

## What is Concentration?

What is the meaning of concentration? In order to understand it, one must first of all try to understand many other things. Concentration must be considered in relation to the mind, and therefore one has to understand the fundamental nature of the mind. The inquiry must start at the sensory level.

But what is the sensory level? First of all, it is a form of consciousness, embracing the whole experience of what one has—one's existence, the meaning of this existence, everything. The very act of apprehension of what one is and has is a form of consciousness. If there is no consciousness at a particular moment, all will be dark and one will know nothing, like in deep dreamless sleep. At all other times one has at least some form of consciousness, which is connected with 2 factors: 1) the I-feeling (a part which appears steady, but is sometimes more pronounced and at other times under the level of what the I can receive, as the knower, the "I know"); and 2) the I as the doer.

Now, this I who knows...how does it know? Everyone has the consciousness of this I, but it cannot persist in isolation. It will constantly be in relation to something not being the I, thus establishing the whole of consciousness within a relational framework. So, at first, there is the subjective aspect in which the I knows. But outside its boundary there is always something with which the I is in relation. That something is then taken up by the I and called the object, while the I is called the subject.

Thus consciousness appears as bimodal: the steady subjective form, and the objective one which is constantly changing. The subjective I is the

same, but its knowing and reaction are ever changing in the oscillatory pattern of consciousness. This is the usual form of mind, or consciousness, but it is not actually the whole mind. It is only accepted as mind since, for most people, this is the every-day state of affairs. (In Yoga, the subjective and the objective phenomena are called *antahkarana*\*, and the objective, oscillatory aspect of consciousness is called *citta*.)

Whenever an image comes to be an object of consciousness, the subjective I will know it. But consciousness is not a thing; it is not what we call "material". How then can the picture enter in to the objective aspect of consciousness?

It is physiologically explainable, to a certain degree. Take for instance the faculty of sight. The eye is exposed to light, falling on the retina, where the impulses are received by the optic nerve and carried to that particular area of the cerebrum specially constructed to receive those impulses. There, these impulses are recognized as some form, which is called perception. However, when the nerves are stimulated with impulses along with them, which shall culminate in visual perception, they cannot differentiate as to which of those impulses shall actually be acknowledged as a particular perception.

If, for instance, one were to sit in very deep thought and there is suddenly something are still functional. Why is there no impression? It is here that the mind comes in. For, when one is able to do a certain thing very intensely with the mind, then it is possible that the sensory organs do not function in an efficient way at that time.

The partial experience of this phenomenon is very common, but when the concentration gets very deep it is possible that there will be no sense-reaction at all. On the other hand, when the mind is in a scattering state,

all will continually be perceived. It is as with the rays emitted from the sun, which are many and give much heat. But when one may focus and concentrate these scattered rays, they will burn with quite another strength. So is it also with our thoughts. If the mind spends its energy in a scattering way, its strength is consumed in maintaining the oscillatory pattern of consciousness, eventually rendering it more or less bankrupt.

The mind is dependent on the sensory apparatus for the receiving of things directed towards it by the sensory organs, which are continually exposed to outside stimulation. The sensory organs are constantly in contact with objects, and thus constantly sending impulses, but not every impulse which is sent is received. Only certain pictures in which we are more interested are taken up, while the rest is overlooked. Yet, unless we accept that selective function of the mind in relation to the sensory phenomena, we cannot explain this procedure. For the mind receives what the senses are presenting from outward into the inward, then presents that to the I-consciousness, thus enabling the I to know the object.

But how can a material object enter into the mind and give a whole picture? Somewhere a dematerialization-process of the material form must take place in which the dematerialized thing itself does not lose its characteristics, its essence.

It may help in understanding here to remember that, in Yoga, the so-called "matter" exists in five forms. Moving in order from the most gross form to the most subtle form, these are called: *sthula*, *svarupa*, *suksma*, *anvaya* and *arthavattva*. Behind the gross, physical form (*sthula*) lies the inner form, or *svarupa*, which gives the characteristic features to *sthula*. These are grasped by the first form, and as physical aspects of things via the *jñanindriyas*, which are both physical and extra physical-mental. In this process, the picture becomes dematerialized after the cerebrum-state

by the *indriyas* in the mental area, and the dematerialized picture is then presented to the mind, which conveys it to the I. The whole thing flows as an image into the objective field of consciousness and thus the I gets to know it.

In concentration, the constant flow from outside to the *indriyas* to the mind (*manas*) and on to the objective aspect of consciousness, is stopped. This means that we are able to exercise the power of control over those streams of images. It belongs to the first stage of concentration, to have control over this constant penetration of images reflected on the objective aspect of our consciousness.

This control is acquired in several stages. At first one may find that an image has formed in the objective field of consciousness. One will know that, for as soon as it has formed in the consciousness a relation is instantly established, as the I radiates into the objective field and establishes the connection—which means the knowing of it by the I. Here neither the subjective nor the objective aspect has any special control over the phenomenon. The objective aspect is only just going on molding into different forms without interruption. As soon as one image is formed, the I receives, knows and is conscious of it, yet has no control over this phenomenon. But the I can, if it will, get a certain image it especially wants to have. However, it cannot retain this selected image at will, which shows the lack of power of the I.

Thus, the ordinary person has free choice within certain limits. There is free choice to initially select an object for concentration—which the I knows as an object received by the *indriyas*, carried to the mind (*manas*) and reflected as an image on the objective aspect—but when the I attempts to retain the selected object in the consciousness, the image will tend to escape and another will come in. That is so in the beginning of concentration. The object is then transitory in character and image upon

image will constantly penetrate in.

To understand concentration scientifically, one therefore has to understand the mechanism underlying it. This is the purview, the great contribution, of Yoga.

\* *antahkarana* in the Tantras and *antahmana* in the Upanishads .Editor's note.