

14 May 1981

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

On the platform: Dr. Roles, Lady Allan and Mr. M.W. Fleming

M.W.F. The next of these Meditation Meetings will be on Tuesday, 9th June. We have set aside three days for Initiations this term – on Sunday 14th June, Wednesday 17th, and Sunday 21st. If you know of anyone who is interested, please let us have the particulars in the usual way; and please fairly soon.

We have had one or two requests for a similar kind of Introductory Meeting to the one we had last term, but it is not thought to be quite the right thing to have, because the right preparation, Dr. Roles says, is that the sponsor should deal with all that on an absolutely individual personal basis – tell each person what they need to know in order to have them prepared for Meditation if they really want it. Then just a private conversation with somebody before the day. So if you've got anybody, please bear all that in mind.

Dr. R. Meditation is really such an individual thing – there are as many different approaches as there are people – and if you have a group meeting always you get a sort of personality reaction. Something becomes set, fixed. So preparing people for meditation should be on the basis of private tuition. In India the Shankaracharya personally sees candidates at some point before he initiates them, or they are initiated, and sees if they are ready for it, and clears up any doubts and so on that they may have, and judges which Mantra they should have. So it is very private when rightly done. There is no mass giving of meditation as there is across the United States today – the army, businesses, everywhere. This house is a place where you can have it absolutely privately the way you want it.

M.W.F. About the small meditation meetings that have been held in various places, mostly outside of London, for meditators who can't get to activities here at Colet very much. The meeting at Esher has been a great success and it is now necessary to divide it. It is proposed that some of the meeting should go to Twickenham and a notice to that effect will be put in the hall so you will know the exact address. I expect that meeting will make its own arrangements. This is just to remind people who would like to meditate with others from time to time that those small meetings do take place, and an up-to-date list is downstairs so that you can join in by application if you would like to. The need for that does change from time to time and we just thought we'd like to remind you about them.

The last announcement is that there is a book missing from the library *The Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales* by Daniélou which is irreplaceable. Would anyone knowing anything about it, please get in touch with the librarian. May we take this opportunity of reminding people that the library is for the use of Members and Associate Members of The Study Society and we are sorry but the library cannot be used by people who come here only for meditation as they do not come into these categories.

Dr. R. There will be several people here for whom this might be their first big meeting and we welcome them and hope they won't be prevented from asking something if it occurs to them. Alan Caiger-Smith stressed the point that we ought to present something simple in a

nutshell so that they can have something to take away and keep in their memory. One of the things that H.H. said comes to my mind as very suitable for that. It depends on our Western description of man as consisting of body, essence, personality and soul. We'll concentrate just now on 'essence' and 'personality' which are often very much confused. Essence is what is really yourself, what you are born with, and every individual essence is different from every other in the world. It is entirely distinctive. Personality is what we have in common. It is the means by which we communicate with other people – very valuable and useful – it contains the speech centres – it does all the talking in fact. But it has this element of being artificial, not being your own – it is derived from the Latin word 'persona' which is the mask which the actor put on in classical times to express a certain character. In fact, personality is the mask we all wear when we confront each other. Again no harm in that, if you realise that *it isn't you*.

Now – this is where I want you to remember: In ordinary life people's feelings, thoughts, actions, are all produced and governed from without, from outside, from the environment. Meditation is intended to bring about a situation where these are all produced and governed from within. The first half of the Ladder of Self-realization is bringing your outward experience inside and beginning to open up the inward experiences. So meditation is a fundamental need and as long as mankind has two different halves to his nature – the right and the left – the inner and the outer – meditation will be needed to restore the right balance between them. Is that clear? Let's discuss it. It is inherent in the structure of human nature. Anybody want to ask about that? Meditation is a means of bringing about this right balance between what we pick up from outside and what has to be controlled and governed from within and that balance is brought about by stillness.

The only way to reduce this talkative hemisphere to its right proportion is to still it, and still, at the same time, all the desires from within which it introduces. In that peace and quiet you become aware of something quite different which you didn't know you possessed. You hear a lot of people nowadays criticising the meditation, all sorts of scientific tests, so-called, all sorts of reasons for not meditating. Don't pay any attention to them at all. You don't need to because they all miss the point. They none of them mention the stillness. They are all talkative attacks by talkative people who haven't ever had the stillness. So let us keep to that necessity; and if we don't in our meditation keep to this stillness or don't achieve it for a few minutes or five minutes during a half-hour, then we should inquire from somebody the reason why. OK? I'm sure there is nobody in this room who hasn't at some time had a few minutes of stillness in a half-hour. That's the thing to fix on and carry away with you. Anything you want to debate on that – especially new people?

