

8 March 1977

MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

Lord Allan reminded those present that there would be no Meditation Meeting on Tuesday 12th April as that followed immediately after the Easter Bank Holiday.

Dr. Roles. We hope you will be getting the sunshine and the sea air.

A. contd. So the next one will be May 10th.

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Dr. Roles then began as follows:

We should start, I think, with a big idea to get off the ground and I'll begin with this quotation from the Shankaracharya:

A person who dies has never come back to say what happened to him after death. Therefore the only course open to us in finding a way to think about life and death is to consult some fully Realized person with Cosmic Consciousness or inspired writings like the Gospels or the *Gita*. The *Gita*, for instance, tells us very clearly how to deal with thoughts of life and death which was put in synopsis by His Holiness:

1. Forget the past; do not fear the future either; devote the present to the loving service of the Param-Atman – the Universal Spirit. That loving service he calls Bhakti – the direct route.
2. For two half-hours a day give up all duties and obligations; surrender yourself completely to the single care and protection of the Param-Atman. That would save you from all evil consequences and therein lies the end of all your worries.
3. One who sees Param-Atman in everybody and everything in Param-Atman, to him life and death never appear obscure and he never becomes opaque to Param-Atman.'

(Record, 13 January 1972)

Dr. R. We are full of fear all the time because we have forgotten ourSelves. We are bewitched by the changing world – Maya he calls it.

S. It is this forgetting of the Divine Self which brings on us all the troubles we get.

Now when the *Gita* describes giving up, it also explains *how* to give up and *what* to give up. This is the crux of the difficulties which people experience in Meditation. It is a complete change of attitude that is necessary at the beginning of each half-hour because, in ordinary life, before undertaking any course of action, a person always tries to assess what I am going to get out of it!

But in the Spiritual world of Meditation we must get absolutely rid of that attitude – what I am going to get out of it. Instead, one dedicates each half-hour to the Divine Self ('Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy Will be done.')

So, in addition to giving up the sensory world as far as we can, shutting our eyes, turning our attention away from physical sensations, we have to do something else, because a merely physical giving up, without a mental giving up, is just hypocrisy and merely does harm instead of good.

[*this passage seems loosely based on* (Record, 15 April 1972)]

Dr. R. This giving up is what is so difficult for people. We give up, perhaps, one thing and forget it the next day; but we never consistently strive to give up everything that we ordinarily call 'I'. We must learn to do that without any more waste of time.

Many so-called Spiritual Ways describe giving up for certain periods. It is always taken far too literally – like giving up sweets in Lent or something physical. But it really means *giving up psychologically at all times*.

The Zen people have very telling stories about what we have to give up. They spear-head their practical teaching on this very point. The whole of Zen is about that. For example the statues you see in Chinatown in various American cities of a plump Buddha – he is often called the 'Laughing Buddha' – with a sack on his shoulder. He would never give lectures or anything. If a Zen pundit asked him, for instance: 'What is the significance of Zen?' He would take the sack off and plump it down on the ground in silent answer, meaning 'Disemburden yourself.' Then if he were asked: 'What would be the actualisation of Zen?' he would happily pick the sack up again and walk off to do his job without saying anything.

Also they have lots of telling stories. This one may be familiar to a lot of you but we should keep it in mind. It is about this selfishness – self-centred thinking, which is sometimes called 'identification', sometimes called 'attachment'. But its essence is just selfishness:

A. reads:

Tanzan and Ekido were once travelling together down a muddy road. A heavy rain was still falling. Coming round a bend they met a lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash, unable to cross the interception. 'Come on, girl,' said Tanzan at once, and lifted her in his arms and carried her over the mud. Ekido did not speak until that night when they had reached a lodging temple. Then he could no longer restrain himself. 'We, monks, don't go near females,' he told Tanzan; 'especially young and lovely ones; it is dangerous. Why did you do that?' 'I left the girl there,' laughed Tanzan. 'Are you still carrying her?'

Dr. R. And we carry, not only pretty girls, but all sorts of things round with us! The burden is all the time on the mind, whereas other functions – including the body – often have to pay for it. So we must really start the practice of this mental giving up, for this would make everything so much easier for us.

