

11 July 1978

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Dr. Roles. Before we begin, I just want to mention the Programmes which are on the landing in response to some requests, the idea being that a very little regular effort is much more effective than some enormous big effort once in a way. If one can keep something of the sort going over the holidays, it should do you a good turn. It's meant to help people to meditate although it does, in fact, summarise what we have been talking about this term at meetings.

Now there are some other announcements.

Lord Allan. There will be Meditation Meetings on 8th August and 12th September. During the holidays there will be an opportunity for anybody wanting some good company and to hear a Reading, if they are willing to come and help us for a couple of hours. Two different kinds of arrangements have been made. First, every Thursday evening from now to the end of September from about 7.30 to 9.30 – no need to give notice, just turn up. It will be a great help in dealing with ordinary maintenance work. Secondly, there will be a fortnight of work on weekday evenings and Saturdays doing some very much needed maintenance and decorating from 11th September for a fortnight. For this, would you please see the lists either on the blackboard or on the table in the hall and put your name down showing when you can come. It will not only be a great help to the house, but for all of us to have good company during the long holidays.

Dr. R. Any questions about that?

I don't suppose there are any questions in cold blood! We will warm you up a bit by borrowing a description of the essentials of meditation which the Shankaracharya has given us at different times from what Lord Allan gave to the recent initiates of the S.E.S. a week or two back.

We need to be reminded of what he considers to be the most important things.

A. (reading):

S. I will give you some very important hints about meditation. There are a few fundamental principles which need to be observed in order to derive benefit. Posture is most important. I was invited to the Ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to have a look at a number of people who had come from various countries and were training there. I saw that they were lying in different postures. All were in the wrong postures, one way and another. There was not a single person who was sitting correctly.

Dr. R. I was one of those guilty people so I blushed when the Shankaracharya mentioned it!
(laughter)

S. The most important thing is that you should not sit on an easy chair in a reclining position. If you keep the body in any position other than with the spine straight for a length of time, it may cause you trouble and will make the person lose faith in this technique of meditation. Losing faith, he will be disillusioned and go away. The method is corrected like this: you should sit for half an hour in the

morning and evening, but be sure the body is in the correct posture on a chair which will keep your spine vertical. Then begin to pronounce the Mantra with lips shut as lightly as you can. Sound the Mantra as loudly as you can inside you with maximum effort. Then decrease the effort gradually until the Mantra finally merges into the heart. This process should not take you more than five minutes.

(Record, 21 September 1974)

Dr. R. Now let's do that because otherwise we forget it. Just keep a straight back and sound the Mantra within yourself as loud as you can for several minutes.

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Dr. R. That was just five minutes. We will meditate again later. The point about this is that the maximum effort is needed in the beginning. Then you allow the Mantra rhythm to take its own course, gradually relaxing the effort. If you get slack or the mind wanders or you get sleepy anytime during the half hour, you come back to the sounding of the Mantra loudly. Isn't that so?

A. Yes.

Dr. R. From time to time, he has said different things about posture. For instance, for two years during audiences with him, I was encouraged to sit on the floor with my legs crossed and my back against the wall. He said that it was not easy to do it on an upright chair with arms to it, and yet when we go, we get provided with those! (laughter) Apart from that, the one consistent thing all the way through is the straight spine and that's very important. There are two places where disease – spondulitis – can set in most commonly: the neck (and the neck shouldn't let the head fall forward or be pushed back) and the other is the small of the back which should be hollow arched, a normal spine, because that's where the spinal cord ends at the 1st or 2nd vertebra. It doesn't end at the bottom of the spine. The centres which fire off our energy are just there at the end of the spinal cord in the small of the back so it's rather important not to let your back 'round'. The other thing is a symmetrical position – feet firmly on the ground – and he has often said that the hands can be held one inside the other – the right hand (representing the individual) resting in the left hand (which represents the universe). That, he says, is as you like. Any question about these fundamental things?

