

# The role of attention

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*“In order to enter into this holy and mysterious communion with the Word of God dwelling within us, we must first have the courage to become more and more silent.....a silence where we have to listen, to concentrate, to attend.” (Word into Silence)*

John Main here draws to our notice the role of deep listening, of sustained attention. One-pointed focused attention has a strong effect on the way our brain functions, the way our brain allows us to receive and to tune into different levels of reality.

Dr Shanida Nataraja explains in her book *‘The Blissful Brain’ Neuroscience and proof of the power of meditation* that there are two sides to our brain and switching between the two is facilitated by the power of attention:

*“The left hemisphere houses the neural circuitry that deals with language and .... the intellectual functioning of the human mind (i.e. our ego). During meditation, through the focusing of attention, the practitioner accesses the functioning of the right hemisphere..... Experiments suggest that the right hemisphere captures a much more truthful representation of an experience. Our left hemisphere has a tendency to filter our experiences, so that they fit into our established perception of ourselves and the world. Experiences that fit our worldview and “boost our ego” are captured, whereas those that challenge our worldview and “undermine our ego” are ignored. The right hemisphere,*

*on the other hand, captures the whole experience and therefore, during meditation, when the practitioner has access to the right hemisphere, often long-forgotten memories can surface in full Technicolor or solutions to unsolved problems or dilemmas can emerge. Meditation therefore provides the practitioner with a method through which to switch between the two modes of thinking and perceiving conferred by the two hemispheres.”*

This switching between different modes of perception, which affords a more complete picture of who we are, leads to deeper self-knowledge. Only by truly knowing ourselves, by letting go of the filters with which we view reality, can we glimpse Ultimate Reality.

John Main stresses the importance of this:

*“Most of us have to get into touch with ourselves first, to get into a full relationship with ourselves before we can turn openly to our relationship with God. Putting this another way, we can say that we have first to find, expand, and experience our own capacity for peace, for serenity, and for harmony before we can begin to appreciate our God and Father who is the author of all harmony and serenity.” (Word into Silence)*

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