

THE PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION – PART 1

by

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When the whole attention of the mind is directed to anything whatsoever, that state of mind is called concentration. No action of the mind can be called concentration if the whole of it is not centralized in the chosen objective. For instance, if you are to solve a very intricate mathematical problem – it may be algebra, geometry or arithmetic – the whole mind is concentrated on that because you are expecting such a question to arise in the exam. Sometimes people sit the whole night to solve an equation. You won't think anything else at that time. The necessity to think anything else does not arise because of the absolute value of that on which the concentration is fixed. That on which you want to concentrate your mind should have absolute value, entire value, whole value, so that it is not some partial reality on which you are concentrating your mind.

Usually, the whole of a person can never get concentrated on anything, because of the fact there is practically nothing in the world which can evoke such an interest in the mind of a person. We cannot say that anything in the world is wholly desirable. It may be tentatively desirable, conditionally desirable and partially desirable, but unconditionally desirable objects cannot be seen in this world. The reason why nothing can be unconditionally desirable is because there are things in the world which are other than and different from the objective that is chosen by the mind. It is not possible for you to bring together at one stroke the total objectivity of creation to your attention. You cannot concentrate on the whole world at the same time. As the whole world cannot evoke the attention of the mind, some part of it will be excluded and some other part will draw the attention. That which draws the attention may be considered as valuable and very necessary under certain conditions; but that aspect of reality, that segment of the world which has necessarily been excluded from the point of concentration will set up a subtle reaction. That reaction is called distraction of mind.

The mind wanders here and there and does not permit itself or persuade itself to get concentrated on anything. Since everything is finite, it cannot evoke an infinite attention on the part of any person. Then the attention will also be finite – a finite mind will be thinking of a finite object. Then the result also would be finite and it will be tentative, temporal and evanescent. The excluded part of the world is oftentimes not considered even as existing at all because of a tentative, temporal attraction that the mind feels for one particular object.

Do we know that there are deeper layers of our own mind within us, and they are very powerful media which condition the way of thinking in the waking condition also? There are subtle potentials and vibrations of the psyche in the subliminal level; psychologists call these levels as subconscious, unconsciousness, etc. They actively operate, determining the manner in which the waking mind works,

such that the waking mind will be wrongly assuming the role of a self-competent medium of thought, with freedom of choice which it can absolutely exercise. It is necessary to study deep psychology, not for the purpose of becoming a professor of it, but to understand one's own nature. You must know what you are made of. When you think something, you must know why you are thinking in that manner. "I don't know. I happen to think like that." You should not say that. That is an unintelligent reaction to a phenomenon taking place in one's own mind. Every bit of psychological action should be understood and should be subjected to careful, rational study. One cannot afford to be unintelligent about one's own self – that will serve no purpose.

If in our own selves there are deeper layers of the psyche which condition waking thoughts, and for the time being we accept that all concentration of mind that we are thinking of is an activity of the waking mind, we can conclude at the same time that this activity of the so-called concentration of mind in the waking condition is not adequate, because it is conditioned by the impulses that are deep within one's own self. The freedom of choice that we are trying to exercise in the waking condition is supposed to be a will-of-the-wisp and an illusion cast by the propensities of the lower layers of the mind, which defeat the so-called purpose of the activity of the waking mind. In every movement of the waking mind we seem to be engaged in a self-defeating exercise, which predicament is not to be allowed if we are careful about our own selves.

There is no use being too much interested in the sun and the moon and the stars and the Mars and the skies and all that without knowing one's own self, because all the knowledge you have got of the higher space and astronomical universe is again conditioned by the structure of your own capacity to know. Philosophers tell us the study of the structure of knowledge is a primary study before anything else is taken up. They call it epistemological studies. You must first of all know how you are knowing anything at all. Otherwise, that which you are supposed to be knowing

may be really not a knowledge at all. Even our choice made by our own selves personally of an object of concentration or meditation may be determined by a temporary impulse of the notion of value imposed upon that object. It is accepted that every object has a value, but as I mentioned, no object has absolute value. That is the reason why unconditional concentration on any object in the world is not possible. If the concentration is not unconditional, you cannot really call it concentration at all. This is a very important background of study in which we have to engage ourselves before we take to spiritual life, especially a God-seeking life.

What do you mean by seeking God? It is the search for that which is complete in itself. It is the whole in every sense of the term. A partial attempt on the part of a finite mind cannot contain within itself the idea of a whole, whether you call it a universe or the God Himself. Has anyone attempted to think of a complete situation or a wholeness of anything, excluding every facet of things which are external to it?

