

FIVE MINUTES ON CONCENTRATION.

The last word of warning in a previous paper must be the first in the present one. Do not let us accept in a grossly material sense those illustrations drawn from physical phenomena, which are only intended to suggest the direction which thought may take in entering new regions. The mile stone and the guide-post do not go to the desired haven. They only point the way. The pilgrim has to make the journey.

No better illustrations of concentration can be had than those based on the various features of a wheel. But if we confine ourselves strictly to the physical expression of these features, whether the rim of the bicycle wheel, or the zodiacal circumference of the solar universe, we are but metaphysical vagabonds who may lounge for awhile but cannot truly live.

It will be found that most people's method of concentration is to sit down in a secluded place and fix their attention on some object. Or, if they have thought a little further, they will be indifferent to the surroundings and can fix their attention on the given object undisturbed by distracting influences. Or they may, in a further stage, replace the physical object with a mental one, and fix all their attention upon that. In all these cases, however, they are only standing at the rim of the wheel, looking at or towards the centre. There are many who are unable to realize the difference between this attitude and that which involves a complete change of base, the becoming one with the object contemplated, the union with the subject of meditation, the actual dwelling at or existence in the centre of thought, not merely a straining in that direction.

This can be illustrated to a certain extent on the physical plane. If you have ever gone on a railway train through farm lands at ploughing time you will probably have observed the furrows radiating away from your point of vision like the spokes of a great wheel which kept turning, turning, as

you rushed along. By an effort of will, which, strangely enough, some people are unable to make, you can fix your gaze at the other extremity of the landscape, when the furrows will begin to move in the opposite direction. Similarly, looking over a bridge, you can alternately have the bridge moving up the stream or the water moving down the stream as you desire. Or at night, travelling in a vehicle, you look out and are just able to see another vehicle travelling in the same direction, but faster than yours, and you can easily give yourself the impression of moving in an opposite way to that in which you are really going.

Let us repeat again that these are merely illustrations. They certainly indicate the fact that we are very much the slave of the senses. But they also represent the possibility, and we need not here claim any more than the possibility, of changing the base of thought, of moving the centre of consciousness from one point to another, in the other and higher planes or states of consciousness which we have considered as lying beyond us.

In the railway train we are so impressed with the importance of our own existence and its conditions, that we look on the surrounding landscape as a transient vision passing swiftly away. If we get out into the country and associate ourselves with the landscape then it is the train which is the rapidly passing vision, while the landscape is the reality that lasts forever. If we get into the habit of allying ourselves with those things which are not the creatures of a day, it will be found that there grows up within a consciousness of stability which, in an increasing degree, presents a standard of permanency by which the values of sensuous life may be truly measured. All this external activity of form and appearance is the rapidly changing motion of the rim of the wheel, while at the centre lie the realities.

The evolution of fitting vehicles of consciousness must follow the development of those attitudes of the mental life which differ from the ordinary. All thought, as well as thought form, is