

MEETINGS FOR NEW MEDITATORS

17 JANUARY & 7 FEBRUARY 1973

(All those initiated during 1972)

While people were collecting – between 6.45 and 7 o'clock, Mr. Allan started the conversation, encouraging practical questions. Chiefly people who start the day's activities early were asking how to fit in the morning half-hour. Some wives were too sleepy, so they tried to come back to the half-hour later in the morning without success; some asked if they should get up earlier, etc., etc. It was advised that we should not limit our sleep (as both deep sleep and light sleep with dreams were essential for the physical and mental machinery); we should set our alarm clocks at a reasonable time, say 7 a.m., get up at once, brew a hot drink and do a half-hour before the mind got oppressed with the daily load.

There were the usual questions, too, about incoming thoughts, and they were warned not to suppress them or try to still the mind.

We started the meeting with the reminder that our word 'meditation' comes from the Latin word '*mederi*, to heal', and originally had nothing to do with thinking. So the two half-hours are for *healing* (the mind shedding its burdens), and it succeeds best if done as near sunrise and sunset as possible.

The increasing influence of meditation on one's life is much more a question of cultivating one's taste, than of making efforts.

The Maharishi (who first trained us in meditation) has said: 'The mind (Manas) naturally moves in the direction of greater happiness, but it mistakes the pleasant, which is very evanescent, for True Happiness, which is eternal.'

The Shankaracharya often tells this story:

There were two mountains and there were ants living on each. One, a mountain of sugar, represents inner happiness, and the other, a mountain of salt, represents the outer world where temporary pleasure is mistaken for happiness. One day an ant from the sugar mountain went to visit her cousin who lived on the mountain of salt. After trying the salt, which was not to her taste, she said to her cousin, 'Why don't you come over to my place? Then you'll see what delicious food is available there.'

So the salt-fed ant went with her to the other mountain; but not being sure of getting enough food, she took some in reserve and held a few grains of salt in her mouth. So when she ate the sugar, because she had the salt taste in her mouth, she said, 'I don't find much difference, cousin, between yours and mine.' The other one said, 'Can it be that you are holding some of your old stuff within you? Get rid of that, and I'm sure you'll see for yourself that the taste of sugar is far better.' Once she had done this, the salt-fed ant never went back again to her mountain of salt.

(Record, 21 January 1970)

In the same way, if the mind (Manas) because of Rajas and Tamas (excessive activity and consequent fatigue) is always looking outward, it will always pursue the outer world as the only taste it knows. If it can be directed inwardly (twice a day), and can get rid of the old taste, then it will enjoy a marvellous new taste which is called Sattva (energy of awakening).

While each individual is different and has a different pattern of life (so that each person had to find how to fit the two half-hours into the pattern), yet wherever this System of Meditation is used throughout the world, there are certain essentials:

1. Each half-hour should be approached with a firm resolution dedicating it anew to the Supreme Self, and for at least the first minute or two, no other thoughts must be allowed; 2) we must learn how to set the rhythm of the Mantra running by itself without effort, and then not interfere in any way – let it come, let it go, let it travel where it wants, changing speed as it does so; 3) that to get the full fruits of meditation, we must learn to keep a straight back without tension. Vibrations created by the Mantra must be free to travel down and up the spine; then one goes quickly to the still and peaceful place where the constant presence of the Self will be felt; and later, coming out of meditation, the organism will be recharged with energy to do our jobs with pleasure, energy and zest.

For all meditators – whether within the Shankaracharya's organisation in India, in the Maharishi's world organisation, or in our own groups here and in different countries, the half-hours are exactly the same. The only difference between those different organisations lies in their ways of bringing people to the initiation, and of subsequently guiding them.

We then read the Shankaracharya's description as given in *A Lasting Freedom* (p.31) or *Way of Liberation* (p.25), and we put it into practice for about ten minutes:

Sit comfortably, feel your body and let it relax. When the body is relaxed, then the breathing and circulation find themselves in a state of agitation because the body has been kept still, which is a rare thing for it. At this point one feels nervous and jumpy, but slowly the body-chemistry adjusts and a smooth and balanced rhythm of breathing and heartbeat follows. But then of course comes the mind, the most mobile of all. When it doesn't find the body and the chemistry moving in support, it will pick up points to play with and start rocketing. It will rush to any minute source of sound or any mental picture and engage in unnecessary duels with any thought or idea or dream it can evoke.

(And this is the finest part of the mind, mark you, the part which distinguishes human beings from all animals, and it never gets a rest. It's active by day and it's active all night in dreams, even though we may not know we're dreaming.)

