

14 September 1976

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

The meeting was taken by Lord and Lady Allan, assisted in the first part by Mrs. Fleming.

A. Dr. Roles is on holiday, as I expect you know, and my wife had a letter from Mrs. Roles this afternoon.

M.A. They are sunning themselves, and she says, 'we are having a marvellous time and feel tremendously refreshed.' He describes himself as an old crocodile sunning himself on sandbank! (laughter)

A. So we have to do our best. My wife has got a notice.

M.A. Pots made at a 'Day in the Country' have been fired and glazed and are in the West Studio for collection. The names of the makers are inscribed on the bottom surface of each item.

A. We thought we would start tonight with some ideas which came to Mrs. Fleming over the holidays. We felt that it would be nice if she would talk them over with us.

Mrs.F. Well, it is just this: I thought it would be nice if we could really exchange (it is our meeting, after all) findings of what helps us all during the long months of the holidays to keep awake. I was going to say a little bit about what helped me to start it for you.

I was very lucky because I have been on holiday with people who meditate. We did not meditate together hardly at all, but what we found was that the barriers dropped, and one was very conscious that all these unnecessary barriers get in the way of us being unified. I don't know if any of you found things that helped you to feel either unity with people you were with or things that kept you remembering your heart's desire? It would be marvellous if we knew what we were all doing.

As there was quite a long pause she continued: Or did you all go to sleep?

Mrs. Wilks. The company of other people who meditated was the greatest help even if it is just somebody you bump into in the street and have a few minutes with; it makes all the difference.

Mrs.F. I was ruminating during the holidays about something that was said to me a long time ago when Mr. Ouspensky was alive, and that was: We did not appreciate the enormous resources of our relationships with each other. I never knew what it meant; it means a little bit more now, and one begins to see that it is really very important. Again this means dropping these unnecessary barriers. I also feel very much, if you agree, that we need to take a very big step forward at the moment. I think Dr. Roles has been talking this way; and I don't feel that we help each other enough. We depend too much on what he feeds us with. If we could drop these barriers, if there was a real feeling of unity, I believe this step forward would really take place. Now do you agree with this?

Q. Yes.

Mrs. F. Well, what have you come up with? Have you come up with any little tips? It would be lovely to have some tips, wouldn't it?

Mrs. Cardew. I have rather the opposite experience. My not very large house was occupied by ten people, none of whom were meditators, and they were not only not of my generation, but also some of them were of a different race. But they had one thing, and that was that they were all very jolly and happy, and busy getting on with things.

And I found that the only thing for me was to drop the barriers and just join in and become one with them; but I did find that I valued the opportunities for getting a half-hour more than I have ever done.

Mrs. F. I think in relation to what Mrs. Cardew has been saying, I was very lucky in going down to a group of people who are down in Somerset and Bath. We had a marvellous day in which the families were asked to come and spend a day. They were mostly teenagers – fifteen, sixteen, seventeen – and the parents and grannies. Just to begin with they all looked very suspicious; then, because they did things together – they destroyed a complete dead tree; they cut it up into logs – there were people with all sorts of different saws; it was absolutely terrifying, but it worked; even small people had axes, yet there were no accidents! Now the tree became beautiful firewood.

By the evening one could see that we were all real people. It was marvellously happy, and the young people commented on it with great enthusiasm afterwards. So that also was a unity. I didn't mean that we do not drop barriers with people who did not meditate, I don't want to be heavy about barriers but do you find that practical tips help?

I found trying to listen to my voice very illuminating and I tried this during the day, not just when one was sitting being quiet. Also walking with your head up so that you can see the sky instead of looking down on the pavement helps to see a lot of things that are not necessary. Both these practices were attractive and simple. Do you know of any other things like this? I would like to know some new ones.

Q. When walking, I find that if I broaden my vision – don't focus on the small things as I usually do – but keep my vision broad, then I feel much more awake and not at the mercy of all the small things.

