



THE HOLY LIGHT ACADEMY



STEPPING STONES ALONG THE PATH



The Art of Concentration

Concentration is not just a tool to use in spiritual practices and exercises. It is in reality an innate function of the soul that often lies dormant; however, people only use it when they have to, or if a particular task demands their full attention. Although it is necessary to apply concentration in all areas of life, we want to especially stress its significance in your spiritual disciplines. Concentration is important in the use of Prayer, Meditation, Contemplation, Study, Worship, Retrospection, etc. In fact, it is required to develop the ability to concentrate and to keep focused in order to successfully meditate. Once you become relaxed and centered in the quiet place within your soul, you are ready to seriously meditate. If you attempt to meditate while your mind has thoughts running through it, or you are continually distracted in some way, you will not be able to actually meditate.

First the student must learn to relax the body and mind. In a different article of the **Stepping Stones**, we discuss relaxation and breath control. It would be wise to read this if you haven't already. After he has been able to relax through the proper breathing technique, he should practice the development of concentration. We normally suggest the Orang Exercise for the first level of concentration. Once you are successful at focusing your full attention on one thing, then you are ready to truly meditate.

Manly P. Hall describes concentration this way: "It is the achievement of one-pointedness of purpose."¹

In the Buddhist tradition, one-pointedness is the key to meditation, and hence, to enlightenment. As always, one leads to the other. This form of concentration should be applied not just in your spiritual disciplines, but in all daily tasks. When an individual attempts many-pointedness, or multitasking, this only causes the thought-process to become scattered. This negative practice is detrimental to the process of meditation and the disciplines in general. It is when you train your mind to focus on one thing at a time throughout the day that focusing on meditation becomes much easier because you have already started this single-minded process.

Likewise, daydreaming while you should be keeping your mind on the task at hand is spiritually unhealthy. One who has a habit of daydreaming all the time while working is depleting his ability to concentrate. The serious student must not only learn to develop concentration during

his meditation time but also during his daily routines, in every task before him. It is when you let your mind wander while the body is doing some mundane operation, that you are causing disengagement of yourself. As long as you attempt to keep the mind separate from the body, through actions such as daydreaming, this will only slow down one's unfoldment process. Let not your eye be scattered, but keep your eye single, and then your whole being will be filled with Light.

Receptivity and concentration are two critical keys in preparing for and receiving the Illumination, or any spiritual Initiation. Jesus said, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." –Matthew 7:22

This verse is an essential key to the reality of Illumination and is worth meditating on.

Once you learn to concentrate, you can truly become focused and receptive to the Light. Then you have entered a state of surrendering to God, hence, the door opens to deeper spiritual unfoldment through the Initiations.

"Concentration is gentle, unstrained, effortless one-pointedness. It is grounded and founded in the realization of the Law. It may be interpreted as *steadfastness* of purpose. As a candle burning in a still night, so is realization burning steadfastly in the midst of concentration. Concentration is the continuity of spiritual motion toward the One."²

You need to practice the art of concentration correctly. If you find yourself straining at keeping focused on an object, simply relax and take several slow deep breaths. Using the proper breathing technique, relaxation, and concentration all work together in the purpose of achieving a state of one-pointedness.

One example of the necessity of concentration is when you are driving your car. Because there are many distractions outside of your vehicle and often inside. When you are distracted, this can lead to a car accident. In fact, concentrating on driving your car is an excellent exercise.

If you have not begun doing the Concentration Exercise on the orange (in **Foundations of Light** after Lesson Four), it is a good time to start. You should take your spiritual disciplines seriously and you should take concentration seriously as well, as a serious tool in your use of the disciplines. Concentration is an art, and a discipline in itself. It is a simple door that will lead into a vast realm of many possibilities. Use it earnestly and sincerely and it will bear you much fruit.

Go forth and keep your eye single on the Light!

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1 Manly P. Hall, *Self-Unfoldment by Disciplines of Realization* (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society), 81

2 Ibid., 82