

10 June 1975

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING**COLET HOUSE**

Dr. Roles. Are there any questions while we are waiting for people to collect? – anything anyone has been longing to ask? (Pause)

There are several questions which have been coming up at Caiger-Smith's meetings for new meditators and he'll bring those in presently, but is there anything fresh now?

Dr. R. to A. Caiger-Smith. How was one of those questions put to you?

A. Caiger-Smith. Somebody at the meeting for new meditators said that they had found it easier to meditate with other people. Why should this be?

First of all they wanted to know if other people agreed. Other people did seem to agree, so they asked, 'Why?'

Dr. R. Anybody answer that? There are lots of different answers that could be given. First of all, maybe we don't all agree? There are dissenting voices sometimes.

A. Caiger-Smith. Some people feel (and I think it is very understandable) that Meditation is the most private thing you can do, and the idea of meditating with other people seems contrary to that feeling of privateness.

Dr. R. Because of the temptation to 'put on an act?'

A. Caiger-Smith. I think there was a feeling that it might turn into a 'prayer meeting', you see, and not be quite the real thing.

Dr. R. So there's a case to be put both ways; we don't therefore insist that you meditate with other people; that's not essential. Some might prefer to meditate occasionally in their own homes with one or two intimate friends and they must be careful to choose which friends help, and which don't. That's a private matter.

Really what is important is the absolute necessity of having some sort of 'gatherings' fairly often. The Shankaracharya is continually stressing that in his Tradition (which belongs to the 'Fourth Way', that is it's for householders living an ordinary life – not living a monastic or dedicated life) and that this is their way of progressing, having what he calls Satsangha or 'gatherings' now and then. At some of these they meditate, and at others they don't. But the idea of the gatherings which are very essential in our branch of the Fourth Way (as they have been in the Shankaracharya's) was put rather clearly to the general public at a religious festival. Then the morning after we had been to that talk at the Festival we asked him about it.

A. (reading). Dr. Roles said:

Would you tell us something about the principle underlying 'gatherings' which you have been speaking about at the Mela Festival?

Here in this audience chamber each day nearly twenty people meet in this Sattvic atmosphere and listen to the truths spoken by the Shankaracharya. This is surely a true kind of gathering?

In the West we have mostly groups of twelve to twenty people – each group at about the same stage – who meet once a week to hear Knowledge and to improve their Being. Very often they meditate together, and they are given a sequence of ideas of the true Knowledge. Is this the best way to create a number of gatherings leading in a definite direction?

The Shankaracharya replied:

The underlying principle of a gathering (or Satsang) is *unity*, the root word is 'Sanga' in Sanskrit, and it means 'Yoga' or 'unity'; the word 'Sat' means 'whatever is'; and he adds that there are three levels of gatherings. The first and highest level is the unity with the Absolute – unity with 'Sat'.

Dr. R. That's what was referred to as the very private thing? (A.C-S. Yes).

(Reading contd.) Where there is no other presence to be felt except the Absolute, that is the best level of gathering, and there the greatest efforts are made.

Then on the second level you have the teacher and the pupils discussing their questions in relation to the existence of the Absolute, the practical ways of achieving Realisation by disciplines of any sort, and the practical application of knowledge. For where the true Knowledge is being discussed, there is direct questioning by the pupils and direct answers given by the teacher. This is the second level of gathering. This also is leading to unity.

The third level is an assembly at which there is no particular question in sight but any number of people gather, and a Realized man or anyone who has progressed on the Way would express his ideas to give them a lead and help for their improvement. In such a place books relating to the Scriptures, or the Scriptures themselves and the commentaries on them may also be helpful, and people in company with them should also be partaking in this gathering. This is the underlying idea.

(Record, 29 January 1970)

Dr. R. We don't have that very much; we don't give public meetings except for occasional lectures here to invited friends though it is a very big feature of the Shankaracharya's world out there. So I think what interests us are the first two kinds – the communion alone with your true Self, and the kind of communion that can take place among friends after the same objective.

We haven't hit on the right way to do this. Of course, some Monday meetings (which are very well attended) and these monthly Meditation meetings are a form of Satsang – a meeting at which a certain theme is discussed and at which people can ask questions and, if they like, can meditate together.

But something more than this kind of gathering once a month is needed. We haven't found today's answer yet. Two or three people gathered together to have in mind the meditation in a Sattvic atmosphere, this is very essential; and we find that those people who after the initiation just go off and don't get this kind of communion very rarely persist with meditation to the point where it gives permanent results.

