
Body, Mind, Breathing, Consciousness, Zazen

By Claude E Mon Cannizzo

Relationship Body, Mind and Meditation

Practicing meditation with or without philosophical foundations does not yield the same results. It is necessary to study and understand the links between body and mind. The body does not function independently of the mind and vice versa.

We all have tensions, so we must start by discovering them, in order to feel the contrast between tension and non-tension. People need to learn how to relax: tension/relaxation. When the mind "tells" the body to relax, what does it feel like? For example, when someone is asked to "breathe with his belly", very often he can't, because in our mind it's obvious that we breathe with our lungs... We do not have a clear awareness of being a "body/mind" and we must rediscover our globality.

The Eastern tradition insists very much on the notion of repetition: things must be repeated tirelessly until the body and the mind penetrate our consciences and work together spontaneously, without any need for the mind to "think" that "body/mind".

Be aware of yourself and breathe!

"Self-awareness", knowing, becoming intimate with your strengths and weaknesses.
To develop self-awareness, which better tool than the body?

You can "rediscover" yourself by learning body postures for prophylactic purposes. Exercise should be considered as efficient when the accompanying breathing becomes natural. Breathing is an innate faculty and the word "breathing" is related to life. Our breathing abilities are not very developed, so we need to learn to go back to conscious breathing. This is not a control of breathing, but the release of the tensions that hinder our body consciousness through breathing. Breathing then plays its full role of vital regulation in our body and mind.

For a human being, breathing well will influence the circulation of liquids (blood, lymph, water), but also of energy. We need not only to have a correct body posture, but also a calm attitude of the mind. The psychological aspect is important. With deep, calm breathing, the inspiration fills the body from head to toe. During zazen, the exhalation is concentrated and carried on our *hara* (under the navel). This concentration is also the basis of all Eastern arts, martial and others. A complete breathing is relaxing and does not require effort. It is the basis of life.

Oriental way of thinking (psychology)

There are differences between Western and Eastern way of thinking: the "individualistic way of thinking" that characterizes the West is conditioned by our social pattern, which has the effect of developing a rather individualistic behaviour. What we need to develop is the connection with others. But to develop this connection, we have to start by understanding ourselves, studying ourselves. Then, with the "globalization" of ourselves with the world around us, we

can understand what life is, in other words, we can understand “interdependence”. It is necessary to introduce this notion in order to understand the Eastern philosophy, the message of the Elders, of the Masters and Patriarchs.