

8 October, 1974

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

(After announcement regarding Introductory meeting to the Meditation, to be held on Wednesday, 23rd October, at 8.30 p.m., and the procedure to be followed by those interested.)

Dr. Roles: We've had to revise our plans for this meeting because we are in luck again, and this morning came a verbatim account of Nolan Howitt's questions to the Shankaracharya a week or two ago, the answers to which are very illuminating. Howitt, for those who don't know, has had exceptional experience and coaching in the meditation, since my wife and I gave it to him and the New Zealanders in 1961. In 1962 the Maharishi paid them a prolonged visit, and a year or two later he went over to the Maharishi's course in Santa Barbara, California. Ever since then he has been taking the entire New Zealand group in the meditation – it's bigger than our group here in London. He was over here for six weeks in January.

So he had given a lot of thought to the questions he was going to ask the Shankaracharya when at last he met up with him. After the four audiences he had, he and his wife went up to Katmandu to get a feeling of Everest and let it soak in, so we had this letter from the hotel Yellow Pagoda, Katmandu. His letter starts off:

The evening (Sunday, September 22nd) before I visited the Ashram for the first audience, I gave particular thought to the question of meditation. I reflected back over the years on the knowledge I had received about it and experienced. I then reflected on the other side – the practical side. What had I actually got from meditation? What does it mean to me in practice now?

My experience was of sitting down repeating a Mantra for long periods. What else did I experience? Sometimes when I was more quiet in mind, the Mantra ran of itself and refined itself. But unhappily, it seemed there was generally no bliss, no Light, no Omnipresence. Sometimes, of course, the Mantra connected with joy; but then, lurking at the back of my mind, was always some idea of what the Mantra *ought* to be doing.

Dr. R. remarked: I think this is an experience we've all had.

Letter continues:

So at our second audience I brought up the subject of meditation, and the Shankaracharya asked me straight: 'Did Dr. Roles give any special direction about the technique – the method of meditation?'

I heard my words coming out as I described the various things you had told me over the years, but I waited wondering what His Holiness would answer. He said:

S. I will give you some important hints about meditation. There are a few fundamental principles which should be observed in order to derive maximum benefit.

Posture is most important.

Dr. R. Then he described how he came over to the Maharishi's Ashram where I was at the time with seventy Westerners, and he said:

I saw that they were lying about in different postures and sitting in any sort of position. This is no good.

The important thing is that you sit in your chair (or in your position on the floor) with the spine absolutely correct; that is, it should not be bent or twisted.

Dr. R. It shouldn't be unduly forced to be straight, because our spines naturally have three or four curves in them; but it should not sag or twist or bend at any point.

S. contd: This gives rise to two very serious snags; one way there is a risk of losing faith in the efficacy of the meditation because, unless the spine is straight, the Mantra won't travel round everywhere – the vibrations it sets up will not go the full distance.

The other snag is that it causes diseases of the spine.

Dr. R. Which we call spondylitis and what may follow, like a prolapsed disc. There are two definite situations where we get those: one is in the neck – cervical spondylitis, and the other place is in the lower part of the lumbar spine. Several people have had this from meditating in the wrong position. This is particularly important, so ask your checker, about your own posture – 'How you can sit without deforming your spine, or without building up tension?'

Mr. Howitt continued:

The next thing is about pronouncing the Mantra:

S. At first, mentally pronounce the Mantra with your lips shut as lightly as you can. Don't tense your lips, but just keep them shut (and don't move them or your tongue). Repeat the Mantra mentally, but gradually decrease the effort. You start with the maximum effort and, during the first five minutes, you gradually decrease the effort so that at the end the Mantra is quite effortless.

Dr. R. It will be slowing, and may be giving Sattva, but that is adventitious; you shouldn't be trying to do things to it like that! It is a question of how much effort you are putting into it!