At this stage one needs to feel an *expansion of one's Being* so that it covers the whole of one's world (because all the world that you and I experience is created for us by our own mind-body machine out of sense data). Once this is established, one recognises that everything is happening within one's own organism, and the true Self emerges as observer. Now the Self gradually takes command, and though he observes that such-and-such things are happening, he lets them happen without bothering or identifying with them, being only a witness. This deprives the restless mind of its power to dominate, so that it loses its force and speed and afterwards settles down.

In this peaceful state of body, breathing and mind, the Self recharges the whole organism from the Source of energy and happiness This is what we earn by meditating.

(Record, 8 August 1964)

(Meditation)

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Even if we do not for a long time reach the final goal of meditation (the eighth step of Yoga), which is Samadhi – the bliss of Union with the Divine Spirit – if we meditate honestly we will quite soon achieve the fifth and sixth steps, whereby the busy mind becomes concentrated in *one-pointed attention*. In relation to that, a story of the Shankaracharya is a help. He has told us that there are always two types of Realized man – the Avadhuta or wanderer who pursues a way of his own – independently of any spiritual ‘establishment’ – and the Acharya or teacher within an established tradition.

In the little-known *Srimad Bhagavatam* (from which His Holiness often quotes) Krishna describes a young man of the ‘wanderer’ type who derives his experiences from the natural scene – from Nature, from people and from situations, etc.

One day he was passing through a city and paused to watch an arrow-maker working in his shop-window. Just then a lively wedding procession passed by, with gay costumes, banners, music and singing. He noticed that the arrow-maker didn’t look up or pause in his work, so he asked him – ‘Didn’t you notice that procession?’ ‘What procession?’ was the reply. ‘Do you mean you didn’t even know there *was* a procession?’ ‘No,’ said the arrow-maker, ‘You see I was at the critical stage of shaping the point of an arrow and this requires my full attention, so that nothing else exists.’

(Record, 2 November 1967)

This story teaches us that many types of skilled work on external objects demand one-pointed attention, and that for certain stages of meditation (chiefly the first and the final stages) one-pointed attention to an inner object (the Self) is just as essential. When we meditate with the Shankaracharya in his audience chamber all sorts of noises are going on – birds in the rafters; cars, a loud-speaker, children’s firecrackers, cows lowing, dog fights – yet no one seems to notice; when asked, the Shankaracharya said with a smile that it was easy to avoid the outer noises, but the *inner noise* was more difficult; and he told the story of the ‘Horse that wouldn’t drink’:

There was a King who was out riding and after some time he and his horse became very thirsty. In his search for water, he came across a well from which water was being pumped into a trough and buckets by a mechanical pump. This made a lot of noise which made the horse nervous and distracted so it wouldn’t drink. After several attempts, the King asked the workmen to stop the pump, but of course when the pump was stopped, no water was available. Finally the foreman, getting impatient said: ‘See here Mr. King, if you can make your horse drink this water in spite of the noise, well and good; otherwise you’ll just have to look for somewhere to sleep instead!’

The meaning of this story (continued His Holiness) is that our Manas – the ever-busy mind – is like the horse. Although it is interested in drinking the water of spiritual experience, it is so lost in the distraction of inner and outer noise, that it cannot meditate. Wise men, though aware of these noises, ignore them and only pay attention to what is useful to the Divine Self (Atman). This is done through Reason (Buddhi).

