

9 September 1975

MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

Lord Allan: I thought that we might start where we left off last time which was about the idea of the meditation being helped by the thought that one was going to meet one's nearest and dearest. Have people thought about this, and have they any ideas about it?

This is part of a conversation which Dr Roles read last time:

S. Before practising meditation, one should know what meditation is. (This was to Mr. Howitt.) You expressed some inertness, some sleepiness – that is not meditation. Meditation is a deep state of rest. You get rest during sleep also, but in that rest Tamas predominates.

Meditation is the rest of Sattva. Full rest is that when all vibrations stop. That is the real meditation. Usually during meditation something external comes into your world. For example: if you have full night's sleep, say six hours, you get refreshed; nothing from outside has come into your body. But if you get four hours, or even two hours, instead of a full night's sleep, then to some extent you feel refreshed, but not fully. The rest that you get during meditation is Sattvic due to the release of Sattva, so even half-an-hour's meditation makes you entirely fresh.

I must remind you that during meditation no energy from outside comes into our body. The energy is already there in the body. The object of meditation is to give you energy for all your actions – worldly and non-worldly. Here is an example:

If you have a bank account, then you get a certain interest on it. The energy you get from meditation is that remaining in the body, but out of this energy, there is also interest like a bank account. You use that energy for carrying out your worldly jobs.

(Record, 24 September 1974)

A. Does anybody want to say anything about this? (No reply)

There is another completely different conversation which I will read and which has the same kind of illustration – something that we can all understand. I posed this question:

A. Stressing the need for continual practice in meditation, His Holiness once gave us as an example learning to ride a bicycle. Sometimes when a boy is having difficulty in learning, a grown-up holds him steady. In meditation can help be given this way on the subtle level?

S. Two worlds here are concerned – the coarse physical world and the subtle world. All the help which one can give is in the physical, so when somebody is trained to meditation, they are told how to take a posture, how to start the Mantra, and what not to do – not to move one's body – to close one's eyes, and so on – all these physical instructions. That is all that can be given as far as the physical body is concerned.

In the realm of the subtle body, indication or directions can be given, and these directions have to be carried out by the disciple himself. Beyond the directions one can't do anything.

(Record, 24 September 1968)

(A. Here is another illustration of the same point):

S. Meditation is a journey back home. Most of the trouble and tribulations which one experiences are in the first half of the journey. When that point is passed you are nearer home in that there is only one point to look for and you don't have to bother about anything else. Meditation is going back home – home to the Self – and what the teacher has to do is to describe the journey from start to finish and show what usually happens and what may be met on the way.

(ibid)

A. What are the characteristics of being at home? One doesn't have to put on an act; one is relaxed; one doesn't play a part. It was said somewhere else, on the theme that meditation is like going back home, that one has a right to go home at any time. This home is not separate from us. If it were, we would need signposts. We don't need signposts, because we know where our home is. If you are peaceful despite what is happening around you, you are nearer home. If you are indulging your ego, you are far from home.

Mrs. Fleming. It is a splendid idea, isn't it, that one has a right to have a share in this? It is a marvellous idea.

A. (agreed and continued) Shall we now meditate together for a little?

MEDITATION (15 minutes)

A. Does anybody want to ask any questions?

Q. Could you say what was said at the last meeting for those of us who were not there?

A. Yes, the theme of the last meeting was that one had to have an emotional approach to the meditation and in order to succeed fully, one had to approach it as though one was going to meet one's nearest and dearest. In other words, one had to have love, and this would make the meditation work properly.

Did anybody else get anything particular out of the last meeting which helped them?

Q. (as repeated) She said that she had got very much from it.

A. You got that, meditating here last month?

Q. Yes. The idea of going home or to one's loved one was emotional and did greatly help the meditation. (She then referred to the recurring feeling of it.)

A. Yes, absolutely. It is important to get this idea and the kind of confidence that one's home gives one – a sense of security. In one's best moments after meditation, one really does feel that all is well and nothing can hurt one. One has discovered what one is, and one is impervious to the arrows and slings of outrageous fortune. Anything which gives this feeling will help one to meditate better.

Mrs. Simpson. Is it correct that if one goes into meditation seeking anything or a relief from stress, one doesn't really get to the quiet place?

A. I think that is so, because that implies having an object in meditation rather than putting oneself into the hands of the Atman. If one goes into meditation wanting any particular thing,

the Shankaracharya always says that this will spoil it. One wants to approach meditation without thought or any particular objective or petition. One just repeats the name of God.

Mrs. Simpson then referred to a BBC programme on what was called TM – transcendental meditation, which many of us may have seen.

