

Concentration Techniques: Exploring Various Dimensions

K.P. Singh

¹Assistant Professor of English,
Sri. Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha

²Vinay Shankar Shukla
Associate Professor of English,
D.A-V. College, Kanpur, UP
Email: drkpsingh217@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Concentration is one of the most vital aspects in shaping the effectiveness of learning. It is the application of mind on a subject of any nature upon which we wish to have complete control and direct it the way we wish to. The fundamental question is how we shape our mind and train it in a systematic manner to enhance the power of concentration. If we look at the available books on the subject and different other resource materials on the techniques of developing it, we see that systematic research on scheming the level of concentration is far from satisfactory. But at the same time, great knowledge of Yoga, discovered and practised in ancient Bharata gives not only a ray of hope but complete assurance in developing the highest level of concentration. The practice of Yoga as a means have been studied along with the effect of an external factor that plays its role in our concentration. In present time, anxiety, worry, and mental tensions have become nearly unavoidable companions of students in general that result into negative impact. The lack of concentration affects performance adversely; It has a lot to do in acquiring knowledge or expertise in any given field. Present paper focuses on the various ways and techniques which are essential in improving concentration level.

Keywords: *Concentration, Dhyana, Meditation, Pranayama, and Yoga.*

Introduction

Concentration is one of the most vital aspects in shaping the effectiveness of learning. It is the application of mind on a subject of any nature upon which we wish to have complete control and direct it the way we wish to. Vivekananda in this regard said: “The power of concentration is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge” (Complete Works II, pp. 391). The fundamental question is how we shape our mind and train it in a systematic manner to enhance the power of concentration. If we look at the available books on the subject and different other resource materials on the techniques of developing it, we see that much systematic research on scheming the level of concentration is far from satisfactory. But at the same time, great knowledge of Yoga, discovered and practised in ancient Bharata gives not only a ray of hope but complete assurance in developing the highest level of concentration. Under this very circumstance, we have studied the effect of an external factor that plays its role in enhancing our concentration. In present time, anxiety, worry, and mental tensions have become nearly unavoidable companions of students in general that result into negative impact. The lack of

concentration affects performance adversely; It has a lot to do in acquiring knowledge or expertise in any given field. The effectiveness of learning is vastly reliant on the mental state as well as contemplation to the object with which a person aims at achieving his/her target subject. In the words of Vivekananda: "Continual attention to one object is contemplation" (Complete Works VII, pp. 68).

The practice of Yoga might be directed for utilitarian motive or for a passionate choice or even for an ulterior motive, yet once the person is highly determined, s/he can direct it to harness the positive impact and recognize and remember so many difficult matters under study which is otherwise difficult to perceive in a short period of time. On the other hand, if the target and mental state are not harmonized with the hope of some gain in the process, a person tends to lose interest and concentration, neither s/he could gain knowledge on the subject quite successfully.

Developing Concentration

Concentration is indispensable for activation of the best potential in one and all. The important element of concentration is the ability to center the Dhyana on the accessible task. James Mallinson elucidates it in the following terms:

Dhyana is a continuous thought towards a single object of concentration usually a thought wave arises, remains for a short duration, while then subsides later followed by another thought wave. In Dhyana aspirant concentrates on the same object without interruption for a prolonged period.

In so doing or designing the task, it is of paramount importance not to be disturbed and hampered by unrelated external and internal motivation. External motivation occurs when a crowd boos, loud music is played, bad officiating rulings are made, and opponents engage in unsportsmanlike behaviour, among other things. "My heart is beating in my chest," "I'm terribly worn-out," "Don't be frightened," "the discomfort is intense," "My rivals are superior and better," and "I erupted it," are examples of distressing bodily sensations and thoughts and sentiments. " Although external and internal incentives are two distinct groups, they frequently interact. More or less every single external experience will cause ideas and a sensitive move in a student or athlete's head, as well as a change in the body's reactions. Equally, a shift in one's feelings and thoughts can alter what one concentrates on and in what manner one concentrates on a certain topic or object of study or pursuit. Coaches, yoga teachers, and sport psychologists prepare players for important competitions by teaching them how to manage these shifts under pressure. Furthermore, if one's concentration abilities haven't been developed in preparation,

then one can't expect to perform at their best throughout the real delivery. More often than not, an untrained person is seen to perform poorly. Any non-serious attempt, or lack of adequate concentration skills has brought downfall to so many athletes. Concentration training teaches performers how to focus their attention on a certain activity while remaining calm and how to gently refocus their attention if it wanders. As Landers commented:

Failure to develop refocusing skills has been the downfall of many athletes. The key to avoiding these pitfalls is to perform in the present; this is, focus awareness in the “now” rather than the past or future.

