

Start with Meditation

The aim of this meeting is to remind us to have patience and confidence – patience with ourselves and confidence in the meditation. Over the years we have had many words of advice and encouragement and it is always a good idea to remind ourselves of some of them. When we receive the mantra it is as if we are planting a seed or young plant and in so doing we are demonstrating an attitude of both hope and trust. Here is Dr Roles reminding us that the half hour should be a happy occasion – that joy is the food of the Atman:

What one needs in mediation is to be giving up something joyfully. Whenever one sees anything that isn't the mantra, or hears anything that isn't the mantra, or thinks anything, or remembers anything, one gives it up, but we must do it joyfully. Each individual has to find a way to do that – to connect the meditation with joy and gladness. (FCR VOD p80)

There are always questions about how to find the silence for that space of time. Here is some advice from the Shankaracharya given in 1965:

In the early stages of meditation it is quite possible that one may not enter the silence, and even if one did, one may be out very soon. This stage is creating a level, so every minute of it is of value, although one may not be able to recognise what is happening inside. All that is happening is in the dark. But if one finds that staying in silence is broken, then one can reassure oneself with emotion and intelligence (Buddhi) that this only is the way to happiness and one should try again. Even if, with these gentle efforts one can't reach silence one is spared the violent vibrations and tensions of the day and also the speed of the heartbeat is slowed, which saves energy for the body.

Many questions come up about the mantra itself. We have looked at some of these in a previous meeting. The following was a question about the purpose of the mantra and about the purest form of the mantra during meditation and here is what the Shankaracharya said:

Mantra is to help one's consciousness to be united with the Self. Once you have done so, the mantra disappears. Unity with the Atman is the aim and in its purest form the meditator, Mantra and meditation become one. When you start the mantra and let it repeat itself, it will go slower and longer until a stage when you experience no rhythm at all. Everything just merges into one Consciousness. (Record 1964)

Pause

If anyone has ever wondered about the rhythm of the mantra, how we should start it and how we should continue; here is some practical advice:

HH: *The rhythm will not come to the mantra by itself. One has to start the mantra with momentum and allow it to merge into silence. This merging process will be the rhythm. If one finds that the passage is blocked by thoughts, then supplement the process with extra faith and emotion and enthusiasm. The process should always be repeated in the same way. A mantra held in the mind or anywhere would be bound and couldn't move to acquire rhythm. Give it a momentum and let it move in the natural rhythm. Don't create any rhythm and don't desire that the mantra should follow a certain rhythm.*

And he continued:

The rhythm or the vibration leads to peace. Somewhere in the heart, where the Atman is supposed to live, there is stillness and peace, All those people who feel tensions and activities going on in their body and mind without turning to that peace, are running away from it. Once you get the taste of that peace, with regular meditation you will find it again and again. (Record 1965)

Pause for mediation

Some people when they are fortunate enough to go very deep with their meditation will ask about the stillness which they experience and they may need reassurance about this.

HH It is the moving mind which is frightened of the stillness. Our mind is the messenger between our outer and inner worlds. It has to interpret these worlds to us. The whole of our mind has for so long been associated with the outer world that it has quite forgotten the existence, let alone the language of the inner world. So when in meditation it is brought to the inner world it is unsure of itself, can't interpret and becomes frightened. The moving mind looks for happiness in possessing and experiencing things. These do not suffice, for when the mind has one thing it immediately rushes after another. The still mind finds happiness in everything. If the mind has knowledge of both inner and outer worlds it will not be frightened and it will learn to do its work properly. This is achieved by meditation and true knowledge. (Record 1965)

The Maharishi was the person who brought the meditation to our Society and here is what he said in a talk he gave on the technique of meditation and how the mantra helps us. For any of us who ever feel concern about the 'turning thoughts' here is his typically light hearted advice:

There is no need to stop thinking, because thoughts are part of meditation. Even if the mind is filled with other thoughts whilst the mantra is going on there is no conflict. Our concern is with the mantra and if other thoughts are there along with it we don't mind them and we don't try to remove them. We are not concerned with them. We innocently favour the mantra.....as when we are walking along a road if someone is found walking by our side we just don't mind.

In this meditation we don't concentrate, we don't try to make a rhythm of the mantra. We don't try to control thoughts. We don't wish that thoughts shouldn't come. If a thought comes we don't try to push it out. We don't feel sorry about it. When we become aware that we are not repeating the mantra, then we quietly come back to the mantra. Very easily we repeat it and if at any moment we feel that we're forgetting it, we should not try to persist in repeating it or try to keep remembering it. Only very easily to start and take it as it comes, and do not try to hold the mantra if it tends to slip away.

Doctor Roles towards the end of his life wrote this:

It was only in the final years that one has realized completely that meditation is the only possession one can take with one. It is indeed the pearl of great price for which one sells everything.....One starts by salvaging a minute or two from the stream of time, making that into five minutes, then ten, then half an hour and even two half-hours a day. By that time mind has undergone a permanent change – a wholly new attitude to oneself, to other people and to human life. One just cannot go back, for one will never be quite the same again. (VOD p80)