

14 February 1978

GENERAL MEDITATION MEETING

As Dr Roles was absent through illness, Lord Allan and Mrs. Brigit Howitt (B.H.) were on the platform.

Lord Allan: Quite a lot of you have seen Nolan Howitt. He and his wife, Brigit, have been over here for two or three weeks on their way back from the Shankaracharya to their home in New Zealand via New York. Nolan Howitt left a little before Brigit in order to spend two or three days with the Group in New York. He left here, and as far as we know he got to New York. Again, as far as we know, despite the snow he is having good meetings with our friends there.

I thought it would be very nice if we could have Brigit on the platform tonight. We will try to get from her something of the atmosphere of Allahabad – where you left about three weeks ago?

B.H. On the 14th (January).

A. This wasn't your first visit, was it?

B.H. No, our first visit was in '74.

A. What was your first impression of the Shankaracharya?

B.H. Well, to start with anyway – stillness and happiness – very definitely just that rather than anything personal.

A. Yes. Did you see any difference this time to last time? The first time one is rather in awe and frightened. (Yes) You were more relaxed?

B.H. Yes, I was; it made quite a difference knowing the set-up. And also knowing that, after you have been there just a short while, quite naturally your own self-concerns and worries about the fact that perhaps your type of questions might be too simple or something. That sort of thing falls away and one is very happy indeed to be just in that situation.

This time, of course, I remembered that when I went, so I didn't go through quite such agonies before the first audience. My own personal concerns evaporated much more easily which was quite a relief.

A. That let you see that twinkle in his eye?

B.H. Yes, wonderful. It is always there, whether he is speaking quite firmly or with great laughter in his voice which is very wonderful.

A. You had your audiences with him in the rather smaller room?

B.H. Yes; in fact, I myself haven't seen the rather larger audience chamber which is just next door – the main one. We were in that room which I think is called his own room – his private room?

A. Yes, his private quarters.

B.H. But it was a reasonably sized room. There were chairs and a table – just like this – put out for us. In fact, at the first audience in 1974, when we arrived – we were just a little early actually – we were told to wait a wee while just at the door; and there is a large window at the side in this particular room, and somebody just handed through a couple of chairs for us, which was so marvellous; and they were put out in front of His Holiness and we were asked to sit on those, because they readily recognised that we don't find it very comfortable sitting as they do on the floor – fortunately!

A. You had a different interpreter than Jaiswal, whom we normally have?

B.H. Yes.

A. He was a man whom both Dr Roles and I have met; but we have never had him as an interpreter. How did you get on with him?

B.H. Absolutely splendidly; we really couldn't have been more fortunate as it turned out. He and Nolan, after a very short time, struck up a tremendous affinity and a tremendous respect for each other; and, of course, this meant that the communication line was that much simpler.

But Narayan himself is a man who is just about pure devotion, a most magnificent example of someone who lives the idea that he has nothing of his own. It is really a most tremendous inspiration; and several times during the actual audiences, he would turn and say: 'You must realise that I am only able to help you in this way through the Grace of the Guru, or through Grace; it is nothing to do with me.' He would say this – just introduce it when he felt that this was something that must be said – so naturally, and it was really tremendous, most interesting really.

A. He was quite a prominent business man and lived with his brother in Lucknow – where Dr Roles and I first met him thirteen years ago. Then he was already giving up everything in order to be with the Shankaracharya. I suppose he spends nearly all his time with him now, doesn't he?

B.H. I think when the Shankaracharya is in Allahabad particularly.

A. Yes.

B.H. He looks after a great deal of the Ashram business for him; and he said several times to us that his particular Sadhana – his particular spiritual practice – was to do whatever His Holiness wishes him to do. It could be organising his travel arrangements, money matters, or audiences – such as with us; and translation came into it. He said that whatever was asked of him, he did it to the best of his capacity.

A. And, of course, he does speak good English.

B.H. His English is very idiomatic – generally speaking. There were one to two interesting slips, shall we say. One rather delightful one it seemed a pity to cut out or alter, which we did actually.

He was speaking in a story which His Holiness had given relating a battle between Indra and one of the demons. At one point during this battle Indra was at a point where he was distracted and lost his sword. And Narayan said: 'And Indra became armless.' (laughter)

A. Yes.

B.H. We had to change it to 'disarmed' but it seemed a pity!

