

8 April 1970

MEDITATION MEETING

Dr. Roles. As we have with us this evening meditators at all stages, let me introduce the subject with this quotation:

S. The word for Meditation is Dhyana, derived from the root verb 'Dhi', which means to *hold and contemplate*[†]. In meditation the moving mind is held and contemplates. What is it that one should hold to and contemplate?

We see, touch, hear, smell, taste, through our senses; but we have no control over the objects of these senses and no control over the repercussions they set up in us – our likes and dislikes, desires and thoughts. Everything in our nature changes all the year round. The mechanical mind (Manas) is also very mobile, and our understanding (Buddhi) changes with time and place. All this is part of Prakriti – our changing nature, which is the same as that of the changing Universe. What else is left to us then?

There is that unchanging, Eternal, blissful, conscious, peaceful entity called the Self (Atman) and that is what we try to hold and contemplate during Dhyana. We should know more about it. We might like it. The more we know of a likeable thing, the more the possibility of liking it.

(16 August 1964)

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There had been previous talks on this subject which relate to the stage where some of us find ourselves now:

Q. How should one think about time in connection with a man's search for Self-Realization? Is his time limited?

S. There is no time limit for Self-realization. It could happen as quick as a few minutes, or take as long as anything can take. Once the mind is stilled and cleared of impurities, then one is near the goal. Time factor depends on the level of Being.

Q. If a man does not climb the Ladder of Self-realization fast enough, is there a danger that he will lose the help of his instructor?

S. The guide is always with one who is under his discipline; there is no question at all of leaving him, until he sees him reach his goal. Even death would not break this relationship, so one should be carefree on this question of help.

Q. How can the aspirant know when he is ready to receive instruction leading to Samadhi?

S. He himself knows; when he finds that he is wholly turned inward, there comes a profound feeling that now he is ready to receive it. This is like the dawn; one doesn't need any other agency to proclaim the dawn. It is self-evident.

(15 August 1964)

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In January and February of this year there were three successive visits to the Shankaracharya, and for this meeting we have tried to arrange the most important of all the answers he gave to questions on meditation, not 'chronologically' but in sequence from practical details to bigger aspects:

[†]Contemplate = 'survey steadily' (OED) – in active life with eyes and mind, in meditation with the heart.

C. I would like to ask – during meditation when a glow of joy is felt in the heart – how can this experience be deepened?

S. Mrs. Halsey asked the same question about a glow in the physical body. There are stages in meditation: The beginning stage when you get the knowledge of it. Then you learn the technique – this is the practice side which is the stepping-stone to putting it fully into constant practice which takes time according to the individual; so that it becomes natural and habitual. To get on to the third stage, you have simply to go on with faith and patience and then this glow of joy will be boundless.

R. We have a number of examples also where a hard knock or a disaster or severe illness or operation has unexpectedly caused a glow during subsequent meditations.

S. agrees. Again two kinds of people. One kind who has patiently practised meditation over a long time (without necessarily much reward). When they undergo hard situations they are able to cope well with them; in contrast to others who have not continued to practise and who tend to become prostrated or defeated by them. (He implied a development of reserves).

He gave the following illustration:

The young car driver who has only learned the technique of driving and passed his test, will perhaps get on all right in ordinary traffic, until he meets with an unusual situation or emergency, from which the experienced car driver would extricate himself.

(20 January 1970)

Dr. R. So we keep along at it (often apparently unrewarded) as a kind of conscious insurance, because when you really need it then what you have done in the past will come out.

Any questions?

Mr. Geoffroy. This is only for certain emergencies; what about everyday life?

Dr. R. No, not only for emergencies, but *for everyday life*. The meaning is that maybe you don't get much reward, so you don't think you are getting very much. But in fact you are; if you look at your life in terms of weeks and months you see how much better things are; but the times when you are conscious of your real power is when the real need comes along.

(Reading continues):

C. During meditation, repetition of the Mantra sometimes brings a wish, a desire to meditate upon the Atman, the God within. Can H.H. give any advice about this?

S. Whatever one meditates on he becomes. So if one were to meditate on the God which one has within oneself, one would see that the qualities (attributes) of that God will take appearance in oneself.

But there are thousands of ideas and pictures of Gods; so one must make sure as to which and what type of God, is really the God. One has to make sure, before 'meditating on God', that one has got the real concept of the Absolute, and not as explained by people here or there.