A. This programme seemed to me, and to many of us, to present a very different view of the meditation we are concerned with. It was trying to prove that it had certain physical effects, and in the end this was so over-emphasised that it ceased to be objective.

One has got to have some knowledge of course. This tempts me to try something out tonight which I have already mentioned to you, Mrs. Fleming. I introduced the idea that we can't sit back and meditate, hoping that the glory of meditation alone will get us whole way.

The Shankaracharya always tells us that his teaching is to do with the Truth behind all teachings, and he has never in the slightest way hinted that we should become Hindus or anything at all like that. In the same way our Turkish friends who brought us the Turning would be most upset if we thought that we had to become Moslems! In fact, both the Shankaracharya and Mr. Resuhi have expressly told us that we must be grounded in our own tradition. For us here, basically that means Western Christian culture, and the Shankaracharya encourages us to seek a synthesis (and Dr Roles is working on this all the time) between the inevitably rather Eastern flavour of his approach and our own Western idea. If we could do that, I am sure it would be a very important achievement for this Society. It would help us to feel more at home with the Shankaracharya's own thoughts and it would also make it far easier for us to communicate our experiences and understanding to others.

We can't be just a closed community, for if we are, we will wither away. We have to be able (in the Christian phrase) to 'put our light upon a hill-top and not hide it under a bushel'. I don't think that it is our task to go out and scatter the seed widely; that seems to be the task of the Maharishi and his followers. Our duty seems more to preserve this marvellous thing which we have been given by letting other people see from our conduct what its true worth is. Then we can talk; and that is why we have to have a framework of Knowledge based on Western culture. For instance, it is simpler for us and more convincing to refer to a picture, a poem, or a parable, than it is for us to use Indian words – the exact meaning of which are not generally understood. Such words at best are not fully understood; at worst they put people off. So we have to try to express what we are learning from the Shankaracharya in a way which is easily understood and accepted in the West.

This Society has been built up on the teaching that we exist and work on three levels – the physical level, the intellectual level, and the emotional level. The physical level is concerned with the working of our bodies influenced as they are by environment and heredity. The intellectual level is concerned with knowledge to be grasped by the mind. The concern of the emotional level is some form of insight flowing from a direct experience independent of thought or analysis. It has always been the belief of this Society that in order to become whole people in what is called the Fourth Way – the householder's Way – one must work on all those three levels. It is said, and I think one can see it for oneself, that concentration on one Way alone may take one quite far, but will not take one the whole way to Self-realization.

The Shankaracharya talks about Knowledge and Love. He asserts that at a certain level

those two meet, fuse, and become One, and thereby give true emotional understanding. Below that level of fusion each has to be pursued separately.

Now one of the purposes of these meetings is to help us to do that, and it is done in greater detail at meetings which are held under the auspices of the Society weekly. If there is anybody here who is really anxious to build up a framework of Knowledge, then it might be possible to arrange for them to come to such meetings. At them we try to study the marvelous machinery of our bodies, to understand something of the world around us and our place in it, and we try to provide a stimulus towards some kind of emotional understanding. But with all these things, the work has to be done by ourselves; we can't sit back and be enlightened. We have to work in some way or another on ourselves and with other people – together.

I wondered if I might try tonight to indicate a way of trying to effect this synthesis. I am sure others of you (if you are interested) could do far better. Here is just an attempt to synthesise on one level. First of all, I am going to read a short extract from a talk by the Shankaracharya about deep meditation.

S. In the type of deep meditation which has been described, one is directly connected with the creative force. It is a resting point for the Atman and enables the Atman on its own – unimpeded by the subtle body – to come into direct contact with the Absolute. In such a unified state there is absolute peace. The subtle body eventually recalls this – that the unified state is the real state of the Atman and one should always strive for that.

When one comes out of meditation, one should then see that during all the worldly activities in which one is engaged, one does not associate oneself with either, say, the mind or the hand or the foot, or whatever may be the agent of those activities. One remains the Atman and gets the agents to work for the Atman. We must be still to get the most out of those labourers in our body.

(Record, 3 October 1972)

- A. (contd): Very soon after that comes the story (which I am sure is familiar to all of you) of the King who offered to give his throne to anyone who came to meet him at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. As he went to his throne-room where the rendezvous was to take place, he saw to it that all the approaches to that room – the corridors and the ante-chambers – were filled with jewels and gifts of the most exciting and attractive kind. Everyone – except one man – missed the appointment because they were attracted by those gifts or jewels.

This leads on to the question of detachment. Very often that word leads us astray; we don't quite understand it. I believe that it simply means not to be obsessed by something; it's the obsession with things that destroys our peace. I have just come across this in the last letter we have had from H.H. He writes:

Similarly, sensual pleasures are not to be given up altogether for they have been granted for a definite purpose and they should be used, but used properly. Total giving up is not prescribed. We should make use of them in proper doses. (To a certain extent we should be able to judge what those doses should be.)

