

10 January 1978

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

COLET HOUSE

After some announcements, Dr. Roles began as follows:

People so often complain that, for some time, they can't get off the ground in Meditation. We all have these arid periods. It doesn't matter at all if you are having peace, even if there are no electric sparks or moments of ecstasy.

Now one of the well-recognised ways of getting over these dry spells in the Shankaracharya's Tradition is through music, and they make a great use of music; so we want to encourage more private enterprise about using music in connection with Meditation. Of course, it is impossible, even in a group of twenty people, to have everybody wanting the *same* music; and in a big room like this one can't attempt to find music which is popular with *everybody*. I will read you what they use the music for.

At the first Sunday evening concert, recital and a talk to which we were invited (and which the Shankaracharya so often gives) we had been promised a recital of the special music called 'Kirtan' since this music has a special value in helping Meditation and the start of the climb up the Ladder of Self-realization. While the singers and instrumentalists were assembling (which is a small orchestra that H.H. had trained himself), I asked His Holiness the meaning of the word Kirtan?

He replied that it is made up of two words which together mean: 'The song in praise of'.

Dr. R. It needn't be church music. It merely means that certain music has the power – at a specially bright moment of the composer, and many Western composers have it – of lifting one off the ground floor.

S. cont. When Tamas, inertia, is predominant in people, and their level is not so high as to take them to the transcendent stage, the Kirtan imparts to them a push – a movement. The sound or rhythm, particularly when repeated, creates an atmosphere which binds them together, and through this active force of Rajas they can be taken into Sattva without any effort on their part.

(Record, 14 October 1962)

Dr. R. They simply have to join in and be receptive. We so often use a sleepy, soothing kind of music in connection with Meditation. This isn't at all the way they do it. They do it to wake one up. This Kirtan was created in this Tradition to serve as a bridge between low states and fine states in Meditation.

Then the singing began; and as the sound penetrated all through the Ashram and into the street outside, more and more people collected so that the long audience hall became quite full; many joined in the choruses, and sometimes beat time by clapping. Thus the whole room was united, and when the music stopped His Holiness began his public address on 'The Four Ways'. That is one way in which they use music.

Dr. Roles then said:

Well, we tried a little while ago a record the Allans produced of Fauré's *Requiem* and many people seemed to like that. This is a different recording on tape and we are starting near the end. The last two movements are called 'Libera me' with Fischer-Dieskau doing the baritone solo, and then 'In Paradisum' – 'into Paradise' – is the last movement. So, after playing this we will go straight into Meditation.

The music, followed by MEDITATION (10 minutes)

Dr. Roles, afterwards:

Now we must stop; those ten minutes went by very quickly. We planned to read something about the Meditation, but if any questions come out, they would be very welcome from time to time. Anything that wants to be asked, ask it.

I think that in these days of record players and cassette recorders there is so much marvellous music to choose from that a little research by individuals on 'music in the home' in relation to Meditation would be a very profitable thing.

Anyway, it comes to this: that attention is the fundamental thing in this life and the next, and we are going to study this term the recent work on attention, which is also a special point where recent scientific discoveries, the Shankaracharya's Teaching, and Mr. Ouspensky's, all coincide and one helps the others.

To do anything well, you need to have the power through long practice of one-pointed Attention when you want it – Attention roused and directed to one point, and Meditation, is a very quick, and easy, and universal way of acquiring this power. Of course, there are other ways, but are there any questions about this? The most important of all, of course is one-pointed Attention in Self-remembering, where one remembers nothing but the Atman or the Param-Atman – the Divine Self.

(After a slight pause)

Well, shall we go on with some reading; then perhaps some questions will force themselves through your teeth.

Dr. R. (to A.) This is from a talk which you and your wife had with the Shankaracharya; we were all three there, but it was the first time your wife came out there. (A. Yes.)

A. This was a question by me (in 1968):

A. Stressing the need for regular practice in Meditation, His Holiness once gave us an illustration of learning to ride a bicycle. (Dr. R. Do you ride a bicycle? A. I used to.)

Sometimes when a boy is having difficulty in learning, a grown-up holds him steady. In Meditation can help be given in this way, but psychologically on the subtle level?

S. Two worlds are concerned here – the coarse physical world and the subtle world. All the direct help one can give is in the physical sphere. So, when somebody is being trained to meditate, they are told to take a certain posture, how to start the Mantra, to close one's eyes, etc. And also, what not to do – not to let the physical body sag or slant; not to let it move and so on.