Since meditation is the Sattvic activity, it achieves whatever one aims at.

(24 January 1970)

Dr. R. May I just mention (for people who have not heard) that everything is to be seen in terms of the Three Forces or Gunas, which is the practical guide by which one comes to

judge everything – one's actions, one's relations with people, all situations, and in fact the meditation itself. We know that when Rajas is predominant and our mind is full of activity, our feeling of 'I' is very active making us very egoistical. We know the opposite, too, when submerged in Tamas our mind is like cotton wool and won't play at all, and then our feeling of 'I' is very much tied up with small bodily sensations. So our feeling of 'I' changes with the proportion of the Gunas.

But what people don't know is that there is a *Third Force*, the 'Energy of Being' (Sattva) which can be cultivated, and always leads to a feeling of the awakening of whatever it happens to flow into. So if one has more of this 'Energy of Being' (Sattva) when one begins the meditation, then things go very much more easily; there is no struggle. So if we want the meditation (and everything else) to go smoothly and happily, we must aim to accumulate more of this Sattva.

(Reading continues):

S. One can meditate upon God, or Atman, or individual, or anything whatsoever, and one will experience the dawning of those qualities within oneself, if the meditation is right. In fact, however, we have not been introduced to the concept of meditating *upon anyone*, because in meditation, even if only for a short time, *all cognition is removed*; and we are giving up even the subtlest activity which could go on in the meditation...

The purpose of meditation is to bring the individual to the great stability.[†] Stability (equilibrium) is the quality of the Sattva. Once the individual has achieved this complete equilibrium, and has done away with all ideas, even of meditation, meditator, and Mantra, so that he has achieved equality or unity; *only then*, if one does take to this feeling and meditates on that, could it be useful. He says the meditation is only to achieve stability, but if someone feels like meditating upon God, he is free to do so, provided he realises that it will always be within the limitation of whatever idea of the God one holds.

C. Could I add a rider? One has this feeling *in the heart* of wanting to reach out towards the Creator; but perhaps, from what he is saying, it is not profitable to make more concrete or actualise this feeling?

S. The meditation is a discipline designed to produce the Sattva and the stability which comes with Sattva. Once you have got some Sattva out of meditation you have to use it. You have to choose the way you wish to use it either by loving people, or by helping people or doing some other activity pleasing to God. You will see that whatever you do, you will do it with more efficiency and goodness within it. And so the activity of meditation is not for the sake of meditation itself, otherwise it will become void. It produces Sattva, and the Sattva has to be used for the type of activity which one chooses to take on in the worship of God or any other activity for the Spiritual advancement of the individual.

(*ibid*)

Dr. R. Is that clear? The meditation is a means to an end. It is up to the person what they do with it, but everything is enhanced if they use what they get in meditation for something worthwhile.

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During our second week we began to put questions from our groups in other countries:

[†]'Stability' in the sense of a firm foundation for any type of building one wishes to construct. See St. John Cassian (*Philokalia*): 'There are three things which make a shifting heart steadfast – vigilance, meditation and prayer. Diligence and constant attention to these will produce steadfast firmness of mind.'

Mexico, 1st question

Q. Does the possibility contained in any moment depend upon remembering the Atman?

S. Remembering Atman is certainly essential, but if at the beginning, at the end and somewhere in the middle one remembers the Atman, then the activity will be supported by Sattva or the Truth. It is not necessary to keep on remembering the Atman all through the activity related to any moment. What one needs is to start the activity by remembering the Atman, and thus the initial Sattva will be available with which one would be able to perform the activity to its full and true effect. One may again remember Atman in the middle of the activity and at the close. If the activity is performed without remembering the Atman, then it is quite possible that Rajas or Tamas would take over, and one would not face the occasion with enough Sattva and miss realizing all the possibilities of that moment.

Mexico, 2nd question

Q. Is it possible that meditation removes harmful tendencies from past lives, so that more can be achieved in this life?

S. The System of Meditation is to create Sattva. Sattva being the vehicle of Light does away with the darkness. The harmful tendencies of one's past lives come in the Sanskara (essence of previous lives' deeds) – the harmful kind. But if meditation has been fully established and is done properly, then enough Sattva will be available to neutralise these harmful tendencies and gain the victory over them.

