

Introduction to Gnostic Meditation – Notes 3

<http://www.GnosticStudies.org/Meditation>

Preliminary Essentials for Success in Meditation by Swami Sivananda

Concentration and meditation are the royal roads to perfection. Concentration leads to meditation. Fix the mind on one object either within the body or without. Keep it there steadily for some time. This is concentration. You will have to practice this daily.

There are foolish, impatient students who take to concentration at once without undergoing any manner of preliminary training in ethics. This is a serious blunder. Ethical perfection is a matter of paramount importance. **One must purify the mind first through the practice of right conduct and then take to the practice of concentration.** Concentration without purity of mind is of no avail. There are some occultists who have concentration. But they have no good character. That is the reason why they do not make any progress in the spiritual line, the path.

A person whose mind is filled with passion and all sorts of fantastic desires can hardly concentrate on any object even for a second. Chastity (through Transmutation of the sexual energy); reduction of wants and activities; renunciation of sensual objects; solitude; silence; discipline of the senses; annihilation of lust, greed, anger; non-mixing with undesirable persons; giving up of newspaper-reading and visiting cinemas; etc., all increase the power of concentration.

Concentration is the only way to get rid of worldly miseries and tribulations. The practitioner will have very good health and a cheerful mental vision. They can get penetrative insight. They can do any work with greater efficiency. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Purify the mind through *Yama*¹ and *Niyama*². Concentration without purity is of no use.

The senses draw you out and perturb your peace of mind. If your mind is restless, you cannot make any progress. When the rays of the mind are collected by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get *Ananda* (Bliss, happiness, joy) from within. Silence the bubbling thoughts and calm the emotions.

You should have patience, unbreakable willpower and untiring persistence. You must be very regular in your practices, otherwise laziness and adverse forces will take you away from the *Lakshya* (Goal; target; point of concentration). A well-trained mind can be fixed at will upon any object either inside or outside to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

You can achieve anything through concentration. Nothing is impossible to a person who practices regular concentration. It is very difficult to practice concentration when one is hungry and when one is suffering from an acute disease. Concentration can be done only if you are free from all distractions. Attention plays a very prominent part in concentration. Whosoever has developed their powers of attention will have good concentration. **Everyone possesses some ability to concentrate along some lines, but for spiritual progress: concentration should be developed to a very high degree.**

¹ **Yama** is the very foundation of Yoga, without which the superstructure of Yoga cannot be built. The practice of Yama is really the practice of Sadachara (right conduct). The noble eightfold path of Buddhists deals with the practice of Yama only.

² **Niyama** is the second accessory of Yoga. It is the practice of internal & external purity, contentment, mortification, study of scriptures and worship of God.

Techniques of Concentration from Sivananda

In the beginning stage of practice, you can concentrate on the 'tic-tic' sound of a watch or on the flame of a candle or any other object that is pleasing to the mind. This is concrete concentration. There is no concentration without something to rest the mind upon. A definite purpose, interest, attention will bring success in concentration. At the beginning, the mind can be fixed on any object which is pleasant, since it may be difficult to start by fixing the mind on an object that it dislikes.

Repetition of any Mantram and Pranayama will steady the mind, remove *Vikshepa* (the tossing of mind) and increase the power of concentration. Concentrate on anything that appeals to you as good or anything which the mind likes best. The mind should be trained to concentrate on gross objects in the beginning, and later on you can successfully concentrate on subtle objects and abstract ideas. Regularity in the practice is of paramount importance.

1st Gross forms: Concentrate on a dot on the wall, a candle flame, a bright star, the moon, the picture of OM (AUM), a Divinity or a Guru in front of you with open eyes.

2nd Subtle forms: Sit before the picture of your Guru and close your eyes. Keep a mental picture of your Guru at the space between the two eyebrows (*Ajna Chakra* or *Trikuti*) or in the heart (*Anahata Chakra*). Concentrate on any other internal Chakra. Some Yogis concentrate on the tip of the nose (*Nasikagra Drishti*). Concentrate on the Divine qualities such as love, mercy, or any other abstract idea. Concentration may also be directed on the mental image of God.

Stick to one center of concentration (this can also be called your 'gaze'). Cling to it tenaciously. If you concentrate on the heart stick to it. Never change it. Sit in your meditation room and practice this gaze gently from half a minute to half an hour. There must not be the least violence in this practice. Gradually increase the time period. This exercise removes *Vikshepa* (the tossing of mind) and develops concentration. Lord Krishna prescribes this gaze with the *Trikuti*, but you can concentrate internally on any of the seven centers of spiritual energy (the *Chakras*).

Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi: Sivananda's Methods of Progression

Dharana or concentration is centering the mind on one single thought. During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focused on the object of meditation. The mind is centered on the *Lakshya* (Goal; target; point of concentration). There will be no tossing of the mind. One idea occupies the mind. The whole energy of the mind is concentrated on that one idea. The senses become still and do not function. When there is deep concentration, there is no consciousness of the body and surroundings.

You should be able to visualize the object of concentration very clearly even in its absence. You will have to call up the mental picture at a moment's notice. If you have good concentration you can do this without much difficulty. Concentration will be intense if you remove all distractions. A truly chaste person who has preserved their energy will have wonderful concentration. Right conduct, posture, Pranayama and abstraction from sensual objects (withdrawing the senses from the objects) will go a long way in achieving rapid success in concentration.

When there is deep concentration you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and the surroundings. All the Prana will be taken up to your head. If you concentrate your mind on a point for 12 seconds, it is *Dharana* (concentration). Twelve such *Dharanas* will be one *Dhyana* (meditation): $12 \times 12 = 144$ seconds. Twelve such *Dhyanas* will be *Samadhi* (Superconscious state, God-consciousness): $12 \times 12 \times 12 = 28$ minutes and 48 seconds.

You will have to march on the spiritual path step by step, stage by stage. Lay the foundation of right conduct, postures, regulation of breath and abstraction to start with. Only then will the superstructure of concentration and meditation be successful.