

8 November 1977

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

On the Platform: Lady Allan, Dr. & Mrs. Roles (Lord Allan has business commitments in India and won't be back until next week).

Dr. Roles. You see us somewhat travel-worn, because although the flight yesterday from Delhi was only eleven hours, one spends almost as much time on the ground in formalities and delays. Our sleep too was a bit disturbed last night, and it is now at this moment midnight in the time we have been living in – time to go to sleep. So we daren't trust ourselves to meditate for long! (laughter) We will have two short meditations, but you must excuse us if the worst happens!

Now this is a Meditation meeting, and although we could write a book about our travelling adventures in the outside world and the delectable scenery of the Himalayas in Nepal, we should concentrate, I think, on the delectable scenery inside. It is this which we can share with you all at first-hand.

We had eight audiences with His Holiness, who had important engagements in the outside world at the same time, and had to keep things just right; somehow he managed every day to give us an audience and did us proud.

Perhaps some of you have not heard about how careful we have to be to perform correctly the ritual at each audience. On the day before, we buy the best fruit we can find; even if it means going to several different fruit stalls it has to be the *best*. Then, on the morning of the audience, we drive in a taxi to get to the Ashram at ten, and just before we get to the Ashram there are women sitting by the roadside making flowers into garlands, and there is great rivalry as to which we favour each morning; so Allan and interpreter Jaiswal stop off and buy the flowers, and we go on and enter the garden of the Ashram which is very peaceful.

As soon as we all get in there, word is relayed to His Holiness and we are directed to go up. The first morning was an intimate one in his own room. After that, he preferred to see us in the audience hall, and there we take our seats. And as soon as the word is passed to him we hear this chanting begin in his inner room and approach us:

(Dr. Roles then played a record of the chanting)

Meanwhile His Holiness has come in briskly at the head of the chanters, has kicked off his sandals, stepped up the big step on to his dais, and has sat on the throne in the Meditation position, from which he doesn't stir for the whole audience, moving only his head and his hands.

Then each of us in turn make our offering of flowers or fruit. We keep to a very precise ritual. One steps forward, kneels on one knee, touches the small table on which the offering is made, takes the flowers from a small basket and lays them out, touches the table, bows, and walks backwards to one's seat. It has been the same at every audience since 1962. The attendants and the chanters have meanwhile disappeared, and so now we invariably meditate without anything being said. We go into a few minutes of Meditation, and at the beginning

we just faintly hear His Holiness reciting one of the introductory phrases to the Upanishad, and when we hear that again it is time to come out of Meditation. So I think we might do the same now for a short time.

Short period of MEDITATION

Dr. Roles. When we hear his whisper, we open our eyes, and see him sitting with a totally withdrawn expression as if in some other world. And he would probably sit there the whole time like that if the interpreter did not ask his permission to put a question. We had usually written out a few questions to set the conversation going. The first day mine was taken; the next day my wife's; then Lady Allan's, and so on. We took it in turn to set things going, after which the conversation would develop spontaneously. If the questions were to his liking, his expression would become more and more animated, his eyes would twinkle and everything would become very light and gay. So we kept watching his expression; but he would never let his eyes be *caught* by any of us – he remained detached.

This is how the first audience started; we want you to hear it now because it refers to Meditation.

Lady Allan reads:

R. His Holiness has frequently described three levels of stillness. Of these, we seem as householders very deficient in stillness of the subtle level. We are full of pulls like the puppet moved by strings, they seem usually more like distractions than desires, duties to be performed, etc. We are not at all clear how to get this second level of stillness in Meditation.

Dr. R. This is a question we have often asked, and one often gets asked. We know what the physical stillness and peace is; we know when we wake up if we have had a good night's rest; and we know from experience occasionally what the Causal level is in the course of a half-hour; but all the rest of the time there is a continual hubbub on the subtle level – (personal psychology) – thoughts and feelings and everything whirling about, and this is what makes the next half-hour difficult. Here is his answer to this question:

S. The body is the product of the Samskara (the Essence) and the Prarabdha (the debts one has previously incurred).

Dr. R. We have incurred debts which have mounted up, and for each person there is a particular debt which has required one to appear on stage again in this life. That is the meaning of Prarabdha.