Any views on this? We would like to go on experimenting to see what would attract people. Only striking results will, in the end, attract people. They won't come long distances if no results are achieved!

Anything anybody wants to say about that?

Mr. Hodge. This union with the Absolute, can that start by just looking inwards when you begin the meditation?

Dr. R. Begin like that, but you have found, haven't you, that it needs quite a lot more. As he said to me in private correspondence, it needs three things: first of all, dedicating all your actions to the Divine Self so that you do all ordinary actions in a way worthy of the Divine Self who observes everything and is always there. Secondly it demands on the emotional level giving importance to the Supreme Self, and continually reminding oneself of His unlimited benevolence. And thirdly that, intellectually, we identify ourselves with the idea of the Param-Atman – the Self of Creation – and that we are, as it were, on His side; so in deeds, in feeling, and in mind each 24 hours we prepare ourselves for a half-hour's meditation, then when the time for meditation arrives, as you said, we just empty ourselves, pronounce the Mantra, and give the meditation to the Divine Self so that we are not hanging on to Him and making demands; but we are giving this half-hour to Him.

Mr. Hodge. I find that I don't give enough importance to the Divine Self.

Dr. R. Yes, we've all got to realise this more and more. We'd really better begin now!

Though it's so very pleasant we aren't remembering ourSelves enough. So make a plan the night before to try different things next day to remind you. Remember that it takes about three weeks to form a good habit; and a much shorter time than that to form a bad habit! But any of us could set to and form the habit of remembering the Param-Atman quite often during the day.

Any other questions now?

The meditation is a lead-in – a means to an end; but you can't expect to go on in the same mechanical way all the rest of the twenty-three hours and then go right through to the holy of holies (so-to-speak) in a half-hour! Sometimes one is lucky and it does happen; then one wants far more of it.

Well, gatherings are needed fairly frequently where people are good company to each other, promoting unity in this aim of Self-realization. So let's try and find what goes today.

A. Caiger-Smith. I think that somebody at one of these same meetings said that when they look forward to the time when they were going to meditate, then they remembered all sorts of things about it, and a lot of what you are talking about *happened* rather than having exactly to be done. Do you see what I mean?

Dr. R. Yes, I do, and I agree.

A. Caiger-Smith (contd.) The thought – looking forward to the time of meditation – touched that off. The reminder was a reminder as well as making it easier to go in to meditation.

Dr. R. Yes, it makes it easier to go in during meditation and get this energy, and then afterwards some of these things I've been talking about do happen! Then one sits and walks attentively; one is careful what one says, and one enjoys things much more.

So it all works together; meditation can't really be an isolated act.

Any other things on that theme because there are other themes that people have been asking about.

Mr. Harbord. Do you think it would help if people who are scattered – apart from each other – could have some time in the day when they knew that other people were meditating, so they wouldn't really be all separate people? – there would be some bond?

Dr. R. Some of the weekly groups have tried this and have found that it is a great help. There is no reason at all why a few people who know each other shouldn't make that sort of plan for a certain time. It is one of many experiments that we should be trying, but that is really a matter of private enterprise; or some plan made at a gathering for the whole group.

But go ahead, Harbord; don't wait for something from the chair!

Alice Bolton. Can we believe that, when we meditate, energy is produced which goes beyond ourselves to help society?

Dr. R. I should be very careful about what you believe, Alice; one can believe anything! All you can do is to fill yourself with this Energy of Being, and be in the company of other people who are filling themselves with this Energy of Being and then... well, I must say, surprises come along. Such results in the subtle world are quite within the programme of the Shankaracharya and his Tradition. He has said that it is much more useful to do this, than to rush around helping people in a material way and often complicating their situation even more!

But one mustn't imagine! – one has to read and read what the Shankaracharya has said then practise, practise – and then observe the good results.

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Now there are one or two questions about the actual technique of meditating; at the beginning, as you know, we say 'take it easy, sit comfortably and relaxed'; but quite soon we have to go further – we have to sit symmetrically, not sit in a sloppy sleepy condition, and as soon as possible learn to sit with a straight back without building up tension.

This is important. He's many times told us the reason: there is in the spine at its lower end a very powerful centre of energy. This energy is, as it were, coiled up. It's supposed to uncoil and go up the spine to the top of the head and down again, and that can happen two or three times during the course of a half-hour if one is lucky; and also at other times when energy is needed. It's a very well-known thing; in fact there are schools in India devoted to the production of this energy.

