



## CONCENTRATION & INNER AWAKENING

According to Tibetan Buddhism

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### BOOK EXCERPT

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**By Fernand Schwarz**

The practice of concentration is essential so that each of us can freely build our destiny. It allows us to get out of confusion and helps us to better control ourselves. Concentration exercises in daily life facilitate the development of our ability to overcome obstacles without repression or violence in order to obtain a more harmonious daily life.

Concentration promotes the reappropriation of our memory and the rediscovery of our true identity.

This little book invites us to discover in a simple way the itinerary of our consciousness according to the oral teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. This was the goal of the Lama Blo-bzang Don-yod when, in the 17th century to facilitate the learning

of his disciples, he made a drawing representing the story of a character accompanied by three symbolic animals on a path.

This path shows us the difficulties that we must overcome through simple and accessible mental and physical practices that demand very little of our daily time. Indeed, the key to this method is to permanently do a short practice daily rather than long occasional workshops.

## **CHAPTER ONE THE PATH OF CONCENTRATION**

### **THE MIND**

Considering the mind superficially, it may seem to be at peace, but on closer examination, it becomes clear that the mind never rests. It is like the leaves of a tree that constantly shake in the wind, or the surface of a lake ceaselessly rippled by the by the passing breeze.

In the same way, walking through the streets of a big city, we may not always be aware of the activity around us. We would not notice how busy the surroundings are unless we were to look down upon the scene from the window of a tall building. This is how we would perceive our mind if we were to seriously examine it. It might seem momentarily agitated, but this would only be an impression revealing our previous ignorance of its incessant activity. The constant activity of our mind has a harmful

effect on our present and future life. Though much effort may be required, it is necessary to free our minds from distraction and lack of focus.

### **SCATTEREDNESS OF THE MIND**

An excellent way to become conscious of the dissipation of the mind is the practice of Tratak.

Tratak is a concentration exercise, in which the meditator focuses upon a dot, within a circle, solid or dotted, by managing to eliminate the vision of the circle to keep only the central dot. This exercise gives us a sense of the difficulty of becoming one with a particular object without becoming distracted by the external or internal environment.

This little experiment to reach a goal, though may seem simple, helps us to understand that complications don't come from the outside but from within ourselves.

Concentration is the key to the mastery of speed. Therefore, in martial arts, as we learn to concentrate more, the movements of the adversary appear to be slower. With practice and increasing consciousness the adversary's movements become increasingly slower, although in reality, his speed has not changed.

This applies to daily life as well; with its quick pace and stress that in reality, only exist as a function of the importance that we choose to give it.

For the one who concentrates, everything slows down. It is a question of learning to place the consciousness inside, and not outside, meaning at the centre.

In reality, the events remain the same. We have no control over the events. It is in us that the change takes place, which fundamentally modifies the way we relate to those events.

## **THE GOAL OF CONCENTRATION**

The goal of concentration is to eliminate all obstacles which prevent us from penetrating the object of our concentration; for if we cannot penetrate the object and make it our own, we cannot investigate it.

Investigation is not the study of, but the ability to concentrate on material or spiritual objects and to be able to penetrate them to make contact with their essence.

Concentration is not only a system of vigilance, something useful for everyday life, it is also the key to inspiration and understanding.

Right concentration opens the access to wisdom because wisdom is the ability to fully possess the object in which one has placed one's mind, and this, without any obstacles. This is what the Hindu tradition refers to as dhyana, or meditation.

Concentration, which enables control over

the mind, is the basis of meditation.

If we can learn to concentrate properly, we will have the energy to meditate because it is concentration that sustains meditation. Concentration is therefore the light we have within us. If we have no access to this light, we depend on our external senses to move forward and our progress suffers.

Fuelled by concentration, meditation will amplify the light; the thing we focus on will become more illuminated and we will begin to see things better as they are.

## **CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION**

In order to see the drawings on the walls of a dark room, we can use a candle; if there is a breeze the flame of the candle will flicker, and if its light is insufficient the drawings will not appear clearly to us. The meditator is like the one who wants to see the drawings. The drawings are the objects or the thoughts upon which he tries to concentrate. His mind is the flame of the candle. The weakness of the flame reflects the numbness of his mind and the distractions are represented by the breeze that makes the flame flicker.

If the candle we use does not light the room sufficiently, we will be unable to make out the drawings on the wall. Therefore, the light of the candle must be increased, that is to say, the numbness and drowsiness of the mind must be eliminated.

## SEE THE ESSENTIAL

It is not important to see everything, but to see what is essential.

Therefore, concentration implies taking a rest from all "secondary" activities in order to bring peace, which makes it possible to reach unity without interruption. At the beginning of this journey, it is necessary to choose a question, only one question, it doesn't matter which one, as long as it is the most essential one for us. This question must become the object of our concentration, our meditation and all that we do must allow us to always come back to this same question.

It is not necessary to understand everything; if we answer this one question, the others will also be answered.

## THE MYSTERY OF UNITY

This is all the difficulty that lies behind the mystery of unity. In the Tratak exercise, you will certainly succeed in erasing the circle from your mind, but sometimes it will come back, and sometimes unrelated thoughts or feelings will come up. And all this will happen within a very short period of time.

When you have this type of experience, things appear very diverse, broken up and fragmentary.

This exercise actually reveals the difficulties that we have in coming together as a unit, that is in being one. It reveals the state of distraction we live in and the difficulty we have in maintaining our concentration. According to Tibetan Buddhism, this awakening of the consciousness makes us aware of our difficulty in perceiving ourselves as a unit and in acting accordingly. Even if, intellectually, we manage to conceive of ourselves as one, practically, we do not function as one.

The journey of consciousness is simply to perceive things as they are, in their unity, without judging them, comparing them, and without useless qualms.

