

14 June 1977

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Lord Allan began as follows:

People are very kind and put the chairs at the back of the room after these meetings, which is a great help. But the floor is apt to get damaged if the chairs are dragged; and as we have got it into a good state now for the Turning, if you could carry them – rather than drag them, it would be very helpful.

Perhaps we could just say that the next Meditation meeting is on July 12th, and we will probably go on throughout the Summer on the second Tuesday, that is August 9th and September 13th.

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Dr. Roles: Well, how is the Meditation going?

From what one hears a lot of people are getting benefit in connection with the 'Alchemy of Happiness' which you have been hearing about. I mean, a lot of people have happy moments; a lot of people find that after a half-hour the quick-silver mind is steadier and that they, as a result, have more energy.

But still, hands up those who feel that they have everything that the Meditation can give them?

(after a moment) Not a hand!

Also, a lot of us are seeking an explanation for why we get these arid periods when we seem to be repeating the Mantra to no purpose. Part of that is illusion; if we didn't try and do it we would find ourselves very much less stable and with less energy. But, nevertheless, there is no doubt we do have arid periods.

I think this is connected with the fact that any repetitive discipline or exercise – in addition to doing what it should do – has a 'side-effect' which fixes whatever is there, and produces a hardening of the heart. If thoughts and a feeling of 'I' are going on during the Meditation, the repetition of the Mantra will fix that.

If one is sitting in a wrong posture and repeating a Mantra, the repetition will fix that. So it will be fixing certain bodily and mental habits unless one is rather wary.

What do you feel about that? Are you aware of the risks of mechanical repetition? Are there any questions on this topic?

Q. (a woman) In that case we would be very much better if we stopped meditating?

Dr. R. No, that is the last thing to do! *Never stop*; find out quickly what isn't right – that you really aren't properly meditating. Stop improperly meditating – not stop meditating!

So seek advice; tell somebody with more experience whom you trust what you are feeling is not satisfactory and make it better.

In one conversation there, one way was described of preventing this hardening of the heart, for the Shankaracharya attaches great importance to this.

A. This was a question from my wife:

M.A. One seems to need a fresh reminder about consistency of thought, word and deed every day. Is there a particular prayer one should use each morning to remind one?

S. He has given earlier instructions in this matter, but he now repeats: There are certain sentences here prevalent in India derived from the Vedic source which are very much like prayers. According to your own set-up in the West, you can easily find certain sentences in which you seem to have trust and faith; and with which, by saying them, you can feel united.

They must always be related to the Spiritual world – not any other sentences. So, each should pick one according to his own desire and trust and faith, and recite it every morning and whenever one feels the need.

The Shankaracharya does not want to specify a particular one. However, whether one uses such sentences or not, it would be good when one wakes in the morning to pronounce whatever Mantra has been given you – say ten or a dozen times – and during the day as often as one wishes at the beginning and at the end of a particular job.

Again, as one goes to sleep one should take up or recite the Mantra, and the same cycle should be kept up regularly.

The system depends on the fact that if you start something with the Mantra and finish it with the Mantra, then the whole activity between these two is influenced by the Mantra, and that activity is purified. It is like two Lights which illuminate the darkness in between them. This is part of the 'Great Meditation' which can go on every day.

(Record, 10 March 1970)

Dr. R. The idea of the 'Great Meditation' is a good one; not just one's own little attempt at meditation, but that there is a 'Great Meditation'. The nearer I can get to that the better.

Have any people tried those suggestions which have been given before? There are two things here:

- a) Have you tried repeating the Mantra a few times whenever you think of it – first thing on waking in the morning and last thing at night and before and after some job during the day? I think some of you have tried it but only for a short time. That is one thing.
- b) The other thing is the question of these sentences. I have for some time used the sentence: 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them, I would liken him to a wise man who built his house upon a rock'. And, to my great surprise, while I was listening to our Jubilee service in St. Paul's Cathedral, I heard the Archbishop suddenly come out with that as the text of his sermon.

