

Lectures by Sri Shyam Sundar Goswami

(II.37)

Physical Motionlessness and Mind

The lying position in humans is the ideal position to recover or rest with the body movements reduction or the immobility it affords. Yet, the mind is not calmed thereby, thought-patterns will be going on unless one falls asleep which ensuing disappearance of consciousness. While consciousness persists in the waking stage, and unless we are subject to fatigue or fall into sleep, thoughts will manifest at different levels. Bodily motionlessness physical is most suitable for active thinking. It thus produces two effects on the mind:

1. If consciousness fades, sleep takes over;
2. If consciousness persists, it will manifest all kinds of thoughts which will become a predominating factor in the mind.

Motionlessness in Yoga has three grades:

Savâsana or supine;

Samakonâsana: sitting with legs straight together and extended forward;

Utthâsana: standing up.

Savâsana features a posture of maximum motionlessness. There the immobility is carried out to the maximum and is therefore, theoretically, most suitable for mental concentration.

Mental concentration reaches its peak in *samâdhi*. However, the concentration will first have to pass through the two intermediate states of *dhârana* and *dhyâna*. However, *samâdhi* can be achieved in each of these three postures. For *dhârana* and *dhyâna* the sitting posture - which here corresponds to a 0+1 value - is most appropriate. Here, the extremities that

usually are used for different activities are "locked". This is not the case with the posture *samakonâsana* posture, where one sits with legs extended forward and the pectoral and pelvic limbs not being "locked". And these should be as in *padmâsana* when the body is sat cross-legged in the so-called lotus posture. In the practice of mental concentration that posture has always been considered best prior to the alternative postures of *siddhâsana* and *sukhâsana*. Also, it is important to lock the hands, which is rather natural in crossed-legs postures like in the *dhyâna-mudra* - or contemplation attitude, or the *jñâna-mudra* with hands resting on knees, palms up, thumbs and forefinger finger forming a circle, the whole symbolizing knowledge.

Locking the hands and legs, which are the most used muscles, is recommended because their constant activities reflect on the mind which experience it. Body movements are generally causing the mind to oscillate seeing as they gradually leave their imprint on the mind, giving it a sort of memory towards oscillation. So, to counteract this mental tendency Hatha Yoga provides a reverse physical condition whereby hands and legs are being kept locked with the above crossed-legs postures.

In these sitting postures blood-circulation is partially stopped, which signifies that the condition necessary for motion is checked physiologically and thus also extends its effects to the mind which then gradually becomes educated in the opposite way - toward motionlessness. In crossed-legs postures, legs are partially immobilized and the blood flows slowed down. At the beginning, this immobilization may cause a slight numbness of the legs. However, after some time of practice it is possible to easily maintain a cross-legged posture for longer periods of time.

Thus the reversed physical condition affects the mind and induce it to inner calmness as soon as the posture is controlled, that is to say beyond the preliminary stages of discomfort.

The same condition applies with the postures *dhyâna mudra*, *jñâna mudra* as the arms are the next avenue to executing movements. They too have to be locked up inactively and thus reflect on the mind giving less tendency towards motion, which will be helpful for achieving calmness of the mind. However, that too requires a regular and prolonged practice.

Yet these "locks" are not enough to calm the mind completely. Also, the supine posture is not much more conducive to concentration than the sitting postures, because here breath-control is essential - something very difficult to have in the supine position. In the respective states of *dhâra* and *dhyâna* breath-control is indispensable because at this level the practitioner still needs breathing to better concentrate. The sitting-postures have the two advantage of the locking of arms and legs - which is possible in supine posture but only to those how to do it -, and the breath control.

The positioning of the *chakras* in sitting is an important point to be considered. As long as an image remains in the mind, there will also be a feeling of space (distance) and time-related factors.

It is not possible to visualize an object without assigning it a spatial position. It is therefore difficult to eliminate the position which is intrinsically linked to that object and gives the apprehension space in the form of distance. The space factor operates once an object is thought. Distant or near the object arouses the sense of a position, an occupying space. Thus a fixed position in the conscious field and the projection of the I towards the object gives a feeling of space, as the first fundamental one. By *chakra* or center, is actually meant a level of elevated consciousness. So, when we consciousness stands at a particular level, say A, and it rises to level B, the elevation of A to B involves a space - here towards an upper field, the raising meaning here that consciousness stands at a particular level particular mental level but in relation to the physical posture: and unless we create a condition enabling a

corresponding physical change, it will be extremely difficult to raise our consciousness without experiencing difficulties. Hence the need, to allow improved mental concentration, to adopt these yogic sitting postures,

The energy that flows through and up and down the spine may be diverted to move transversally - something which is undesirable here. Therefore it is advisable when sitting for concentration to keep the spine straight and free from any contact, that is to say without support, lest the desired higher levels of mental concentration fail to turn up.

However, even under such condition, difficulties in concentration may still arise. Indeed, even with a motionless body, the mind is still free to wander thus displaying an incessant activity and a tremendous amount of oscillations.

As long as we divert thoughts into action, the mind is able to partially get rid of thoughts, leaving only a few persisting mental patterns of particular interest to us. No do we get quite free from thinking by merely eliminating the sensory factors around us. For thoughts can also be linked to dreams where no external impressions are received. There, stored-up impressions from past experiences are being retrieved via the memory and returned to the conscious field. These are the results of inner reflections, stored up and later to resurface into consciousness. For thought is a reflection from within, focused on the objective aspect of our consciousness.

This is "pure" thought. But thought, or mental image, can equally be a mixture of perceptions, that is external patterns that flow inwardly in mind's objective field, and resulting in a shining image there. External impressions come to the objective field along with inner reflections, and there both get mixed to produce a thought. Thought is thus of two forms: one pure form of thought, which is practically free from any factual penetration - that is free from sensory perception -, and other thoughts mixed up with sensory perception.