S. continued. And however the body has been designed according to the ingredients of these two, it is very difficult to tailor it to match one's desires because it is materialised and finalised. It will go by the laws by which it is designed and forced to follow.

As far as the subtle level is concerned, that can certainly be controlled. There is no difficulty in controlling the subtle level at all. That is within the realm of human endeavour through special means.

The means to do that is to go into the Causal level. The third level is described as deep peace; and His Holiness says that the simile which is given to the Causal level of peace is the ocean. The ocean embodies all three levels: The surface is always

in turmoil – there are short waves always going on; the middle of the ocean has very little movement.

Dr. R. Just a swell and a prevailing current.

S. But the deepest levels of the ocean never have any turmoil of any sort; they are always at great peace.

It is only through the Meditation that one can enter into the Causal peace, which is very deep peace. The System of Meditation has been described, and one can go into this without any difficulty; and it would seem that this region of the Causal level appears to be experienced very briefly as far as the time factor is concerned, but its potency is great. Its effect goes on for a much longer period – for a longer stretch.

Just as, for example; when you have a meal lasting only ten or fifteen minutes; this ten or fifteen minutes of taking food will keep you going and working for hours and hours on end; and if you get tired or hungry again then you return for more food.

In exactly the same way, this Meditation which takes you to the deepest level of peace is good enough to give you enough strength and energy and sustained peace for a sufficient time for you to keep your subtle level trimmed to your desires.

You cannot trim your body to your desire. But although you may be a puppet on the physical level, you are not a puppet on the subtle level at all. You are a man.

(Record, 25 October 1977)

Dr. R. Well, I see certain doubtful looks about this. Are there any questions about this?

(after short pause)

There is no excuse; we *can* learn to control all our psychology. It is ours and we are responsible for it. We do this by going through it all – having nothing to do with it during a half-hour, until we get to the peace with the rhythm of the Mantra. Then, this peace will return to us at certain moments during the day between jobs, or at night if we wake up or first thing in the morning, depending on how persistently and patiently we have managed to get a couple of minutes of peace in any half-hour.

(another pause)

Well, come on; throw something at us or we'll go away again!

Q. It sounds rather like switching the attachment from the physical to something deeper. Swinging the mind over from something superficial to something deeper?

Dr. R. Yes, it begins like that. Habitually all day the mind is proceeding on its own course along with the body; and whenever we move, then the mind moves, and it is all going by machinery. We simply take the mind away from all movement and change its direction, a process which the Maharishi used to describe as 'a 180 degree turn'.

What I want to stress very much is to make quite sure you realise that the secret is that the *whole of you* must be meditating. You can't just say: 'Well, this bit must meditate, and the other bit can do what it likes'; but instead one should think 'I, Roles, am the meditator' – 'for this half-hour I am the meditator'. Don't bother with all the different parts of the machine, but just try to have total attention for at least a few moments.

Any other questions?

Q. (a woman) Is the peace stored at the deep level, for I wonder sometimes when I am in the middle of turmoil that I am suddenly aware of mySelf?

Dr. R. Yes, it is always there, just as the stillness of the depths of the ocean is always there; and directly one turns away from the ripple on the surface we find the stillness. Does that answer your question?

Q. (same) Yes; but the question really is: How is it that out of the blue one suddenly remembers oneSelf?

Dr. R. It is a gap in the whirr of the machinery, for some reason like a change of occupation. There is a gap; at such a moment your mind is not rushing after something. It is in those gaps that suddenly the Causal level makes itself felt. And this is the great secret because as it came out later in the conversation, we don't make nearly enough use of these gaps during the day. Having accomplished something, finished a job, we don't try and prolong the interval before we rush on to something else.

