something for the Param-Atman for His sake or for something for this world? We are only required to give up our ignorance of the fact that unity between the individual and the Param-Atman already exists but that we have forgotten it. We have to give up this forgetfulness by any means.

Now do any of us feel a little guilty of evasion in our approach to the meditation? This business of running until you fall exhausted – we're all the time trying to get out of running too hard in many other ways. Doing a little less than half an hour, not quite so thorough. And this attitude is what is not going to succeed because the one thing the Param-Atman demands is wholeheartedness. Only when convinced that the person is genuinely seeking, does His grace fall upon him.

We said a little while ago that if we meditated together let us put everything we've got into the first five minutes, rather as if we were aiming to fall exhausted after five minutes and not wait for twenty five minutes or thirty minutes! We *won't* fall exhausted; we don't have to worry.

## MEDITATION

Yes, if one practises being thorough for the first five minutes, then the natural process extends itself. The ordinary way that people are content with is when the meditation brings you to a stillness which is a void. It was explained to us that the followers of the Buddha Gautama fell into disrepute and were expelled from India because they only took it that far – so that they explained that the whole of creation was a void. They taught this in the Buddhist teaching. Whereas the real meditation is when you throw over all your luggage and go with extreme lightness of mind to this emptiness; and when you get the lightness and stillness, then your mind rises. All the heaviness of mental gravity that you have disappears and your mind can then take in the whole of creation. And this is where the effect of meditation should culminate in the recognition of the Param-Atman and not of the Atman only.

Any questions about that? We ought not to be content with very rarely getting that lightness of mind and heart which is promised us.

Ray Hodge. Does this imply two levels of meditation, first of all taking in the Atman and then the Param-Atman?

Dr. R. There is only real meditation and pseudo-meditation. We won't allow this question of two levels of meditation or we would have to arrange a meeting for first level of meditators and another for second and lower levels (laughter). No, this is genuine meditation where you cast off all your luggage and then your mind is light and you realize that your own Self lives in the hearts of all. And that realization brings you to the idea that there is a Lord of the Universe and that there is a way by which the individual has a secret line to get him... If only people could realize it, if only people knew it.

Lady A. This would manifest as a confidence and realisation in the rest of the day, not necessarily the actual half-hour.

Dr. R. It starts in the half-hour, the more you can achieve that confidence during the half-hour, the more you'll get moments during the day extending into two minutes and five minutes and half-hours where you are aware of the greatness and the immanence of your great instructor.

This is not only peculiar to today. Somebody very kindly sent me three addresses by the distinguished Father John Main in the tradition of St Benedict who was taught the meditation long before he became a monk, when he was in the Colonial Service in India. A Guru taught him Mantra meditation in much the same way as we have been taught it. He found not the slightest difficulty in assimilating it later into his monk's rituals, except that the Mantra and the expression prescribed by St Benedict in his tradition is too complicated. It was four rather long Latin words and it required intellectual comprehension. He returned therefore to the tradition of John Cassian.

Lady A. And this is a shortened account of the story of John Cassian:

The story of John Cassian and his friend Germanicus has a striking contemporary relevance. Like many hundreds of modern Westerners looking and travelling

to the East, these two young monks of the 4th century wanted to find peace and suffered restlessness while they looked for someone who could teach them. They found wanting, the monastery in Bethlehem, and so set off to the desert of Sinai where they found Isaac the Syrian who spoke to them from the heart, not from theory but out of his own experience and distilled wisdom. They decided 'this is what we must do'. But after they had said goodbye to Abba Isaac and were returning to their own cells, they suddenly stopped in their tracks. 'We know all that he said to be true; we wouldn't have come all this way if we hadn't known it, but what the Holy Abbot did not tell us was how we are going to do it. How are we going to achieve this continual recollection and internal prayer?' So they returned to Abba Isaac who gave the impression that he had already foreseen and expected their return. He explained that the great danger in all Christian prayer was to cut God down to our size in order to talk to him and making a convenient shoulder for us to cry on; rather than to understand His utter transcendence and His closeness. What was needed was a prayer without images that restricted itself to the repetition of a single verse or word – Mantra. And Isaac instructed them how to say their Mantra so that it is always in your heart. When you go to sleep, you will be saying this Mantra till, having been moulded by it, you grow accustomed to repeat it even in your sleep.

