

Mind's Three Standard States

Reviewed by Basile P. Catoméris

The subject of concentration* is an extremely difficult subject, and it is therefore absolutely necessary to know it both theoretically and practically. Concentration should be understood, and practiced seriously, so that it can be utilized for one's own progress and spiritual development. The expressions, "mind," "spirit" and "soul," are somewhat confusing. Alexis Carell, Nobel laureate in medicine, used the terms soul and mind synonymously. Spiritual development should not be confused with spiritualism or the like.

The concepts of physical, mental and of the spiritual are widely misunderstood. In common life, one deals mostly with physical and intellectual issues, largely governed by a blend of emotions. There are different types of thoughts, essentially based on perception, from which conceptions are then made. The thinking process is influenced by one's relationships to others, those with whom one comes into contact and one's behavior. Being well educated typically includes hiding much of one's inner expressions and carefully tempering one's interactions with others. Thus one often finds oneself playing multiple roles, effectively preventing genuine and spontaneous self-expression. To find the courage to surmount this problem and truly express oneself to the full extent, purification is needed.

Mental life unfolds in humans at three fundamental levels: *mudha*, *kshipta* and *vikshipta*. At the *mudha* state, the intellectual side is decidedly infatuated, not properly developed at all. Whatever the intellectual expression may be, there will be a saturation of darker emotions which will prevent the mind from thinking clearly and constructively. Mental life

here works in emotional circles and, when evaluated from a higher intellectual level, remains hopelessly mired in debasing habits like drinking, smoking, gambling, etc.

The state of *kshipta* is characterized by growing awareness and enhanced intellectual life, yet the fundamental operating principle is still the lack of power to control both the objective aspect of consciousness and its relation to the subject. It is a rather scattered intellectual life, where mind is flying and rushing away. The distracting effect of emotions may be weaker here, but it is still present. Knowledge acquired via the emotional channel is generally rudimentary, as it depends much on subjectivity, outer circumstances, and cultural background. Unless enough inner calmness is developed to steady oneself, physically, emotionally and mentally, it is vain to think of producing really constructive thoughts, besides exercising the power of control needed both at the physical and mental planes.

In the state of *vikshipta* (the prefix *vi* is indicative of specialization, denoting an advanced intellectual capacity), it is possible to a certain extent to exercise that power of control. However, the control power over the mind must also still be directed to the physical and emotions. Even intellectual giants or geniuses may be rather one-sidedly developed, thinking childishly because of lack of mental control.

Defining Concentration

Vikshipta and *kshipta* are the respective higher and lower cognitive categories where philosophy is produced. But to achieve mental concentration, one has to pass the philosophical state as well. One may cogently discuss philosophical issues through use of the intellect, but without actual experience to support it, philosophy will amount to no more than expressing intellectual opinions. Philosophically-attuned minds find it hard to dismiss intellectuality, and the dialectic becomes in them an

almost insuperable source of distraction. Such wandering philosophical thoughts will prove to be a great hinderance, since they draw the mind down from a contemplative level to distraction. One should make it clear: concentration is neither physical nor philosophical.

In Sanskrit, the three forms of consciousness at the sensory level are called *jagrata* (the waking state, which includes perception and thought), *svapna* (the dreaming state) and *sushupti* (sleep). While one is in the waking state, outside images are perceived. In the dreaming state, images are projected from within, as previous experiences. When one is in the sleeping state, there is no manifestation of consciousness as it is typically known. These three mental states may be controlled through concentration. In a fully concentrated mind, the three forms of consciousness linked to the sensory are fully controlled, which means the absence of perception, thought, dream and sleep. Such a state is technically called *turya*. It differs essentially from the unconsciousness of deep sleep.

Concentration is not physical, though it has a physical basis which cannot be ignored (as well as pranic and mental dimensions). Nor is concentration philosophical, since it is not merely intellectual.

Concentration is a state of mind starting at the sensory field, but leaving the sensory field when the mind moves freely beyond space. Mind cannot be fully measured with conventional measuring apparatus, for consciousness can only be measured by time. (Space is absent in the mental.) Mind itself escapes from space but not time, though it still apprehends space even when it stands beyond it. At the mental level, space disappears but time remains. Interruptions in concentration are equated with the intervening time-factor. When interruptions cease, the time-factor is overcome. Mind's continuous, uninterrupted flow towards a chosen object is indicative of real concentration. In such a concentrated mind, the cosmic world sinks and all that remain is the I plus the chosen object for concentration.

Concentration Further Explained

Doing something purposefully supposes being aware of what is to be done. Of concentration, only the superficial aspect is generally known. Consciousness presents itself to mind in two main forms: a) as awareness in which things are cognized when mental images are coming in to consciousness; and b) as a steady but not static entity, standing at the background, the I - or I-ness. This I-feeling lingers, but not always prominently, when it relates to the objects perceived.

Input images may enter consciousness either as external or internal images, from outside or from within. External images consist of whatever appears to remain outside the *antahkharana*, a Sanskrit term that means "inner instrument." It is this inner instrument, or consciousness, that enlightens the human mind with knowledge and feeling. Without *antahkharana*, there would only be darkness and ignorance, because nothing exists to I-ness unless it is reflected on the objective aspect of consciousness. As a consequence of the restricted human perceptual capability—which can be overcome by supersensitive technological instruments and conceptualization power, but only partly—human knowledge of the cosmos is very limited.

Concentration thus allows the voluntary control of the senses, rendering thinking, dreams and sleep inoperative. Such a mental state differs from the un-consciousness of deep sleep, granted that one remains fully awake in concentration. This concentration gives rise to a quite extraordinary mental state, technically called *turya*, where consciousness' three particular conditions—*jagrata* (waking), *svapna* (dreaming) and *sushupti* (sleep)—are fully mastered. This 'real' concentration is the ideal of all yogis, irrespective of the particular path they have chartered, and it is generally attained step by step.

* *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 *dhârana*, *dhyâna* and *samâdhi*. It would seem 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.