Spiritual meditation, therefore, is the reaction of the whole person in respect of the whole of reality. It is not like the attention that you pay during a mathematical problem solution. It is not the accountant's concentration when he totals figures or subtracts figures, though that also is a concentration of some kind. When people walk on a wire in a circus they have concentration on what they are doing, otherwise they will slip down and fall. When you walk on a precipitous edge of a deep ravine, you are very careful. If there is a ropeway bridge across the Ganga with only two ropes which swing this way, that way, and on those ropes you have to walk, you know how careful you will be, lest you fall down. These are all concentrations, no doubt, but the whole mind does not work even here, because walking on the ropeway bridge is not a whole necessity – it is a tentative necessity. Every other action that we are performing is a tentative need that we feel, but it is not a total need. A total need is that without which you cannot even exist. It is not that you want something for a satisfaction – you want it for

your being itself. Your existence itself will be nullified if that particular thing is not attended to properly.

An apparently intelligible example of this kind of concentration is the need that you feel to take your breath every day. Do you know how important breathing is? Fortunately, God in His infinite compassion has not compelled us to be aware constantly of the process of breathing. Some automatic, computerized action, as it were, is taking place through the heart and the lungs, and it is not forcing you to attend on the process of breathing; otherwise, day in and day out you will be thinking only of breath. Merciful God, merciful nature has freed you from this torture of feeling that you have to breath always. When you take your meal, the food goes inside; after that nobody bothers as to what happens to it. Suppose you go on thinking it passes through this gut, then it converts itself into something else, it goes to the stomach, it goes to the intestines; suppose you go on thinking like that, will it be a happy mood?

So there are certain automatic actions taking place which free us from the need to concentrate excessively even on important issues like breathing, digestion of food, sleep, etc. We don't even know how we sleep – it takes place. If you have to pay a price for getting into sleep, then what will happen to you? Without paying any price, spontaneously, freely you are given the choice of going into sleep and becoming very happy, wholesome and vigorous when you wake up.

These are little, visible examples of a totality of action taking place in some way or the other, but meditation on God, which is the principle motive of spiritual living, is a deliberate, wholesome activity of the total individual in the direction of the total reality of the universe. What is religion? It is the reaction of the whole man, whole person, to the whole of creation. Religion does not mean Hinduism, Christianity or any kind of 'ism' or fundamental, denominational section. Religion is not what you do, but what you are. You cannot be something different within

yourself and start doing something which is religious in its nature. Religion is your encounter with God, not encounter with a temple or a church or a textbook or a scripture. That which is permanently real is the object of concentration in spiritual living. That which is permanently real can evoke attention only if that which is permanently real within our own selves starts concentrating. That which is permanently real in our own selves is that which concentrates itself on that which is permanently real in the cosmos. It is the real that is concentrating on the real. If you take this logic to its finale, you may come to the conclusion that meditation on God is nothing but God thinking Himself. I think it was Aristotle who mentioned somewhere when thought thinks another thing, it is called a human being – when thought thinks itself, it is called God.

But no thought can think itself. The very procedure adopted by human thought is to externalize itself in the direction of things which are externally placed in space and time. The mind is conditioned by the pressure exerted upon it by the actions of space and time. The space and time complex has only one function to perform – to externalize everything, and nothing that can be considered as whole and integrated in itself can be conditioned by space and time. This is why we say God is not in space and time – it transcends space and time. It is another way of saying God is not an external object, it is a total being. God is not an object of any kind so that you can open your eyes and look at it. You cannot even conceive it in the manner that you are conceiving objects in the world. The habit of the mind to think in terms of externality – space, time and cause – is to be transcended.

Great philosophers right from Plato onwards – Sankaracharya and Upanishads – have told us that the causal nexus of something proceeding from something else, motivated by the pressure exerted by space and time, has to be overcome. The mind that is completely engrossed in the operations of space and time externally will not be able to wholly attend upon that which is complete in itself. Nothing

that is external in space and time can be complete in itself. It is not complete because it is external. Why is it not complete? Because the external excludes the internal – therefore it is not complete. The internal also is not complete because it excludes the external. Can you conceive of a situation, psychologically, where you can bring a blend between the internal and the external? If that would be possible, you will be thinking transcendently and not empirically. Meditation is a kind of transcendental thinking, if at all you are permitted to use that word ‘thought’. Meditation is not thinking – it is a state of the emergence of Being in one of its degrees. God is being – we call God Supreme Being. We do not say God is supreme object, nor do we say God is supreme becoming. God is not a process, God is not even a creative activity; God is not a work, it is not a procedure, and therefore to be in tune with that fundamental nature of the finally real thing, we have to set ourselves en rapport with that nature.

The characteristics of our center of aspiration should be in tune with the characteristics of that on which the concentration is directed. Likes attract like; dissimilar things cannot attract each other. If the substantiality of your being is dissimilar to the substance of God, there will be a repulsion from the side of God, and you will see that you feel great discomfort even in meditation. Why should there be discomfort in meditation? You should be engulfed in joy, rather. That which is going to bless you with infinite completeness requires from you nothing except your own self. God does not want any kind of gifts from you, like objects that we offer in temples of worship, etc. God does not want incense, flowers, sandalwood, fruit or delicious dishes. You have no right to offer this to Him because you have not manufactured these objects. You cannot offer to God that which is not your property.