Dr. R. But we don't know what the Mantra was and the author of the treatise in which I found this account, Father John Main, who had himself followed a Guru who taught him meditation when he was in the British Colonial Service, he does not tell us. In this case there were missing several important features that we have been lucky enough to learn.

It's like anything that you read about in some printed account – it's not like the real thing. It's rather like reading the Maharishi's treatise *The Treasury and the Market* and being content with that instead of going back and back to the Shankaracharya to have explained to us how to do this, how to get over this difficulty or that difficulty. So people should now feel free to read more of what the Shankaracharya has said in these twelve volumes. But they have to realise that it is much more than the staff can do to type all this and they must somehow find a way of coming and copying it out or getting a friend to copy it out – but there is nothing like reading first-hand accounts.

Anyway the distinguishing feature of John Cassian who became a famous saint and was canonised later in the fourth century AD is his refusal to take no for an answer and his refusal to be content. He went first to Bethlehem and that was unsatisfactory. Then he went to Mount Sinai and the desert, and the desert fathers – Father Isaac the Syrian. And he went back to Isaac in fact. So do let's not be content, but ask, if there are any difficulties.

Bridget Hall. Dr. Roles, you said that if one put all one had into the first five minutes and got that right, then the mind becomes much lighter. This implies that one does the work oneself; but one has always been told that for a good meditation there is Grace that comes down to help. I don't understand where the two meet.

Dr. R. Yes, if you really do the first five minutes, you'll begin to feel the drop of Grace and you do more with that drop and you get a second drop, like that. But you must make a beginning. Undoubtedly the whole thing is due to the Grace of the Param-Atman. Just recently at a Monday meeting we said that in the second step of the Ladder of Self-realization

we had to come to a definite conclusion that everything being done in relation to meditation and Self-realization is being done at the inspiration or at the instance of the Param-Atman; that it is being done for Param-Atman; and that it is being done with energy made available by the Param-Atman. And that without any of those three, you would never get anywhere. So this is very important.

B.H. That's lovely!

Ann Brunsdon. Dr. Roles, I always used to worry about whether I would go or went deep in the meditation, but I think you don't always know. I think you know afterwards when you've stopped meditating. Could you say more about that?

Dr. R. You don't know at the time, do you, because only the active hemisphere knows. The other is at one with the Param-Atman; is at one with the Atman. But only this one knows and defines its knowledge and you don't have to bother it to that extent.

Lady A. The Shankaracharya always used to chide Bobby when he talked about feelings of expansion during the meditation. He always said, 'Well, very good, but it wasn't complete.' (laughter)

Dr. R. If you get a feeling of expansion, then it isn't the real thing. If you know you're getting it. So you made that discovery very well, Ann.

A.B. I think that it causes people a lot of worry. I think that people would like to meditate better and they can't stop the commentator.

Dr. R. All this is this personality hemisphere... if we could only give that up. Meditation depends on getting rid of all that.

Now I'd like to hear from some of the people whom we don't hear too much from. (pause) Are you prepared to agree that we make it ordinarily too complicated? We worry about it all too much? Can we get back to this simplicity? If somebody asks a question which is that of a child playing a game of hide-and-seek...

Philip Smith. Dr. Roles, there is something I would like to know – who is it who is hiding? And why is it necessary? (laughter)

Dr. R. I knew somebody would ask that (laughter). Yes, this is all active hemisphere. It's not a question a child would ask, Philip I'm afraid! I haven't all that number of children myself, but I do know that.

Sarah Beckwith. When my son was very small and we first showed him the game of hide-and-seek, he always used to jump out and say, 'Here I am!' (laughter)

Dr. R. And at a certain point, the Atman jumps out! But you can't make him jump.

P. Smith. Dr. Roles, it is the answer to that sort of question that can help one to convince this active hemisphere. I think this is where help is needed – to convince the active hemisphere to give up.

Dr. R. Yes, it is; and it's the same for everybody. It's only a matter of degree, you see Philip, it's not somebody sticking a knife into you.

P.S. I don't mind that! (laughter) I'd like to have knives stuck into me so that this active hemisphere will give up.

