

CHAPTER X WAYS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Some obstacles to spiritual life-Influence of past impressions Pitfalls of occult powers-Alms and charity-Dress and food Attitude towards the body-Attitude towards sufferings-Forbearance-Reticence-Humility and self-respect-Simplicity-Conquest of desires-Attitude towards women-Devotee and his family--Prayer and devotion

Some Obstacles to Spiritual Life

361. God comes not where reign timidity, hatred and fear.

362. The heavier scale of a balance goes down while the lighter rises up. Similarly, he who is weighed down by the many cares and anxieties of the world sinks down into it, while he who has fewer rises up towards the feet of the Lord.

363. A man who spends his time in discussing the good and bad qualities of others simply wastes his own time. For it is time spent neither in thinking about one's own self nor about the Supreme Self, but in fruitless thinking of others' selves.

364. In what condition of mind is the vision of God obtained? When the mind is perfectly tranquil. When the sea of one's mind is agitated by the wind of desires, it cannot reflect God, and God-vision is impossible then.

365. Though a person's stomach may be full and he be suffering from dyspepsia in addition, his tongue will water naturally at the sight of sweet delicacies and savoury' sauces. Similarly a man may not have the slightest covetousness in him; yet the sight of wealth and other objects of temptation will unsettle his mind, howsoever holy he may be.

366. Be not like the frog in the well. The frog in the well knows nothing bigger and grander than its well. So are all bigots. They do not see anything better than their own creed.

367. The great [Sankaracharya](#) had a foolish disciple who used to imitate his [Master](#) in all matters. Sanka,ra uttered "Sivo'ham" (I am [Siva](#)); the disciple also repeated "Sivo'ham". To correct his disciple's folly, [Sankara](#) one day, while passing by a smithy, took a potful of molten iron and asked the disciple also to do the same. Of course, the disciple could not imitate this act of his [Master](#), and thence forward he left off saying "Sivo'ham". Base imitation is always bad, but an attempt to correct one's own self by the noble examples of the great ones is always good.

Influence of Past Impressions

368. How strong is the influence of Samskaras (impressions of the past)? In a certain place there were seated some Sannyasins, when a young woman chanced to pass by. All of them continued to meditate as before upon God, except one person, who stole a glance at her. This man who was attracted by her beauty had been a householder formerly, and was the father of three children before he became a [Sannyasin](#).

369. Once I saw two castrated bulls at a certain place. Just then a cow passed that way, and I noticed that at the sight of it one of the [Bullocks](#) got excited with passion while the other remained quiet. Seeing the strange behaviour of this bullock, I made enquiries into its past history, and came to know that it was castrated after it had grown up and had mated, while the other was castrated quite young. Such is the effect of the impressions of past habits on the mind. The [Sadhus](#) who renounce the world without enjoying sexual pleasures never get excited at the sight of women, but those who assume the yellow garb in their advanced age, after having tasted the pleasures of family life, are liable to have the impressions of their past revived, even after years of self-control.

370. When the mind dwells in the midst of evil propensities, it is like a high-caste [Brahmana](#) living in the quarters of the outcastes, or like a gentleman dwelling in the slums of a big town.

371. A person once said, "After my boy [Harish](#) has grown -up, I shall get him married, and then leaving the family in his charge, I shall renounce the world and take to the practice of [Yoga](#)." At this, the [Master](#) remarked, "You will never find any opportunity to cultivate devotion to God. You will afterwards say, 'Harish and Girish are very much attached to me. Oh! they will miss my company if I retire from the world. Let [Harish](#) have a son by and by, and let me see his son also married.' Thus there will be no end to your desires."

Pitfalls of Occult Powers

372. Visit not miracle-mongers and those who exhibit occult powers. These men are stragglers from the path of Truth. Their minds have become entangled in psychic powers, which are like veritable meshes in the way of the pilgrim to [Brahman](#). Beware of these powers, and desire them not.