Our meditation looks after it perfectly well as long as we know how to sit with a straight back without building up tension.

Any questions about that?

Mrs. Henry. Would you say that the feeling of happiness we get after doing the Movements to music is a line in the direction of what you speak of in meditation? Discipline and the tension in the body seem to produce some feeling of this sort.

Dr. R. Certainly, all these things help; but just at the moment, Mrs. Henry, we are talking about certain essential points to make meditation more of a success during a half-hour.

There are other points about the way in which we should meditate: one is that *empty repetition of the Mantra* is futile. Just repeating the sound mechanically – parrot-wise –

doesn't allow the meditation to progress to the point where, if some emergency happens, the meditation will be at hand to do exactly what you need.

There's a story which you've all heard probably. Is there anybody here who hasn't heard the story of the parrot who asked for liberation? I don't want to have to tell it again! (Everybody had heard it).

But do you know who the parrot is? The parrot is your own soul – an attractive bird, with many parts – many possibilities.

Now there are some enthusiasts of meditation who teach their parrots how to pronounce Mantras; these parrots either say them out loud or to themselves but unfortunately, when some catastrophe happens, those parrots simply revert to the ordinary parrot-way of dealing with the situation and no good comes of it!

But the particular parrot in this story asked for Liberation, and when the holy man who answered the question appeared to fall dead or unconscious and nobody understood, this parrot did understand and adopted the method, as it were, of dying – appearing to be dead. So his owner opened the cage and the parrot achieved the liberation he had wanted so long.

Now he uses this (in the conversation from which I am quoting) to show that mere parrot-like repetition of a Mantra with thoughts and everything going on is useless. You should know why you are doing it – that it's for unity between the meditator, the Mantra and the Object of meditation which is the Divine Self. I believe that can help a lot of us to stop pretending to meditate, the mechanical repetition of some word, and really meditate – instead of complaining that nothing much seems to happen!

Each half-hour should be perfect in itself – regardless of what went before and what will come after. It should be, as I said, an offering of thanks to one's true Self.

Shall we do that now?

MEDITATION

Dr. R. (to A.C-S.). Now, do you think it is more enjoyable sometimes meditating with other people?

A. Caiger-Smith. After what you said, it seemed to me very different and much bigger.

Dr. R. (to room). Did you mostly find it was easier with this family here in this house? – in this room? More enjoyable, shall we say? You certainly helped me get through my usual layers of thought more easily and quickly.

Anything you feel like saying that we haven't touched upon?

Mrs. Simpson. I think the idea of making an offering is a very liberating one.

Dr. R. Well, there are three things which keep this 'parrot' in its cage on the causal level where emotional centre is. These are three degrees really of the same thing. The first is identification where you lose your identity in some train of thought or feeling about somebody or some situation; next you begin to get a *favourite* identification which becomes a sort of *craving*; and lastly you become addicted to it and can't get away from it. These each have Indian names in the Shankaracharya's terminology; but it is these three things which keep the 'parrot' in its cage; and dedicating the half-hour to something higher than yourself does

away with identification, and greed-making demands – and addiction to your usual train of thought or habitual action. It can be made to be very efficacious.

Now there is another theme which has come up in a lot of questions. It's one you (Allan) asked that same year in Allahabad.

Supposing with these various attempts we have suggested during the day, that on a particular day we just can't meditate – it's just a persistent intrusion of thoughts. What does one do?

I don't mean saying prayers or otherwise preparing the mind *before* meditating. The Maharishi was right: he stressed that when the hour comes to meditate you should just sit and meditate; take yourself as you find yourself. I don't think what he called 'mood-making' just before a half-hour is much good.

But suppose you try to meditate in the usual way – try everything you know to withdraw from thoughts, and still can't get your attention away from them, what then?

Dr. R. (to A.) You asked something like that, didn't you?

How did you put it?

(A. reads):

I said. 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?

The reply was:

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 it will do away with the thoughts.

To do away with these intruding thoughts 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 will 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. He only thinks by postponing he will get a better moment. That is certainly an illusion. This is a tendency to postpone the work, and the 'next time' will probably 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 the third day still further important work would undo the more important work! This can simply go on and on and there is no end to it. So stick to the half-hour.

(Record, 9 March 1970)

Dr. R. Now what about this little prayer? I find that if thoughts intruding are difficult and I try but don't give up, something comes into my mind which makes a difference. For instance like: 'Only the Atman is real'. Or perhaps the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria: 'Whosoever drinks of this water shall never thirst again.' These little Sattvic sentences can sometimes banish all those intruding thoughts.