Dr. R. Well you've got somehow to give yourself a good talking to quite regularly and often in the presence of your wife as witness.

P.S. She's very good at sticking knives... (laughter)

R.J. Metaphorically!

Dr. R. Children are light-hearted you know. They do a lot of laughing and the peaceful hemisphere likes laughter – grown-ups are apt to take things too seriously.

R.J. Do you think it would help if we could see life as a game?

Dr. R. Yes, it would.

R.J. Ordinary life as a game?

Dr. R. I find that easier to see than I do the idea of the play and the actor, not being professionally trained.

What I want to stress is that it is possible for everybody in this room to be successful at meditation. People owe their ill success, if they have ill success to different things. So it needs exploration. And like John Cassian, you have not to be content. If you feel a doubt as to what people are talking about really it's then one has to take steps.

Lady A. Dr. Roles, I loved that bit you gave us to read tonight about the nature of the incentive being that the God within is available to everybody everywhere in the most simple way. I thought that was marvellous.

Dr. R. That is a thing that the active hemisphere needs a lot of convincing of.

R.J. Don't you think, Dr. Roles, that if we can take one small step, He takes at least ten towards us?

Dr. R. Yes; he said at my wife's first audience that the individual is like a child who takes very little steps; but the big man, the Param-Atman takes long steps and covers a mighty lot of ground. So do you think we could do without a good deal of coaching in meditation? Somehow take it in a more natural way? The outward hemisphere always studies man-made laws and man-made rules for education, and man-made things in general. But the inward-looking one studies the natural way, the natural laws, the natural approach. And we're losing the art of that. Or rather, we have lost it but now I think we're just beginning to find it again in a number of different quarters.

Lady A. Dr. Roles, when we started to meditate here, my meditation was disturbed by remembering that phrase from the Shankaracharya which you've given us before about giving up – it can be done anywhere at any time. I was quite glad to be disturbed by that!

Dr. R. Yes. Again that's a thing we need convincing about – that meditation is not acquiring something, it's giving up more and more and more. I don't believe that most of us have really convinced ourselves about that.

Mrs. Simpson. Could the outward self masquerade as the God within?

Dr. R. Oh yes, it's very good at putting on an act. In fact the word '*persona*' from which personality is derived means the masks that the actor used to wear in the Greek plays, whereby he depicted different character parts. So the personality is putting on an act the whole time.

I suppose this is where the audience comes in because they can in a room like this, or a Society like this, can show a given man when he is putting on an act.

Joan Lawrence. Personality can't produce happiness and lightness of heart, can it?

Dr. R. Not alone. Personality has a contribution to make, quite a big contribution. It's extremely necessary. All good relations with our fellow men, communication with other people, all learning from our mistakes, all improvement – all this is due to personality because the medium of personality is knowledge, fresh knowledge. The medium of emotion is love, is positive emotion. It can be used for knowledge but it is not its prime object.

Well shall we do a final two minutes or three?

#### MEDITATION

I would very much like people who have time to try and collect some of the stories that H.H. tells on this theme of the *purity and simplicity necessary to get this Grace of the Absolute*. There is just a final one for this afternoon.

There was this very big elephant, proud of his strength and size. But he was seized by a crocodile by the leg and dragged into mid-stream where he was out of his depth. As he felt that he was taking his last breath, he happened to see a lotus petal drift by and with his last effort he took it and offered it in his trunk to the Param-Atman with a humble prayer of gratitude and a simple prayer that He should save his life. And the Absolute came running from His throne because of the purity and the simplicity of this prayer.

(Record, 24 January 1974)

Mr. Clayton. About this simplicity – at my initiation by you, you told me simply to repeat a word after you, which I did with all innocence and a love for meditation. But ever since, it seems to me I've always found a little voice which thinks it can improve on what you said.

Dr. R. (to Lady Allan) This is what you called the commentator? (Yes) Somebody commentating and adding something and subtracting something all the time. H.H. said this commentator is a useless part of the mind.

Lady A. He also said you would not be rid of him, but get him to do his real job which is to tell you whether you are meditating or not.

Dr. R. Turn him on to his proper job! It's only because he hasn't been briefed as to what he ought to be doing.

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