373. Those that are of low tendencies seek occult powers which help in healing diseases, winning lawsuits, walking on water and such other things. True devotees seek nothing but the lotus-fee of the Lord.

374. Krishna once said to Arjuna, "If you desire to attain Me, know that it will never be possible so long as you possess even a single one of the eight psychic powers (Ashta Siddhis)." For occult powers increase man's egotism and thus make him forgetful of God.

375. A man, after fourteen years of hard penance in a solitary forest, obtained at last the power of walking on water. Overjoyed at this acquisition, he went to his Guru and said, "Master, I have acquired the power of walking on water." The Guru rebuked him, saying: "Fie upon you. Is this all the result of your fourteen years' labour? What you have attained is only worth a pice. What you can accomplish after fourteen years' labour, ordinary men can do by paying a pice to the boatman."

376. Siddhis or psychic powers must be avoided like filth. These come to us of themselves by virtue of Sadhanas or religious practices, and Samyama or control of the sense. But he who sets his mind on Siddhis remains stuck therein, and cannot rise higher.

377. There was a man named Chandra¹ who acquired the power called Gutika-siddhi. Keeping an amulet (Gutika) with him, he could roam anywhere at will or penetrate into any place without being seen by any person. The man was at first devoted to God and was austere in his spiritual disciplines. Later on, however, when he came to possess that power, he began to use it for satisfying the demands of his lower nature. I warned him against doing so, but he paid no heed. He used to frequent unseen a gentleman's house and had an illicit amour with a young lady of the family. He lost all his power thereby and became a fallen soul.

378. Sometimes it is very dangerous to have occult powers. Tota Puri told me that once a great Siddha (a spiritual man possessing psychic powers) was sitting on the sea-shore when there rose a great storm. The Siddha, being greatly distressed by it, exclaimed, "Let the storm cease!" and his words were fulfilled. Just then a ship was going at a distance with all her sails set, and as the wind suddenly died away, the ship capsized, drowning all who were on board. Now the sin of causing the death of so many persons accrued to the Siddha, and for that reason he lost all his occult powers and had to suffer in purgatory.

379. At the time of my practising austere Sadhanas under the Panchavati, a man named Girija¹ came there. He was a great Yogi. Once when I wanted to come to my room in the dark night, he raised his arm and a strong light emanated from his arm-pit and lighted the whole path. On my advice he gave up using that power and turned his mind to the realisation of the highest Reality. He lost that power subsequently, no doubt, but he gained in true spirituality.

380. A beggar would indeed be acting very foolishly were he to go to the king's palace and beg for such insignificant things as gourds or pumpkins. Similarly, a devotee would be acting foolishly were he to appear at the threshold of the King of kings and beg for psychic powers, neglecting the priceless gifts of true Knowledge and love of God.

381. A youthful disciple of the Master once acquired facility in thought reading. Overjoyed at this he spoke to the Master about his attainment. The Master there-upon: rebuked him, saying, "Shame on you, child; do not waste your energies on these petty things."

382. A disciple once told Sri Ramakrishna that in the course of his meditation he could see things as they actually happened at a distance and also added what some people were doing at the time. On subsequent enquiry the visions proved to be true. The Master said to him, "My boy, don't meditate for some days. These powers are obstacles to the realisation of God."

383. Why is it that people are fed at a religious feast? Do you not think that it is the same as offering a sacrifice to God, who is the Fire of Life in all creatures? But bad men, not God-fearing, guilty of adultery and so forth, should on no account be entertained at such feasts. Their sins are so great that even several cubits of earth under where they sit become polluted.

384. Once a butcher was taking a cow to a distant slaughter-house. Being ill-treated by the butcher, the cow got unruly on the way and the man found it very difficult to drive her. After several hours, he reached a village at noon, and being thoroughly exhausted, he went to an almshouse nearby and partook of the food freely distributed there. Feeling himself quite refreshed after a full meal, the butcher was able to lead the cow easily to the destination. Now, a part of the sin of killing that cow" fell to the donor of the food distributed at the almshouse. So even in giving food and alms in charity, one should discriminate and see that the recipient is not a vicious and sinning person likely to use the gift for evil purposes.