I thought his sermon was very good, so Bridget Hall very kindly got the tape from the BBC, and I would like you to hear it. I don't think we have ever put a sermon on before in this room; but this one was remarkably unparsonical! So I think you should hear again how he puts it, because in a strange way it is exactly what the Shankaracharya personally instructed me to try to do in a much smaller way in connection with helping people with the Meditation, and in conducting this work here. So, shall we hear the Archbishop:

Dr. Coggan. (on tape) In the Gospel according to St. Matthew at chapter 7 and verse 24: 'Everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.'

We listened to these words of Jesus a few moments ago. How right He was. Foundations matter. Watch any good team of builders in this or any other city and note what care goes into the basic structure. It is useless building on shallow or shifting foundations; that way lies disaster. Long, patient, skilled work must be done down in the depths before ever a brick or a stone can be seen above ground. Given that, we need not fear whatever the strains and stresses are put upon the building.

We meet today in this Cathedral, joined by millions all over the world who are rejoicing with us by means of radio and television, to thank Almighty God for a building which has stood the test of years because its foundations are strong.

This is no material building which can be seen by the eye or touched by the hand. Rather, it is something at the heart of our national life of incalculable value: a spirit of devotion to duty and of service to others, which has found its focus in a family and in a person.

King George VI and his beloved Queen in days of war and of post-war stress taught us afresh what duty means. The years that followed that reign have not been easy, but the foundation then laid has proved strong enough for another sovereign to build upon, and this she has done. Our nation and Commonwealth have been blessed beyond measure by having at their heart an example of service untiringly done, of duty faithfully fulfilled, and of a home-life stable and wonderfully happy. For this we thank God, and from this we take courage.

The next twenty five years will take us into a new millennium, and none of us can foretell what those years will bring. Pray God they will be years free of war. Doubtless they will see developments in the realm of science which will surprise us; knowledge will increase; the superstructure of Society will change, possibly almost beyond recognition.

And what about the foundation? Will there be an increase in Wisdom as well as in knowledge? For the two are by no means the same. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom', said the Old Testament writer, and in saying so, laid down the principles which we neglect at our peril.

Many today are seeing through the hollowness of a way of life which seeks to build on the basis of materialism, of each for himself, or each for his sectional interests, and which forgets the good of the whole. Many are seeing the supreme need of reconciliation and understanding at the heart of a people where rivalry or suspicion could so easily lead to open conflict.

This is all to the good so far as it goes. But, by itself, it does not provide a foundation strong enough to resist the storms which assail us in personal, family or national life.

That requires a listening to the sayings of Jesus and then carrying them out in action; and that takes some doing.

So what was the essence of the sayings – the words, the principles of Jesus? He taught us that no man could live life to the full without the willing recognition of God as his Father to be loved and as his King to be obeyed. He taught that as God loves each individual however insignificant in human eyes he might be, so should we; and that we should treat him with dignity and respect.

He taught that the only way to build a Society worthy of Sons of the most High was to build it on love, to give and not to grab, and to lose our lives for Christ's sake and the Gospels. He not only taught that way by word of mouth; he died to prove it, and to carry the sin of men and women who were too blind to see it.

My words today will reach the ears of millions who care deeply for our nation and Commonwealth, and for the welfare of our wider world. Those who have joined in this service will remember it as an occasion of great splendour and of deep joy. That is right and good. But if this service is to leave a mark of permanence on the lives of those who, near and far, have shared it, it must lead to an act of penitence for all that has made our life as a nation or as individuals tawdry and unworthy; an act of dedication to the God who calls us to give ourselves to Him and to our people in self-surrender and service; and an act of thanksgiving for the way that God has guided us and the leadership which He has given us in our Royal house. Penitence, dedication, and thanksgiving; this is what matters. We listen again to the words of Jesus; we build again the foundations which have been broken down by our neglect of them; and we create by the Grace of God a Society which will be unshakable in that it is built on our response to the living God.

Let my last word today then be one of thanksgiving, and in it I ask you to join – thanksgiving for twenty years of service faithfully given; for God's goodness and loving kindness to us down those years; but, above all, for God's inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of Grace, and for the hope of glory. So, with full hearts and deep thanksgiving we sing: 'Praise my soul the King of Heaven.'