Mrs. Henry. When I was meditating well, or better than usual, it made a great difference to my attention; and attention was very important in one's everyday life. As one gets older, one becomes more absent-minded; one goes into a room to fetch something, and by the time one gets there one forgets what it is one went to fetch. But I notice that with the meditation going well, that the general level of attention through my ordinary day is much improved.

Q. I found it was useful to come here. There were Work parties, as mentioned at the last Meditation meeting, that went on each week here. I found it useful to come to those because one could be together with other people in this House with similar interests. This is what helped me during the holidays.

A. We hope to give people more opportunities next term of working together and dropping barriers. This is known in our original system as 'Second line of work' – work together for a

purpose. It is very unifying and it helps greatly too with the first line of work which is work on oneSelf.

Mrs. F. then went on:

Last night one of my friends rang up wanting to ask a question which she felt was something that many people feel, which appears when meditation is in a great low, and you gradually feel terribly guilty, but don't feel able to ask for help.

I was looking through one or two things, and found that when Dr. Roles was in New York the other day this came up, so I thought I could read the question and what Dr. Roles said: The questioner said:

I have a question about a sense of guilt? I have a habit of not having many flashes in regard to keeping to direction for any length of time.

Dr. Roles answered:

Now get rid of that at all costs. You see, we shouldn't either praise ourselves too much or pick on ourselves. We are perfectly beastly to ourselves. We shouldn't entertain for one moment a sense of guilt. We are not guilty; it doesn't help anyway. If you have made a mistake or failed to meditate properly, stop thinking about it or you tie yourself to the mistake or failure. Forget it.

I have a sense of guilt too. You would not believe it, but I have a frightful sense of guilt. So one of the great blessings that the Shankaracharya has given is 'Forget it'.

Mrs. F. Then something in the same relationship at a meeting which some of you were probably at in July. I wasn't. Dr. Roles said:

If you have got into some sort of habit – we all do this temporarily – do not be ashamed of it and do not take it hard that you are not meditating properly; but go and ask somebody at once. It is a check by request that is so important.

Mrs. F. That might answer this problem.

S. (Questioner, above) Yes. Thanks awfully; that is very helpful.

A. then continued:

What Mrs. Fleming has just said does, in fact, tie up with a question which was written in this evening:

Towards the end of half an hour of meditation I have fleeting moments of silence; but at the beginning I am doing little more than battling with or pursuing thoughts and daydreams.

How would you describe the kind of effort needed to repeat the Mantra through this competition? Would you say we must concentrate on it? Does it need an effort of will? I get the same feeling of annoyance and regret as I had when I was a child practising the piano – playing a piece through again and again, but never really working at it with feeling.

A. We all suffer from that. We all do; nobody escapes it; I would suggest that if it persists go to somebody for help as Dr. Roles said at the last meeting here.

But it is also worth considering two things the Shankaracharya once said if you are in these kind of difficulties. When you are settled down and are quiet and sitting correctly

repeat the Mantra inside of you very, very, loudly for a while, and that will drive out all competition. That is one thing to try.

Another thing is, to prepare oneself beforehand by reading something or listening to music, or looking at something which inspires one, then one sits down fresher and can repeat the Mantra with confidence. That also helps.

Are there any other questions on those lines that we might take now?

Mr. Harbord. (somewhat shortened) I would like to make an observation: This was for me a particularly difficult summer and for everyone a very hot summer; and I had to do some very delicate and very difficult business and deal with negative people.

I had to go down to the country in the middle of this very hot weather to deal with a particularly difficult situation, and the only sanity in this situation and the only help I found was the meditation which I did as hard as I could without any success; but I felt that this was the one thing that I could hold on to even though I could not meditate well.

I also telephoned various people who did meditate, one or two of whom I knew meditated at a certain hour when I also meditated, and this was of great help.

On a particular occasion I had to go and see somebody who was entirely negative, and in order to try and prepare for this I decided I must meditate; I meditated as hard as I could, but it was without any success at all. As I started to go down the stairs suddenly I had an experience which felt as if something descended on me filling me with energy, power and wafted me down. The meeting went extremely well and everything went just as I would wish it to. I attributed it directly to the meditation and to this house.