If there is something bad which is very predominant in one's Essence, this harm will be lessened and lose its strength through the effects of Sattva and meditation.

The method of meditation is somehow related to all three times, past, present and future. It doesn't only correct the harmful tendencies of this present life, related to the past life, but the meditation and Sattva also takes care of the third dimension of time, the future – and cleans everything. The effect of Sattva on Rajas and Tamas is greater than the effects of Rajas and Tamas on Sattva. This means that Sattva produced by meditation wins over the harmful tendencies and allows many more possibilities to be realized in this life; and removes harmful tendencies for the future.

S. (continues) One of the examples which could be seen is when harmful tendencies of past lives have caused a disease in this life. A disease is in three phases. The first is when it attacks the patient, the second when it has gained hold on the patient, and the third when the disease is passing from the patient due to time or other factors. In the normal case these three phases of the disease act on the patient varyingly and he goes up and down.

But a person who has mature meditation going on will be affected only on one level. Without much difficulty, though the body may be suffering, the mind (Manas) and Buddhi will be unaffected by what is going on in the body. He will pass through the suffering and perform the necessary activities without pain or complaint. He will be able to withstand the pain well compared with those who don't meditate.

(27 January 1970)

Dr. R. Then the question was asked, how long the discipline on average had to last?

S. says: It would seem that three years of good positive training is just enough to enable

the people in all those groups you mention to stand on their own feet through Meditation and True Knowledge, and support themselves on the three levels: the level of action, the level of ideas and the level of feeling.

This is not a long time. Even on the ordinary practical level it takes 25 years from birth to grow up and take on full responsibility. How long then is needed to be firmly established in the Spiritual world, considering that the time factor will be on a different scale? Only three years of sincere application.

The Spiritual world is concerned with only this subject: Liberation and appreciation of unchanging Truth...

But anyone who thinks he knows everything after three years, in fact knows nothing. On the contrary; the man who feels that from this point, after three years, *starts* the True Knowledge, so that his thirst for knowledge continues unabated; then *he* would be the person who has understood something about the practical continuation of this work.

(29 January 1970)

Dr R. When you came out later, Allan, you took up that question:

A Can this period of three years be connected with the Ladder of Self-realization; is it for instance point 3 on the Ladder?

S. The general notion of three years is only to bring the individual to a point where the discipline and the method become a part of his life, so much so that even if he is sick he will not leave the discipline or the meditation, and at the usual time at which he meditates he will settle down to meditation and carry on the practice. This is possible when it has become natural. There are so many examples here in India of people who have been carrying on the discipline for twenty years and yet they haven't transcended even one step. So it is quite possible that people may carry on the discipline and yet not do it with sincerity and love (which H.H. mentions precisely). So it is only up to the individual that he does the work with sincerity and love; then he will be able to come to the third step where the effort will be natural. There are students who stick to their classes for many years and cannot pass them, and there are students who, even at the first go, get a first-class and pass easily.

(8 March 1970)

Dr. R. Any questions about that?

We have been around for many years – much longer than three years; this was only due to our ignorance, but we are gradually learning, and I think that with the help we are getting now and with as much of the sincerity and love as we can bring to it, we can assure people that they should get to a position of security in three years; only *each has to do it for himself!*

For those who set out to guide other people there was a very nice story:

An old woman brought a small boy to see a Holy Man because of the boy's addiction to sweets. The Holy Man said they had better come back in a fortnight. They came back in a fortnight and the old woman said, 'Well, we have waited a fortnight; have you anything to say now?' He said, 'Yes, my dear boy, you should not eat sweets to that extent.' She said, 'Is that all you have to say to us when we have waited a whole fortnight?' He said, 'I had to stop my own addiction to sweets during that fortnight before I could advise the boy!'

(10 March 1970)

Dr. R. contd. Then, Allan, you got some very important practical advice:

A. If thoughts continually intrude so that it seems impossible to reach a quiet place, should one persevere for a full half-hour, or is it sometimes better to give up and try again later?