Dr. R. Well, it seems that we here have much in common with that, since this Way of ours is supposed to be the Way of the householder; and the Meditation that we do has been specially devised for people living normal lives – active lives; and I think we are lucky that in the established order in this country we have conditions very favourable for that. So while we yet have the time we should go as hard at it as we possibly can.

Any questions aroused by that? – the difference between knowledge and Wisdom; the development of dependability; a feeling of thanksgiving – many things there.

And about service: The hardening of the heart can be cured by doing things for other people. If you gain something from Meditation, come and help other people with the Meditation. This melts the heart.

When I asked the Shankaracharya for his personal advice to me, he said:

On the physical level be everybody's servant; devote yourself to universal service. On the emotional level give importance to the Supreme Being, always remembering His unending benevolence; and intellectually, identify yourSelf with the Param-Atman who witnesses everything and shows Himself in everything you see.

(Letter, 15 February 1973)

So, in Meditation, the great thing is to get away from the idea that this is *my* meditation; that *I* am meditating well, or *I* am meditating badly; from any personal consideration at all.

Meditation is to be One – One without a second; not even one looking on to see how well I am meditating. Just the meditator, the Mantra and the Object of meditation – 'Param-Atman that lives in the heart of all'.

Is there anything you want to say at this point or shall we meditate for just five minutes or so?

MEDITATION

Then Dr. Roles said:

Well, we could now have just an ordinary conversation if you feel like it.

Q. (a woman) It helps so much to be with other people while meditating.

Dr. R. Yes; yet even when one is sitting alone one is always with all of us. We are spiritually connected on the Causal level, whether physically with others or not.

You can encourage this feeling that it helps to be meditating with other people [by meditating] as if you are *always* meditating with other people – a great army of other people. There is no need to wait for once a month to come and do it here.

Julie Wood. I don't really understand this suggestion of yours that repeating the Mantra can fix something negative in you. In my experience when things go wrong it is because I am *not* repeating the Mantra properly. When I do repeat it properly it goes well.

Dr. R. Well, that is really what I mean; one so often is *not* repeating the Mantra properly.

If you are really repeating the Mantra it is a kind of charm; it banishes all negativeness and everything irrelevant. But when one's mind is on something else and one is repeating like a parrot, one will be fixing whatever negative thing there is there.

We mean exactly the same thing, and I am very glad that you yourself don't have trouble fixing negative things!

Julie Wood. It is not really a question of repeating it like a parrot; it is not repeating it at all; then things go badly.

Dr. R. Either way, much of the time, quite often in a half-hour we are not really meditating. That is what you mean? (Yes.)

Dr. R. The difficulty here, Julie, is that in the higher, subtler stages of Meditation you don't know whether you are repeating or not. You reach a point where all the physical manifestations have disappeared and you are One; and it is rather difficult without experience to tell whether one has been asleep and not meditating, or whether one has really transcended into this deeper place.

Don't you think there is that question which you ask afterwards? (Here A. agreed.) That is a difficulty; so often people blame themselves, thinking that they have not been meditating, that they have been asleep; yet, at the end of a half-hour, they find themselves refreshed; and, in fact, they may have been in Samadhi, because in Samadhi you know nothing until you come out. Then you really do know! That is all. Do some people have that difficulty – I mean have doubts about themselves?

Q. I recognise what you say about this question of fixing negative things, but I at least regard it as a protection against things getting worse.

Dr. R. Yes; we should look on the positive side and not raise bogeys!

Mrs. Koren. Could you say more about the melting process? I find it quite shocking that the hardness of the heart stays so long.

Dr. R. Well, this is the obstacle that presents itself immediately in front of all of us here; for if you belong to some organisation, you have to keep getting melted down all the time!

Otherwise you think you are separate, and that because you belong to something special you are different from ordinary people.

That was one reason for reading the Archbishop's sermon.

So for a few weeks we are going to be speaking about this melting of the heart, for which there is a special method. It needs a bit of technical explanation, but we got it all wrong in the past. We misunderstood the idea of 'being identified', of 'identification' especially with other people.