A. Yes. You were saying earlier that one of the things you felt was that those of us who have been there were undoubtedly very privileged; but somehow it really wasn't necessary to go there in order to feel the benefit which he bestows on us all?

B.H. Yes, both my husband and I are so sure of this now. It is not an easy concept to get across probably, but, having been there, I can really assure anyone that this is so, because one of the effects that I find most pronounced and which I know will never lessen is the sense that one is simply reminded of something so strongly that you already know; and that in fact you could be reminded of and come into touch with it or recognise it wherever you are. You don't have to be with someone like the Shankaracharya.

But I do think that having been lucky enough to be in that situation, if there is any possibility of actually expressing that – of getting it across, it is a most important possibility.

I think this is something that so many of us – we certainly do at home – tend to underestimate that in ourselves. So that we feel that not having had that tremendous opportunity – each person – then we don't have the same advantage. But it isn't like that at all.

A. No.

B.H. It really isn't.

A. Something struck me that you said earlier – that, in a way, he makes you feel at home.

B.H. Yes, very much.

A. At home with yourSelf; and when we feel at home with ourSelves, we are really at One with the Shankaracharya. I, myself, feel that most strongly.

A. (went on): You were telling us that Mr. Agrawal (Narayan) kept on saying that he had nothing of his own and that everything came from the Shankaracharya. But he also says, and of course the Shankaracharya says it himself, that everything the Shankaracharya has comes from the Atman.

B.H. Yes; in fact, over the period of time that one is there, one comes to understand – and this has happened both times I have been there – and certainly the three times that Nolan has – you begin to understand that the Shankaracharya again is speaking from that viewpoint that there is nothing of his own, and he is very, very much the vehicle of the Truth – of that which he is expressing – in answer to questions. And this very absence of the personal in this particular sense relieves you yourself of that – your own hang-ups don't operate – you don't need them any more, and it is really quite a relief at the time. You can be yourself – warts and all! – it doesn't really matter.

A. Yes; quite.

B.H. It is very superficial – you feel a lot more at home with yourSelf, and this is a tremendous feeling.

*

A. then continued:

I thought we would now hear some of the things that you asked him and his replies. But before that is there anything particular that interested you in what Brigit Howitt has just said? Would you like to ask a further question?

Q. Could you elaborate more on the relationship with the Shankaracharya? This is a question I have raised before with Dr. Roles – one hears so much about people following different Gurus and having a relationship with them and I asked him what was our relationship with the Shankaracharya then. It is not quite clear in what you have said this evening.

A. It is close and continuing; it is always there. I can recall on at least three times when I have had rather emotional discussions with the Shankaracharya, being assured that he was always there. If one thought of Him – if one brought Him into one's mind – one was sure of making a connection with Him. One could be equally sure that in those circumstances, one would receive help. On at least three occasions I have asked: 'Can I go back and assure people in London that they can also benefit from this help?' He said, 'Yes, you can assure them.'

A good many people here have felt that if we think of the Shankaracharya, and we can think of him through Dr Roles because we are all in one chain, we will get that help. It is ever-present. I could not be more sure of this – that His Love and His care are always available.

Though it is not to be personalised. He is our avenue to the eternal power and love that is always there, centred in our hearts did we but know it. He opens our own hearts for us.

Lady Allan. The questioner in the early part of his question mentioned people following different Gurus and it reminded me that Dr Roles said when he first met the Shankaracharya and subsequently went to see him that this was a man who made no demands of any sort; he doesn't demand a personal following; as you said, it was not personalised – so in one sense we have His help, but it is to be free, not to be dependent on this idea of a Guru; it is a connection with the Truth, not following a *man* who makes demands.

A. I am sure you are right. About following other gurus: I had a friend in Bombay who was a spiritual man and I used to talk to him a lot about spiritual things. He had a Guru and was very keen that I should meet his Guru. I was reluctant to, but eventual I agreed. It so happened that when I was asked to go my wife was with me. I will not go into details, but we had a most fearful journey. However we got to this Guru who was a very remarkable man indeed and I was extremely impressed with him.

We went straight from there to the Shankaracharya and I told Him that we had seen this man. He answered very simply, not in the least bit angrily, yet firmly, that a man cannot follow more than one guru at a time and that one must just make the choice. If you are following one discipline you must continue with it, he said. 'You cannot follow in two directions at once.' He added; that if you change, it becomes increasingly difficult for you to stick to any one line.