S. went on: If the mind should get agitated during meditation repeat this technique again. First, sounding the Mantra internally, loudly with maximum of effort, then gradually taking away the effort, when it will settle down into a condition where no effort is being made.

Dr. R. Is that clear, or do you want to ask anything about that?

Q. (as repeated): It seems in a way to become almost hypnotic at a certain point, and how does one get away from that?

Dr. R. Well, he goes into that later in this talk. Just remember that the meditation is to keep awake and, if one doesn't keep oneself alert and lets the hypnosis creep over one, it will end in being futile, because it won't give joy, and you'll probably fall asleep!

There are ways of doing this – perhaps for a moment changing the *volume* – making it sound loudly; another way is changing the *rhythm* so that it goes either faster or slower for a moment or two until it finds its own pace. There are three remedies then: change the loudness or change the rhythm; and don't let your posture slump. Very often that hypnotic feeling comes when your head falls forward or your body sags. That's the quickest way to hypnotise yourself!

So Howitt and his wife began to practise this, and then next time they got the interpreter to describe to His Holiness just what they had experienced in the twenty-four hours since the previous audience, and strangely enough, H.H. picked on this very point which you have raised.

Howitt was suffering from dysentery at the time – rather a severe attack – and he had found meditation difficult; he did mention that he felt sleepy, so the Shankaracharya took that up, and said:

S. Before practising meditation, one should know what meditation is. You expressed you had some inertness, some sleepiness – that is not meditation.

Meditation is a deep state of rest, but *rest during sleep is a different thing from the rest during meditation* because the first is full of Tamas (inertia, heaviness); the second is the rest of Sattva, which is awakening. The full rest is when all vibrations stop. That is meditation.

For example: when you have a full night's physical sleep it's because nothing has come from outside into your mind.

So full rest during a half hour's meditation is that you shouldn't let anything come from outside into your mind during that time.

This rest which you get in meditation – rest on the subtle level – is due to the release of Sattva Guna (and it can be increased by reading great works expressing True knowledge, or having the sort of company which encourages you).

(Here Mrs. Fleming reminded Dr. Roles several people present knew nothing about the Gunas):

Dr. R. There are three Forces of the Universe: there are the two that Newton mentioned – action and reaction – but 'to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'; so what the scientists never point out is that that ends in nil! If to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, then nothing could happen! So action and reaction are called Rajas and Tamas, and when events spin on the same place without anything new happening, it is always like the Kilkenny cats – Rajas and Tamas – biting each other's tails until each devours the other in the usual Irish way!

The third and little known force behind any *new* event in the Universe, we call Sattva. This is neither action or inaction – nor inertia. It literally means 'Energy of Being', but it shows itself in some sort of waking up – wherever this Sattva is flowing in your bloodstream or along your nerves, whatever part it reaches, that part will wake up.

Are there any further questions? There are volumes written about it but one should take these three Gunas quite simply. Any moment while in action one takes a look at oneself and sees that either one's engine is overheated or it's cold and needs more choke, or occasionally it's running very nicely and does everything one wants – one remembers something, and it comes! This is when one has a lot of this Energy of Awakening.

(continuing Mr. Howitt's letter):

S. How then do we get rest? Because on the subtle level the mind is active all the time – during the day with thoughts, feelings, desires and intentions; and during the night in dreams. How does the mind get rest? It is due to the fact that these energies, vibrations and agitations (which are always going on in the

physical and subtle bodies) subside. It is this subsidence during the meditation that makes you feel fresh.

The first object of meditation is to give you energy for all your actions – worldly and unworldly. As you meditate, you go on accumulating the energy you need, so that is what you have to do to enable you to spend this in your daily work and recreation.

Here is an example: If you have a bank account, then you get a certain interest on your money. The energy you get from meditation is like that – remaining in the body, in the bank. But out of this energy, there is paid also interest. Like a bank account, you use your interest for carrying out your worldly jobs.

