



Concentration

is a condition for seeing clearly and directly into the true nature of things.



Sayalay Susilā


Buddha praised concentration: One with concentration **SEES** things as they really are.

Difficult to See Things as They Truly are When Mind is Agitated

Our eyes keep chasing after beautiful sights, ears...pleasant sounds, nose...nice smells, tongue...sweet tastes, body...comfortable touches, and mind...desirable thoughts. Such an agitated mind cannot see the impermanent nature of the six sense-bases, six sense-objects, six sense-consciousnesses, six sense-contacts, six sense-cravings, and six sense-feelings.

Practitioners Should Not Forget Concentration

We can keep our attention on the breath and bring the awareness to a very refined state. Keep the attention under the nostrils and just be aware (not focusing) on the in-breath and out-breath. Relax the body and mind, and breathe naturally. Be aware whether the breath is long or short. We do not try to make the breath longer or shorter, what is important is to remain mindful on the in-breath and out-breath. Do not follow the breath down to the abdomen or up to the head. If the mind wanders, gently bring it back to the awareness of the breath. If there is pain, bring your attention back to the breath. If the pain is dominant, reflect on the suffering nature of the body and gently bring the attention back to the breath. This is concentration practice. So we continuously keep our attention on the fixed object, i.e. the breath. Once concentration develops, the mind will become pure, powerful, malleable, and soft. Then, one can see the rapid arising and ceasing of the physical and mental phenomena. This gives rise to disenchantment and dispassion. Being dispassionate, one lets go of craving. This is the path to freedom.

 **The attitude to watch the breath is likened to a person sitting on a river bank observing the flow of the river. Whether the flow of the river is fast or slow is none of his concern. Just as a silent observer keeping his gentle effort continuously mindful of the breath.**

Quick way to achieve concentration during the retreat:

Mindfulness on the breath must be continuous from the very first moment of waking till one falls asleep. It's like rubbing two stones together to get a spark: if one only rubs for a minute here and there, the stones cool down and getting enough heat to create a spark seems difficult. In the same way, one must make one's mindfulness on the breath continuous to light a spark of insight.

Recommended daily practice:

Sit at least one hour practicing Samatha (Concentration) meditation. When not on the cushion, one may practice Vipassanā (Insight) meditation, keeping mindfulness on whatever object that arises in the present moment.

Two possible reasons for those practicing a long time and not seeing progress:

1. For a samatha yogi, the way one observes the object may not be correct.
2. For an insight yogi, the mind is not mature enough -- one must build up concentration first.