In the subtle realm, indications or suggestions can be given, but these directions must be carried out by the meditator himself. Beyond such directions, it is impossible to do anything for another person's meditation except in very rare cases.

Dr. R. Any questions about that? It must be experienced. It rather reminds one of Mr. Ouspensky saying that: 'Nearly everybody is asleep'. He said, 'I can do nothing for such people. Anything you try and do will only make them uncomfortable in their sleep. The desire to awake must come from within each person.'

It is the same with Meditation – someone else trying to get you meditating will not get you far unless you have a strong desire to wake up, and if you are discontented with your sleep. Then somebody can assist and hold you steady, as in learning to ride a bicycle, but the strong desire which is the individual thing, must be there.

Any questions?

Dr. R. (to A.) The continuation of that talk is useful, isn't it?

A. Yes; and the Shankaracharya went on:

Meditation is a journey back home, and most of the troubles and tribulations that one experiences are in the early part of that journey (before one's Attention is roused by emotion and the memory of the Self). When that point is passed and you are nearer home, then there is only one thing to look for and you don't need to bother with anything else. Meditation is going back home – home to the Self. All that a Teacher can do is to describe the journey from start to finish and show what usually happens and what may be met with on the way.

Once (either during Meditation, or at some other lucky moment) one gets the taste of inner happiness, which is not available in the physical world and which comes from the Casual world, then one wants to have it again and again.

If there are just a few grains of sugar an ant will travel from one grain to the next without anybody's help; and it is the same in Meditation. You don't need the help of anyone else; one is capable of making the journey oneself because then the Divine Self that knows everything, takes you by the hand and leads you along the way.

(Record, 24 September 1968)

Dr. R. Isn't there too much straining and thinking 'I must get on with *my* meditation' – too much activity in connection with Meditation and the attention needed for it?

The chief one in each of us who doesn't want to meditate is the *personality* with its dominant hemisphere and its speech centres and its turning thoughts. This definitely does not want to meditate; it will do anything to trip you up and to stop you meditating. It will try to persuade you it is too difficult for you and you are not the sort of person to meditate, and so on. You have to find the way of diddling this dominant hemisphere! In many people the body does not like sitting still. But in some people the body likes sitting still; my body likes sitting still and it is all I can do to get it to move at all (laughter); that varies a lot with people. So personality, on the whole, is our chief enemy. Therefore, it is the body and personality against the Essence and the Soul; and the Essence and the Soul have got to win, and are going to win, and will win. There are lot of people all going for the same thing with a good guide and a Teacher to take them.

I am doing a lot of gagging, you see, to start somebody off.

Mr. Hammond. I find I keep on leaving things in other people's houses quite frequently, I think this is because my mind is continually turning.

Dr. R. Do come to tea with me, Hammond and leave me some of your possessions. I would love that. (laughter)

Mr. Hammond. (Cont.) My mind is continually turning from one thing to the other and is not focussing on anything. Can you confirm that?

Dr. R. Well, Yes, I can confirm that! (more laughter) And do you also go into a room for something, and forget what you have gone into the room for? (Mr. H. Yes)

Dr. R. Oh, you do! Well, it is really when one's mind is tired these things happen – the tiredness shows itself in that way.

Meditation is a rest for the mind; and if it is not being a rest for the mind and preventing this tiredness, you should consult somebody about it and alter your technique. When the mind is fresh with plenty of energy, it is capable of the most miraculous things; it always has ready for you just what you want. It is a question of energy. Is that what you feel about it, Hammond?

Mr. Hammond. Yes.

Dr. R. Well, where do you lose your energy? (Dr. R. added:) In other people's houses? You feel fresh, for instance, after turning? You get energy?

Mr. Hammond. Oh, yes, I do. But there are times when I obviously don't have enough energy.

Dr. R. Well, like many of us you turn on the tap but leave the plug out of the bath. I mean, the energy is seeping away all the time. So you must find out where your energy is leaking and stop that leak.

Have a talk with some candid friend. We all have leaks of energy – favourite ways in which we let the energy seep away. But they all come into three main categories: a) turning and especially negative thoughts, b) identification with conflicting desires and emotions, c) involuntary and wasteful actions.

Any more questions?

Q. It seems to be the important thing to have one thought at a time; and I therefore ask: How is it possible to give attention to the task in hand and at the same time to remember oneSelf?

Dr. R. First use the mind for watching your actions instead of dreaming; and then do what you have to do efficiently and economically. The human Mind (capital M) has all kinds of departments. It sounds as if the wrong department is trying to operate here.