(Record, 21 September 1974)

- A. (contd): Now could I relate those ideas to other writings in our own culture? The most

obvious one that immediately comes to mind is the parable of the man who gave the supper. He invited guests to a very splendid banquet, but when his servants went out to call the people to attend, they all made excuses. One of them said, 'I have just bought a piece of land; I must go and inspect it.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen and I must go and try them out.' Another man said, 'I have just got married, so I can't come.' The point is that Christ never said that it was wrong to buy land or oxen or to be married, but it is giving a wrong priority to, or being obsessed with, such temporal things which causes our undoing.

There are many other examples of this, but it so happens that the Epistle for last Sunday is relevant. It was St Paul to the Galatians and I am reading this from the *New Jerusalem Bible*. This is what it says:

Let me put it to you like this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit. And it is precisely because the two are so opposed that you do not always carry out your good intentions. If you are led by the Spirit, you are free from certain laws. When self-indulgence is at work, the results are obvious – sexual irresponsibility, idolatry, envy, feuds, wrangling, bad temper, disagreements, factions. I warn you now as I warned you before that those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God which is within you. What the Spirit brings is, on the other hand, very different. It is love, joy, kindness, trustfulness, gentleness, self-control and peace. Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit.

It is again a question of getting priorities right and seeing where our true motivation lies.

Finally, a few verses from Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*. The first few lines take up this idea, yet without criticism, of the pleasures of temporal life. In the next bit, he points to that deep thing within us which is probably what has brought us to this room tonight. In the first bit, he says:

Earth fills her lap with pleasures all her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And even with something of a Mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, innate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

...

And then:

‘O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction; not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed

Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
 With new-fledged hopes still fluttering in his breast –
 Not for these I raise
 The songs of thanks and praise;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Falling from us, vanishing;
 Blank misgivings of a creature
 Moving about in worlds not realised,
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised!
 But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet a master-light of all our seeing –
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal Silence; truths that wake,
 To perish never;
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor man nor boy,
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
 Can utterly abolish or destroy;
 Hence in a season of calm weather
 Though inland far we be,
 Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,
 And see the children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

- A. remarked: Wordsworth's 'calm weather', St Paul's 'What the Spirit brings is peace'; and the Shankaracharya saying that meditation leads one to a resting-point for the Atman seem to provide a starting point for the synthesis we seek.

Could we now have five minutes to try to get into that 'calm weather'?

MEDITATION

- A. This is perhaps rather off our general line; but if it interests you to take this further, I'm sure you can find much better examples than those which I rather hastily put together this evening. I believe that if one does try, one learns a great deal about many things.

It is equally possible to get this kind of synthesis between modern Western scientific thought and the Shankaracharya's teaching, and perhaps another time we might try that. It would be very interesting perhaps if people could look at the aspect and let us have any ideas that come to them.

Is there anything else that anybody wants to say?

Mr. Hodge. The things that have been read were things of the spirit: gentleness, truthfulness, kindness, joy and peace – and were common to the Shankaracharya's teaching and our own, and in fact, they were connected to the emotional centre of all the great religions.

A. This is true.

Mr. H. They are all related?

A. Yes indeed, There are, as is said so often, many spokes to the centre of the wheel. No Systems based on true knowledge can ever be incompatible. I don't know how many people here are interested in Christianity. It seems to me that there is a growing interest – and not necessarily seen in church attendance – but all round. One finds people who in different ways are picking out the real teaching of Christ. Some people find that their Christian ideas are illuminated by what we hear from the Shankaracharya. This is not to say, of course, that we must become Christians. It has never been any part of our belief here that people must adopt any particular kind of faith or be involved in any particular religion.

Lady Allan. The Shankaracharya, as you said, indicated we should stick to our own Tradition whatever it may be and we would find this Truth within it. Mr. Resuhi said the same, and it is finding this same Truth that brings unity.

Mr. Torikian. Referred to the Gospel of St John and said that there were examples of Eastern ideas there. He also mentioned the story of the birth of Christ and that of the birth of the Buddha, and that they seemed to be parallel?

A. Yes, I am sure it runs parallel. But again I must emphasise that it has never been part of this Society that one should adopt any particular faith; its teaching is open to those of all faiths or of none. We have people who meditate (whom I have had the privilege of initiating) from every faith. In all the cases I have observed, the meditation has helped their faith whatever it may have been.

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Well, it is after quarter-past eight. As you know, Dr Roles will be here on the 14th of October having been in India, so he will return, I am sure, full of refreshment for us all.

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