Dr. R. (to A.) As a financial expert, do you think he meant that you can get compound interest on your money which keeps increasing your capital?

A. Yes, the capital can grow.

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Howitt's letter continues:

At the 4th audience I asked a simple question about meditation: 'What is the state of the Mantra just before it enters the heart?'

Dr. R. Here is His Holiness's answer:

S. The more subtle the Mantra grows, the more it spreads all through the body. As you go on pronouncing the Mantra, it moves deeper – going slower and slower – to its root, which is the Atman, your Divine Self. When the Mantra merges completely into the Atman, then it spreads through the whole of the body.

He gives a simile:

When the heat of the sun falls on the ocean, water vapour rises. Later, it comes down again to earth in the form of rain; then by means of rivers it flows back again into the ocean.

The Mantra also rises, and finally it merges into the very Source – the Ocean from which it came.

Starting the recitation of the Mantra through your desire is like the vaporisation of water, and vapours rising into the atmosphere. The subsequent falling of the water in the shape of rain and its going back to the ocean through the rivers, is like the soaking of the whole organism with energy, and the merging of the Mantra with the Ocean.

S. contd: The real thing is in the Mantra. When you have succeeded in letting it drive away other ideas from your mind, then the stage comes when the Mantra takes you in and real Meditation begins.

Mr. Howitt: 'His Holiness then repeated the instructions that he gave at the beginning and continued:

The Mantra means the same as the Atman, your own True Self. The Atman is the root of it so, when you are totally absorbed in meditation, it stands to reason that the Mantra and the Atman will become One.

It's rather like this example: Take an earthen pot; it is made of clay. But when the pot breaks up it mingles with the earth once more.

Similarly with the Mantra and the Atman. As long as it has the shape of a pot, it is a pot; otherwise it is the earth itself.

So with the Mantra: as long as we pronounce it, it is a sound; but when it merges into the Atman, it is the Atman Itself – the same thing taking a different form. Under one set of circumstances, earth becomes a pot. In the same way, under one set of circumstances, the Mantra is a Mantra; while in different circumstances, the Mantra becomes the Atman.

I will explain this concept further: (And at this stage he pointed to an apple in front of him on the table):

This is an apple. What is an apple? An apple is merely a word. You may try to describe it and say, 'It's a fruit.' 'Fruit, all right, but what *is* the apple?' 'It is sweet.' 'Yes, very good, but the question is still not answered. What is it then?' 'Apple is apple.'

Similarly with the Mantra: the Mantra is a sound? Yes, yet when it pervades the heart, it becomes One with the Atman.

When it is pronounced externally, it does other things, worldly things.

For example: When our Mantra (Ram) is pronounced, our Mantra has got energy, fire, love, and things like that. Pronounced externally it produces these things, but taken *inside the heart* it gives Spiritual things – peace, bliss, rest and everything like that.

Mr. Howitt's letter continues:

The translator says: 'The word used for 'heart' is a difficult concept to translate. When he says, 'the Mantra taken inside the *heart* gives bliss...' it's the word Antamukti; it means 'the cutting off of all connections with the external world so that our attention is completely within.'

Dr. R. So we can say that when the Mantra is taken 'into the heart' – reaches the heart – it means it reaches a place where all external connections are cut off.

Well now, should we try and put a little of this into practice? Remember to see to your posture; and also make the greatest effort during the first five minutes, and let the effort gradually finish.

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Dr. R. then said:

I think you will agree that we should experiment quite a bit with that. We will type all this out and let you have it for your small meetings, and also have it put where people can read it.

Did anyone get this feeling of the Mantra going to a place where no outside impressions can reach? Or did they get the feeling of the vaporisation – of the effect of the Mantra going all through the body – all through the organism?

Mr. Hodge. The Mantra seemed to get lost within one's body.