385. Thus goes the law: Those who made large charities in former life are born rich in this. But then this world is His Maya, and the process of Maya is beset with many irregularities-none can comprehend it.

Dress and Food

386. What is the good of wearing the orange coloured dress of an ascetic? What is there in the dress? The orange dress brings with it pure associations. The wearing of worn out shoes and torn clothes brings thoughts of one's low state to the mind; dressing smartly in trousers and coats, with patent leather shoes on, makes one naturally feel rather elated with pride and vanity; by wearing the black-bordered **dhوتي** of fine muslin, one feels impelled to be lively and to sing love songs perhaps. The wearing of the orange garb of the **Sannyasin** naturally causes sacred thoughts to rise in the mind. Every kind of dress has its own associations, although dress in itself has no special significance.

387. A young plant should always be protected against goats and cows and the mischief of little urchins, by means of a fence. But when it becomes a big tree, a flock of goats or a herd of cows can freely find shelter under its spreading boughs and fill their stomachs with its leaves. So when your faith is yet in its infancy, you should protect it from the evil influences of bad company and worldliness. But when you grow strong in faith, no worldliness or evil inclination will dare approach your holy presence; and many who are wicked will become godly through their holy contact with you.

388. Once a student questioned **Sri Ramakrishna**, "Sir I as the same God dwells in every being, what harm is there in accepting food from any and every man's hands?" In reply the **Master** asked him whether he was a Brahmana. When the student said "Yes", the **Master** remarked, "That is why you put me the question. Suppose you light a match and heap over it a lot of dry wood. What would become of the fire?" The student replied, "The fire will attain God, - for him beef is as good as the food of the gods.

393. Eat to your satisfaction in the day but let your meal at night be light and small in quantity. .

394. That food alone should be taken by the **devotee**, which does not heat the system or unsettle the mind.

Attitude Towards the Body

395. Q. How is one to conquer the love of the body?

A. The human frame is made up of decaying matter. It is a collection of flesh, bone, marrow, blood and other unclean substances subject to putrefaction. By such constant analysis of the body one's love for it vanishes.

396. One does not care for the cage when the bird has flown away from it. And when the bird of life flies away, no one cares for the body left behind.

397. If this body is worthless and transitory, why do pious and devout men take care of it? No one takes care of an empty box, but all protect with care a chest full of precious jewels, gold and costly articles. The pious soul cannot help taking care of the body because God dwells in it. Our bodies form the treasure-house of the Deity.

Attitude Towards Suffering

398. Disease is the tax which the soul pays for the use of the body, as the tenant pays house-rent for the use of the house.

399. Iron must be heated again and again and hammered a hundred times before it becomes good steel. Then only it becomes fit to be made into a sharp sword, and can be bent in any way you like. So man must be heated several times in the furnace of tribulations and hammered with the persecutions of the world before he becomes pure and humble, and fit to enter the presence of God.

400. The **Master** once said to **Keshab Chandra Sen** while the latter was ill, "You are suffering; but your illness has a deep meaning. In this body you have gone through various stages of spiritual development; the body is now suffering from the reaction. When the spiritual waves arise, the consciousness of the body vanishes, but it tells upon the body in the end. When a big steamer plies on the **Ganges**, the waves dash against the shore for sometime after the steamer has passed. The larger the boat, the bigger the waves; and sometimes they even break down the banks. If an elephant enters a small hut, the hut shakes and falls down. So also the experience of spiritual ecstasy shakes and sometimes shatters the body of the **devotee**. Do you know the consequence of this? If a house catches fire, many things are burnt. Similarly, the fire of Divine wisdom burns all passions, anger and other evils, and in the end destroys the consciousness of 'I, me and mine'. The body then suffers a severe shock and is shattered. You may think that everything is finished, but as long as there is the least vestige of the ego, He will not make you free. If you are admitted as a patient in a hospital you will not be discharged unless you are perfectly cured."