In those gaps, Samadhi (bliss) can occur. You have heard of the Samadhi which the Yogis use in the Eightfold steps – a long and complicated business with Samadhi at the eight step. But there is another kind of Samadhi not known about, not paid attention to, which can come at these gaps in the machinery during the day. There are many more than we suspect. It is rather like what St. Paul calls 'redeeming the time'. Are there any other questions?

Q. (a woman) Does His Holiness mean that we should not feel a sense of failure if the moments of deep peace are very short?

Dr. R. Never feel a sense of failure; His Holiness won't have it; it is just not allowed. Never feel a sense of failure or a sense of sin or any of the personal smoke-screens that get in the way between us and the Divine Self.

If Adam and Eve hadn't behaved in that curious way after their deal with the snake, and rushed into the bushes and sewn themselves garments of fig leaves, a lot of trouble would have been saved! (laughter)

So, apart from that, it is a question of making more of these very brief moments. You can prolong them for two minutes, for five minutes, for a quarter of an hour and a quarter of an hour of that peace will change your life. It is what Mr. Ouspensky used to say. 'Remember yourself for a moment, for two minutes, for five minutes, and a quarter of an hour would change your life.' It begins like that. But even these moments, although they are very short in duration have very lasting effects. So, just gently without any self-analysis, make more of them.

Any other questions?

Q. (a woman) I always feel at the back of my mind that I don't make more progress because of a lack of self-discipline. Am I mistaken?

Dr. R. It all depends on who you call 'I' – who is disciplining who. If you could only stop thinking 'I am doing everything' and taking the credit or the blame, and realise that a Higher hand is doing everything. The puppets are moving, but somebody else is pulling the strings. That is the attitude one should be trying to get, and that is what we mean by self-discipline. Do return to your question if it is not answered.

Mrs. Cardew. Is it launching out into some kind of faith? I don't know what else to call it.

Dr. R. Faith only comes from experiencing something sufficiently often so that you believe in it. Turning on an artificial kind of faith wouldn't work.

Dr. R. to Mrs. R. What is Mariel Cardew really up to?

Mrs. R. (laughs and says) 'I think we all try to find excuses for not doing what we can easily do.'

Q. What was meant when His Holiness said that we inherit an Essence and a debt?

Dr. R. Yes, this is very interesting and important. He has said quite a lot about this subject from time to time so he takes it for granted that we know what he means.

Man consists of body, Essence, personality and Soul according to our Western System. The body has a span of life; it is born and it dies. The personality is created each time with the body and crumbles with the body at death. The Essence lives on. In life after life it accumulates experience; but it also accumulates a debt. In fact, one owes the Almighty so much that one often feels that it is impossible to repay. But we are not asked to; we are asked only to do our best. Not to dwell on the debt, but be happy and ready to repay something whenever we get the chance. We pay our debts by showing love and kindness to our fellow human beings (including those who ought to be near and dear to us) and by trying to remember the Creator, our true Self. That is what is meant in the Lord's prayer: 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.'

Q. (a woman) What is that debt? Could you say more about it?

Dr. R. It is totally forgetting the only real thing in this Universe – the Consciousness, the Absolute; totally forgetting. And this Consciousness is oneself, one's true Self, one's Divine Self, how often do we remember that?

This Divine Self likes to be taken notice of and to have attention paid, just as you like to be taken notice of and have attention paid to you. Because in fact it is ourSelves; so it is to be true to oneSelf, to remember, and to want to pay one's debts. And to realise that everybody has this same Self, the Self that lives in the hearts of all. Everybody is the home of this Self, and paying a debt is to recognise this Self also in other people, and to do to others what you would have them do to you.

So, if one feels that one has been helped by this Meditation, then one tries, if one can, to take a hand in giving the Meditation to other people handing on what has received.

Dr. Cox. The payment of one's debts does not give any reward; the reward is in a different direction, and that is the peace. Is that right?