I wonder if any people have experiences of this sort or views on some little form of prayer?

Peter Stern. I find it a great help.

Dr. R. (to Colin Lucas whom A. thought had made the previous remark): Do you, Colin, incidentally?

Colin Lucas (as repeated, but somewhat shortened): He found great help in something you read from the Shankaracharya, namely that when those things happen you just say: 'I couldn't care less!' And that makes a tremendous difference.

Dr. R. That stops you identifying with the train of thoughts? (C.L. agreed)

Dr. R. (to Peter Stern) What about you?

Peter Stern. I find that any psalm that I may know by heart, or the Lord's Prayer, is a very great help.

Dr. R. But it must be *short*; I find that I can easily go off on some tack away from the Mantra and forget about meditation!

Some people who use music – in whom a musical theme comes to mind – find they can easily go off on to the music and forget the Mantra. So one has to be rather careful of the devil because he uses all sorts of different wiles!

Lady Allan. He once said that these thoughts are like many friends – sometimes rather annoying friends – so you say to them: 'Just wait a little while and I will talk to you afterwards; I'll tell you about it!'

Dr. R. (added) or like the Dick Emery character. 'You are awful, but I like you!' (laughter)

Anyway, it's much more valuable to coax that part of the mind which is noticing the thoughts and make it repeat the Mantra because (as you know from the story of the man who couldn't get the monkey out of his mind) they become very obtrusive; the more you try to get rid of thoughts the more they grow. When you try to push something out of your mind like a train of thought or something of that sort, it increases tenfold, because you are noticing it all the more.

So what Lucas said was very valuable: say, 'I couldn't care less!', or 'Don't fuss about these thoughts; come with me and attend to the Mantra!' – something like that.

Miss Newington. You said something last time about the Mantra being a kind of magnet...

Dr. R. (interrupting) No, no! Everybody keeps pinning that on to me! I said actually that the Absolute – the Atman – is like a great big magnet, and we put into the mind a little iron filing (the Mantra) which is attracted to the big Magnet.

The simile is useful in getting the ego out of the way – its not '*my* meditation, *my* responsibility, even *my* result!'

Any last questions?

I think to conclude it would be rather good to revise what he said about the stages of meditation. As you know the final three steps of Eightfold Path of Yoga were Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Dharana we've defined as one-pointed attention. Here is his description:

S. When attention becomes deep and fixed and is able to stay like that for a time, it is *Dharana*. An unshakable attitude of the mind about a certain thing is also *Dharana*. (For instance: an unshakable attitude that 'only the Absolute is real.')

For *Dharana* first of all we have to have something in mind. In the case of meditation we have to fix our mind (attention) on a Mantra, so much so that it settles down easily and permeates throughout our entire self.

The crossing of this stage to the next one brings *Dhyana*. *Dhyana* resides in *Sattva*; when you have a store of *Sattva* available and you reach the stage of one-pointed Attention, then you pass naturally into *Dhyana* – transcendental meditation, which intermittently ebbs and flows when a little *Tamas* or a little *Rajas* come in. (They can't be obliterated completely – the excitement or the sleep, – but they can be moderated by having more *Sattva*.) As long as the *Sattva* is not predominant, *Dhyana* will not stop and go into the next step.

For *Dhyana* to stop and to go into *Samadhi*, the presence of Joy is required. When the Consciousness is saturated with Joy, then *Dhyana* passes into *Samadhi*.

Samadhi is of two kinds: the first a merging together of two different identities – for instance, man into God, each having different attributes. But the final *Samadhi* is the merging of sameness into sameness; *Atman* into *Param-Atman*.

(Record, 11 April 1969)

(Note: It was interesting that there were present a Sikh from the Punjab and also a Moslem from W. Pakistan both of whom have been enthusiastic meditators since being initiated by us 2 or 3 years ago. Neither of them had heard any such description in his own country).

Well, that's the target, and it's not so far away as one thinks. On the physical level one thinks of months and years, space and time, etc., but on the subtle level things can happen in a moment; and on the causal level everything is right there always. We take long journeys like the Prodigal Son, yet what we want is right here!

Well, perhaps it's our dinner we want now!

Dr. R. (to A.) Are we having a meeting in July?

A. Yes, we are. As usual, it's the second Tuesday, the 8th July.

Dr. R. I hope you will all be on holiday at that time, but in case some of you are not, we'll be here!

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