Though making this perfectly plain, he said that one was absolutely free. It was up to

anybody to do exactly as they liked; but one would lose direction if one continually changed Teachers.

Is there anything else?

Lady Allan. It is also important to realise what the word Guru means – it is just a translation of the word ‘teacher’ – you can have a piano guru, or a dancing guru.

A. Absolutely right. (turning to Mrs. Howitt) Do you mind if I read what you said?

B.H. No, not at all.

A. (reading):

B.H. Sometimes there is an unexpected and expansive warmth experienced physically in the region of the upper chest and throat like a fire, and the related joy links immediately with something which can slip the joy into excitement and eventual tensions rather than stillness and peace of mind. I feel this dissipates rapidly the potential of the initial connection and I am not able to keep the mind on the Mantra. Could His Holiness please give me guidance on my best approach at this point?

S. Your intense desire to meditate will take you so far and you need not worry about it. Here is an illustration:

Just as when you start a car there is a lot of noise, but once it has started, the noise diminishes. Similarly when you try to meditate, then the power which is flowing at the time from the head downwards is now going upwards – starts going upwards. The normal flow is downwards. But when you start meditating, it goes upwards and that causes some sort of tension. Actually, it is not tension exactly, just a type of tension and felt as tension.

Now this will all go towards the head, and when it reaches there it will get settled and it will be calm and quiet. So, you will have to continue having a little patience, and it will be all right. At the beginning you will feel that, but once you get used to it, it will settle down and things will become normal.

Then you said:

B.H. I am very glad to hear that. Would His Holiness say that all I need do now is to carry on as I have been doing?

S. Yes, carry on.

(Record, 8 January 1978)

A. (to Mrs. Howitt) Any comments now that you have been carrying on?

B.H. Well, after that reply I really understood why the man who was visited by the messenger of the Absolute and was given the answer about the tamarind tree – about the leaves of the tamarind tree – why he danced, because that was really marvellous.

It will come all right in the end and that was the assurance one needs because so much of what is seen causes difficulties in so many of us; and I find this by the very fact that one is concerned about it, and his answer relieved that concern, and that is ninety percent of the battle.

I must say we have had a very busy, very changing time this last month so I really don't feel that I can expect too much yet! But I think when I say ‘expect’, it is almost as if an answer

like that – it shut up just for a little while that part of the mind that wanted to look for a result, shut it up smartly, and that is quite a relief.

- A. He has said more than once ‘what is required is simply faith in the Meditation. Have faith that Meditation will work’. Then just plug away at it steadily, and it will work.

Mrs. Koren. Can I ask about a pointer you touched on about the interpreter when you said he felt he was there to do everything that H.H. asked of him – I was talking to someone this week who was confused because he felt that out of gratitude for this work and what he had been given, he wanted to do everything, and that we *should* do everything that is asked of us, as a good advertisement for Param-Atman if you like. On the other hand, one can become drained, and I wondered if you could say something about balance in our ordinary lives between being the servant of everyone, and on the other hand keeping undissipated enough of one’s attention to keep the connection?

- A. I will answer that by quoting what the Shankaracharya said to Mr. Howitt. He referred to the pull of worldly things and the pull of the things Spiritual, and asked how this could be resolved.

And the Shankaracharya said:

Now, as regards this duality, to which reference has been made. I must point out that he need not be afraid of the worldly pull. This is what your people should do while they are engaged in their worldly affairs.

They should do it to the best of their ability, they should attend to whatever calls to the best of their ability, and after having finished it, they should then revert to their Spiritual path, and at that time they should try to devote themselves entirely to that aspect.

When we do this, the Rajas which is the cause of obstruction will tend to be subdued, and with this, the feeling of any obstruction will be lessened and in due course the difficulty will entirely disappear.

(This was the obstruction caused by the pull.)

(Record, 10 January 1978)

- A. I won’t enlarge on that answer. It is the old answer: ‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s’. We don’t need to ask that any more, because we *know* in our heart what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God.

Is there anything else?

- A. (to Mrs. H.) I am going to read another question of yours. You said:

Some years ago in a conversation with Dr Roles, His Holiness said that we need to learn to enjoy Buddhi both in Stillness, as in Meditation, and also in activity. Could he say any more about how one enjoys Buddhi in activity?