M.A. added:

I imagine he was inferring that we do not have to worry if we don't meditate well – just do it.

A. Yes, I think that is right. That is the sort of unexpected bonus one gets. I don't think it was entirely to do with your meditation that day. It was, as you say, the work over many years. Of course this is how we ought always to be – full of that tremendous power, because we have in us all the energy of the universe.

Mr. Harbord. Once you have tasted an experience like that, you want more.

A. Yes, I agree. Any other remarks?

Mrs. Garten. I find that in the evening when I am very tired I don't, in fact, have difficulty in meditating and don't fall asleep. But in the morning when I am fresh and full of energy, that is when I find meditation difficult. Have you any suggestions?

A. It seems to me that it relates to what we have been hearing from Dr. Roles about the two hemispheres. In the evening your dominant hemisphere is absolutely whacked, so the passive hemisphere has time to enjoy the meditation.

In the morning, batteries recharged, the energy goes straight to the dominant hemisphere which asserts itself. The best thing one can do is to read something. Don't start meditating straight away – read something first to still the mind.

Q. This refers to the written question which was read earlier about the competition of thoughts. The questioner said that in his case it is the competition of noise – exterior noise; not odd incidental noise like traffic passing or a voice suddenly shouting, but noise like a record player or some amplified sound. It is noises that make meditation difficult for him. Can you advise?

A. It is awfully difficult that, I think. You may have heard us playing records which give an idea of the tremendous din going on when we meditate with the Shankaracharya. On one occasion when I first saw him in Lucknow, cows put their heads through the walls of the room in which we were meditating. That kind of thing it is possible to ignore, but I agree that it is much more difficult with the steady noise. All you can do is to concentrate as much as you can on the meditation. I believe that it will fade. But we are told that we should try to make things easy for ourselves and sit in as quiet a room as possible. If you can, meditate somewhere else where you are not going to get a continuous noise.

Q. Is it possible to put in ear plugs?

A. Yes, of course; very practical. The Shankaracharya is a very practical person and that would be good advice.

M.A. Can one say also that, for some people, it is a phase, because if I may be personal, I remember a time when you had to put the clock behind a cushion! (laughter)

A. Yes, exactly.

M.A. But it is a long time since he has done that.

A. These are just things to try. We must be practical. Maybe you will find one day you just don't hear the noise any more.

Mrs. Brunson. I used to find noise very troublesome and suddenly discovered, in fact, that I was fighting noise and that there is a way of accepting it. I find it difficult to describe how I arrived at this, but by accepting the noise it ceased to trouble me.

A. I believe that is the best answer we have had.

Mr. Anderson. For me the noise worries me in my head, but I have noticed that as the Mantra spreads through my body, if my attention can be drawn with the Mantra the noise worry is very localised. Then I can be drawn away from the worry.

A. Fine. All that is very helpful.

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Lord A. then went on:

I was thinking during the holidays that when we read from the Shankaracharya we usually retain the Sanskrit words which he uses. This is mainly because they are very difficult to translate into a single English word. However, I am sure that there is a wish to understand some of these Indian words more clearly. I thought that I might try tonight to help with the meaning of the words most frequently used in instructions on Meditation. I won't manage to get the full meaning of the words and it is, of course, my personal effort only.

The Shankaracharya's Teaching, describing the ideal condition of man, says that within us we have a part of the Source of all creation, and this is felt as something we know to be true, right, and always to be trusted. This inner part gives continuing guidance as to our conduct through a function which discriminates against any thought, feeling, or action which is not in line with this guidance; and through Mind orders our thoughts and actions so that they may conform to it. And at the same time we feel a love for all things and live in harmony with ourSelves, with others, and with Nature.

Now that is our birthright; this is how we should be. But, alas, we know we are not, except for the rarest flashes.

The Shankaracharya's Teaching says that the trouble lies in the failure of this discriminating function. It can fail through ignoring the inner promptings, through concern with other things – too much concern with other things and through plain forgetfulness.