Dr. R. Yes, it disintegrates; it is no longer like an ‘apple’ – one whole thing – it disintegrates imperceptibly. Sometimes we are a little discouraged when it appears to ‘get lost’, but this is quite natural.

Did anyone manage to reduce the effort they were putting in by the end of the first five minutes? Did it become effortless?

Dr. R. to A. There were no loud and prolonged cheers!

A. There were little nods!

Dr. R. Very modest! So we need to practise it a bit before we make claims!

(to John Bancroft): Is that at all new to you? You’ve been eleven years in the School of Meditation; do you feel that gives a rather different slant?

J.B. No, Dr. Roles, really I think it is the same.

Dr. R. So it corresponds with your own experience? (Yes)

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Dr.R. Now, we have spoken about the technique, but really the important thing – beyond all that – is the *Object of Meditation*, because the ‘meditator, Mantra and the Object of Meditation should all become One’. The more you understand of the nature of the Object of meditation – one’s Divine Self – the easier the meditation becomes, because you get the energy and guidance from this Self – the Ocean – from which the Mantra originally came.

There is a story about this in the report of the Ashram meeting to which His Holiness invited the Howitts on their last evening. To lead up to this story, I would like to say what especially we should understand about the nature of the Self:

First, it is present in all created beings in the world whether they are conscious of it or not; no one is privileged in this respect!

Secondly, its retiring room – withdrawing room – is the *Causal* level, the deepest part of human nature – the part to which external impressions very seldom reach, only the most important. Now this Causal level is always there, but is entirely inert; it never *does* anything. It is full of unrealised possibilities – it contains all the possibilities that have been exhibited by human nature since the beginning of man – latent in each one of us. If one could only convince the sceptical mind that this Divine Self is always benevolent and that it is here all the time in everybody, it would lead to a number of very important implications:

First of all this Atman – the Divine Self – *sees everybody from within*. We judge people from outside – we judge people’s lives as a success or a failure, or their situation as unhappy or happy – from the *outside*. The Atman does not do that; it judges from the *inside*; and in the most unlikely and most desolate places you get the evidence. It is part of our job here to collect this evidence and transmit it.

I will get Allan to read to you a piece of this evidence: Helen Wright was reading Solzhenitsyn’s *Cancer Ward*. There you have about the most hopeless situation – behind the Iron Curtain with no possibility of communication on this sort of subject; and in the prisons of the Gulag Archipelago (to which he was condemned for six years), and later being diagnosed as ‘cancer’, he spent a term in the ‘Cancer Ward’. This is one of the impressions he had there:

A. (A description of a doctor of the 'old style' as he nears the end of his life):

He had to take frequent rests nowadays. His body demanded this change to recoup his strength, and with the same urgency his inner self demanded silent contemplation free of external sounds, conversations, thought of work, free of everything that made him a doctor. Particularly after the death of his wife his inner consciousness had seemed to crave a pure transparency. It was just this sort of silent immobility without planned or even floating thoughts, which gave a sense of purity and fulfilment.

At such moments an image of the whole meaning of existence – his own during the long past and the short future ahead, that of his late wife, of his young granddaughter and of everyone in the world – was conjured up in his mind. At these times he did not see it as embodied in the work or activity which had occupied these people, which they believed was central to their lives and by which they were known to others. The meaning of existence was to preserve untarnished, undisturbed and undistorted as far as possible, the image of eternity which each person is born with.

Like a silver moon in a calm, still pond.

(*Cancer Ward*, Penguin 1974, p.460)

Dr. R. went on:

As far as we know, Solzhenitsyn had only the Russian Orthodox religion of his childhood behind him, and the good company of great men like himself – rather hard to come by – and his art as a writer; but it's an enormous comfort to know that, within each of us, there is a marvellous thing. It is when things are at their worst that the Causal level is uncovered and the presence of the Atman – the 'Redeemer' – is felt. So we don't have to worry about the future – about illness or death; when things are really bad, that's when we'll know it! There's been abundant proof of this.