S. The basic nature is pervading everything, and once you start experiencing it in all things, then you will be able to enjoy it in whatever your circumstances. So that the Buddhi, or the play of the main use of the intellect is that it should be used in seeing, observing and feeling the all-pervasiveness of that perfect nature. Just as when you see a tree, then your Buddhi should be able to convey to you that ‘the basic nature, which is in me, is also in that tree’.

It is another matter that this basic nature is making its appearance in different forms: in a creeper, it is tender; in a stone, it is hard; in the leaves of a tree, it is green; and in me and in the translator, it is yet in another form. The form may be different, but the basic nature is the same. So, when your Buddhi sees or appreciates this fact of the all-pervasiveness of nature, then in your everyday life, your normal duties, you will be able to enjoy the circumstances in which you may be placed.

Here is a story from the Scriptures:

At one time there was a demon known as Rakshu. He was fighting with Indra. At one stage in the fight when he was distracted, Indra's sword slipped out of his hand. Being disarmed, he was afraid that Rakshu would kill him. At this point, Rakshu stopped and said: 'Don't worry; it is all a theatrical affair that we are fighting. You have been given this job to fight me, so pick up your sword again and then we will fight. You need not be afraid.'

So, that is the sort of feeling that when it develops one will find that one realises that this is all a play. And if one realises that it is all a theatre, a drama, then whenever an enemy comes before you, or a beloved one comes before you, you will be able to behave as you should behave in that particular connection; and your Buddhi will not misguide you – you will be guided correctly.

(Record, 8 January 1978)

Mrs. Simpson. Can we be reminded of what the Shankaracharya said some time ago about the Gospels and Christianity, because it is the same way – it isn't another way?

A. I don't recollect what you are referring to, Mrs. Simpson – what particular point of the Gospels?

Mrs. S. I think he said once that one doesn't give up one's religion.

A. Certainly not.

Mrs. S. How can one reconcile it with just going one Way, which is the way of the Shankaracharya?

A. Oh, he never said that his is the only Way. In what I quoted earlier, H.H. was referring to teachers and the confusion which follows a change of teacher. He always says that what he teaches is the Truth behind all religions; and that the whole object of the life and the teaching of the first Shankara was simply to do this – to expound the Truth behind every religion. He continually says that there is no conflict at all between what he teaches and Christianity or any other religion.

Mrs. S. Yes, that is what I meant.

A. (referring back to reading): What I read a moment ago is a very interesting example of what is called the Intellectual approach about which Brigit asked in her question on the use of Buddhi.

It has been said – and this is something I made a note of – that a man on the Intellectual Way sees that there is nothing but God; while the man on the path of Devotion sees God is in everything. That is the subtle distinction between the two Ways; they both of course lead

to the same end. One sees that there is nothing but God; and the other sees God in everything.

A. (to Mrs. H.) I think that was what he was saying? (Yes).

A. (added): What I just read is, I think, a very good example of the way of Buddhi – the Way of the Intellectual?

B.H. Yes.

Then A. asked her: 'Have you got anything you would like to add to that?'

B.H. To me, one of the really key points that he gave me in this was when he said: 'When this develops' – in other words, it is a natural progression. This is how I understood it: it is not something that happens overnight; there is no blinding revelation that one suddenly sees everything as a play, because I, personally, find this very difficult.

So, to me, I felt: here again is another confirmation that one is at least on the right path and you have this understanding that you are on a path which has this direct link to the Truth. And you will get the guidance you need because, being in that line, you have the charge, as it were, that will ensure that you are given an answer when you need it.

Narayan described this as like a vacuum (vacuum, he said!) which is in the individual and the needs of the individual are met when necessary – not when he thinks he wants it. I found that, again, a great help.

B.H. added: It, again, hits on the head this idea that one wants a result here and now.

A. That is another way of saying: 'Thy Will be done'.

B.H. Yes.

A. then suggested: Shall we meditate for a moment or two now?

MEDITATION

A. Has anybody got anything they would particularly like to say?

Colin Lucas. I would like to know a bit more about this basic nature of things – when one feels that it seems to depend on the half-hour that morning – or what has gone before – I would like to know more about it works – the connection between the half-hour and this feeling that you get during the day.

A. Were you relating it to the Meditation and how it can come that way?

Well I don't think that anything can happen during the meditation except a complete stillness. Nor do I think at that stage you should be aware of feeling the basic nature of anything. It is when you come out of that that you see through the process of a Buddhi, still in tune with the Atman, the basic nature of the stone and the tree, and the creeper and the greenness of things as being part of oneSelf. You appreciate that through the intellect.