Q. Could you say more about the effect – what happens to the energy if the spine is rounded? Is it dissipated if the spine is rounded rather than hollowed?

Dr. R. It just doesn't pass up and down watering all the centres as it should do. It gets stuck, and so the passage of the vibrations due to the Mantra get held up. Then you don't get the full effect, which is to 'come home' to the place within is completely silent and still. In that silence the energy can be touched off and that's where our responsibility ends, because that's the point when the Atman himself can take over if he so wishes. See that you don't hold things up.

Miss Cassini. What would happen if your back was absolutely straight against the wall?

Dr. R. This is a mistake that a lot of people make. They think that a straight back means to

cancel out the natural concavity of the spine. It isn't – you become a guardsman or something! (laughter) Don't let's think what would happen if... let's do what we are told. Any other questions about this?

Mr. Hodge. The Shankaracharya mentioned closing the lips as lightly as possible and I have found recently that this has a definite effect on the facial muscles and some effect on the Mantra.

Dr. R. The idea is not to set up tensions in the muscles around the mouth – clenching your teeth or anything like that – because the habit quickly develops and the Mantra fixes it very nicely for life! (laughter) As you know, the jaw is the last thing to relax, and just to have your lips lightly closed is the best way to ensure that.

R.H. I find it difficult to hold the lips closed without tension except in my experience in the turning.

Dr. R. I don't see what's difficult about keeping the lips gently closed. You don't walk about with your mouth open all the time, Hodge; I've never seen you like that! (laughter) Just naturally with your lips shut. The emphasis is on not clenching your teeth and introducing tension.

There is more important instruction from the Shankaracharya:

S. If the mind gets disturbed again, repeat the above process once more. Repeat the Mantra and decrease the effort. This, in the end, becomes almost effortless. The pronouncing of the Mantra becomes in the end effortless. It should settle down into a condition where no effort is being made.

A. Then he went on, slightly later, in part of the same talk:

S. The first thing is this: that you sit with the back perfectly straight. And the second thing: that during Meditation you recite the Mantra. While reciting the Mantra, there should never be any stressing of any part of it. It should be perfectly smooth. The feeling should be like that when you go to meet someone whom you love dearly. At such a meeting, when you go to meet someone whom you love dearly, there can be no question of tension, no tension at all. Simply you are going to meet in meditation your Atman, your Real I, which is the object of your greatest love because your Real I is part of the Creator of all things. And when it is seen to be your greatest love, there is absolutely no question of tension. So in this way you will descend into the depths of your own Self. You will reach the region where everything is perfectly quiet and perfectly still. All the tensions are left far behind. Going into meditation, you should do so with the same spirit as if you are going to meet your dearest.

The idea is not meditation itself, but it has the aim to drive out other thoughts. For example, you are sitting here and a number of people are seeking an interview with you. Then someone who is most important comes to you. You ask the others to wait and you attend to that important person. Similarly this idea of going to meet your most beloved person is only to keep out other ideas. The real thing is the Mantra. When you have succeeded in driving out other ideas from the mind, then the stage comes when the Mantra takes you in and real Meditation begins. If, when you have gone into meditation, you are again disturbed, then during the second

disturbance the *idea* is not necessary, for the Mantra will do it of itself. Start the Mantra first with the lips shut and with greater force and then go on, decreasing the force. Ultimately the Mantra also goes away and in a state of bliss you forget that this is the Mantra, that you are meditating. All these ideas have vanished. The meditator, the meditation, and the object of meditation merge into one another and we no longer remain conscious of their separate existence.

(*ibid*)

Dr. R. There can't be any artificiality or pretence about this. If one, like everyone in this room, has had any experience of the loveliness of the Divine Self, it would be quite natural during a meditation to approach it as if going to meet your chief and only love. It's not what the Maharishi used to warn one about – 'mood-making' – some artificial creation of moods. This is a natural thing. Any questions?

Mr. Tyou. I've notice that as one becomes more relaxed during meditation, the head is apt to drop either back or forward. Can you give any hints as to how to guard against this?

