

The Nature of Concentration **by Annie Rix Militz**

Book Description

Contents: The Nature of Concentration; Power of Repose; Self-Control; Concentration on the Daily Life; Concentration through Devotion; Peace and Bliss.

FOREWORD

These lessons have been presented to large audiences in various cities of the world with most happy and practical results. The style of the familiar talks has been retained, yet for this book the lessons have been revised, added to, and rearranged. They have been written with sub-heads so as to be made easy to study or to be taught, and, in many ways, to be made convenient for the practical student of spiritual mind to attain the power of concentration he desires.

May all your needs and desires in this direction be met quickly, O Reader! That this little volume be a privileged instrument in setting your feet in the Straight Way forever is the earnest prayer of the author,

Annie Rix Militz

Chapter 1

THE NATURE OF CONCENTRATION

The Common Center

THE simplest definition of concentration is that found in the dictionary, namely, "to gather to one common center," for it defines that which is spiritual as well as that which is material.

We need only to consider what is the common center in order to put concentration into its right place. That common center is within you and its name is One, whether we call it the name of the Lord, as we read in the book of the prophet Malachi, as to the great Manifestation that finally shall be in this world, that "there shall be one Lord and His name One," or whether we call it the mathematical one. It is sufficient that we see the common-center of our spiritual thoughts and of our material thoughts as one thought, one manifestation.

The Way of Creation

Concentration is the formative way of creation. Creation is manifested by the power of divine mind working upon thoughts, ordering them and being obeyed, so that they gather around one common center; thus we have that expression, called the Solar System, or a world.

If we turn to the scientific theories of the formation of this universe, we have that nebulous mass which finds its center in some nucleus about which all is gathered. This formative power of divinity within you is that which brings everything to its essence. The common center of your being is the essence of God, your divine self. To begin to make your eye single to that central self, that divine I, is to feel your mastery.

The reason why people are so disturbed, upset, mixed and lacking in concentration, is because they have forgotten. They have ceased to look to that One, and they must return, and remember the One that is the source of our life; the power that holds us together; the great means by which we can order our lives and manifest the works of God—works of healing, of mastery, of self-control and the restoration of memory. Thus can you be a power like the sun, radiating power to transform your whole world, according to your own idea, to the light that dwells within you, bringing forth all that which is right and that which is a blessing.

A Gauge of Intelligence

The power of concentration has always been a gauge of intelligence. It is an indicator of intelligence, whether it be expressed in the animal realm, or in the human, in the babe or in a Socrates. When a trainer wishes to select animals of intelligence, he will note their power of concentration. A famous trainer of dogs would gather together a number of these animals from everywhere; sometimes they would be very common dogs, for he found that it was not always dogs of the best breed that showed the most intelligence; sometimes it would be but a yellow cur that would make the best trick dog. After association with their master long enough to become familiar with his voice, it was the practice of this trainer to test their powers of concentration. He would gather them together and holding up some object, would demand the attention of all the dogs to that thing. One by one, the dogs dropped their eyes, turned away their heads and sought some other interest, only a few remained alert and waiting and these were the dogs that the trainer chose to become performers on his stage. And so we can take the babe. The babe that “takes notice” very quickly and very steadily, we count of much intelligence. This is also true of ourselves, we find that the times, when we can hold our mind to certain things, are the times of greatest accomplishment—when we manifest the greatest intelligence—and finally, we shall see this a power so supreme that one might, like another Socrates, stand in the midst of the market place absorbed in a revelation, and even stand for hours. It is said this great philosopher once stood a whole day and night, while the people surged around about him. Were you or I able so to stand, we also might present to the world such a philosophy as he gave. Socrates represents intelligence of the highest degree, and it expresses itself in this power of concentration. There is no greater pursuit than that of the knowledge and understanding by which you can express your intelligence in concentration.

Natural Concentration

It has been found that those who follow the spiritual life, devoting all their time and attention to it, have no difficulty in concentrating. Healers easily center their thought; can easily be at peace, be self-possessed, poised and fearless in some of the hardest problems and the most distracting situations. Therefore if you simply pursue this truth, putting it into practice in your daily living, seeking ever to help people and lighten their burdens by your power of thought, you will manifest concentration without an effort. You are even now exercising that power in centering your minds upon what I am saying. I have had speakers, who have been on the platform with me, express themselves with wonderment at the attention that is given me—the silence, the peace, the freedom from restlessness. It is all a marvelous’ expression of concentration, because the subject that I present is so vital and of such power that it naturally unites our thoughts, and you concentrate naturally— without an effort.