Then there is this other feeling, that you get perhaps walking, or even in a tube when you suddenly see that God is in everything. That really God is in everything.

All I can say is that if one wants to learn more about that, one has to have more Sattva, and that can only be through Meditation.

Mrs. Fleming. Would you not say that the same person can experience both – one isn't always necessarily understanding through Buddhi, it might be more emotional? One isn't absolutely stuck in one or the other?

A. No. People have probably heard from the Doctor that perhaps it may be connected with blood groups – we don't really know. People of A blood group are apt to approach things from an intellectual point of view; people with B blood group are apt to approach things emotionally. If we are the intellectual type of person – it perhaps is more easy for us to understand this basic nature of everything through reasoning; and if we are an emotional type of person, it is perhaps more easy to get the same understanding through an emotional feeling of the existence of God in everything.

A. then turned to Mrs. Howitt: 'What would you say about that?'

B.H. Yes, certainly with the second one – it is often experienced simply as joy or happiness.

A. Yes

B.H. There is no intellectual thinking about it – it just is experienced.

A. Yes, you suddenly see.

Mrs. Koren. I thought that Dr Roles had said about us as a group of people that, in coming here, we are probably not very extreme one way or the other; and I thought the question really was couldn't one have both types of experience in one person.

A. Yes, I am sure one can. But does one? That is not really for me to answer. People will know for themselves whether they can.

What Mrs. Fleming was saying was that, in her experience, it is possible; and I am sure that is right.

Lady Allan. We all have the same equipment; we all have a Buddhi.

A. Yes. But our Buddhi is not always in tune with the Atman receiving the Truth through what the Shankaracharya calls 'the force of Chit'. If we were receiving that in what is called the Antahkarana (which includes the Buddhi, the feeling of 'I', the memory, and the ordinary mind), if we really were in tune, then we would be fully attentive and know what we were doing, carrying out the Divine Will. – If!

A. (then said:) Well, it is very nearly time to stop. It might be nice to leave with some words of the Shankaracharya in our minds. This was a question put on behalf of a New Zealander who felt that there was some blockage in the connection between him and H.H.

S. Just as when we are on the telephone, both parties are connected by the telephone receiver, sometimes there is some atmospheric disturbance which is reflected in the earphone of the telephone.

Similarly, although the flow of the blessing of the Realized man, and the desire of the disciple is there – they may have faith and respect for the Guru – yet because of Rajas, at times there is this disturbance which you are talking about.

But again, this should not be a cause of worry. Constant practice will enable this to lessen in due course, and then the disturbance will be eliminated.

(Record, 10 January 1978)

A. (to Mrs. H.) So it comes back to what you were saying earlier and what He has so often repeated in your audiences this time – which is ‘go on, have faith, and it *will* come right.’

B.H. Yes, that is very true. In answer to a particular line of questioning which my husband put in relation to his own experience in meditation, where he was able to confirm for him a really deep point in meditation – my husband is one of those fortunate people who don’t seem to have difficulty in diving deep – and he was able to confirm for him that this is just the simple practice of meditation. This is – the Hindi word is Dhyana – the point where the mind and the whole being are recharged. This is it; this is the way; and for all levels at all points – mine with what I call my difficulties, others with their difficulties. But as long as we feel that we are on this line, and simply practise, we are ninety per cent there.

A. Ninety per cent there. That is right. We can be hopeful.

A. (added:) I thought that at the beginning I was becoming rather like a TV interviewer we have here called Parkinson. So I don’t want to end by saying: ‘Thank you for being on the programme.’ (laughter)

B.H. I perhaps could just say that when my husband – I understood how he felt actually – was asked if he would come and be up here with you, he said he would rather have faced the Shankaracharyas of the North, South, East and West. (laughter) Well, I felt I would rather do the same than face a hall of two or three hundred meditating Englishmen!

A. Well, it is very nice to have a simple meditating New Zealander with us. You have helped us an awful lot and we are very grateful to you.

It is nice to remember something your husband said when he was with us: he said that New Zealand time is exactly twelve hours different. We can think that when you are meditating, we are also meditating; though at this end we are asleep when you are being active. However morning and evening meditations are probably together though the wrong way round!

B.H. We are twelve hours ahead, you know! (laughter)

A. On that rather boastful note we will end. (more laughter). Thank you very much.

* * *