Dr. R. asked for the rest of the question to be repeated, then said:

I think this is a mistake – a mistaken way of going about it. You do what you have to do, the task in hand; and you do it to the best of your ability – you do it just as it should be done, and with just the amount of energy required. You don't have to switch part of your attention on to yourSelf in any way. When you have finished the job, and before you plunge into the next job, remember yourSelf, collect your attention. But while you are into the next job attend to it with undivided attention. But just to begin with, for now, do it as well as you can.

There is an old mistake which crept into followers and adherents of the System we studied – that you had to divide your attention – one arrow pointing to You and the other pointing to the job in hand. It does not work! In the Meditation you are 100% meditating; doing your job in ordinary life you are 100% doing your job. Is that clear?

Q. (same) In the past I have been able to have good attention on the task in hand, but when it was over and looking at it I found that all my attention had, in fact, been on the task and this rather worried me.

Dr. R. Well, it is a matter of gradually supplying the mind with the right energy; practising attention in all kinds of varieties of operations and practising meditation; and gradually you will find that your capacity to do things does not demand the whole of you; it is only rather exceptionally skilled operations that require the whole of you; so it is a matter of attaining this gradually.

The other side of attention, according to the Shankaracharya, is efficiency. By efficiency, he means just appropriate action for the occasion. You don't have to puff and blow in order to unlock a door. With our machinery all tangled up, we tend to put too much machinery into everything; just as a child writes with his tongue out. We are very wasteful in the way we do things. This needs practice and observation. Has anybody got views on this? It is a very important point on which we have gone wrong in the past.

Mrs. Simpson. It is true that in time Attention and remembering become One?

Dr. R. Not only in time; they are that way in the construction of the human machine – the human organism; because every set of impressions you take in awakens the cord of memory of similar impressions that you have had in the past. If the mind is allowed to operate as it should, it is all the time comparing a performance with a previous performance. That is the way we learn.

So, if you let the mechanism work properly, Mrs. Simpson, without worrying about yourself, or something like that, it does just this – memory and performance go hand in hand.

Q. Is Meditation directed attention as opposed to attention caught and held?

Dr. R. In its first stages, a little attention is directed to the starting of the Mantra – just enough to start the Mantra going by itself and forming a rhythm.

Very soon you don't have to 'direct' any attention; the Mantra rhythm takes over. All you have to do is just to be passive and withdraw your attention from anything that comes between you and the Mantra rhythm. But it is a very passive thing, the whole of Meditation. After a few moments we begin to get quiet, and these physical changes happen: the breathing gets economical, and the muscular tension fades out, and the lovely quiet begins to come, then some new energy comes in and does it for you; the Divine Self takes over. So the less the ego produces what it calls 'active attention' the better it goes and the quicker the result.

Dr. R. (to Mr. Lucas). Do you agree with that, Lucas, or would you put it a different way? Mr. Lucas agreed and added: 'It is very clearly put.'

Dr. R. (to A.) And the Shankaracharya puts it more clearly still in answer to the next question from Lady Allan. Dr. Roles then went on:

There is something not understood and rather important in Meditation. What exactly does the Mantra do? The Mantra sets up a lot of nerve impulses which travel. Now we don't feel the nerve impulses; they are in a cosmos below us in the cellular world and they are quite below the threshold of consciousness. All we know is when a volley of nerve impulses arrive in a particular situation and that lights up a certain function, and we recognise this function. So what does His Holiness say in answer to Maureen's question?

A. The question from my wife was:

M.A. After the Initiation, does the vibration of the Mantra remain strong, or does the meditator have to strengthen it? And if so, how?

S. One starts meditating with a certain energy available to oneself at that moment. And the system is that the rhythm of the Mantra has to go deeper, and usually goes slower and keeps on slowing down until it becomes unconscious and appears to stop. At that stage one feels no rhythm and finds oneSelf transcending.

S. But you asked about another aspect, the vibration of the Mantra itself.

This Mantra which we have all been encouraged to use, consists of three sounds in One; and the first sound, the 'R' sets up strong impulses in the cerebrum. We don't feel nerve impulses directly; we feel the result when they reach a certain destination in the brain or spinal cord; certain functions are started up. So these nerve impulses pass from the brain to the lowest part of the spine where they liberate a store of energy which penetrates the whole body, travelling up through the sympathetic nerves and chakras (plexuses) to a place where they seem to unite in the head.

(ibid)

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