

8 August 1978

## GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

Dr. Roles. I'd rather like to know who has been for a holiday already. Could you put up your hands? And now who's going on holiday?

Lady Allan. Mostly going!

Dr. R. There are some announcements first.

Lord Allan. Our next Meditation Meeting will be on Tuesday, September 12th. Just to remind you that during the holidays there are Work Parties every Thursday evening starting at 7.30. This is in order to keep the House clean and we would be very glad if some of you would join in. It gives good company and we have a paper to read as well, or something to read.

At the end of September Miss Edna Joyce, whom some of you know, is going to move into the flat occupied until now by Mrs. Hamilton-Pearson and she will help with the work of the House then. We want to get the flat ready for her and on Thursday, 31st August, we are going to have a special working party in order to do this. If anyone can come and help, we would be grateful if you would put your name down on the list in the hall.

There are also lists there for the fortnight of work from September 11th when there will be decorating and maintenance work every evening. Again the details are on the hall table.

Dr. R. Any questions from the ones who are not just going away?

We have rather let you down about the report of the July Meditation Meeting; only just got it corrected, but it will be duplicated and copies will be available for the Library and so on. People seem to want to read that Upanishad again and there are various practical questions dealt with.

Again, we'd like this time to go on with the practical side. From what I have heard everywhere there is a bit too much *talk about how* to meditate. People are talking to themselves about meditation. They go for a check and there is perhaps too much talk. The Shankaracharya is always stressing that the work of meditating, which means giving up everything else for half an hour, has to be done by the person himself. There is really nothing to be said about it. The person just has to sit with a straight back and start the Mantra putting maximum effort into the first five minutes. There is nothing more to be said and we want to get away from this dominant hemisphere which is all the time wanting to talk about it instead of actually meditating! I hope you will sympathise with this point of view.

Now the question of checking. What each person seems to need is some confidante whom they respect to whom they can turn if things are going wrong with them in any way – anything that makes the meditation temporarily difficult. They need to have somebody to turn to and this person should be told confidentially about life's circumstances, family circumstances, health, anything that may be interfering. The person should meditate with them perhaps and see what's wrong, find out what the trouble is. In many cases any person who loves the meditation can probably solve the problem. If not, they can turn to a checker or somebody who has longer experience.

Now how does this appeal to you as answering a need? We all have difficulties; meditation doesn't by any means always run smoothly. But does it really help to have a lot of verbal instructions? What about it, Michael Fleming? What do you feel about this question?

M.F. I quite agree with what you say – that we shouldn't talk about it too much. But I do think one difficulty is that we get our meditation too personal.

Dr. R. Yes; that's the other thing I wanted to go on to say. Meditation is to get rid of the changing ego. One wants to displace all thought about one's personal self; personal thoughts are no use whatsoever in meditation. Further, one is always assessing oneself, either one is doing rather poorly or doing awfully well or something like this. None of this really has any place in meditation at all, has it, Fleming? Don't you find that a lot of people's difficulty comes from thinking of it in terms of *my* meditation and *me* as a meditator; whereas the meditation is an act of love towards one's true Self, one's Creator, a kind of dedication, a 'thank-you' dedication for half an hour, during which you don't let anything displace Him from your consciousness. So much depends on getting that right. The Atman is rather like a child who wants to be noticed, who likes having some *raison d'être* – some reason for being there, who likes recognition. Instead of that we keep saying what *we* are going to do – talking about *our* intentions even during a half hour. Do you get 'met' at all? He usually speaks without words. So in order to understand the divinity of this individual Atman, over the last six years or so we have been advised and coached in trying to think of the Self that lives in the hearts of all, trying to make universal this idea that in each of us is a spark of the Param-Atman, the Self of the Universe. This, with the meditation, does away with the intrusion of what isn't really one's Self at all – thoughts, feelings, intentions, psychology. So shall we now drop it all and turn with love in our hearts towards the Self from whom all good things come – for a few minutes?

#### MEDITATION

Dr. R. Well, there is a little bit of strain I can see on faces. There shouldn't be any strain about this. We read last time about the attitude that every half hour one is approaching one's dearest love. If one has that attitude there is no need to strain about it.

The true Christian may be wondering why there is all this Eastern terminology and why isn't Christianity enough? That is rather emphasised because somebody heard on 19th July last at Evensong at King's College, Cambridge, in the Provost's closing prayer, a prayer by Christina Rossetti written around 1900. I'll ask Allan first to read the Christina Rossetti prayer because it seems the same thing.