S. One can try not to attend to the intruding thoughts but one should never give up, because once you give up in despair, the next time the same situation presents itself another giving up will be needed. So persist with the exercise for half-an-hour and see how much one can do away with the thoughts. To do away with these intruding thoughts before one starts, one can say a little prayer, or firmly bring the resolution that now I am going to give them up and take to meditation. But under no circumstances should one give up meditation in the hope of doing it better next time. This idea of giving up is a sort of delusion which people accept only to escape what they are thinking in the moment. One can take to prayer or one can recite the Mantra loudly so that this will bring some sort of attention within and meditation would then be possible. Even if the prayer or saying the Mantra loudly takes quite a long time it doesn't matter, but the effort must persist for half-an-hour. If anybody thinks that by postponing he will get a better moment, that is certainly an illusion. This is a tendency to postpone the work, and the next 'better time' will certainly never come! We have the routine work of our life, and if for some important work we give up the routine work, the next day there will be *more* important work, and we shall have to give up the 'important' work, and the third day still further important work would undo the 'more important' work, and this can simply go on and there is no end to it, so stick to the half-hour!

A. Dr. Roles writes that he finds the use of the chanting and music very helpful in 'getting people off the ground', i.e. raising their emotional level. He asks if H.H. has any advice about other things which might be done or used?

S. Application of chanting or music is very much like an appetizer which one takes before a meal. But appetizer can never be the meal itself. The real meal for all of us whether working through intellect or emotion is the meditation itself. What one needs is to take the Mantra and proceed in meditation, because that is the only food. Appetizers are only to help people just to give them a little inducement to proceed on this system. If one wanted to have more of these appetizers, then the mind would never be settled on the system which is being given as the proper food. So one should not try to get any more appetizers, but should be content with little; and should rather attend to the food which is the meditation itself.

(*ibid*)

Dr. R. We will give you one more answer on the practical side, before meditating and continuing in a wider context if there is time. Mrs. Allan spoke as follows:

Mrs. A. The answers about consistency of thought, action and feeling were much valued in London. Is there a particular prayer one could use each morning to remind one?

S. said he had given earlier instruction in the matter, but he repeats it – there are certain sentences here prevalent in India – one of them he recited which is from the Vedic source, and there are many more which are very much like prayers: Each of the *Upanishads* begins in that way, for example, the *Brihadaranyaka* or *Famous Debates in the Forest*:

Lead me from the unreal to the real!
Lead me from darkness to light!
Lead me from death to Immortality!

According to your own set-up in the West you should find certain sentences or prayers in which you seem to have trust and faith and with which you can feel united by saying them. They must always be related to the Spiritual world – not any other sentences. So an individual should pick one and should recite it every morning or whenever he feels the need.

[NOTE: It so happens that belonging to our own Western System there is a collection of Aphorisms, a few of which you have heard, such as:

‘A man can be born; but before he can be born, he must die; but before he dies he must first awake.’

And another: ‘Give up your suffering and create Moon in yourself.’]

S. continues: However, it would be good when one gets up in the morning to say the Mantra which was given to you at your initiation – say it about eleven times – and during the day also before some job and also at the end of it. When one goes to sleep, one should again say the Mantra, and this cycle should be kept up regularly. The idea is that if you start something with the Mantra and finish it with the Mantra, then the whole activity between is influenced by the Mantra and the activity is purified; it becomes part of the Great Meditation.

(*ibid*)

Dr. R. Now we will be quiet for a few minutes.

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After Meditation

I had a nice letter from someone who is here this evening:

3rd April. I have been having much longer and clearer times of understanding of the meaning of things – periods of about half to three-quarters of an hour quite without the old fear. It is the feeling of ‘I’ which is changing, ‘I’ seem to get smaller and almost disappear, and then join in with a radiant feeling. This feeling is the thing that could survive death.

Dr. R. I read this now with a caution to the writer. Yes, that’s good, and good also that you should write it to me. But that’s enough. Don’t stop to admire the view – keep walking; always wanting to discover more and more of the True Knowledge, the Nature of the Creator. When we say things like that to the Shankaracharya, he never gives us a pat on the back, but rather a warning as happened at our fourth audience on this visit:

On the evening of our third day there, we decided that we would really put something into practice – genuinely meditate. That night I, also, got a feeling of ‘liberation’ and remarked to H.H. next morning that I experienced a feeling like the parrot (in the story) escaping from the cage!

He replied that it was not the Atman who escaped from the cage, because the Atman is always free even though the ‘inner organ’ or soul is superimposed. ‘So it would seem that it is this ‘inner organ’ (Antahkarana) that gets itself into a cage because of three things’ – Raga (attachment or identification), which leads on to Lobha (greed or wanting too much all at once), and thence to Trishna (‘addiction’, when one is always demanding).

