

Key to Concentration

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Thank you, Mr. Rosser for your announcements and words. I just must add that whatever experience I have had, is not my doing; I owe it to the beloved Master. And, as I promised him many years ago, if after practicing the techniques, and taking his discipline I could help others, would I do it, I said, I said, "I certainly will." And so that's all there is to it. Whatever I can do, if you receive benefit, it is because of him. He knows it, and God knows it; nothing else matters.

I was listening to Mr. Rosser's reading about how Sri Yukteswarji used to, bring our Master's attention back where it belonged. Well, he had a little, trick he used to do with me – it was the strangest little thing. I used to feel I was giving him my undivided attention, and yet every once in a while, I was, had a coat, and he'd take the lapel and pull it. I'd come around – "Yes, Sir." I thought I was listening. I thought I was being fully concentrated, but every once in a while I'd get a little jerk, and I'd give him undivided attention.

So, concentration is a very important subject. Concentration is the basis of all success. Let us understand that. Just to once more refresh your memory as to what concentration is – the definition, which all of you can look up is: "concentration denotes the art of withdrawing the attention from objects of distraction and then placing that recalled attention on one thing at a time." That's concentration.

Of course, in our work it is placing that recalled attention on the Presence of God within, which makes it doubly necessary that our concentration be one hundred percent. But when you do this, as our Master's has said, the lake of the mind must be still. When you do this – when you are able to concentrate – you set up a chain reaction, without question of a doubt. Everything nowadays is chain reaction. So when you concentrate, you set up a chain reaction. In other words, your will is not then your will; it is God's Will. When you still the waves of the mind, when you stop its action with its disturbing effect upon you – when you do that, you bring in an entirely different set of sources of power and enthusiasm – and that source of power, instead of being your own limited mental power, is the Presence of God – His Will within you and His Enthusiasm, which goes with it. So realize that. Your will ceases to be your limited human will. It becomes God's Will. That's what concentration will do for you, if you use it in this particular way to attain the Presence of God.

And so you see, the subject, how important it is this morning, that you be able to one-point your mind so that you can give your attention – not your mind – your mind is in duality, your mind is in this outward consciousness. There's no unity of consciousness in mind. We have to overcome that restlessness of the mind. Then when you do that, then you can take your attention, which has been freed from the distractions, and you can say, "Here Father, here it is. Here am I. Make me like Yourself." That's what you can do

with Self-Realization Fellowship techniques. They are unique, because they take you into the Presence of God by your concentration. Then you can say, "Here I am, Father. Do what You want with me. I want to do only Thy Will. But if Thou comest into me, I know all things are possible according to Thy Will."

And so, let us realize how important this concentration is. All great men were men of concentration. All great men had that power to one-point their mind so they could put their attention and their powers on whatever one thing they wanted to do. I remember the Master, how concentrated he was, and what enthusiasm he had. Sometimes when he would come to us and tell us of something he wanted to do, it seemed, out of the way to us – it seemed uncalled for at times – and so we would express ourselves, and he'd quiet down. But I noticed the next day he was at it again, and in a week. So finally you just said, "All right, Sir, have it your way. What do you want done?"

In other words, he had what? He had the follow through. Many people start something; their concentration is good – they arouse their will – perhaps they unite it a little bit with God's Will, but they do not follow through. That's the hard and the difficult thing to do. But great men do it, and I know the Master always followed through. You might think he'd forgotten it; you might think that you had quieted him down, but I found out soon that wasn't so. And so after a while we didn't try to obstruct him, but we rather tried to unite with him.

So this follow through is necessary. And, if you do that – if you unite your will with God's Will – then you can see that all the enthusiasm you need will come, and you will follow through, because you've got the backing of the Eternal One Father, One Spirit. And so uniting our will with His Will, follow through and enthusiasm naturally comes, because God is what? Well, we might say He *is* enthusiasm. He is Bliss. He is all Power. He is All-knowing, All-pervading. He is All. Having Him, we will have sufficient for our needs. We will have the enthusiasm and the will, which is necessary to accomplish anything.