Dr. R. I've found this quite a problem. One does relax greatly and I've seen it in people during Initiations. I myself have a cushion behind my head because I find if my head falls forward, not only is it a dangerous thing for the spine, but also one falls asleep. I like a high-backed chair and a cushion, but one must be very careful not to slouch, not to lose the straightness of one's back. Try that, Tyou.

The meditation is a giving up. Successful meditation lies in giving up everything else during a half hour. Giving up your ego, in particular. The idea that *you* are somebody, *you* are meditating, *you* have certain rights and if you meditate in a certain way, you have the right to enlightenment or if you are not meditating well, that you are at fault and are a bad meditator and never will meditate properly. All this I, I, I, business is what one gives up in meditation. This nearly always is the cause of difficulties that arise.

So giving up the obtrusiveness of one's ego in meditation is the most essential thing, and one reason why he suggests entering meditation with the thought of meeting your true love. 'Giving up' can be done at any moment during the day or whenever the thought occurs to one – about Self-realization, about any of this business at all, you can give up something. You can give up wasting a drop of energy, for instance. Giving up in a psychological sense, the real 'giving up', is not a matter of external objects but inner renunciation of the attitude that 'I have something of my own' – 'I am separate and have my own rights'.

As an illustration of the happy results which arise from giving up the view that 'I am something', he told a story to the crowd which some of you may have heard, and some not.

A rich man had three sons of whom the youngest was a cripple. The father looked after him very well while he was alive, but after his death, he received no attention from his brothers and passed all his days lying on doorsteps begging for food and water.

One day a Realized man passed that way to whom the cripple told his story and asked for advice. The wise man took him outside the village; making him sit under a banyan tree, he asked him to remain like that for three days without eating or speaking to anybody. When people saw him sitting there motionless without eating or talking (a very rare thing in India!) their curiosity was aroused and they

thought he must be a great Mahatma. As the news spread, people came from far and wide to have a look at him. So great were their offerings of fruit and sweets that a hundred men could live on them. The Realized Man gave him neither Mantra nor Tantra (i.e. neither method nor System of Teaching) but merely by taking shelter under him, the cripple's life was completely changed for the better.

(Record, 1 February 1970)

We do not recommend literal adoption of this policy in London, Paris or New York; (people have, we believe, tried it by the statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus!) but one can learn much by sensing the spiritual meaning – our attitude in meditation, for instance, the need for a Fully Realized teacher and so on.

Any further things you want to discuss? Our plan is that at some time we should meditate and then we want to read something special. But perhaps there is something you would like to know about or discuss first.

In the Programme that you have, the idea of giving up is detailed in different stages. Well then, shall we meditate and then read?

MEDITATION

Dr. R. Now we will read this and end the meeting with a few more moments of meditation.

At one time we had a great friend who was an Englishman who knew many languages and he made a translation of a little known Upanishad – The Maitri Upanishad. We can't give you the whole thing but just the main part of it. If you remember that it was passed on by word of mouth for centuries before it was ever written down, it's remarkable how it sums up the present teaching of the Shankaracharya and all that we have discussed this term. So beginning at the beginning of it:

A. (reading):

Worship of Brahma in ancient days was by building a fire, therefore he who would worship truly must build the inner fire by fixing his heart upon the Self. In this way only can worship become free from fault. What is that Self to whom one must aspire? He is called the Breath of Life and concerning Him it has been said thus:

A certain King, Brihadratha by name, having established his son in the sovereignty and reflecting upon the transiency of this body, ceased to value the things of this world and went forth into the forest. There he stood performing extreme austerity, his arms outstretched, looking up towards the sun. At the end of a thousand days, into the presence of the ascetic came the blessed Shakayanya, revered as one who knew the Self, with consciousness burning like a smokeless fire.

'Arise! Arise! Choose a gift,' he said. The King bowed before him and answered, 'Lord, I do not know the Self. I have heard that thou art one who knows. Teach me that!'