Dr. Beckett. Dr. Roles, could meditation be a way of stilling the right hemisphere as well?

Dr. R. Yes indeed. But most of us when in action aren't aware that we have a right hemisphere at all. Isn't that so? While your patients are doing their talking, it is very hard to get them to realise that they have anything else, wouldn't you say? I mean you know more about it than I do. Make them aware that there is another quiet part which is just as valid as the noisy one and then get them to stop that catching chattering habit from the other. But I'd like your advice on that sometime, Dale.

Recently owing to stress, old age, and all that sort of thing, I have realised that a lot of the Shankaracharya's stories relate to harmony between the two sides of human nature – essence and personality – although he does not have words to use like those. In his stories, if you see the story and the characters in the story in yourself, you'll find a lot of truth in them. For instance, I don't know if you have heard this very early story which has been repeated once or twice and was always told with great gusto and laughter all round:

A king once wanted to see a real Mahatma so he sent a minister and attendants to search for one all through his kingdom. They tried for a month without any success, and in desperation, the minister asked one of his servants to impersonate a real Mahatma. So he dressed himself up and sat unshaven, unshorn, under a tree, observing complete silence and just looking holy. (Now this is us when we start meditating!) (laughter) The minister reported to the king that a very great Mahatma was staying under a tree outside his capital city. He was so great that he neither spoke nor slept nor ate anything. The king went to him and bowed down at his feet and offered baskets of fruit and flowers. Without speaking, the false Mahatma waved to him to sit down and the king sat for a while before humbly taking his leave.

Having saved the immediate situation, the minister told the servant. 'All right, now get back to work. Put on your proper clothes, have a shave, have your hair cut and get back on the job.' But the servant said, 'When even a false Mahatma can make a king bow down at his feet, how much respect could a real Mahatma command? Now that I can see the light of wisdom, I will renounce my usual way of thinking. I will try to become a real Mahatma through genuine meditation.'

(Record, 25 August 1964)

I think all of us are in that position now. Most of the time we are faking the meditation to a considerable extent – not altogether. It is the personality doing it for various reasons of its own. So now let's meditate... genuinely... as if we really meant it... for a few minutes.

MEDITATION

Dr. R. Don't you find that the more quiet you get, the more something inside one begins to enjoy itself and begins to feel free of the tyranny it is always under? That something that feels happy is the essence.

R. Hodge. Is that something a feeling, Dr. Roles?

Dr. R. Well, you tell me, Hodge. You know what a feeling is.

R.H. I've watched it and wondered what it was – it seems to come in little waves.

Dr. R. Good. Fine. Better not talk about it though. Dangerous! The other hemisphere gets hold of it, you see, when you begin to talk about it.

R. Weigall. Recently I've been feeling the need to let the Mantra die down during the half-hour and just enjoy the stillness. Is this a positive sign?

Dr. R. That's all right. Don't you *do* anything, but if the Mantra begins to die down and leaves you more peaceful, let it do what it likes. You shouldn't, through the personality, hang on to the rhythm of the Mantra and try and make it go on if it wants to stop, because very often

the rhythm is only noticeable for a certain time and then it goes below the threshold. It's still there inside you but below the threshold of consciousness and you don't know that it is going on. It may feel rather like sleep. The way you can tell the difference is that when you come to yourself, your mind is very clear and fresh. And that isn't sleep. If you have been asleep, your mind is very muzzy when you come to. I hope it is being got around that you don't have to keep the Mantra going during the whole half-hour. There must be a lot of other questions!

Mrs. Wheatley. Is personality by its very nature always a false mask or will it one day reflect one's true nature?

Dr. R. There are two kinds of personality according to the Shankaracharya's teaching – the real feeling of 'I' which everybody has, people are born with. You see a baby exercising its feeling of 'I' and if you lose that feeling of 'I' you have a mental breakdown. So there is the genuine feeling 'I exist'; and there is also the false one commenting all the time and saying, 'I'm very clever, I've got a good brain. I've had the best education'. Or alternatively, 'I'm a hopeless flop, absolutely no good at all. I could never meditate however long I lived'. This sort of thing. All this commentary is false. That is why it is necessary to work together in a group, because by oneself one gets confused as to which is which. (to Lady A.) It's true, isn't it, if you watch babies that they are practising all the time to see what is I and what is not. (Yes) When a person is born, he is entirely body and essence. Personality begins to envelop him, as Wordsworth said, during the first few years. By 3 years old, it is well settled in.

Are there more questions about how to get a loftier idea of what our aim is; what the meditation is; what you really are if you only could realize it? I think perhaps we might read what's in this paper for group takers which is given out today, from one of the earliest of writings which was passed on by word of mouth before writing was developed – the Maitri Upanishad.