Any questions? Are you aware of this burden that we carry about – the burden of me, me, me, what I did yesterday and what I intend to do the week after next?

(Pause, but no questions were asked)

Dr. R. went on. Well, this silence could mean that either you have given it all up already or it could mean that you don't know anything at all yet (laughter). Either way – very satisfactory.

At our last visit to India my wife asked a question about the way Meditation shows us this burden we carry; shows us all the stuff in our mind, and this is often unpleasant and discouraging.

Dr. R. to A. You were at this talk, do you remember it?

A. I think he said:

The meditation is like switching a light on and then you see all the dirt that is there, as in a disused attic. Then the difference between the good man and the bad man is that the good man sets about cleaning it up, whereas the bad man is quite content to go on living in the squalor.

Dr. R. Well, are there any good men here?

A. then read the actual words from the record:

Our Chitta is like a room and the light of the Param-Atman illuminates the rubbish. We have to remove it so that the Param-Atman can come and sit in it. The more cleaning up we are able to do, the more enjoyment we will get out of the appearance of the Param-Atman.

Then Mrs. Roles said. Is this a work in which we can all help each other, as well as cleaning our own attic can we help other people in cleaning the dirt away? – by meditating together or by example?

S. replied. You should clean yourself. You can help others to have Light, so that they may be able to do it for themselves; but you cannot do it for them.

(Record, 27 September 1975)

Dr. R. I can witness that she has been doing her level best to live up to that (laughter).

But she also knows the story which H.H. told me one time when he was being rather rough with me:

He described a Muslim preacher who was not very successful. One day he stopped at a wayside cafe to have his morning cup of tea, and the old woman who came to clean the table brought a wet cloth and tried to get rid of the dust and dirt on the table; but every time she did it she left dirty marks.

At last the Muslim said to her. 'Please go and clean the cloth first and then come back and clean the table.'

She said. 'Can't you see I am doing just what you do? You are a dirty old man with a dirty mind, and you keep teaching other people. Go and clean your own mind first.'

(Record, 2 February 1971)

Dr. R. I was very angry about that! (laughter) And was about to defend myself when I luckily caught the twinkle in H.H's eye – and subsided.

Q. Sometimes one wants to see this dirt and all this rubbish, but it is difficult, as it were, to get 'unhooked' from it? Sometimes one doesn't see the hook slipping back in again.

Dr. R. Yes, quite true. It is not, any of it, easy; the only easy thing about it is that this is the one thing we have to do. We do not have to do a lot of external disciplines or obey artificially imposed rules and regulations. This is the only victory we have got to win if the Meditation is going to take us to Samadhi and beyond. So, how do we do it? Is there anybody with any suggestions?

Q. What part does connecting with the senses play, to bring us into the moment and in order to clear up the mess?

Dr. R. The point of 'attachment' does not lie there. Everyone from time immemorial has tried to tamper with some part of their endowment – with the mental or physical mechanisms. Whereas the mechanisms of the human body and mind, which have been developed by natural evolution over millions of years are absolutely marvellous; they provide everything. So our job does not lie in futile efforts to change any of the existing mechanisms of the mind and body; it is the use we put them to that counts. It is learning to use our power economically and efficiently (to use our car efficiently – not grinding the gears and wasting the petrol, slipping the clutch and keeping our foot on the accelerator all the time). Accept the impact of the sensory world as a continual probation; a means of learning just roughly how one should work – how one should function – and remembering to do it.

I get impatient when I see some people here imitating Eastern ways of interfering with the body – fasting, celibacy and other tortures people have invented! The body is fine. As a doctor I can say that if people would only use their bodies properly, there would not be so much demand on the Health Service or money reaching the medical profession! (laughter)

Another Zen story:

When the Zen student Banzan was walking through a market he overheard a conversation between a butcher and a customer.

'Give me the best piece of meat you have' said the customer. 'Everything in my shop is the best' replied the butcher. 'You cannot find any piece of meat here that is not the best. At these words Banzan achieved Satori (enlightenment).