‘The Real Self or Atman is under no circumstances bound or limited by anything; it’s only the individual Antahkarana. Those who have no cage, experience the freedom; those who are not free are bound by their own desires, attachments and greed.’

It was a warning, not an ovation!

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Dr. R. The leader of our group in New York had written some questions about the meaning of the symbolism of the Initiation ceremony to which His Holiness gave this reply:

S. This Holy Tradition, to which we all belong, was started by Narayanan and has been kept alive even till today. Whenever we enact this ceremony to initiate anyone, we are somehow trying to connect this new individual to this Tradition; and once this connection is made, whenever the individual remembers the Tradition, the connection is actualized in the sense that the flow of Grace takes place. As an example:

Suppose you have an electricity generating station which provides electricity to substations. These substations are connected to individual users all around. Whenever one of them wants to experience the flow of electricity, he switches on.

Here, ‘switching on’, is the ‘remembering’, which Mr. Rabeneck mentions as ‘Smriti’, which means ‘to remember’. By *remembering*, the flow materialises; particularly during meditation is this so. Connection with the Tradition and the forces of the Atman, and the production of Sattva, all become possible only because of the remembering. The whole meditation system is simply remembering the Mantra. Even in other activities removed from meditation – to start the job (as explained in answer to Mexico) with remembering the Atman, and at its close again to remember the Atman – all this becomes a part of Sattva.

(27 January 1970)

Dr. R. Mr. Rabeneck’s next question related to his own meditation:

During the meditation I miss this feeling of connectedness with the Holy Tradition and this is disappointing. How could I bring this feeling to the meditation?

S. says: On the electrical analogy, sometimes a fuse blows so the current cannot flow or a short circuit occurs. This is caused by overflow of Tamas and Rajas or some such thing. To mend the fuse only the correct meditation is the solution. If one tries to meditate properly then re-connection will be experienced. (H.H begins to laugh so much at the implications of the fuse blowing that he could not go on, so R. breaks in with):

R. Could it be that he studies too many books? Or perhaps, like me, he teaches others too much?

(At this everyone round the audience chamber joined in the laughter as the Indians in the Ashram get some of their own back on us Westerners with all our intellectual ideas and manifold distractions.)

S. agrees that reading too many books on too many subjects by too many philosophers is a very disturbing thing! This could cause interruption of the current and is not very helpful.

(*ibid*)

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Dr. R. It is very nearly half-past seven. Any final question?

Q. Has the Shankaracharya said anything about posture in meditation?

Dr. R. He was very strict about the straight back. We are still very ignorant of some most interesting knowledge about the circulation of the force released by the meditation; that is too much for this evening, but we must take it that a straight back is essential. You must judge your own strength; not just build up tension, but train yourself to sit quite naturally during a half-hour with a straight back but without any strain. Any other questions?

Mrs. Spira. Would you say what the Shankaracharya meant when he spoke of the 'Great Meditation'?

Dr. R. He means I believe, that in meditation everybody who meditates sincerely is a part of one Body, the Body of all Realized Men past, present and to come. We may think of it as a kind of ionosphere of Cosmic Consciousness where the souls of all Realized Men look after humanity and gradually guide it. If one meditates sincerely and in the way mentioned, one becomes part of this sphere of influence and gets the force from it. The first time I met him he said: 'Goodbye, but in meditation we will be meeting.'

Q. On this question of 'addiction', could one become so addicted to silence as to come to resist noise?

Dr. R. One can get addicted to absolutely anything. Everything should be done, as he says, with 'measure and refinement'. Certainly one must not neglect one's job in life and one's relations with people in order to cultivate the silence; but during a half-hour one must get at least a few minutes of pure silence without any evasion or compromise.

Q. I mean physical things: not trying to cut oneself off from other people.

Dr. R. It is not so much an *external* thing, but a silence which goes on *inside* one and lasts even when one is in action, making one more sensitive to other people's needs too. One can then go about one's work without that burden of incessant and unnecessary mental noise. Silence is an *inner* state. I should study it more. People have got great benefit from soaking themselves in silence, for then they feel the influence of that Tradition of which each of us is just a humble instrument.

We can have another meeting soon if you like.

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