

he Sun, Friday, June 15, 1973

Yoga with Rama

By RAMA VERNON

"Concentration can depend upon the steadiness of your eyes" intimated the master of yoga. His disciples then dashed for the door in search of a candle. When they returned, the master placed the well-lit candle in front of them with the instructions that they were not to tense or fiercely stare, but they were to gaze deeply into the center of the flame without blinking.

This seemed like an easy enough task and they were eager to begin. But after several minutes of observing the brilliance of the light, their eyelids grew increasingly heavy and tears tumbled in steady streams from the corners of their eyes.

The guru then asked them to close the eyes and hold the image of the flame with the mind's eye for as long as possible. The longer the visual image of this light was kept in the mind, the stronger was the students ability to concentrate.

This practice is a cleansing technique of Hatha Yoga known as Tratak which in Sanscrit simply means gazing. Tratak is more than just a cleansing and strengthening aid for the delicate sensory organs of the eyes . it can also gently lead into the majestic realms of mind. . Raja Yoga.

According to those wise yogis who know, the unsteady and frequent blinking of our eyes can betray the unsteadiness of our thoughts and our inability to concentrate. By stilling the muscles of the eyes, we are supposed to be able to still the muscles of the mind (thoughts) . . . and why not?

As we know, the optic nerve is directly attached to the brain and if the brain is in any way attached to the mind, it doesn't seem so far out to stay that our mind can affect our eyes and our eyes can affect our mind.

Whether you believe it or not, if you have difficulty focussing either one, you might try the

TRATAK (Gazing)



following exercise in hopes that it may steady and strengthen both.

Instructions for Tratak

In a darkened room sit in any comfortable position (back straight). Remove glasses or contact lenses. Place a well-lit candle about 3 or 4 feet in front of you with the flame as horizontal to your eyes as possible.

Without straining your eyes in any way just begin to gaze at the flame without blinking or thinking. Just observe the light of this flame within the darkness and observe the

center of darkness within the light.

When your eyes begin to water, gently close them and try to mentally recall the image of the flame at your brow center. Observe whatever comes to the mind's eye until the image begins to fade then open your eyes and once more gaze steadily at the flame until your eyes again begin to fill with the cleansing tears, then close and recapture the image of the flame.

Continue for 3 to 5 minutes in this manner or "until your mind becomes as still as the flame within the windless place."