Then what is it that God wants? He wants you only. This is a moot point in spiritual life. If anyone says “I want you” what will you make out from this statement? You want me? What is the meaning of this statement? We have this subject

discussed in the great poetic drama of the German poet Goethe when he wrote the beautiful epic called *Dr. Faust*. Dr. Faust was in a state of embarrassment when Mephistopheles, the opposite of spiritual welfare, offered him all the wealth of the whole world for a small price. "Would you offer a small price, Dr. Faust?" "Oh, if it is a small price, why should I not part with it? But what is it that you are going to give me?" "The whole world of glory with all the magnificence of creation – here it is, it is laid out before you. But give me a small thing." "What is that small thing?" "Give yourself to me." "Oh," Dr. Faust thought over. "Oh, I see, you want me. And in return for that you will give me the whole universe of pleasure." Dr. Faust forgot that when he is not there, because he has already given it to someone, he will not be there to enjoy this cosmos. This idiocy caught hold of him. "Take it," said Dr. Faust. A thunder, as it were, broke everywhere. Dr. Faust felt he was shattered to pieces. He broke into little, tiny particles. When you are broken into tiny particles of subatomic elements, torn apart in shreds, unthinkably destroyed completely, you are no more there – such shattered condition befell this wonderful Dr. Faust who sold himself for the sake of the wealth of the whole world.

This is not a story. This was also mentioned in connection with Jesus Christ. The whispering one came and told, "Why are you sitting on this top of the mountain famishing your body? You have already attained what you want. Here it is. Look, everywhere gold, everywhere silver, everywhere shining crystal. Take. Why are you torturing yourself? Go. Here it is." But Christ was made of a different stuff. "Get thee behind, Satan. Tempt me not." These are the stories that apply to everybody. We should not think that we are better than Dr. Faust or Jesus Christ – nothing of the kind. Every human being has to pass through the same experience and in the same layer of ascent. If it is not today, it will come tomorrow. There is no such thing as waiving of a condition or a double promotion – nothing of the kind. Every step of ascent has to be passed through by everyone; if it is not today, it'll be done tomorrow.

Most people get frightened of the thought of surrendering themselves to God, because it is a negation of one's dear self. Nothing can be more frightening than the possibility of losing your own self. This fright will also be a good indicator of how far we have progressed in spiritual life. You are frightened by God Himself. Is it possible to imagine such a situation? When God says, "I shall give you all things and I take you entirely into Myself," well, when He says "I shall give you all things," you are pleased. When He says I shall take you into Myself – God forbid. If I am annihilated from the existence which I am enjoying now, I shall not persist anymore and there shall be nothing called 'me' even to enjoy the bliss of God. This is the whisper of Mephistopheles, or the opposite of Christ, which will not permit you to think that there is a glory beyond your own selves. "I am everything, what I am is perfectly ok. I am perfect, there is nothing wrong with me; there is nothing higher than what I am." It is impossible to conceive that which is beyond yourself.

This is perhaps the reason why the great German thinker Immanuel Kant said you cannot think the noumenon, the thing that is really there. You cannot think that which is above yourself; you can think only that which is within your capacity, within the phenomenal range of your mental perception. Beyond that you should not touch – don't go beyond the limit. There is a limit for logic, there is a limit for reasoning, and reason fails and then religion starts.

Spiritual meditation is not a kind of physiological exercise. It is not a mere attempt to see if something can come or not. It is a dedication, and a dedication for the whole of life. When I say it is a dedication for the whole of life, it means there is nothing else to be done – this includes all things. And even the other things that you are apparently interested in and engrossed in, they are also brought together into this granary of comprehensiveness of God-consciousness. Many people cannot reconcile themselves between the world of activity and the being of God. "After all, I have got duties, I have got a family, and I've got to do work."

Who told you not to take care of family? Who told you not to work in a factory, in an office? But your wisdom consists not in making a dichotomous distinction between God and the creation, but to see a blending factor between the two.

A little bit of conversation we had yesterday with some visitor, and a question was raised before me: "After all, we have to get on in this world of matter." I said, "I do not know if there is a world of matter, because that would imply that God has created matter also." There are two aspects in this question. If matter exists, it opposes spirit; that is the Sankhya duality of Prakriti and Purusha. If spirit and matter are opposed to each other, there will be nobody to know that matter exists. Matter cannot know itself because it is not spirit, and spirit cannot know matter because it is established that the two are totally different. So who is it that is conscious of the world? You will not know that even the world exists at all because you are a center of perception, knowledge, spirit, opposed to the object of the world which is considered as material. If you are totally segregated as a center of the spirit that you are inside yourself, the objective world will not be an object of perception. Nobody can know that the world exists if spirit and matter are two different things. This particular situation defeats the argument that spirit and matter are two different things.

