

Sense Perception and Concentration

What is the essential point in concentration*, when it is given that non-concentration is to be conscious of sensory objects?

Human consciousness mostly engages the form of sensory objects and is molded into the objects of a sensory pattern, thus reflecting the cosmic world. Concentration is, therefore, the state of mind wherein there is no cosmic world. One is temporarily able to forget the world, both as perceived through the senses and perceived mentally. That is the fundamental starting-point of concentration.

It is useful to first consider two aspects of the mind:

- 1) when a mental penetration of objects occurs through the senses, the mind grasps the objects and thus becomes conscious of their presence; and
- 2) if one succeeds in preventing sensory penetration, subliminal things slumbering within the mind will still give rise to thoughts.

Mind and *manas* are not the same. *Manas*, which is a distinct aspect of *antahkarana* ("the inner instrument"), stands for the operating principle with functions of attention, selection and synthesis. When these three functions (which derive from *manas*) are operating, concentration will not work. This means that concentration supposes the voluntary suspension of *manas*.

In *manas*, there is a permanent flux of objects streaming through all the avenues of the sense organs. When *manas* functions as attention, it picks up certain elements and synthesizes them. To briefly sum-up, the whole perceptive process first involves attention directed toward certain things, a selection from among external stimuli, and a synthesis via *manas*, which is then transmitted to the objective aspect of consciousness where it glows as an image of which mind becomes conscious.

Transmission is thus the fourth function of *manas*, which essentially busies itself with sensorial matters. However, if the process of sensory perception is stopped, *manas* is freed to turn its attention toward other objects stored up inside. The memory of the objects is activated and the selected objects are recalled and brought up to the field of consciousness as thoughts.

It is when both these aspects are controlled that real concentration can actually start, not before. Concentration is difficult, but necessary. When one becomes fully able to concentrate, the experience of a new, powerful dimension and new cognitive forms will arise at once. When returning back from that state, one is then able to appreciate the differences between these two kinds of experiences.

Here, one cannot fool oneself (or one's teacher, for that matter), as the veracity of the experience is immediately revealed. So true and persuasive are the effects of real concentration that they at once manifest through the body. To the penetrating, discriminative view of an experienced teacher, the whole appearance of the pupil will change. At this point, there will no longer be so much questioning of one's teacher, either. The pupil's remaining issues will be of a quite different kind.

Real concentration is such a phenomenon that it affects the whole of the individual. Its influence is closely linked to respiration, which in its gross form is a vital part of the physical body. At the background of vitality there are *prâna and apâna*, parts of the (subtle) pranic body which influence the mind. At the middle stage, or pranic level, *prâna* and *apâna* operate as subtle, non-physical, *rajasic* force which extends to both sides—the mental and the physical level.

At the grossest point is the respiration-rate and at the mental level the mind-oscillation; these are interrelated. Concentration is therefore the absence of mental oscillation, which means no activity at the pranic except for *ha-tha*, which stands for the union of *prâna* and *apâna*. The state when both these forces are inoperative is called *nishkala*. When

they are in motion, mind also will be in motion, and when mind is inoperative they will also be inoperative.

In Raja Yoga, one first uses the mind as means to achieve motionlessness of *prâna* and *apâna*, while Hatha Yoga starts by restraining and blending the *prâna* and *apâna* so as to achieve the same mental inactivity.

Without Raja Yoga Hatha Yoga cannot be complete and without Hatha Yoga it is almost impossible to undertake Raja Yoga.

* *Editor's note:* Rather than adhering to the vague and inadequate English-language term, "meditation" (*to reflect upon, ponder, contemplate*), the Author has adopted this term to cover the yogic, 3-stage, mental control process of *dhâraṇa*, *dhyâna* and *samâdhi*. The etymology of the word concentration (*to direct the mind toward a one-pointed state; bring or draw to a common center or point of union; to focus*) better relates to the actual mechanism involved in this mental exercise.