M.W.F. (reading)

'This Self which thou seekest is verily thine own.' 'What Self is that Lord?'

'Thou must go aloft out of the darkness of thy present state into that which breathes without breathing, that which though motionless reaches all worlds. There only wilt thou find the Self.'

Once, this question was asked of the teacher of the Gods.

'To what Being, higher than the senses, belongs the power whereby this body has become united with mind? Who is its driver?'

He answered. 'It is from above and not from below that this body is endowed with intelligence. There is that Self, above the senses, above the mind, pure, tranquil, firm and everlasting. He abides in his own greatness. By Him this body is endowed with mind. Thus it is that the driver stands upon the cart... Pure and stainless He abides in Himself; hidden by the veil of the Gunas, He remains firm. Yea, He remains firm.'

Dr. R. You'll have another opportunity of hearing that. It's only a little tiny bit of this Upanishad. Ordinary life is the field of battle where your firmness is put to the test, therefore one should welcome all disturbances, every sort of trouble, as a test of one's firmness because in this way you'll realize yourSelf – your true potentiality.

We've heard just recently about a person – a Jiva as it's called – who doesn't realise that he is this Self, this marvellous Self; he just remains a changeable person – the Jiva. But when the Jiva realises Who he is, that he is this wonderful Self, then indeed he *is* that Self, and no longer just a person. We haven't got to do more than that!

Mrs. M. Edwards. Should we lose the sense of I altogether during meditation?

Dr. R. I don't like this word 'should'. Do you lose the sense of I altogether during meditation? Tell me.

M.E. Yes, sometimes certainly.

Dr. R. And how does it feel in contrast with the times when you don't? Nicer or not so nice?

M.E. Nicer. It seems sometimes that the wrong bit of oneself is trying to meditate.

Dr. R. And that carries with it a feeling of I (Yes) and it is better dropped, isn't it?

M.E. Yes, in varying degrees and sometimes the I melts away altogether. One becomes no one and everyone.

Dr. R. And you distinguish this from going into a trance, don't you?

M.E. I've never been in a trance! (laughter)

Dr. R. Hooray! Don't ever get into one! (laughter) Some people mistake a trance, which is a form of sleep, abnormal sleep, for genuine Self-realization, Liberation. No – what you are saying is absolutely right, you see. And you wouldn't believe it if I said it wasn't!! (laughter) So it's much better to make your own observations and remain firm on it, and don't pay attention to anyone else who doesn't understand. (to Lady A.) You don't see anything wrong with what she says? (No)

Lady A. I seem to remember that a slightly similar question came to the Shankaracharya and he said that you would always know that you were a man. You wouldn't suddenly feel you were a butterfly or a monkey or something. (laughter) You would always know – he said that even in sleep at night, you would never forget that you were a man.

Dr. R. This is rather the same conversation as we quoted from earlier: that you've no need to keep reminding yourself all day that you are the Atman, any more than there is any need to keep reminding yourself all day that you are a man or a woman, a human being. (laughter)

The question arises when you see some men behaving like animals and you begin to have doubts; then you have to remind yourself that men are created men and not animals. It's not as Richard Leakey says – that a group of apes met in the jungle and gradually, gradually, over a million years transformed into men. This is not conducive to any kind of truth. We were created men and women and we have something which no animal ever has. We have the higher part of mind called the Buddhi which discriminates between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. No animal ever has that. Animals, gods, angels, all super-human or sub-human beings have to do exactly as the Creator ordered, but man is given the choice. He has the power to choose. This was an occupational risk and one may feel, at the present time, that it was a big one to take. Nevertheless, as the lecturer at our AGM said, he is confident

that there is so much intelligence behind and around the creation of the world and its maintenance that we will be saved from the consequences of our own folly.

Q. Dr. Roles, you said that meditation was a very individual thing. What is individuality?

Dr. R. I don't think I could add anything. I've said that each person differs from every other person in the world. Nobody is exactly like you. And it is this sense of individuality which has to be preserved somehow (without getting too cocky about it). I think we're juggling with words if we try to define what individuality is. You go through half the day without knowing that you exist at all and suddenly you come to yourself and feel 'I am', 'I'm here'. Then you are feeling your individuality. It was there all the time only you didn't feel it. In meditation you don't have to feel it – during meditation you simply feel the rhythm of the Mantra. When you come round though, your feeling of I should be greatly enhanced – when you've finished the half-hour. Does that correspond with what you feel? Who disagrees with that? That's only my view, my experience.