Then there's another implication: we have turned now to disbelieve in the existence of the Atman or God, because we see it as very unjust! We see apparently good men having a terrible time and bad men prospering exceedingly. But there again, we judge from the *outside*. The Param-Atman is seeing everybody from *within* and knowing what's good for them; and the story at the Ashram is rather an amusing one in this respect.

Later you'll hear the whole discourse. In the Ashram anybody can come from that suburb or anywhere, and many of them don't meditate; so he doesn't talk about technical details or Special Knowledge.

Here, he is talking about prayer, and to illustrate what we have been saying, in this story the Holy man represents the Divine Self:

(Allan reads):

Once a Holy man – who had a reputation that whatever blessings he gave to people were always fulfilled – came to a village, so people flocked round him with their worries and troubles. A very poor man came, and said: 'Your Holiness, I live under very hard conditions. I find it very difficult to find money for even my simple needs. Could you give me money – as much as I want? – and a blessing that I have as much money as I want?' The holy man said, 'I could do that, but you will repent of it.' The man said, 'How could I repent of it, if I get money? I would be only too happy!' He insisted. 'All right,' the holy man said, 'you will have a lot of money.'

Another man came with great urgency; this man wanted to have children. Again, he was told, 'You will repent of it,' but he insisted again, and the holy man said, 'All right, you shall have your wish.'

Then a woman came whose husband was very cruel; he had turned her out. She wanted him to take her back. He also told her that 'she would repent,' but still he granted her wish. Then the holy man departed.

The first man now had a lot of money and everyone wanted to know him. One night robbers tried to rob and kill him. His parents and relatives wanted money out of him; no matter how much he gave them, they were not satisfied. People who were his friends before, now became hostile. One night his servant mixed some poison with his food and gave it to him; by sheer luck he gave it to his dog first and it died. Then he got fed up and said, 'Oh, what *is* the use of all this money; let me find this holy man again. He must take back the money; I will be quite all right as I used to be.'

The second man who wanted children got children all right; but they were born with very bad minds and were a lot of trouble, and this man and his family became notorious all over the village. People avoided him because he had got such spoiled children. He also got fed up with all of this and sought to find the holy man.

Finally, the lady who wanted her husband to take her back, was taken back. But her husband would get drunk and give her a good beating every night. She also said, 'I don't want to live with my husband any more.'

So all three started out in search of that holy man to find him and request him to take back his blessings, which they found they didn't want after all!

(Record, 26 September 1974)

Dr. R. The story illustrates how the Param-Atman gives every man – every individual – just what he deserves.

It's rather like W. H. Gilbert in a way... The Atman is in a far better position than any Mikado to 'make the punishment fit the crime'! But this the Atman does not do. He never punishes – always He is merciful. If we reject him continuously He has to stay away and leaves us to the inexorable Law of Nature – Cause and Effect. So it is we who punish ourselves!

Anyway the idea of this very distinguished Being – the most distinguished all through the Universe – as being eternally present should, if we really *felt* it, change our lives greatly – always in a *happy* direction. The nature of this Being is always *benevolent* – no evil can possibly emanate from it; all evil ascribed to that Spirit comes from transmission through unworthy people.

But the purification that's told of in this story – purification through experience – is the way of eliminating the evil.

So, it is a very good help in meditation to try to convince our minds by looking in the great world around for some evidence of the Creator in oneSelf and in other people; and when we get to know the feeling of His presence, the sound of His Voice, and more of His nature, it will be a natural thing to meditate so that the rhythm of the Mantra becomes One with the Atman.

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Dr. R. It is a quarter-past eight; who's for food?, For questions? For more meditation?

A voice. A little more meditation.

Dr. R. Very nice!

(a further short meditation)

Dr. R. And remember that, above all, this Atman is a very *happy* Being; meditation should free us from what is just a habit of the mind – a habit of unhappiness!

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