Concentration is the basis of all accomplishment, especially in Spiritual attainment. Realize that, and do not think – those of you who take the different techniques, that the technique of concentration – the highest technique of concentration – is not necessary. That's one of the *best* ones. I know that if you follow that technique, and I know that if you attain concentration, when you receive the higher techniques, you will be able to apply your concentration with a much greater force than as if you neglect this first technique – the technique of concentration, the highest technique, the art of concentration.

So, the basis of success in all lines of endeavor is, as I have said, concentration. In business, a successful businessman is one, generally, who knows how to concentrate, and to apply his force on that one-pointedness of his mind, and his power. In the artistic lines, you know how much concentration it takes, not only to be able to practice – especially on the piano, I'm thinking of – and to practice with concentration; but also to carry on a long time, takes a lot of power and concentration to follow through with your

practice. And what's the result? In the end you are proficient. All great artists practice very much. When you saw them as they gave their concerts it seems simple. But it took lots of concentration, and uniting with the Will of God to attain what they gave to you in a few minutes. Concentration, especially in the business world, and in the artistic fields, is very important.

Now how about meditation? I think it's *most* important in meditation; that is, I find that it is most necessary, because when I sit to meditate – and I know you all find it the same – on the left, or on the right, we have the Peace of God. But on the left we have our greatest enemy: the mind. And to attain enough concentration to still the waves of the mind – as our Master said, “The lake of the mind must be still” – it takes terrific concentration, doesn't it?

Is there anyone here who doesn't have any trouble? Everybody has the trouble. One of the great Irish saints – Master used to call him “AE”, I've forgotten his name, it makes no difference – but he was pointing out how difficult it is to meditate, or concentrate on the Presence of God within. And to use that concentration we have to eliminate the movements of the mind. And so in one of his sentences he says, “Who says he has concentration? Who says he can still the mind?” You all know how difficult it is. Why? Because you have not as yet developed the power of concentration sufficient so you can stop the mind. Can you do that?

When you can you are free! Think of it – when you can still the waves of the mind, and a thought comes and you can say, “Get out and stay out!” and it *stays* out – *that's* freedom, because God is right there, Master said. When you can do that, God is right there. His Bliss is waiting for you. And not only is His Bliss waiting, but the Grace of His coming is waiting. But first you have to still all movement, because God cannot come in as long as there is any other movement in your consciousness – such as mental movement, or emotions, or frustrations, or such things as that.

Just like oil on top, water beneath. They do not mix. They will not attain that until you stop the agitation. Then they separate. So when you stop the agitation of your mind, there on the right side, so to speak, is the stillness of God. And, although it seems to be nothing perhaps, at first, you cannot exhaust it, because that's God Himself – All-knowing, All-understanding, All-love, All is in that stillness within. “Be still, and know that I am God.” How to be still? By concentration.

Lahiri Mahasaya was a great, one of our greatest illustrations of concentration. Why? Because he was a family man; He didn't live in a cave, he lived and performed worldly duties, but his power of concentration was supreme. How did he acquire that? How did he become a Lahiri Mahasaya? By practicing and attaining concentration. That's how he did it, and what he has given to us in Kriya Yoga, of which many of you are familiar, and the different charts of the chakras of the spine and their relationship to the Supreme Center of the brain – how he did it – by concentration – becoming one with God. God gave it to him, not Lahiri Mahasaya gave it. God is the Doer.

And so, one of his letters which came to me – not his letter, one of the letters from Ananda Lahiri, who was his grandson. And, he said in this letter, which I'll read just a little bit of it, "Now what was the secret which made Lahiri Mahasaya what he was?" As I have said, he knew concentration. Then he goes on: "If a man can devote" – now don't get frightened – "If a man can devote more than twelve hours of undivided attention at the Spiritual Eye, and then sort of a divided attention necessary for worldly life, he can perfectly go beyond his limitations to contact Vishnu," – which is simply the Universal Presence of God – the Universal Power of Sight within.

