

## Outlines on Concentration

Concentration means, here, to control the mental oscillations, a characteristic feature at the sensory level where the mind is in a dispersed, distracted state.

Mind's oscillations are of three modes:

- 1) *kshipta* - that is, when the mind is constantly oscillating;
- 2) *vikshipta* - when a pause occurs amidst the constant oscillations, and;
- 3) *mudha* - when the consciousness is inert and not shining forth.

In *kshipta*, the mind oscillates by first allowing one picture to enter it, then vanish, and then be immediately followed by another. When a picture emerges, it means a form of consciousness at a particular moment. This process of emerging and vanishing creates a continual flow. *Ksipta* is the type of mental oscillation found in ordinary, unmodified consciousness.

While *kshipta* is a state of a mind with continual, unmodified oscillations, *viksipta* is recognized when a pause occurs amidst the constant oscillations. It must be granted that, without such temporary cessations in the constant mental oscillations, sustained life would not be possible. *Vikshipta* is thus particularized *kshipta*, or modified oscillation. *Mudha* is a mindset where consciousness is not shining forth, being either partially or entirely masked and kept in the dark with inertia, or dullness.

One may know about the mind's fluctuation by the changes that occur in consciousness, where they are recorded. Awareness arises when consciousness reflects the form of an object, the image of which is received and illumines consciousness, thus transforming into the image.

### The Gunas

These three states characterize a mind that functions at the sensory level. Such a mind is subject to the action of the three fundamental principles of *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. In *ksipta*, it is the dynamic principle of *rajas*

that prevails, while in *viksipta* the same *rajas* is itself modified by *sattva*. In *mudha*, the principle of *tamas* (inertia) predominates. At the sensory level, the experiences come exclusively through the five senses. But the mind's very existence is not known without imparted knowledge. One knows by being aware; in other words, one knows something only when being aware or conscious of that something. In the background, there is a form of objective consciousness, which means that knowledge is the form of mind, as one may know it. But, is this knowledge generated within or forced on the mind? Also, does the mind receive it from within or from without?

### **The Indriyas**

In the oscillatory form of consciousness, *aham* (I-ness) is not involved. While the objective aspect of consciousness is outside, *aham* (the I) relates to it. Whatever enters into the objective consciousness, *aham*, by its constant relation to the objective field, is experiencing, knowing and understanding. So, *aham* does not go outward. It remains in place and everything occurs in the objective field of consciousness. The projection of the mind appears to be going outward, but there are only certain mental forces that radiate outside the boundaries of the objective field of consciousness.

These radiations, or projections of the mind, are the *indriyas*. There are two kinds of projections: one which occurs within the mind itself, and an extra-mental form known as the senses, each with a corresponding location in the brain. Put simply, the senses project outward so as to be in contact with objects, which are then conveyed to the mind by a process of dematerialization.

But if the senses should not be allowed to take an object, would the mind become vacant?

Furthermore, when the senses fail to receive something and when sound, sight, smell, taste and touch are minimized or entirely excluded, should not the mind be found in a complete vacuum?

It is not so. When the mind does not receive a sensory projection of an external object, objects may still come from memory as recollections. In mental perception, there is also a faculty of conception, which means the power to analyze and differentiate, by way of comparison, from previous experiences, granted that mind is used to evaluate whatever comes in its

way. The picture of the object is then mentally approximated. Therefore, both the raw basic process of that which is conveyed to the mind through the senses and the knowledge accumulated in the mind do contribute to the outcome of any image, whether emerging from without or from within.

But where was it all before?

## The Hridaya

Many things remain concealed, confined as they are to the mind's unconscious\* and subconscious aspects. Thinking is evidently based on sensory perception, but the greater part of its process is done from within, where the mind interprets whatever comes to it from without. It is therefore a combined process, in which the essential part is contributed by the mind's inner aspect. That makes a problem for concentration, because in that way a picture may come a million times, and disappear, and return again.

But when there is no visibility, and when some mental factors remain latent, where do they stay?

They are in the *hridaya*, that part of the mind that can be described as the mind's unconscious field, the repository of subliminal impressions.

Though mind as a conscious entity is bound and limited by its unconscious part, it remains that both are its constituents. It may be to one's advantage, though, if concentration can be kept in an unconscious state. In this state, one can stop the penetration of objects into the mind from outside, a process which is called *pratyâhâra*.

The next step consists in keeping the images and associated knowledge (which can be forwarded to consciousness via memory) in a concealed form in the mind's unconscious aspect, or *hridaya*. Thus, one has:

Sattva		Tamas
Conscious aspect of mind	$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{Kshipta} \\ \text{Vikshipta} \\ \text{Mudha} \end{array} \right]$	Unconscious aspect
Prakhyā		Hridâya
Citta, in the form of Vritti		Sthiti
		Pratyâhâra

The function of these three mental modes is called *prakhya*, and they constitute the *citta*, which is the state of a mind filled with *vrittis*. Without *vrittis*, the *citta* does not exist. And wherever there is *citta*, there is also *hridaya*, and its disposition is *sthiti*, a term that alludes at the tamasic nature of *hridaya*, which literally means "that which does not glow in consciousness or take a conscious form" (*sattva*).

When one tries unsuccessfully to remember something, one may speak of a "bad memory." However, in concentration, forgetting the interfering objects is certainly not negative. *Tamasic* influence is helpful insofar as it "devours" everything. Thus, in concentration, the influence of *tamas* is considered helpful, as an aspect of Shiva.\*\* Here, *tamas* destroys by way of effacing all knowledge (*sattva*) from consciousness. Shiva is therefore symbolically regarded as the Destroyer, while in Hatha Yoga concentration is often practiced on Dancing Shiva, the expression of motion (*rajas*). When *tamas* is fully activated for the "Destroyer of everything," the cosmic world disappears. When Shiva dances forcefully, the whole cosmic world does melt during the dance. This means that with the help of *tamas*, everything, the whole world, can be erased from consciousness so as to enable the would-be yogi to be fully forgetful of everything external.

Hence the Dancing Shiva is the preferred *devata* and a selected object of concentration, for *tamasic* power prevents all outer impressions from staying in the mind—and effectively obliterates the cosmic world.

\*The ancient yogic term *hridaya* differs substantially from the late term "inconsciousness," coined by Sigmund Freud.

\*\*The word *shiva* means: "to do good," "to give welfare" or "what is most opportune at a given moment."