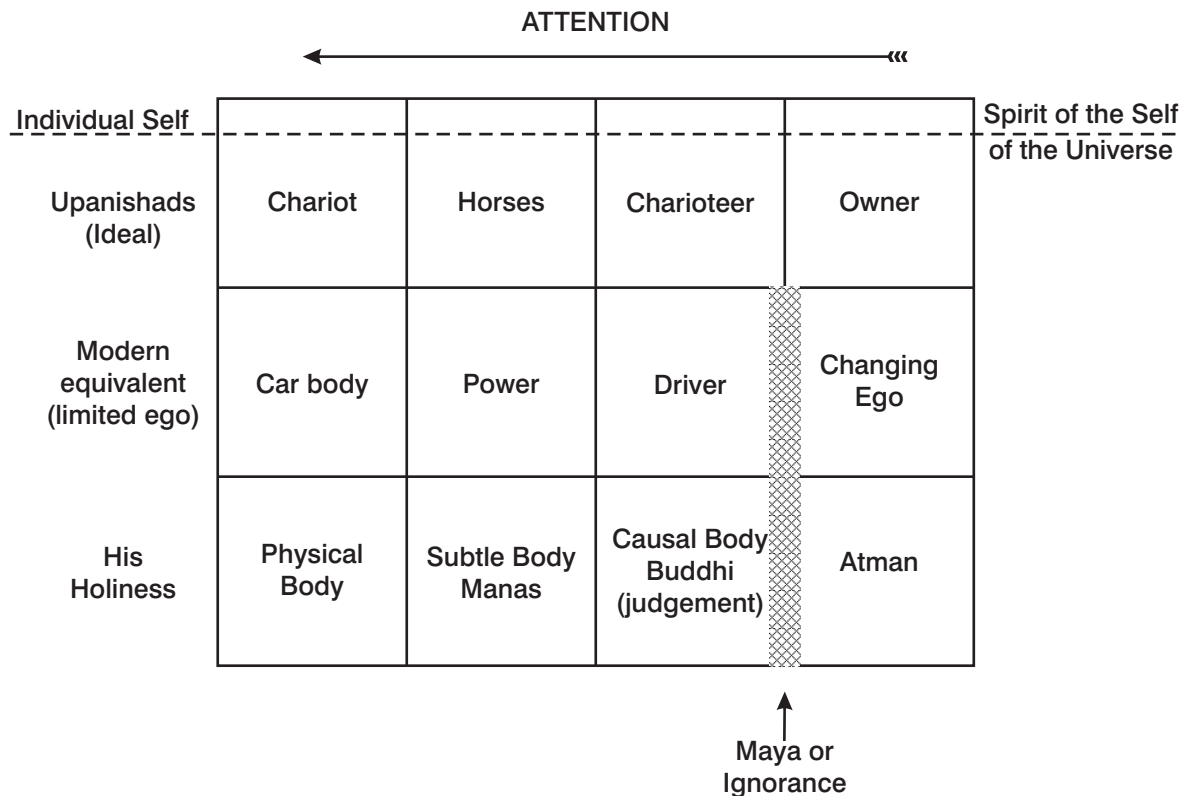
(Record, 28 October 1965)

That, incidentally, was the point of Mr. Allan’s remark at the beginning of this meeting – that he had found it essential to take a firm hold on his attention during the first two minutes of

a half-hour, and dip through most of the noise, and then the horse will drink the water of Life, and enjoy drinking!

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Some of you may, like me, find it valuable to keep some simple working model of the nature of 'Mr. Everyman' which can flash into the mind and bring it in the direction of the Self. Of the many that we have been given from time to time, this one has certain advantages: (Diagram on blackboard)



Obviously, the whole equipage works efficiently as one unit only when attention is directed from above.

The 'chariot' means something more than just the 'car body' – it means the whole car with all its parts, but with the power switched off. The spark of the Divine Self is situated there in every individual, but is only felt as the 'Life Principle' which keeps us alive, and its potential is unrealized. That is the condition of deep and dreamless sleep. When we wake, the ignition key is switched on, and we set the car in motion, and go up and down through the gears during the day's activities. Unfortunately, nowadays, we think of ourselves as 'owner-drivers', and the mind needs a shock to make it realise how limited and unreliable is that outlook. The 'Manas' (or subconscious mind in charge of the horses or desires), is incessantly at work converting sensory impressions into psychological experiences in a dream world, the driver going with it when inattentive. The driver needs a shock to make him turn towards the real Owner and carry out His instructions.

In the Katha Upanishad, 1:3, vv 3–9, this picture of the chariot is fully described – I'll quote only verses 3 and 9:

3. Know the Atman to be the Master of the chariot of the body; the Manas the horses and the reins; the Buddhi the charioteer.

9. A man who has good judgement for his charioteer and holds the reins of the mind firmly, reaches the end of the road – the Supreme Self, the Master.

The first Sri Shankara twenty-five centuries ago wrote a commentary on the Upanishads and said about this last verse:

The question: ‘does the goal just described lie in some external far-off region that can be reached only by following a certain path?’ is answered in the Vedanta as follows:

The goal lies within a man himself. It is neither in heaven nor anywhere else in space or time. It is man’s inmost Self which remains hidden because of his ignorance; as soon as the ignorance is dispelled, he knows this Self.

That we call Self-Realization. If any of you want to know more about your own potential in relation to this working model, you can come to one of the weekly meetings where we meditate together and quote the wisdom and stories of our guide, the Shankaracharya. Just get in touch with your sponsor, and you can have a list of possible addresses and times.

Liberation and happiness come from realising how much greater is our individual potential than we ever imagine. It is much more important to first understand what Self-realization is all about, than to alter the details of our external lives in small details like diet and hours of sleep.

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