The mind, also, has limitless possibilities. So it is some wrong use we are putting it to – the mind and the body – something which spoils its work, is a heavy burden on it. I think we all know this; the difficulty only is giving a good example, or putting the right question.

Miss Cassini. One of the difficulties I find is how to use the energy which one gets from attending meetings or any of the other activities connected with this House, and I feel so energetic after these occasions so that when I go back home I cannot sleep. Then I become more tired and the whole thing becomes a vicious circle.

Dr. R. You have the same trouble as Hemingway, do you? – in this recent book, *A Life of Hemingway*, by his fourth wife, it comes out that he had to take pills all the time because he had so much superfluous energy! Call it 'libido'.

But, you are right; most of our troubles come from undirected energy; it is just a mechanical seeping over of unused energy into the works.

That is why we just cannot let things be; we have to give the mind something to do; give the body something to do; practise attention; because just sitting still all this energy seeps up and becomes very difficult to deal with. And the direct route, which His Holiness describes as 'Bhakti', is to dedicate all your actions – whatever you are doing, however trivial, however ordinary – to dedicate that action to the Param-Atman since that noble guest is looking on – that VIP. So if you happen to be doing things, keep remembering to do that as well.

An ordinary action becomes holy if dedicated; whereas apparently noble actions are the opposite if they are done for any kind of selfish motive or expectation of reward.

Secondly, in our emotional world – the emotional centre – we should give importance to the Supreme Being – practise realising that there is this Supreme Being who knows all our

innermost thoughts, present in us all the time. And always remembering the unceasing, unlimited benevolence of this Being; and thirdly, if we are wanting to think in a larger way we should try to think of the Self of the Universe comprised of atoms of Self in all living beings – realising that the whole Universe is One; that everything is contained in the Param-Atman, and Param-Atman is in everything. So, this should fill any spare time we have!

Now it is about quarter to eight; I think we might have another question or two

[Silence]

With that in view, now, perhaps you would be more at home with detailed questions – practical questions, like this one from Mexico:

Carlos, one of the young ones, who has been organising the cleaning work very well, is unfortunately having difficulty with the Meditation. We cannot keep his attention on the Mantra.

We have given him advice about listening to music, repeating the Mantra out loud, etc., but all without success. What can we do to help him?

Dr. R. then said. ‘Well, this came at the right moment because Roy Jacobs is stopping off in Mexico in a couple of weeks’ time and is going to have a look at Carlos to see what it is all about.

But I have heard things like that even said in London! In fact, I had a letter from somebody – an old hand at this:

If possible, on Tuesday, could you give help to others, as well as myself, who cannot meditate when their emotions are stirred up.

She recounts how she had rather a shock and the Meditation appeared to desert her. How would you answer those questions?

Mr. Hodge. Mr. Carlos is making some progress, because he is at least aware that he is not doing the Meditation properly.

Dr. R. Well, we don’t know but we hope that Jacobs will find out what progress he is making; but I think, using Sherlock Holmes’ sort of deduction, – he is a ‘moving centre’ person (since he has been put in charge of the cleaning) and perhaps his trouble is the superfluous physical energy which does not allow him to sit still.

(to Mr. Geoffroy). Supposing it were that type of difficulty, how would you answer him, Claude?

Mr. Geoffroy. He would need to have something quite bit to think about.

Dr. R. Yes, really, a lot of what we have been saying applies, I think, there. Carlos has to have something to put against all this physical restlessness.

What would you do with the other one, whose emotions when they get steamed up prevent her meditating?

I felt the whole idea was to be more emotional; but if to be emotional is going to stop you meditating, what would you advise there, Peter Eadie?

Peter Eadie. There are two types of emotion, aren’t there? One is the devotional type which we need for meditation; and the other is restless.

Dr. R. Well, the Shankaracharya defines those as demanding love – selfish emotion; and unselfish, or undemanding love. So emotion itself is not the trouble. It is clearing the selfishness out of the emotion that this person needs. If she is here, I would like her to do that. We often deceive ourselves, by thinking we are devoted to some other person – a near relation or somebody; but really it is ourselves that we love. She is worrying about some other person. The other person is all right, but she must clear any self-love out of it.