Dr. R. Yes, Dr. Cox, and that is infinitely rewarding. Infinitely rewarding because of the Truth and the energy it gives. One must not do it for the sake of a reward. One does it out of love for oneSelf or another person, and the reward comes. It is a bonus, yes; but a 'no claims bonus' it must always be.

Q. Could you say more about how we should proceed when we are aware of these gaps – these moments where there are gaps?

Dr. R. This is really what all our conversations with the Shankaracharya this time were about.

We will let you have it, bit by bit, but we can't let you have it all in one breath!

(To Lady Allan) This really has reference to your own question:

M.A. I asked:

M.A. His Holiness mentioned the short dip into the deep peace of the Causal level and the long effects of this. He said this is the way to 'tailor our subtle level'.

Many people who have been meditating for some years say they feel rather stuck and cannot get enough of the deep peace to progress.

Can we help each other, or is there some special advice or type of checking for people who have been with us for many years?

Dr. R. I think she was putting a question that a lot of people here in this room would like to ask.

M.A. The Shankaracharya answered:

S. There is nothing special which can be given to these people because the special is the Meditation and there can be nothing special for the special.

Dr. R. If you go on saying that you get into what J. W. Dunne called 'an infinite regress'. The Meditation, the whole thing, *is special* and very individual. You have been told all you can possibly be told about it so there is nothing special which we need beside that. What is special is how we carry on with the other twenty-three hours of the day.

M.A. In fact he did use those words. He went on:

S. Otherwise you go into an infinite regress and there is no end to such a thing. The work we have to keep on doing with these people is to remind them of the aim of the whole System. There are a few difficulties when people cannot go deeper into their level. The most predominant of these is the *Vikshepa* (distracted mind) which pursues these people who are so much involved in their own activity that the effect of the activity does not allow their mind to penetrate deep into their own Being.

(Record, 27 October 1977)

Dr. R. The continual activity of the roving mind, *Vikshepa*; it used to be called 'uncontrolled imagination' in our System. One thought leading to another; inner conversations; outer conversations; incessant mental activity. One must learn to curb that to some extent during the other twenty-three hours, if one is going to have deep peace during the half-hours.

(Pause)

Dr. R. There is somebody in this room whose private question we took out and she will recognise it.

M.A. The question which Dr. Roles took and put was:

Q. If one is reunited in Meditation one's eyes naturally gaze on the Beloved. But when this doesn't happen one feels sometimes that one was initiated outwardly but not inwardly. Can you perform a wonder over me at these times?

S. He categorically refuses to accept that there is anything wrong with the Initiation. The mere fact that real Unity does take place sometimes shows that the Initiation has been performed properly and a passage has been created for reunion with the Self.

Even in ordinary life one finds that if one has to go to see someone who one really knows well and the gatekeeper doesn't allow you in to see your friend, you won't take it as an unfriendly act of your friend himself but an interruption caused by the gatekeeper.

In the event of such non-availability of Unity during Meditation, the cause is Rajas or Tamas and these are present in the atmosphere at any time – sometimes caused by oneself. They are the only hindrances which come in the way of Unity. If they are reduced, there is no doubt that the Union will take place as usual, and one will reach close to the Self.

One should never think that the Initiation could have gone wrong, but try to improve one's state in relation to the three Gunas.

(Record, 1 November 1977)

Dr. R. And then I topped that up by saying:

H.H.'s words during all these audiences, when she hears them, will certainly do the magic for her that she asks for.

Dr. R. continued:

You understand that? You are going to see a friend in a block of flats, but the hall-porter refuses to let you up. It is not your friend's fault. The Atman is always friendly – always there, always ready to help, and always welcoming with us. It is the hall-porter (the Buddhi or intellect) that needs attention.

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He then went on:

Well, as it is now 8 o'clock (1 a.m.) we could now put your husband's question, for the answer contains a very lovely Sanskrit poem.

M.A. My husband asked:

A. Can I return to the question of the Gunas? Sattva seems to manifest in serenity and calmness. Our actions can be carried out with calmness and serenity. One can even talk of a person 'sleeping serenely'. Should we therefore aim at the permeation of Rajas and Tamas by Sattva?