To be doing things for people, trying to put yourself in their shoes and feeling how *they* are looking at something, instead of just how *I* am looking at *them*, this is a wonderful way of melting the heart. So we want to be practising that in the next few weeks.

We need to get right off diagrams and start doing that. But we need clear examples to make the distinction between what we used to think of as identification – namely being wholly immersed in something, which is not what is meant by identification at all – and what *is* identification, namely when you are so obsessed with yourself that your ego intrudes into everything, including your relations with other people. This example was given by His Holiness in relation to Meditation:

A. reads:

S. To meditate is to Be, to be One – One without a second. Here is an example:

In very ancient times, when Dattatreya (the Wanderer) was walking along a street, a marriage procession came by. He stopped at the door of a shop where arrows were being made. The shop man was busy doing his work and did not care to look at the procession.

After the procession was gone, the observer wanted to know why this man did not enjoy the merry procession? He called him and asked if he had seen a marriage procession? The shopkeeper said, 'No,' and added: 'I did not even hear any noise, because I was busy shaping the point of the arrow. In shaping the point I became One with it; and the world of senses did not exist for me at that time.'

S. went on. The same applies to meditation. In meditation one is just One; one becomes the Self. The method of meditation is only a process by which this is made possible. The Absolute meditates and becomes the creation; we meditate and become the Absolute.

(Record, 2 November 1967)

Dr. R. So you may have heard wrong opinions about it which have interfered with some people's meditation; but this story is a good thing to keep in one's mind to remind us that nothing else exists at all during complete Meditation.

I remember the Maharishi used to explain this and demonstrated what you did when the telephone went. He said: 'Reach out your hand, stop the noise, take the receiver off and say, (dreamily) 'Hallo-o-o' and put it on again.' (laughter)

Any further questions?

Q. Is there any useful application we can relate to the Archbishop's call for penitence? Is it anything to do with the melting of the heart?

Dr. R. There, I am afraid, we slightly differ from the Archbishop. We are discouraged from entertaining ‘penitence’. If we have made a mistake, by dwelling on this mistake we link ourselves with it, and thereby fix it. So at any moment we should put away any memory of the past, or any worry about the future; and just try to have *this moment* as perfect as we can.

The Voice of Conscience is a positive thing; it is not meant to make you go into mourning for your sins. It says to you, ‘You have been asleep; wake up.’ So you wake up, and you throw the sleep away – and with it all the mistakes you have made.

So this is one of the great assets of belonging to the Tradition of non-dualism – the Shankaracharya’s Tradition. It concentrates on the present moment; and this is very important in a half-hour, because the mind (so often when you shut your eyes) goes off on to something in the past or something in the future that you ought to be doing. The secret lies in this present moment, as a number of quite new people are finding already.

Elizabeth Guyatt. The word ‘*atonement*’, which can in one sense be taken as equal to penitence, does also mean at-one-ment.

Dr. R. Exactly, and that is the meaning we want to attach to it.

Mrs. Guyatt continued: So that in meditation, if one is at One, one is also atoning?

Dr. R. Yes. Atoning means paying your debts; and the Shankaracharya says very clearly: Certainly we are in debt; but, instead of trying to get out of the debt, we should be happy to pay our debts in full. We pay our debts in full by being One with the Absolute and helping other people as a consequence. Yes I am very glad you brought that up – like you asked last time, a very good question.

Mr. Geoffroy. Can you help over the question of the need to make the present moment bigger? I feel it often as so narrow.

Dr. R. Stop doing things, Claude! Stop ‘making moments bigger’; you personally can’t do things like that. If you get near the Atman, the Divine Self, better things will *be done* and more moments will *be bigger*.

Dr. R. to A. Is there anything, Allan, we haven’t touched on? We have been all round the shops!

A. I think we’ve found a good shop, anyway.

Dr. R. concluded. Well, I have a feeling that we are all hungry now; so let’s go and eat!

But I do hope we recognise that on the Way of the householder one is not a ‘special person’ but that just anybody with whom one is in contact gives one an opportunity to repay one’s debt.

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