An individual need to acquire the ability to keep focus on fruitful performance even if they are surrounded by negativity. The dynamics of this approach are akin to those of contemplative practices of meditation in which an individual concentrate on a particular object or chants a particular word, and whenever the focus shifts away from the reciting of a word, the person gradually gains the attention back. By practising such a method, anyone can enhance their concentration level. So, for overall performance, it is more important to provide extra concentration or attention. Now, the question arises as to what it means to have extra concentration and how to develop it. Furthermore, it is critical to ensure that the mind is not distracted by external or internal sounds as a result of stress or worry.

It eats up from within and takes away a big chunk of our concentration without being aware of it on the surface. One must keep in mind that reaction is a big drain that takes our energy down and hence, one must not be reactive or be disturbed by silly factors. If at all one is disturbed for any potent reason, it is the duty of the trainer to see that a person is recovered from disturbances and it is more vital for the athletes when s/he performs. The disturbed sports persons are made to regulate their thoughts and concentrate their attention appropriately. When we talk about performers such as artists, musician, writers, and surgeons, they can similarly accomplish their performance much better with a high degree of accuracy and a fine finish with the aid of high-level concentration. Ironically, one should understand that to concentrate on something is also not concentrating. It means we should focus on our target, be it sports, games, music, writing, recitation, or dance performance. But we end up in forcing our mind on it, which is not concentration, really. Hence, it is focusing, not forcing while doing something. Sometimes this is justified as a means of guarding ourselves that may burst through and disrupt our concentration. Active defense would constitute a disruption in and of itself. As a result, attention is a learned skill that wants disregarding or being diverted by irrelevant incitements. Concentration also entails being completely present and absorbed in the current moment, rather

than in the past or future. When our minds wander to the past or the future, we are less effective than when we focus on the present. With a view to getting good concentration and attention, first of all, we should be relaxed which stimulates our nerves and make it ready for undertaking a task. According to Goldman:

When one is calm and alert, the prefrontal lobes are free to engage in higher level thinking tasks which help a child to pay more attention, concentration, solve problems, be creative, learn and remember. One of the universal techniques is Yoga, discovered by the saints of Bharata a five thousand years ago. So, modules for improving concentration have yoga as an essential part. Ganpat TS et al. says:

Researches done exploring the effects of practicing yoga in educational settings with young adolescences, which have shown potential benefits in various domains. Brain activity is associated with different cognitive processes and plays a critical role in different yogic practices. Yoga is the best lifestyle modification, which aims to attain the unity of mind, body, and spirit through Asana (exercise), Pranayama (breathing), and meditation.

It can improve concentration, attention, and memory all at the same time. Yoga is an ancient science and way of life that incorporates physical motions, postures, meditation, and pranayama (breathing exercises). In Bhagavad Gita, When Arjuna asked to Lord Krsna:

For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krsna, and subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind. (Gita, pp. 300)

Lord Krsna Said, “It is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and detachment.” (Gita, pp. 302)

The practice has all of the components, including a scientific method of movement and rhythm that can help participants coordinate their body, mind, breathing, mental resources, and information processing more quickly and precisely, leaving them poised and energised. It improves mental and physical health, as well as attention, focus, memory, and physical fitness. It also enhances the capability of the students to resist diseases, fatigue, ennui, and irritability due to the fragmentation of personality. Yoga makes a person complete and balanced. In educational fields, researchers have earmarked the benefits of practicing yoga on young adolescents in various domains by exploring the effects of it and by a detailed explanation of procedures. Ross A and Thomas S. commented, “Various studies in adult populations have proved the importance of yoga which is better than exercise in its ability to improve psychological outcomes”.

In several yogic practices, the involvement of brain and nerve activity is crucial. Yoga is a great way to improve your lifestyle by combining Asana (exercise), Pranayama (breathing) and meditation to bring your mind, body, and spirit together. The importance of Yoga in various adult populations have proven its unquestioned merit which is far better than ordinary exercise as it improves physical and psychological outcomes together. To Hillman CH et al.:

Some studies suggest that there is a positive relationship between fitness level and concentration of attention and memory among children.

In comparison to physical education, yoga has better benefits in schoolchildren and adolescents. According to Noggle JJ et al.:

There are studies which compared physical education and yoga and proved yoga has better benefits in schoolchildren.