Second thing is when you say that God has created the world. Every religion says that God created the world. What did He create? Did He create the world out of some pre-existent material? If you say God existed, of course, but there was a substance also out of which He fashioned this world, then there would be a permanent opposition to God, and the other assertion that God alone is will be futile. Some religions are unable to get over this problem, and accept that there are two facets of reality – Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, as the Zarathustrian philosophy will tell you. There is a permanent opposition to God. Ahura Mazda is God, Ahriman is the opposite of it – a spirit and matter opposition. In India we have got theological doctrines of Deva, Asura, Sangrama – a war between the gods and the demons. From where did the

demons come at all? Who created them? No one wants to put questions of that kind – they are all taken for granted.

So, just as nobody can know that the world exists if the perceiving consciousness is totally isolated from the world of matter, as you think, so also you cannot know who created this world. The assertion in all religions that God alone is, or was, or shall be, precludes any possibility of God handling some pre-existent matter for the purpose of creation; because if there is a pre-existent matter, call it Prakriti or whatever it is, then God is not All-in-All. If God is not All-in-All, He's a finite being, He cannot be immortal, He cannot be infinite. There is a muddle in thinking.

This difficulty arises because the mind is impure to the very core. The mind is unfit even to think such great things. But, as I mentioned to you the other day, take at least the initial step in the direction of understanding this truth. It may not be a complete understanding at 100% marks – you have got only 1%. Ok, God is pleased with that also. You will not be declared a failure because your mark is only 1%; you don't have to certify 40% – not necessary. God is a very good examiner – 1% is sufficient. What a beautiful statement in the Bhagavadgita. Even the least attempt that you make in the direction of knowing this reality will free you from great fear, because even the least effort, even a millimeter distance that you cover in the direction of this ultimate reality, evokes a flood of response from that Great Being, and prevents the agonies of people.

When you think, when you exercise your mind in meditation, mostly what happens is you are simultaneously conscious of excluding certain thoughts. You should think only Bhagavan Sri Krishna, and you should not think any other nonsense in this world. You shut out the thoughts which are external to that particular thought which you have chosen as that which is your ideal. But you must remember, psychology is a very interesting subject. You cannot shut off or shut out the thought of something without being

conscious that such a thing exists. Even when you are not wanting a thing, you are conscious that such a thing exists.

So there is a dual activity of the mind – a struggle, as it were, going on within itself – the thought that it is wanting to concentrate itself on one thing, and the thought it does not want to concentrate itself on another thing. This not wanting to concentrate itself on another thing also is, unfortunately, another thought. So you should not imagine, just because you excluded the thought of something which should not intrude into your meditation, you have got over it. It will be there staring at you, “What have you made out of me?” And I mentioned sometime ago that even the awareness that there is a thought of something other than the thought of that what you have chosen is not possible unless there is a linkage between the two thoughts. How would you know that something is irrelevant and something is relevant unless there is some operation going on in the mind itself which links the two aspects of reality?

This is something like our famous Hegel’s philosophy of position, opposition and synthesis – thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Thesis is that the mind should concentrate on one thing. The antithesis is it should not think of something else. The synthesis is that thought which brings about a union between these two thoughts of the position and the opposition of it. So there is a third element, like a triangle – you can have a picture of it drawn, geometrically. The base of the triangle consists of two points which you may call the position and the opposition – the thesis and the antithesis – and the apex of the triangle is the blending factor which is the synthesis of the apparently two different points of the thesis and the antithesis. This is only an illustration I am giving you.

But the world is so big that merely bringing about a reconciliation between two thoughts will not suffice, because this synthesizing thought operating as a transcendental medium between the position and the opposition will itself, to put it in the language of Hegel, will be in the position of a

thesis, a position which will be opposed by another thing which is the antithesis of it. The world is so big that there will be no end for this situation or the encounter of the thesis by the opposition or the antithesis, the seeking of a blending of them two together in a transcendental unity which series goes on one above the other, one above the other, until, staggeringly as it were, it reaches the absolute synthesis where the thesis of God and the antithesis of the world are brought together by a synthesis of the Absolute. Well, I'm not talking on Hegel now, or Kant or anything, I'm just mentioning these Western thinkers are also very penetrating. There is something we have to learn from them. You should not think that Indian thought only is wonderful, and there is nothing there. It is not like that. Very great thoughts are there – Plato and others – people have to teach you very much.

Now, we're coming to the point – I am not able to complete this subject today because I went in such detail – it has taken already 45 minutes. May I conclude today and take up another time? Ok? Hari Om!