S. Beckwith. Is the story of Martha and Mary an illustration of essence and personality?

Dr. R. Yes exactly, and it was much used by Meister Eckhart and other Christian mystics to illustrate just that point. You must realise that every person has a Martha and a Mary in them. But of course people's Marthas – you always say this, Martha Wright – persuade them that it is necessary to be fussing all the time about the outward things to do and Mary doesn't get a chance to sit contemplating the presence of the Lord.

H.W. I seem to remember there is a lovely description in *The Cloud of Unknowing* about this and how they can overlap in certain conditions.

Dr. R. You must give me the place in *The Cloud*...

H.W. I'm sure it was you who pointed it out to me! (laughter)

Dr. R. (after a pause) Mind you, each thing is useful in its own role, each character we have in us, and we each have many characters. Each is good in its right place. Each is useful for something. It's when the characters get out of place, get too big for their boots, that trouble arises.

There is another story which I don't think any of you have heard because at first I didn't understand it at all – I was rather shocked by it until I saw all the different characters in the story in myself, and that was quite recently. It was told at a Magh Mela, the very big festival held every four years, by the Shankaracharya at a meeting we attended. This was translated for us afterwards:

Lady A (reading)

A king's daughter was taking a stroll in her garden with her mother. She noticed one flower which was just budding, another which was in full bloom, and yet another which had dried up and fallen. She pointed them out to her mother. The mother said that the three flowers summed up the whole story of life and if she wanted further enlightenment, she should find a good Guru for herself.

The girl began to search for a good Guru for herself. A cheat came to know all about this and posed before her as a very learned Guru. So the girl requested him to initiate her into the True Knowledge.

The cheat asked her to give him all her money, which she did at once. Then he took her to a lonely place and tied her to a tree. Then he went away, telling her that he was testing her and she was to remain like that until he came back and untied her. She remained tied up, and uncomplaining, for a long time, such was her faith in the Guru.

The god Vishnu was impressed by her devotion and he sent the saint Narada to untie her, but she refused saying that only her Guru must untie her. Then Vishnu sent Narada to find the cheat and he was found and brought there, and Vishnu ordered him to untie her at once. And the cheat and Vishnu both stood before the girl. Even then, the girl wondered whether she should salute the Guru first or Vishnu, because it was the Guru who had been instrumental in bringing Vishnu to her.

(Record, 1 February 1970)

Dr. R. I took all this very wrongly for a long time, but of course it is clear that this happens *in oneself* and that the princess is one's essence or True Nature; and the cheat is the false personality. When for a moment you are free of that, you are untied and you actually experience the Atman, the glorious figure of the Self, and you don't know whether to believe that or believe what you formerly thought or pictured. Or would you think there are other meanings to that? I think there probably are. One might say that it referred to oneself in charge of a large organisation – that one was a cheat and had to appear before the Lord and free all the people. I believed that for some time and it produced a very depressing effect! (laughter) It didn't seem to help! (laughter)

Lady A. Dr. Roles, a phrase that the Shankaracharya has often used is 'Purity of Purpose'; and it seemed there that purity of purpose will get the right result out of any situation.

Dr. R. And this is achieved by loving the Truth at all costs. Then the Buddhi, the discriminating mind, becomes clear and clean by going for the Truth. One of the great things about our first teacher, Mr. Ouspensky, was that he always went for the truth... At all costs, with great courage, in the face of all sorts of difficulties. And we should do the same.

Well, time goes on and I must be getting home. I'm afraid that the news about my wife is that about a fortnight ago she began to have a setback and it is a very worrying situation at the moment. If it's true that a doctor a day keeps the devil away, well we are having plenty of that! Consulting everybody within reach. Anyway there is nothing depressing or sad about it – she is very brave and we just about get through every day. It is possible to have the greatest happiness under the most trying conditions. I mention this really because so many people are helping in so many ways and we get such marvellous messages from people and we don't really come up to the mark in replying. But they are greatly appreciated.

So ending on a bright and happy note, these are almost the first words we heard the Shankaracharya say in public by the banks of the Ganges:

Through meditation you begin to be what you are. But first you have to come out of what you are not. You are not those changing thoughts. You are not that changeable ego. You are not your different conflicting feelings. Well then, who are you? You are everything in the world and everything in the world is you. You are the ripple of the water saying, 'I am that.' You are everything and everything is you.

And that is Param-Atman – recognition of Param-Atman – which is the only real thing in the Universe and is the name given to the intelligence that lies behind all creation, which the lecturer at the AGM feels to have been proved as a necessity. Nothing could have happened by chance. There is an intelligence behind everything in the world. And that intelligence can be found only through realizing yourSelf: your Atman becomes the Param-Atman when it realizes that it is the same.

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