Researchers have opined that there is a link between pupils' fitness levels and their ability to pay attention and remember things. Strong attention to target a task in hand and working memory to accomplish it, are the two significant components of cognizance, which are eagerly evaluated. In 'brain functioning' and its application in day to day activities, cognitive memory plays a main constituent of the decision-making role. The roles are: being a part of the crucial decision-making function together with abstract thinking, planning and task coordination. Finally, both short-term exercise and long-term physical activity have been shown to affect cognitive and executive skills. The study clearly states that Yoga reduces distractibility and enhances the ability to concentrate. According to Luders E et al.:

Yoga has an important role in improvement of a cognitive task of attention and concentration.

Now to relate the above discussion indicating the effects (attention, concentration and memory) of Yoga on human cognition certain observations are made.

i- Memory is a storehouse with all good and bad experiences of life. It leaves an indelible trail of memory for every action that we do, every thought that we think just like a tape recorder. Memory starts working as and when it is needed and sometimes without our cognition it works much similar to reflex action in our daily life.

ii-The awareness of this faculty and its method is vital for healthy existence. Suitably used, it leads us to illumination.

iii-If it is subjected to abuse or misuse, it might prove harmful in distorting our personality. In every sphere of life, we must learn to use it properly, to strengthen it for our own improvement.

iv-Nature has given an exceptional tool known as the 'mind' to All living beings, including animals, are included in the term "all living beings." Out of that, only human beings in the manner of liberty receive her special elegance. Nature has authority over animals; humans have the ability to dominate nature.

v-Only the strength of focus allows for this invasion.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda:

Herein is the difference between man and animals- man has the greater power of concentration. The difference in their power of concentration also composes the difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference. (Works IV, pp. 289)

Concentration leads to perfection, which leads to confidence, to success, and lastly, success leads to joy. In every field of life, a motivated mind is like a wonderful instrument for obtaining achievement. Creativity, abilities, originality, scientific discoveries, inventions, exquisite arts, and, lastly, the finest and the subtlest spiritual truths are found from the focused intellect. Particularly for students and youth, the concentration is most important and without which knowledge and working skills are impossible to obtain. On the other hand, a distracted mind moves to confusion, frustration, failures and various disasters. No one can be successful without proper concentration which is derived from the spirit of all knowledge. In our current culture, it has been estimated that the average human being expends to the maximum level of his brain effort, and as a result, he is always making mistakes. We have never witnessed a trained man or mind makes a fault. The mind is the most powerful instrument of the human being.

For the Hindus they were akin to concentrating on the internal world, that is the mind and They created Yoga as a science. Yoga is the practise of managing one's senses, will, and mind. The benefit of studying it is that we learn to control rather than be dominated. The mind appears to be built up in layers. Our true purpose is to find God through crossing all of these gaps in our existence. Yoga's ultimate goal and goal is to identify our genuine image and that is God as it is enshrined in Ishavasya Upanishad that "Isha vyashyam idagya sarvam jat kincha jagattam jagata", (pp. 4) meaning that God is permeated in everything in this phenomenal world,

however small or big it might be. Vivekananda says, “The whole theory of Yoga is to go beyond the mind”. (Vol.VI, pp. 128) Further he says, “Yoga means ‘yoke’, ‘to join’, that is, to join the spul of man with the supreme Soul or God.” (Vol. VIII, pp. 36) Thus, with the highest level of concentration even one can realize the supreme soul or God, which is the end and aim of Yoga. Therefore, concentration is an absolute necessity for the mind and without it mind falls apart and educes into fragments.

Conclusion

Concentration is a valuable resource and the secret of success in life. We have so much task to perform in our day-to-day life. We must learn to utilize and mobilize our concentration. Concentration is more than just to completing a task. Concentration plays a vital role to shape and frame life’s big picture. Our focal point truly is our perception of reality. It is therefore the prime duty for giving better attention to all that we perform. When a task is performed at the highest level of concentration, it is bound to bear fruit as it generates tremendous results. One must know the real cause that one is fighting for and how one is going to obtain the desired goal by the sheer power of effectiveness of concentration. It is the ability of concentration that ensures goal attainment. It is a skill sets which can be developed and improved through yoga, pranayama, meditation and their applications. In the procedure, we also acquire careful attentiveness—the skills of giving attention to pertinent stimulus and disregarding unrelated provocations. Further, when we become unfocused or lose adequate focus, our previous training of boosting concentration comes into play. It recovers our capability to concentrate on a specific task without letting any external commotion affect our performance.

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