A. (reading):

O God of patience and consolation, grant we beseech Thee that with free hearts we may love and serve Thee and our brethren; and having thus the Mind of Christ, may begin heaven on earth, and exercise ourselves therein till that day when heaven, where Love abideth, shall seem no strange habitation to us; for Jesus Christ's sake.

Dr. R. Do use that prayer if it appeals to you. No difference of approach, there's only this difference of the help we get from a special sound – three sounds in one – which has proved its worth for more than 25 centuries, and which helps to steady the straying mind and produces the energy necessary for this communion between the Atman and the Param-

Atman – pure Sattva – the energy of awakening. The other thing which helps that is to read such words as contain Sattva. If you don't want to ask anything about that or talk at the moment, we will read something.

I just wanted to say that the other thing I find myself doing wrong is stipulating that my meditation ought to be so and so. The great thing about meditation is to keep it going at all costs and if you have to miss it, try to make it up in five minutes. But keep two periods going, and never give up however unrewarding it seems to be. Never stop. Don't expect, when you are earning a living and supporting a family and having a very busy life, don't expect to have Samadhi every time or something like that! Don't feel you are doing wrong if you don't reach the high spots of meditation. Just keep it going, enjoy the peace, get what you can, give what you can.

This was back in 1967 when I asked the Shankaracharya something about the Mantra going to a certain peaceful place in one's nature:

A. (reading):

S. All the creatures in the world are running after the Bliss, Happiness. This is the great eternal chase. We run with our subtle body. The coarse body gets recharged if it gets rest, and there are many levels of rest. A running man gets rest by standing, the standing man gets rest by sitting, the sitting man gets more rest by lying down on the bed, and one gets the complete rest having a deep sleep. This is how one gets his used-up bodily energies back. Similarly, the meditation is to give rest to the subtle body.

The mind is also running after happiness. Some run fast and others faster. With meditation some just stand, and have only a little rest; some sit or lie down, and some are fortunate enough to dive deep and have the complete rest. According to the level of meditation, they derive their benefits. As one goes deeper and deeper one adds to peace and happiness. The test of a good meditation is the abundance of happiness available then and there. The test of a good deep sleep is that one gets up fresh and energetic. The benefit of the meditation is not only happiness, but also that the physical body responds by efficient, precise work. This we must watch.

(Record, 30 October 1967)

Dr. R. Any question about that? Or any questions that have arisen in your minds about meditation?

Bridget Hall. I find that the benefits of meditation don't manifest themselves until about half an hour after the meditation has ended. Could you say something about that?

Dr. R. I think we all could say something about this and you, yourself, Bridget too. During the half-hour you are not supposed really to know anything – not supposed to know whether you are in heaven or not in heaven. But the benefits come in happiness at any time after – sometimes it's half an hour after, sometimes it's quite unexpected moments when you have stopped work at the end of the day, sometimes it's in the middle of the night. The test of a good two half-hours of meditation is that sometime in the course of the 24 hours, you get a burst of energy and happiness for no reason – you haven't deserved it! Does that answer your questions? Just say 'thank you' and get on with what you have got to do.

What also helps is to *do things for other people*. One can live in an ivory tower being a super meditator but that really doesn't help the Atman very much and doesn't give a very productive

life. Everything that is manifested has to be manifested on the physical level... one's kindness to other people in ordinary life... all this is part of the result one should get from being a meditator. Any little thing one can do for anybody is well worth doing and should help.

To go on with that conversation, I said:

A. (reading)

R. From one's heart one would like to do what is useful to the Atman because when one doesn't do that one has very bad time inside!

S. Anything done for the benefit of the Atman is certainly good and nothing could be better than meditation. This does not mean that one should simply go on meditating and resign from worldly activity. If the practical world is ignored in preference to the real world, then there comes in a danger that many others might also resign from the world. Thus it is very important for the householders to find a measure in meditation as well. What one really needs is sufficient Knowledge and pure Being so as to handle the practical world with ease, precision and efficiency and also have peace and bliss within. In India there is a group (to which he himself belongs) which resigns from the worldly life and takes to a life which is hard from the worldly point of view, but pleasant from the spiritual point of view. Their job is simply to keep up the tradition and provide a link between the spiritual and the physical world. The householder only needs to equip himself with enough knowledge and meditation so that he can meet the world with precision and efficiency without any trouble from inside. The physical world, or the activities of the physical world, are very coarse. These should not be allowed to determine the activity within. Our job is to look more at the inner activity and resolve it so that we can manage the chaos which is prevalent outside.

