

Concentration

Concentration, as commonly understood, refers to a state in which the conscious activity of the mind is brought to a standstill. But that is not the correct expression of the sense implied in it. This type of concentration implies physical effort which one must resort to consciously or even unconsciously. Usually, one proceeds with it with a conscious idea of some particular state which he interprets as concentration. Generally, people take it in the sense of an unnatural heavy sleep brought about by the temporary suspension of the senses. As such, it is just like a state of senselessness caused by the drowning effect of some intoxicating drug. It may perhaps be for that very reason that some of the so called mahatmas are found to be addicted to bhang, charas or ganja.

Generally, teachers advise the abhyasi to practice concentration as a preliminary step, and the abhyasi puts himself to efforts for effecting the same. But in spite of all his labour for years together he is seldom able to achieve it. Why is it so? The failure can in no way be attributed to any of the defects of the abhyasi but to that of the teacher himself, who resorts to his bookish knowledge to guide the aspirant on the practical path of Realisation. The fact is that the entire process as it is

prescribed, is wholly unnatural and artificial and the means adopted for the purpose are all physical and gross. The result is that instead of proceeding towards subtleness, they go on imbibing more and more of solidity and grossness, and finally turn into impregnable rock.

Taking up concentration in terms of suspension of mental activities, one has necessarily to apply his effort to create in himself a state of insensibility. The force required for the purpose is undoubtedly the physical force which acts in combination with matter. Thus the whole process undertaken for the purpose becomes a material pursuit in the real sense. Concentration in that sense relates to the condition of the physical mind at the conscious level, the activity of which is temporarily 'subdued by the application of physical force. Practical examples offer sufficient proof to show that those having advanced with the condition thus developed, become internally so gross and rigid that they become wholly insusceptible to finer and subtler influences. Concentration effected by forceful suppression of thoughts leaves its weighty effect upon the mind. The force applied for the purpose, also being a physical force, causes its own weight. Thus in a word the state of concentration interpreted as coma is basically wrong, since it keeps one in close touch with matter. In that sense concentration may aptly be compared to a

marshy condition, from which it is very difficult for one to extricate himself. He cannot save himself from sinking down deep into it unless he falls flat over it giving up all his efforts. Those who proceed on with that condition, carry along all through with matter. It may, however, help them to some extent in their material purposes and promote in them hypnotic powers, but it is not the least helpful in a purely spiritual pursuit.

People like to go into concentration because it is pleasing to the senses. Obviously it cannot, therefore, be helpful in a spiritual pursuit. Concentration directly refers to suppression of thoughts. The idea entered into our mind only after mesmerism or hypnotism has come to our view, because there the physical force of thought was utilised all through. No spiritual purpose can be served thereby. It can, however, reveal the nature and character of a thing, but that can by no means help its achievement. It cannot therefore be instrumental in the attainment of God. On the other hand it tends to keep one away from Reality. The basis of meditation is purely spiritual, while that of concentration is only the ego. When you mean to concentrate, 'You' are there, quite definitely, but when you meditate, you wait for something higher, hence you are away from the idea of self.

The only proper course for an aspirant would, therefore, be to get himself absorbed in the light of the Divine coming to him from the Original source, without minding the implications of the word concentration. In that case the question of concentration will not arise at all, and one will all along be with that which can neither be interpreted as concentration nor otherwise. Concentration with all its implications affecting encloement, being not of any avail, it is only the power of 'non -concentration' as I may call it that enables one's approach to higher and higher regions of enlightenment. Proceeding along in that way, one would keep on imbibing the power of the Source to light himself up with Divine effulgence.

Now what condition does the word 'non-concentration' refer to? Obviously it refers to a state associated with an overflow of thoughts. But then there are two aspects of it: the one when the flow is not conjoined with our conscious knowledge, and the other when we have a conscious awareness of it and take its effect upon the mind. This, the latter one, may no doubt amount to a state of distraction, especially when one is linked with the thought of some misery or affliction. In the former case, though the flow continues uninterruptedly, yet the encumbering effect thereof is not felt upon the mind.

Normally this state of mind is seldom found to be disturbing. Taking these two aspects into view I might say that the later is quite similar to the state known as concentration, but with only this difference that here the object of concentration is one's distraction and worry instead of the godly thought. It may, therefore, be taken as crude concentration which is maintained by the force of our unconscious efforts. The effect in both the cases (viz., by conscious effort and by unconscious effort) is the same i.e., heaviness, dullness, sluggishness. The very word concentration implies a sense of artificiality, and effort is for that reason indispensable. When the flow of thought is spontaneous it is effortless and closely similar to the state commonly known as concentration. The proper word for that may therefore be 'absorption', which is a natural course and follows by itself as the result of meditation on the right lines.

Concentration taken in the sense of absorption (non-concentration, with flow of thoughts, without effect of the mind) is the real state. It may be of different types at different levels. One may be the concentration of the lower level, another that of the higher level, and still another that of the highest level. Now taking out the common factor 'concentration' from these, what remains thereafter is only the lower, the higher and the highest. That is how one has to go on with his march towards the

Ultimate. On the other hand if our thought remains involved with the idea of concentration the inner force will not be working actively to offer us impetus for our higher ascent. The proper course would, therefore, be to take up the thought in the form of sankalpa (subtle idea) without any imposed resolve or effort, and proceed on with it in a gentle and natural way without enforcing any artificiality or imposition. Such is the process followed in Natural Path which, as a matter of fact, introduces through the Master's Pranahuti from the very beginning that very state which lies at the farthest end. Though in the beginning one might have, at times, only glimpses of it, yet after continued practice the same condition covers him all over. This is why in spite of the continuity of thoughts often present at the time of meditation, one proceeding by Natural Path experiences a peculiar state of concentration better interpreted as "absorption".