Special Concentration

We know the advantages of the ordinary concentration, how it gives you peace and self-control, and the masterly, orderly expression that invites confidence. But there is a special advantage in the concentration that is based upon principle. Have you discovered that what you concentrate upon, you become one

with? That it is possible for you to enter into the heart—into the very essence of a thing and get its secret and make it reveal its nature and its meaning? Some of you have had this experience that when you wanted to know a thing, you simply centered your mind steadily on it, and presently it was opened up to you and you found yourself knowing without the ordinary efforts of getting information. One man told me this, as a common experience with himself in school. He was a boy of fine intelligence, but he was lazy, and oftentimes did not have his lesson, but when his turn came to answer the question put to him, he would think toward the Professor, and say (mentally) to him.: “You know the answer; it is right in your mind this moment,” and while he would think that, the answer came to him. He did this so often that he knew that he had fulfilled some law.

Again, let me remind you of the little newsboy that I saw guessing the dates on the coins, which another boy held in his hand. Steadily his eye rested upon each copper cent, and three times he gave the correct date, imprinted on the under side, which none of us knew until after each coin was examined. It is a good illustration of power that is in us which we exercise, even when we do not know the nature of it nor how we have it. You think it is by coincidence or chance. You think that something called your attention to the fact, and you dismiss the experience in a materialistic way, even with doubt. But it is a power called “psychometry,” now acknowledged by scientists. Maeterlinck says, “The existence of this faculty is no longer seriously denied.” It is orderly; it is right; we have this power, we need only to exercise it. But to do so, we must take care of our thoughts, dismiss certain kinds of thinking and hold to certain other kinds of thinking.

Thoughts of Evil, Rubbish

In the first place, we cannot afford to “clutter” our mentalities with thoughts of evil. It is a homely word but it is literally so. You clutter your mind, filling your brain cells with what the physicians call “dirt,” and this is all because of erroneous thinking— thinking upon wrongs and upon evils, revenge, fear and worryment. Everything that has its root in the belief of evil must utterly pass from our mentality and pass forever, and we become like a little child, with pure, clean brain-cells, because we have no false thoughts or ill feelings, but are filled with love, and purity and goodness. So the very organ of your mentality, the brain, can be orderly and free, without congestion of blood, without any piling up of that foreign material which the physician calls “dirt,” and when you wish to think upon a thing, you will not have to use your human will power but just wait and rest, and naturally it will spring to the front and you will have wasted no effort, but have concentrated easily and with power.

Memory Restored

This is the way for the restoration of your memory. The reason why people lose their memories and find their mental faculties getting out of order, is because they try to hold thoughts in their minds that do not belong there; they will be so disconcerted if they forget dates, or events that should be counted nothing at all. Why should you remember the old past, and why should you dwell on the things of yesterday? Now is the only time. Live in the present. Dismiss thoughts of yesterday; those thoughts of the past. Be as though you were born this morning. Begin every day anew. Some may say: “I have been so wronged by everybody; people impose upon me and it will not do for me to forget or I’ll be wronged again.” There is “a more excellent way,” by which these experiences shall not be repeated, than remembering the wrongs of the past. This excellent way is to begin to fill your mind with meditations upon God, the Good. Even though it be so simple as this reasoning—that there is the One that is the source of all and that One is God the good; that One is omnipresent; therefore good is everywhere. Then insist upon seeing it everywhere, upon believing it, dwelling upon it continually—Good is the only real presence. Do this in place of the evil thinking; do it persistently. How do you

put out darkness? Not by dealing with darkness! So you cannot put out evil memories by dealing with them. themselves. You put out darkness by bringing in the light, and you put out evil memories by bringing in good ones.

Faithful Practice

This means an exercise as faithfully practiced as the beginning of the study of music. When you began to learn music, you pursued practices that were tiresome, but your teacher said it was necessary. When you began to learn a physical exercise, like rowing a boat, you went through simple actions and pursuits, and some were very wearisome, but these simple things were most essential. Begin your practice of concentration by centering your mind upon the thought that the good is all there really is, and learn to crowd out the opposite thoughts with that one thought. It will prove itself true, presently.