If it fails – to discriminate between what is right or wrong, according to the guidance of our inner part – our Mind, which activates all thoughts and actions, becomes ungoverned; and since mind has no power of discrimination itself, it falls under the sway of any momentary desire, ambition or whim. Our inner and outer harmony is then shattered. We have no sense of purpose, and this is how we too often are.

The Shankaracharya says that, for us, the answer is Meditation. The Mind is stilled, the Mantra sounded; with our attention on it, it moves in silence to purify judgment and lead us from chaos to the trusted inner part. It leaves us there in restful peace. At the end of meditation the peace and the purity of judgment remain for an hour – perhaps longer. Then life is lived as we know it should be till judgment becomes clouded again, and so on.

With faith and perseverance we are told we can enjoy the peace of permanent Unity with the inner part and so with all creation.

Now that is a very basic description of the Shankaracharya's System and I have given it in this way so that we now can insert the Indian words at the appropriate places. To many of you, of course, this is obvious, but perhaps not to all.

The part within us is the Atman, and the source of all creation of which this is a part, is the Param-Atman, the discriminating function is Buddhi, and the mind – Manas. Ideally, Atman guides Buddhi, who controls Manas, which orders appropriate speech and action. Atman is always present and never changes, and so it is the attentiveness and the purity of Buddhi which is our main concern.

I don't know whether that helps any of you? It is very elementary, but would any of you like to ask anything about it?

Dr. Arthur Connell. Do you feel what you said depends on getting an increasing flow of good impulses?

A. Yes, of course, but it is right, isn't it, that the impulses come from the Atman Himself. Buddhi, if it doesn't listen to these inner promptings (which I mentioned), will fail; and then Manas will be ungoverned and chaos result.

Dr. Connell's further remark not repeated.

M.A. Mr. Harbord asked how the word Chitta, which is used sometimes, fits in to what has just been read?

A. I didn't want to discuss any word other than those I have mentioned but, briefly, Chitta is the home of our inborn Knowledge – and also the Knowledge which we accumulate as we go through life. It is also the seat of memory. It should work closely with Buddhi reminding it of that Knowledge.

Q. Could you say that our mind is the part that looks outward?

A. In a fairly simple way the mind is the thing that takes in all impressions, sorts them out, leaving Buddhi to judge what should be done. But, if Buddhi remains inactive and makes no judgment then our mind, having no discrimination of its own, falls to the mercy of any passing whim.

Q. When that happens, does mind start thinking things out on its own without being governed by Buddhi?

A. No, mind never reasons. Buddhi reasons. Mind only reflects both inward feelings and outward impressions for Buddhi to choose from. From the outward point of view it may appear that our mind governs our actions and our speech. But in fact these are either purely random and mechanical or under the instruction of Buddhi. If that Buddhi is pure then everything we say, our thoughts and our actions would be consistent with each other and with that inner part which we know to be real and true.

Q. (a woman) Do we just have to wait for Buddhi to be purified or can we do something about it other than the two half-hours?

A. The answer the Shankaracharya would give is to Meditate faithfully.

M.A. He also said, didn't he, that the more you listen to the promptings that come, the louder they will speak and the more often you will hear them.

A. Yes.

Q. Would the Shankaracharya also not have said that we should take a positive attitude and not a negative one?

A. Yes.

Mrs. Fleming then mentioned warmth of heart in this connection.

A. Yes; but the warmth of the heart, comes, does it not, from the inner part and the inner part guides Buddhi. Therefore, if everything is working as it should be, we have a love for all things.

Mr. Torikien. I had an experience on Sunday when I really felt the presence of love. I wanted to be alone and went for a walk in the woods and the whole atmosphere was charged with this love. It was very silent, but I could hear the movements of the wood pigeons, the whole atmosphere was charged with this love.

A. Yes. This is what we want to go for. Such an experience brings us in touch with the inner part which is also part of the source of all created things, birds and trees included. So we merge, in love, with all creation.

We will take one more question.

Q. My mind seems to turn into work against the interests of Buddhi; in fact, it often insists that Buddhi is a sissy! How can I overcome this?