So then it finishes, and this is the, this is the discouraging part, so to speak: "Lahiri Mahasaya was a practical man" – now I'm sure we are all practical – just see what he did: "Lahiri Mahasaya was a practical man, and hence practiced Kriya Yoga a little over twelve hours in continuity at a time a day for more than twelve years to attain the state of the superman which he was."

See what time he gave, and what was he – one of the greatest saints. He was with Babaji before, but he had to put that time in. We give...do we give twelve hours a day? Once in a while perhaps, we will endure somehow through it, but we give some. Even if we give a third of that, or a fourth of it even, in one lifetime we can develop concentration to know God. That's the path we must remember. We *can* do that. Lahiri Mahasaya was the example, and he was a married man – not that they're any worse than single people – but he was a family man, and yet he did that. What a wonderful example Lahiri Mahasaya has given to the world. Master loved him very much. So should we, and so should it stimulate us to develop our concentration.

Now, worldly people seldom know how to concentrate. Worldly people seldom know how to concentrate. There's a reason for this: because they're taken up with likes and dislikes, that's all. And where do likes and dislikes enjoy themselves, so to speak? In the mind – in the dual consciousness - and in this world. This worldly consciousness is full of duality, and because of that duality, the mind takes on the attributes of restlessness, which we find by going from one thing to another – this like, and this dislike, back, and forth.

And in this world what do we find? We find the opposites: sickness and health; pain and pleasure; success and failure. Now the mind takes on those attributes, that's all, because it lives in that. The ego is in the mind, in the mental realm – it is the Soul attached to mind, so to speak. And as such, what is the result – restlessness, that's all, restlessness, and lack of concentration.

Concentration means what? Putting your attention, not on duality, not on likes and dislikes – sickness, health, and so forth and the opposites; but on one thing – one thing, and in this world it's almost impossible. That's why meditation is necessary. And so necessary that we recall our attention and place it on one thing. And that one thing is the Presence of God within us. But although in the world we find lack of concentration, the yogis were able, as Lahiri Mahasaya did – in spite of that – to attain concentration. How? By practicing the highest techniques, which would lead to concentration, then merging in

the Presence of God within; they were able to do that, and so is every worldly person able to do that, if they will.

From our Master's Autobiography, one reference at this time, which will show you that it is possible. On page 493, those of you who'd like to read it sometime: "Yet the ordinary man is not therefore shut out from the possibility of divine communion. He needs for divine recollection no more than the Kriya Yoga technique, or pranayama," which means control of the life force in the body, "daily observance to moral precepts, and an ability to cry sincerely, 'Lord, I want Thee. Lord, I want Thee that I may give Thee to all'."

Those three things are necessary. And then the ordinary man becomes an extraordinary man – he becomes a true child of God. "The universal appeal of yoga is thus, is thus its approach to God through a daily, usable, scientific method." Understand this one point: "rather than through a devotional fervor that for the average man is beyond his emotional scope." Most people are not made up that way. But if they will practice their yoga, and be morally decent, and want God, then the devotion will come. It is so.

So Kriya Yoga is a very important matter to consider – pranayama, or in other words, follow the science of yoga. It is the greatest thing to develop your concentration, because it gets to the fountainhead or the roots of trouble in lack of concentration, which is lack of control of Life Force. Life Force must be controlled. If you will cut your finger, if you will first withdraw the Life Force from the finger, you can cut it and you will not feel it. Why, because the Life Force has been withdrawn. And so with all our distractions – if we can withdraw the Life Force from these distractions, and gather it together, then we can place that Life Force where it belongs – where God dwells in the spinal region and the Supreme Center of the brain.

Now, the science of yoga does what? Stills the restless mind, and then channels it to one thing. The science of yoga stills the restless mind – the mind is the culprit - and then it channels that attention, which it has recalled, to one thing, one point. Now one important thing to remember just about this concentration, this high art of concentration, which our Master has given to us – just one or two important points which will show you how scientific it is – how scientific the practice of the highest art of concentration is: breath ties us to the body. Understand that. Breath ties us to the body. You go to the movies and you see something, and you say it was "breathtaking". Did you ever stop to think why? Because at that time your concentration was perfect, and there is no breath when concentration is good, perfect. Understand this one point, one or two points, and you'll understand how important it is to do the highest technique of Self, of Self-Realization, the highest technique of concentration, because it's absolutely scientific.