In fact, part of the cleaning is to clean out the selfish attitude from all our thoughts; to stop the self-love, to purify the mind (to clarify it); and to stop the self-will and just do things because they need to be done. A Realised man does things because they need to be done without any hope of getting a reward at the end of it.

More questions, please, because the ones that are being asked are very helpful.

Q. (a woman) I often find that I meditate better when I am emotional and need the meditation.

Dr. R. When you have a sense of need? (Yes) We always need the meditation, but seldom realise how much we need it.

(Many practical questions were then asked)

Dr. R. finally went on. To get back to elementary advice we can give young people like Carlos: if you cannot sit still with your eyes shut, at times you feel very restless, and can't keep attention on the Mantra; we all go through phases like that don't we? Yet I think that some things which are available have not been tried.

For example: we have heard very much about the *speed* of the rhythm of the Mantra; sometimes it goes fast at the beginning; sometimes it starts fast and then gradually slows; but we don't really, I think, know enough about the loudness or softness of the Mantra. The speeds can very much be left to the meditation itself by attending wholly to the Mantra. But we can effect a lot by altering the loudness or softness.

For instance, you know it was recommended that, if you want to get to sleep, you sound the Mantra loudly to yourself and let it gradually get fainter and after about half a dozen or a dozen repetitions, it has faded out altogether and you go to sleep.

Now for people who get sleepy during meditation, or people who cannot control their thoughts, a useful remedy is the reverse; namely to make the Mantra become louder and louder inside one – to sound it within one loudly, especially during the first five minutes, or at other times when you suddenly 'come to', then sound the Mantra loudly within you and let it become longer. One can try more variations of that sort if one gets stuck.

The other thing I believe they have not tried with Carlos is the question of posture: if you have been unsuccessful with the meditation sitting in a certain way, every time you take up that position to meditate the same ill-success comes. So it is well worth sitting in a different way and starting quite fresh.

We will ask Jacobs to find out whether Carlos sits in a chair, whether he sits on the floor and whether his legs are crossed, whether he sits symmetrically; but something new in the way of posture may save him a lot of psychological battle and frustration.

Q. (a woman). In moments of tension isn't it helpful to take two or three deep breaths?

Dr. R. Some people try that, yes. You must be very careful not to interfere with your breathing. Two or three deep breaths is fine but it mustn't start a habit. Some people find that if they stand in front of a window before they sit down to meditate, breathe in and then breathe out, two or three times, it starts them off nicely. There are many things that our own experience tells us could be tried.

Mrs. Simpson. When my mind is over-active, I very often say the Lord's Prayer very slowly before I start the Mantra and this seems to bring a certain amount of Sattva.

Dr. R. Yes, the Shankaracharya has recommended it, and we have found that, quite often, if trivial thoughts are too insistent, a little prayer – maybe the Lord's Prayer or the 'Jesus Prayer'. 'Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy upon me', will do wonders.

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Dr. R. then continued. Now, it is ten-past eight. I would like you to listen to some music and to meditate after it. Now suppose we use this listening to this music as an exercise in 'giving up', because whenever we try music people say either that it is the wrong sort of music, or the sound relay is absolutely foul! So if you could only withdraw your attention from all these objections and just let the music enter into your soul to prepare you for meditation, it might be better.

(Slow movement from Brahms' Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major)

MEDITATION

(SEQUEL. At her group in Golders Green on the following Thursday, Miss Newton said. 'Following the big meeting on Monday last week I arrived at the Meditation Meeting feeling completely cut off from the Teaching – confused and scattered. But during this meeting I felt transformed, pulled together somehow. Everything became simple and things started going right and it has been like this ever since. And today, at least five people have approached me, needing help of one sort or another. Is that what the diagram (of 3 Octaves) is about?')

Comment by Mrs. Mellett. 'It really was most refreshing, the whole meeting, but if you only knew the delight that last paragraph about Miss Newton gave us – we introduced her to the meditation when we lived in Fortescue House School – she was a house-mother there and she was the very first person we introduced to the Work – that observation was well worth waiting for all these years!')

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