A. Your mind cannot do this for you. It is your Buddhi itself which is turned inside out but it is not listening to what the inner part, the Atman, is saying to it.

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We all have some difficulties with meditation, but at some stage or another we all do get quite close to the inner part which we have been discussing. We reach the silence. Then what:

M.A. reads: You asked in 1967:

A. At a certain stage in the development of meditation there seems to be a barrier blocking final unity. Is this illusion? If so, can one destroy it?

S. The last barrier to the Atman is Ahankar, the feeling of I. I, the one who is meditating; or I am the one who is about to go over the barrier into the Unity. As long as one sticks to this, Unity is impossible. We have to learn this and make sure in ourself that when one reaches this stage one should drop even the idea of the feeling of I. Everything is to be given up, even the sense of I. Once the sense or feeling of I is given up, then only the Unity is possible.

Dr. Roles mentioned that, remembering the story of the arrow maker, it had been possible in the night to have no movement for quite a long time, but still the feeling of I remained there in the stillness.

S. When one knows that one is still, one is not still; and when one knows that one is at peace, one is still away from it because the great barrier is still there to recognise I and the relations with peace and stillness. In complete peace or stillness there is no I.

Prajapati is the teacher of all the Gods, whose son, Kach, was sent to the Ashram for study. He was taught the Vedas, the Shastras, and also the Upanishads. The essence of all his knowledge was that he should give up everything to be at peace.

When he came home, he did not start any work. So his father asked him why he was sitting around lazily? He said, 'I have realised from reading the Vedas, Shastras and the Upanishads, that to be at peace one must give up everything, so I have decided to give up my work to remain happy.'

The father pointed out that he was still enjoying being in the house and using the services of the servants. So Kach left the house and went to the forest to live alone in nature. But then he found he was not in peace and he asked his father for advice. His father said again, that perhaps there was something else that he should give up. So the son gave up the tree under which he lived, and also threw away his garments and moved about the banks of the Ganges. Even then, he was not at peace.

So he thought that his body should also be given up. He collected wood and lit a fire and was about to jump into it when his father came out from a hiding place and asked him to answer a few questions before giving up his body. The father said that, according to nature, and your being, you will have another body when you have left this one by burning. This means that you will take one for another and this cycle will go on for eternity. Should you then give up this body?

The son was puzzled and asked his father for guidance. Then his father said to him that: 'To give up all, you only have to give up the feeling of giving up. This, your Ahankar, or I, who is trying to give up everything else, is still with you. Once you give up Ahankar, then there is nothing of your own which is to give up – there is nothing yours which is to give up.'

A. What is it that gives up? What is it that surrenders?

S. That which is never absent from anywhere.

A. And part of that substance in me?

S. Yes, a part of that substance is within you and also you are within it.

It is like the water of the Ganges and the Ganges water in a bottle. Break the bottle, and there is no individual trace of that water when mixed in the Ganges.

As long as we associate the self with the body, senses, Manas, Buddhi, desire, or the feeling of I, Ahankar, we are separated and bottled up. Cut out Ahankar and there is no separation.

(Record, 4 November 1967)

A. Shall we meditate now?

MEDITATION

Afterwards:

A. May I leave you with one thought which is appropriate to the change in the weather. At one time I asked:

Whether one was guided towards a Teacher and a Teaching, or was it just luck?

He said, really it is a bit of both. But once one is part of a Teaching at all, one then has the Grace of the Teacher always with one. Like, he said, when the rains come the pots with their mouths towards the sky get filled with water. If they face the earth, however, they will not even get a drop of water. In the same way, the Grace is raining from the Absolute, through Knowledge and the Teacher continually. From the Absolute the rain of Grace is eternal, and all who hold the faith get that Grace of the Teacher.

(Record, 3 November 1967)

So we need always to remember to keep our pots turned up for this Grace is for ever flowing and we shall catch some of it.

That is a nice thought to carry with us.

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A. There will be another Meditation meeting the second Tuesday in October when Dr. Roles will be here with us.

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