'This knowledge has indeed been attained by others before thee, but it is very hard to gain. Choose something else.'

Bowing his head at the feet of the Saint, the King spoke thus:

'Lord, in this wretched, perishable body, a transient compound of mere matter, what is the good of enjoyment of desires? In this state, in which we are afflicted by passion, anger, greed, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation

from what we love, union with what we hate, hunger, thirst, old age, death, disease and sorrow – all the ills of mortal life – what good can be found in desires which perish?

‘Everything that lives on earth grows old; insects and animals, the grass and the trees, all arise, decay and perish.

‘But what indeed of these? There are others greater; warriors, Kings, and rulers of the world. In spite of all their glory, they went forth from this world into that.

‘But what indeed of these? There are others greater: there is the drying-up of oceans, the falling away of mountain peaks, the deviation of the fixed Pole Star, the dissolution of the Galaxy, the retreat of the Celestial Bodies from their station. In this world of unending change, what is the good of enjoyment of desires? When he has tasted them, a man returns again and again here to earth. Be pleased to deliver me. In this wheel of existence, I am like a frog imprisoned in a dried-up well. Lord, thou art my way of escape, thou alone art my way of escape.’

Then the blessed Shakayanya, well pleased, addressed the King and said, ‘Great King Brihadratha, glory of thy race, soon indeed shalt thou attain to knowledge of the Self and reach the final goal. This Self which thou seekest is verily thine own.’

‘What Self is that, Lord?’

He answered, ‘Thou must go aloft out of the darkness of thy present state into that which breathes without breathing, that which though motionless reaches all worlds. There only wilt thou find the Self.’

Dr. R. We may as well go on. He gives an entire system: cosmology and psychology, but this is the main core of it.

A. (reading):

Once some people had put away all evil deeds. With vigorous effort they lived the holy life. They went to Prajapati (the teacher of the gods) and said:

‘Lord, this body is like a cart without the power to move itself. To what Being, higher than the senses, belongs the power whereby this body has become endowed with mind? Who is its driver?’

Prajapati replied: ‘It is from above, not from below, that this body is endowed with intelligence. There is that Self, above the senses, above the mind, pure, tranquil, undecaying, firm and everlasting. He abides in His own greatness; by Him the body is endowed with mind. Thus it is that the driver stands upon the chariot... his reins are the organs of perception, his horse the organs of action. The whip is the formation of decision. Thus driven, the body performs its duties like the wheel controlled by the potter. Thus does this body become the vehicle of Consciousness; thus does mind become the driver... So when this charioteer (Buddhi) is liberated from those things by which he was choked and overcome, then he attains to union with the Self.’

Having revealed to the King the origin of the world, of the material essence of man, and of the union of the Self with Brahman, Shakayanya concludes with some practical advice:

‘This deepest mystery should not be taught save to a son or favoured pupil, nor to one who has not a tranquil mind. But it may be taught to a devoted pupil

who is properly prepared... Let him seek conditions which will sustain the fire of his ardour. Let him abide in goodness, with intent upon the Truth, meditating in Truth, worshipping the Truth.

‘Truly, liberation from the unreined horses of desire which govern the thoughts is the immediate treasure to be attained, for a man who has the marks of desire, restless striving and self-conceit is in prison. Carried along and bewildered by the Gunas, unsteady, wavering, full of passions and distractions; thinking ‘This is I’, and ‘That is mine’, he binds himself with his Ego, as a bird is caught by a snare. He who has rid himself of all these is free.’

Having spoken thus, Shakayanya withdrew into himself. Brihadratha paid him due honour and having attained his aim, he departed by the upper path of the Sun, for there is no by-path here on this Earth. This is the path that leads to Brahma, the Absolute, here in this very life.

Dr. R. Let’s do two minutes of Meditation, and see if any Sattva has come through to us from that after four or five thousand years.

MEDITATION

Dr. R. We’ve much enjoyed your company. Have a very happy and refreshing holiday.

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