You can still the breath, and when the breath is stilled, then you can concentrate. But if you're (Doctor breathes in and out fast), and your heart is pump, pump, pump, pump, pump – how can you concentrate, especially on God? So let us understand that there's a science behind this. Now what is that science? It is based on the carbon cycle within you and within me. Whenever we are active, there's the breaking down of tissue within us.

Carbon forms in the bloodstream, that's all. And don't forget, that when you're mentally active – and especially when you're worrying, and the thoughts are running you all over the place – there's more carbon emptied into the blood than when you're digging a ditch. Now don't think you've all got to go dig ditches, but these are facts – understand that.

Now, you see this is what the yogis said – they say, “If we can stop the formation of carbon in the bloodstream what'll happen? The heart will slow down because the heart will not pump to the lungs unless there's a reason – unless there's carbon dioxide in the blood.” And so, they figured out this highest art of concentration; first, to do what – to still the body. That's why you sit still.

Secondly, to do what – to still the mind. Why, so that there's no carbon being emptied into the bloodstream. And what happens? Then the heart slows down, because there's no need for it to pump. And reciprocally, through the center of respiration in the medulla, the breath slows down. And don't you see how you can concentrate better then?

Just in passing, how wonderfully nature has balanced this system of ours. In the pulmonary artery, which leads from the heart to the lungs, carrying venous blood, there's a little rheostat there, just similar to the ones in the wall – I don't know where they are; they're around here somewhere – there's a little rheostat, and what is it for? When there's carbon in the blood it sends its little message to the respiratory center in the...in the brain. And that sends a message through a similar rheostat down through the vagus nerve, and the heart pumps to get rid of that.

Now, there's another little rheostat in the arch of the aorta. What does that do? That registers the amount of oxygen in the blood. And when there's plenty of oxygen, it sends a little message to the respiratory center in the medulla. And through the vagus nerve, which controls the heartbeat, it slows the heart down. And reciprocally the breath is slowed down. That's why when you practice the highest technique of concentration, that's why your heart slows down, and your breath slows down – sometimes it'll stop – and you can put your attention on one place; the Presence of God within.

Now, that's how wonderful the highest technique of concentration of Self-Realization Fellowship is – how scientific it is. Do it! Many of you are doing it. Those of you who are not, if you want to develop your concentration, do it! Breath controls our concentration. Breath ties our Soul to the body. No wonder we can't find God! Pumping the way we are in heart and breath. Stop that, and you'll find the acquisition of God much easier. Such is the highest technique of concentration. It is so scientific, as I have pointed out.

Now, one or two illustrations of concentration: First, I spoke about going to the movies. They come home and say, “Oh, it was breathtaking!” Sure it was. Why, because you stopped breathing, and could concentrate for a little bit. These are facts. These are truths. Master used to say, “When you eat food you have no trouble concentrating, do you?” Stop and think, you eat the food, and you think of nothing else. All your enemies are forgotten. Everything's forgotten – why, because you're concentrated – fully.

Speaking about food reminds me of a little story. This minister's son, he was a naughty boy, very naughty. He was up to something, so when it came time to eat food they set a little table off to one side, and the family sat at the big table. And he was sitting there, solemnly, and he looked down when they brought him his food and he said, "Lord, I thank Thee for this. Thou layest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." So, there you have it.

Now, just to give you a contrast story between concentration and stubbornness – you know stubbornness sometimes doesn't – well concentration goes with it, but it's not the way it should be. It shouldn't be that way. This man was in a terrible automobile accident, which sent him to the hospital. And he was all cut up. And a friend of his went to see him, and he went in and he said, "What happened to you, Bill, anyway? What happened to you?" He says, "He wouldn't dim; neither would I." So don't make your stubbornness take on the characteristic of concentration. "He wouldn't dim; neither would I." But applying it to God – don't dim. Keep right at it. Keep the searchlight of your attention on Him.