Dr. R. When one comes to the age of retirement at 65 perhaps, one can join this group of which the Shankaracharya is a member and devote oneself only to the needs of the Atman. One has done a life's work, and one can then become part of that group which is a very happy thing to be. Is that clear to all about the relation of meditation to householders?

It is said that in the inner organ – the soul of each person – which contains all the latent possibilities of humanity there lives the Atman sitting in the very lap of the Param-Atman, *in everybody*, but the Atman doesn't realise this. He is so engaged with all the hubbub going on and so involved externally because of the way the individual is feeling and thinking all the time, that he is sitting in the very lap of the gorgeous Param-Atman without realising it. By the individual's efforts at getting peace inside, the Atman and the Param-Atman become one. Then all worry and sorrow disappear and there is happiness all around. That is Self-realization – nothing to do with Dr. Roles or Lady Allan or any other personality. It is to do with the union of the Atman with the Param-Atman. Is that clear? (still silence!)

I don't know whether you have all been practicing silence for many hours a day? (laughter) I shouldn't have said that about not talking!

Miss Scrutton. When one feels one's meditation is right, it has the feeling of making oneself available.

Dr. R. All right – but there's too much 'one's meditation' too much 'oneself' – and all the rest of it, but when the meditation is going rightly, *one is available*.

P.S. It has that taste.

Dr. R. Yes, undoubtedly. This 'non-availability' that we live in half the time – the basement with all the blinds down – is owing to the prevalence of Tamas, the reaction – spiritual ennui. So then one realises that it is all 'the play of the gunas' and one tries to inject a little Sattva into the situation. The trouble now is that one has the uncomfortable feeling that a lot of people in this room know much more than I do about it! (laughter) It's a bit difficult sermonising. But I wish they would come out with something! Somebody has got to do the gagging!

Mr. Geoffroy. I would like to hear more about the first five minutes' effort to start the meditation.

Dr. R. (to Lord Allan) What shall we say more about that? It was said to you, wasn't it?

A. Yes. Do you think it is that one just sits down and thinks one is going to meditate and then all the things start churning. But if one is determined, not even necessarily for five minutes, to absolutely establish something that is there for the rest of the half-hour although thoughts inevitably come in, there is always something to come back to – it has started. Otherwise the half-hour is gone before one knows what has happened.

Lady A. When you brought this up at the last Meditation Meeting a month ago, I realised that for a long time I had found a sort of rhythm with which I started which didn't involve very much but it did involve quite a lot of daydreaming, so I decided it was a very salutary moment to start again with this type of effort mentioned. But I couldn't find out how to make this loud sound.

Dr. R. I think this is what a lot of people feel.

M.A. I was going to ask if it was valid, but it seems to be the same sort of effort that one would put, say, into singing the National Anthem at the top of one's voice. (laughter) It took a long time to find a way of putting the effort in.

Dr. R. The Mantra can vary greatly in two ways. It can vary greatly in speed – it can go very fast or it can go very slow; it can also vary greatly in loudness. How I try to do it is when I sit to meditate I sound the Mantra loudly – you can make it sound loudly, fill the whole space in yourself with no room for anything else to come in.

M.A. The only way I can describe it is like singing at the top of one's voice inside!

C.G. On one occasion in singing practice if I got the right note, there was suddenly complete silence.

Dr. R. I think it's something like that in meditating. With your mind on the Atman, sound the right note somehow. Each person has to find out what this means at different times.

Sue Cassini. I found that if I had lot of thoughts, sounding the Mantra loudly didn't help – it seemed to get all muddled up with the thoughts. If I thought of the silence, then let the Mantra come out of the silence, this seemed to work better.

Dr. R. One needs absolutely anything that will work at any time! There is no one thing! What do you think, Lucas?

C.L. I can't get on with it that way – saying it loudly. It's like Miss Cassini – it has to come out of the silence.

Dr. R. That's fine – you'd better have lunch together! (laughter) What he means is a maximum effort of attention of *some* sort, in the first five minutes.