Such was the case of a young boy who had run away from his home in Portland, Ore., and became stranded in San Francisco. Through a lady, who learned his story, he began coming to the Home of Truth. There he learned to hold the thought: Good is all there really is.

He desired to get back home, and a purser on an Oregon steamer told him to be at the dock on the Sunday morning that the steamer would sail, and he, the purser, would come ashore and get him, and he could work his passage home again.

The boy was there but the purser never appeared. The steamer sailed, leaving the boy in rage and despair.

Then he remembered that he was to say, "Good is all." In bitterness, almost sarcasm, he began to repeat the word. Soon he calmed down and found himself walking toward the Home of Truth. There, on the steps, he met a lady who began to inquire why he had not gone. He reluctantly told her his bad luck, with the result that she handed him the fare to go on the train to Portland, and he arrived there before the steamer reached that city. He proved quickly "the power of the word."

Worldly Success

Worldly success is one of the out-picturings of the power of concentration. Those who have made material success will tell you that it has come by concentration upon their business, and devoting all their strength and time to it. The secret of Paderewski's skill with the piano was this, that he gave himself to eighteen hours' practice at a time. A certain rich man, who was very successful with railway stocks, gave it as his secret, that he studied the manual of railways, night and day; would read it before he would go to sleep, then the first thing in the morning before meals, after meals—all the time. And when some one asked him the secret of his success, he said it was concentration—studying night and day upon that in which he was successful.

Oh, but Paderewski can be thrown off with the injury of a finger; the railway man can receive a little blow on the head, and it all counts for nothing. Those who concentrate upon material things have but a temporal success, for if they try to concentrate upon anything else, they find they have not power in that direction, and it sometimes seems like beginning life over again. This was illustrated in the experience of a man who had been a most successful business man, as a commercial traveler, commanding a high salary and finally becoming a partner in the company, though still pursuing his own efficient line.

Finally, he had accumulated such a snug little fortune, owning a pretty home and ten acres in one of California's loveliest towns, that his wife and daughter persuaded him to retire from business.

What they meant to be freedom and a joy to him proved to be the greatest mistake. He tried to lead a quiet life and, for activity, to become interested in the pursuits of his society-neighbors. But his mind was ever off on the familiar routes that he had followed for over fifty years. He could not center his thoughts on the new life and the result soon was “softening of the brain,” the beginning of dissolution.

Fortunately, his wife and daughter understanding Truth, brought his case under spiritual treatment and his mind was saved, and he was able to hew out a new way of concentration, by utterly abandoning the material for the spiritual.

The Oriental Yoga

The Hindus call the practice of spiritual concentration, “Yoga,” which means “union,” and comes from the same root as our word “yoke.” The Aryan language is at the root of all civilized languages, and our word yoke and their word yoga have a common root, and it means to unite—to join. “Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” This is the Christ teaching of yoga, that we shall have such a power of concentration that there shall be no burdens at all, but all life shall be full of ease and freedom. The Christian Yoga is “taking on Christ,” being one with him, which is the easy way of concentration. Hindu devotees spend whole lives in the study and practice of Yoga, because, by means of right concentration, they look for all power, all knowledge and all bliss here in this life. The text-book of Hindu practice is “The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali,” in which is displayed most subtle and wonderful understanding of the human mind and its workings, and the way of deliverance from its errors by right knowledge and practice of concentration.

Knowledge and Love

There are two forms of thinking which make the way easy for concentration. One is knowing; keep on knowing; never rest content with ignorance; get knowledge and get understanding. The other is love. Begin with the love of truth; love truth for its own sake. My friends, if you will only “fall in love with truth,” you need not have another lesson; you will concentrate and no one can stop you. There are people who think truth night and day. In their dreams, and in the ordinary things of life, and the consequence is that they are joyously and powerfully in the consciousness of concentration. Of course they are in love with truth. If anybody is in love with another you do not need to tell them to think about the other one; if you are in love with another, you simply cannot help thinking of that one. It would sound ridiculous to say to a real lover, “If you expect to win her, you must think of her night and day.” “How can I help it!” says the lover. The advice is not needed. A lover has a wonderful power of concentration, and if there is no mixture of resentment, of hatred or jealousy, there is a perfect feeling of peace and power. Pure love is a power for concentration in itself, and so to be in love with truth is to be able to concentrate without a thought. Love is faithful.

Express your love by obediently practicing this first rule of concentration, the use of the silent word. Often practice saying, “Good is all there really is.”