Now, oh yes, I have a reference from our Master, which are most wonderful about this fact that in spite of all the distractions – in spite of this worldly living – just like Lahiri Mahasaya did – everyone of us can attain concentration. And in the Autobiography this is what we read: "A true yogi is able to pass into and maintain the superconscious state regardless of multitudinous distractions never absent from this earth."

And I remember in the Autobiography about, when the mosquitoes were bothering the Master, and his Master said, "What do you want, the world made for you? Constructed for you?" We have to be able to have concentration on the Presence of God in spite of distractions – and it *can* be done. It can be done through the techniques of Self-Realization Fellowship so that, as spoken of in the Bhagavad Gita, "As a lamp in a windless place flickereth not, to such is likened the yogi of subdued mind and thought, absorbed in yoga of the Self."

It's most wonderful if you will try; you will see; you try all you want; you'll break your head, so to speak, trying to still the mind. And yet, if you do your techniques, you'll reach a point where you can see that mind on the left, so to speak, and on the right you can see the Great Light of God beckoning you. And when you reach that, *He* stills the mind – that's the point. I do not think, that is, I have not found it possible by my will to still the waves of the mind. They give me an awful battle, and I know they give all of you a battle. But when the Grace of God comes, He easily shuts it off. He knows how to shut it off. When His Grace comes, you will develop the highest concentration; all that is necessary for you.

And so, finally when all is said and done, the paramount duty of each one of us is to make friends with God. Develop that friendship with Him. As it says in our prayer, as our Master has taught us, "Heavenly Father, Mother, *Friend*, Beloved, God." In this worldly condition in which we find ourselves, that aspect of friendship with God is one of

the greatest. Develop that. Make acquaintance with Him. Know once more your age-long friend, who has been forgotten. Know Him. And keep your first engagement with God. Keep your greatest engagement, so to, so to speak, every day. Do not let that go by, that time go by unless you contact God.

And your greatest engagement is this – in your meditation. In your meditation you must keep your engagement with God. Engagement with the mind on the left side, so to speak is not engagement with God. But when you can keep your concentration on the Silent Presence where He is beckoning you to come – He doesn't talk. Wish He did. He doesn't. He's beckoning you to come. Keep that engagement with Him. Keep in His Presence, if it kills you.

Master said, "Cast the body into the flame – what of it. What is this body? It's nothing. Throw it away, but get God." You can do that, if you will rely wholly on Him, and once more make friendship with Him. And then, if we know Him, if He is with us – that Friend of all friends – who can be against us? Nobody can be against us. And what will happen? We will develop the greatest concentration and the most enthusiasm that you can imagine. We can follow through with things, because, if God is with us, nothing can stop us.

And as our Master used to say, "We can stand unshaken through the crash of breaking worlds." We are above this worldly condition. We are above worlds. We're above all that. We're above the Astral; we're above the Causal universe. We are children of God. If we can know that, we can stand unshaken through all adverse conditions. Having His Love, nothing can touch us; nothing in this world, or the worlds to come. Such is the Power of God. And that is what we want.

And I'll close by a few words from Master's poem "Samadhi", to show you what we must attain to develop and have the greatest concentration. And this is what will come if you will do that, when your will becomes God's Will:

"Gone forever, fitful, flickering shadows of mortal memory" – the mind is still.
"Spotless is my mental sky, below, ahead, and high above.
Eternity and I, one united ray" – that's what comes. There's One. You can't exhaust it.
Eternity – you are that Eternity.
"A tiny bubble of laughter, I
Am become the Sea of Mirth Itself."

I'll read it once more; I won't interrupt:

"Gone forever, fitful, flickering shadows of mortal memory.
Spotless is my mental sky, below, ahead, and high above.
Eternity and I, one united ray.
I, A tiny bubble of laughter
Am become the Sea of Mirth Itself."

Prove this! You can prove it!! It won't do you any good until you prove it! Develop your concentration by following one who had the greatest concentration of anyone I have met – our beloved Master. He had it. Prove these things, and then life will become wonderful. Why, because you and your Father know each other.

As Lord Shankara said, “All I can say, is, God is.” Let us do that. He will take care of the rest.