But what about the beginners? We've heard all the pundits talking. What about the people just starting? Really one does very well at the start until one gets a 'communal meditative attitude'! Anybody got a simple question such as the Atman might understand? (laughter) (No response) Well all right, perhaps it's better left unsaid.

Anyway it's a delightful kind of work to be doing, to find out the true nature of the Self which is the only permanent thing in the universe and try and serve the Self in any way that will please Him. It's a lovely thing to be given to do and don't let us ever regard the meditation as a chore! 'Oh dear, I've got to do this half hour.' It won't work like that.

Well now, how hungry are you? There was an interesting question which the New Zealanders asked on one of their visits. Are our friends from Sydney, Australia, here today? (No)

Mrs. Howitt asked. 'What is it that repeats the Mantra?'

S. What you call Mantra means the same thing as the Atman, your own Atman; and Atman is the root of it. So when you are totally absorbed in meditation, then it stands to reason that Mantra and Atman become one.

Here is an example. Take a pot of earth, it is made of earth, when the pot is destroyed it comes to an end, it mingles with the earth. Like this with the Mantra; as long as we pronounce it, it is a sound, but when it merges into Atman it is Atman – the same thing taking a different form. Under one set of circumstances, earth becomes a pot; similarly under one set of circumstances mantra is a mantra and in different circumstances Mantra becomes Atman.

I will explain this concept further – (pointing to a bowl of fruit in front of him).

This is an apple – what is it? Apple is merely a word. You try to describe it. It is fruit. Fruit! All right – but what is the apple? It is sweet! All right – but the question is not answered. *What is it then?* It is the fruit, the tree, everything, but still the question is not answered. *Apple is apple.* (laughter)

(Record, 24 September 1974)

Dr. R. Finally now – the Mantra has started and it's audible, almost a tangible mantra, but it goes through a series of transformations. When it fades out altogether, this is what you are aiming for – the object of meditation – it will show itself in some sort of happiness or in some form of manifestation that may arise at the Atman's pleasure.

I was trying to think of a story that would please you and which you could carry in your minds. There is a story (which I may be able to remember correctly) told to the Howitts on this occasion when they were asked to come to a meeting of the Shankaracharya's people at his Ashram, and he was saying that the Param-Atman the Self of the Universe gives everybody what they deserve – what is good for them and what they deserve, illustrated by a fable:

There was once a Holy Man who had the reputation that whatever anybody asked him, he could bring about. He travelled around and at a certain village they came and asked for things.

One man asked for more money. He said he was miserable without any money. The Holy Man said. 'Of course I can let you have some money, but you won't like it.' 'Oh, if I had money, everything would be okay.'

A woman (one of those 'battered wives' we feel so sorry for) came and said that she had left her husband because he was very cruel and now she was very lonely and could the Holy Man get him to take her back? And he said, 'Of course I can get him to take you back, but you won't like it!'

Then another man came and said, 'My marriage is childless. I have no children. Do bring it about that we have children.' And the Holy Man said, 'Yes certainly, I'll bring it about but you won't like it.'

After a time He came back to see how everything was going. He stayed in a place outside the village and had reports given Him. The man who wanted money had heaps of money, very rich. All his friends were sponging on him, his relatives came and demanded money all the time. His servant put poison in his food. Luckily the man gave it to the dog first and it died quickly. He said, 'I must find this Holy Man and get him to stop me having all this money because life was quite tolerable before.'

The woman who was taken back by her husband said, 'I must find this Holy Man. My husband is giving me a good beating every day. Life is appalling. I wish I hadn't gone back to him!'

And the man without children had a family now and the children were very bad-natured. They caused trouble all round everywhere and he wanted to find the Holy Man and get the children taken away from him – get them adopted – anything!

(Record, 26 September 1974)

Dr. R. This is the thing about us. The dominant hemisphere keeps asking for things, but we cry and sob when we get them, because the other (quiet) hemisphere doesn't like it at all! So better not attach any demands to our meditation; for the Atman knows what's good for us, far better than we do. The story illustrates the fact that there is no injustice anywhere because the Divine Self gives to everybody what's best for them and what they deserve. (Silence)

All right, you don't believe me! (laughter) I think it's almost time to stop, isn't it? Well I hope you will come and decorate the flat and do the other things and we will try and have something nice and enticing to reward you.

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