

Concentration and its Objects

Limited as it is, the mind functions through the intermediary agency of the senses. By this, it is usually meant that the reception of a sensorial pattern gives rise to a physical phenomenon. The sensory impulse travels through the nerves to reach an appropriate center in the cerebral cortex, where perception occurs as one of the five forms, or categories, of perceptual knowledge—smell, taste, sight (including color and form), touch (along with heat and cold sensations) and sound. There are five special areas in the cortex which correspond to these five forms of sensory perception, each being specifically enabled to receive related impulses.

This is how images from outside are received and conducted toward a sensory perception, but that does not explain how and where the images actually connect to consciousness. Unless one is conscious of something which gives rise to a sensation, it cannot be conceived, so there is also a mental dimension to this. While the physical part ends at the cerebrum-level, there is yet also an extra-cerebral mental aspect of the senses.

An object of concentration* must be chosen in order to focus one's mind upon.

- *What is the range of objects from which one can choose?*

Consciousness becomes molded into one or another of the five patterns of images that are conveyed to consciousness via the five sensory channels. The chosen object can therefore only be of one amidst these patterns; there is no sixth option! Even thought is related to these patterns, directly or indirectly, as one of the patterns or a mixture thereof. Therefore, the chosen object must necessarily relate to one of the five

patterns of sensory phenomena. One has no power to choose any object beyond these five patterns, whether awake or asleep and dreaming.

Despite even the most sincere desires to overcome one's senses in concentration, one will invariably choose to focus upon a sensory object or a remembered perception of a previously-encountered sense object. Keeping a sensory picture in one's mind for a longer time may be a fair way of mental training and strengthening, but it is costly in terms of time spent and it further binds the mind to the sensory which one seeks to transcend.

Nor can one simply choose to think of "no thing," for then the objective consciousness has no reason to exist. The I-consciousness remains in relation to the objective consciousness, and the existence of the I as such does not depend on the body, but it is in relation to objective consciousness.

- And if that vanishes, what will then remain of one's consciousness?

The I entity is always the I plus something in ordinary life; it is never the I minus something from the objective consciousness. This explains why it is so difficult to go beyond the sensory while the mind is still functioning, as well as why one cannot think while having no object. Objects will always be present in some form, however vague. It is only if the objective aspect is actually removed that the ontological condition of the I will change into something specifically different.

** 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*. 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.