S. This was mentioned in answer to the previous question by Mrs. Roles. When we have to perform certain actions or have to have some rest, we have to take part in Rajas and Tamas whether we like it or not. But if we can inject a little more Sattva into Rajas, then certainly all our actions will become beautiful, like the word 'serenity' which has been used. And actions can be performed very calmly without agitation.

And the same is possible in Tamas. If there is enough Sattva, then all our rest can be with great pleasure and beauty. So one should always try to permeate as much Sattva as possible into one's Rajasic actions or Tamasic rest.

Then he quoted a Sanskrit poem which he said is the 'utterance of a man who seems to have offered everything to the Absolute'.

This was the interpreter's spontaneous translation:

O my Lord, my whole Being is yourSelf, and Buddhi, which has been given to me, is your consort

The five pranas, (the organs of circulation and breathing) which you have offered me are your attendants

My body is the temple in which I worship You

Whatever I eat or wear, or do, is part of the worship which I keep on performing at the temple

Even when this body goes to sleep, I feel I am in Samadhi with You

Whenever I walk or go anywhere, I feel I am going on a pilgrimage to You

Whatever I speak is all in praise of You

So whatever I do in this world in any way is all aimed at You

In fact, there is no division in this life of Unity with yourSelf.

(Śivamānasapūjā of Shri Shankara)

M.A. Then H.H. said:

This is the sort of situation which one has to find in oneSelf and this situation is charged with Sattva.

Unity is not something one is aiming at. But Unity is something which one has to experience every moment, in every action, so that whatever one does is in praise or worship of the Absolute. When that situation exists in one's mind and one's Being, then one *is* in constant union with the Absolute.

(Record, 26 October 1977)

Dr. R. And now let us devote another five minutes to you, our Lord, to go to Your home and do honour to You.

MEDITATION

Dr. Roles then concluded:

And now to the big *incentive*, because to get the full flavour of this one needs an incentive bigger than all other incentives. For me, this has to do with life and death.

Like me, you have probably been reading this book that recounts the experiences at the time of death of people who have returned, having been resuscitated.

So a number of our questions dealt with that – the question of dying and what we have to do *now* to prepare for that moment which comes to everyone. At our final audience I asked this question:

R. If one uses the Mantra at such a moment of two minutes assiduously now, is there a good hope that if we are born again, the first sound which we will think or utter may be our Mantra?

S. Just as in our ordinary life, if one is preoccupied with a certain problem and goes to sleep with it, one finds that whenever one wakes up after six or seven hours that the same problem comes to the mind of the individual.

The same law applies in the transmigration of Souls. Whatever is predominant in the individual when he is about to go into this longer sleep, will confront him when he takes another body. This means that anyone desirous of starting his next life with the Mantra should keep it in his mind and occupy himself with it so much that he leaves the world with the Mantra; then he will get it again.

R. This will be a great incentive, because we may have to wait some time in the next life and have some difficulty before we are reinitiated!

S. said that he was very sure that anyone who dwells predominantly on any idea will find himself confronted with the same thing when he is about to leave the world. It is not a matter of chance; but if one has dwelt predominantly on something good, when one is about to go, one will remember something good, because one will remember the thing one has been remembering in life.

(Record 2 November 1977)

Dr. R. concluded:

I think that is really enough for tonight. It is now after quarter past eight; and we are very grateful to Providence or the Param-Atman for a safe return. And we have been encouraged to think that all of you are doing very well indeed, whatever you may think about yourselves! It is all going fine, so don't let little difficulties, the ups and downs, discourage you.

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We hope that this Meditation Meeting report will give you something of the atmosphere surrounding the Shankaracharya, and that with the weekly papers will be enough to keep your group going for a while. The four of us are desperately trying to put his instructions into practice and until Christmas want to be a little less concerned with minding other people's business! So it's a merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

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