401. The **Master** said to **Keshab** while the latter was ill: "The gardener sometimes exposes the roots of rose bushes, so that the dew may fall upon them. Sometimes he trims off some of the roots, so that the flowers may become larger. Perhaps the Lord is preparing you to do greater works."

402. Expressing his own attitude towards illness, the **Master** said: "Let the disease run its course and let the body suffer, but, O mind, be thou ever in bliss."

403. The power and glory of knowledge and faith never fail a true **devotee**, whatever be the joy and suffering his body undergoes. His knowledge and faith never get dim. See how severe were the tribulations that visited the Pandavas, yet not for a moment did the light of knowledge desert them!

Forbearance

404. In the Bengali alphabet no three letters are alike in sound except the three sibilants (Sa, Sha and Sa); and they all mean for us, 'forbear', 'forbear', 'forbear'. (In Bengali Sa means forbear. It is derived from the Sanskrit root Sah.) This shows that even from our childhood we are made to learn forbearance through the very alphabet. The quality of forbearance is of the highest importance to every man.

405. Look at the anvil of a blacksmith-how it is hammered and beaten; yet it moves not from its place. Let men learn patience and endurance from it.

Reticence

406. Keep your own sentiments and faith to yourself. Do not talk about them abroad. Otherwise you will be a great loser.

407. The more a person conceals his devotional practices from others, the better for him.

Humility and Self-Respect

408. It is a great degradation to be conceited. Look at the crow-how wise it thinks itself to be! It never falls into a snare. It flies off at the slightest approach of danger, and steals food with the greatest dexterity. But the poor creature cannot help eating filth. This is the result of being over wise or having the wisdom of a pettifogger.

409. To become great one must be humble. The nest of the skylark is on the earth below, but it soars high into the sky. High ground is not fit for cultivation; low ground is necessary, so that water may stand on it.

410. The tree laden with fruits always bends low. If you wish to be great, be lowly and meek.

411. Our duty is to fall down and adore where others only bow.

412. One should not entertain egotistical feeling, such as the conceit of the preacher, "I am lecturing" hear me, all of you!" Egotism exists in ignorance, not in Knowledge. He attains the Truth who is devoid of conceit. The rain water stands in low places, but runs down from high places.

413. In a balance, the scale that is heavy goes down, but the lighter one rises up. So the man of merit and ability is always humble and meek, while the fool is puffed up with vain conceit.

414. Be as devoid of vanity as the cast-away leaf carried by the high wind.

415. If you wish to thread a needle, make the thread pointed and remove all protruding fibres. Then it will easily pass through the eye of the needle. So, if thou wish to concentrate your heart and soul on God, be meek, humble and poor in spirit and remove all the spreading filaments of desire.

416. Many a man with a show of humility says, "I am like an earth-worm grovelling in the dust." In this way, thinking themselves always to be worms, in time men become weak in spirit like worms. Let not despondency ever enter into your heart. Despair is the greatest enemy in the path of progress. As a man thinks, so he becomes.

417. A true man (Manush) is only he who is a Manush one endowed with a sense of self-respect. Others are men only in name.

418. No pride is pride that expresses the glory of the soul. No humility is humility that humiliates the self.

Simplicity

419. Till one becomes simple like a child, one cannot get divine illumination. Forget all the worldly knowledge that you have acquired and become as ignorant of it as a child; then you will get the knowledge of the Truth.

420. Simple-mindedness takes one easily to God. If a person is simple, spiritual instructions easily fructify in him, as seeds germinate easily and grow to bear fruit soon when sown in tilled soil free from stones.

421. The **Master** used to say; "People become generous and simple-minded only in consequence of much penance. God can never be attained except with a simple mind. It is to the simple-minded that He reveals His own nature." But to safeguard people from developing into simpletons in the name of simplicity and truthfulness, the **Master** would also sound a note of warning: "You are to be a **devotee** but not a simpleton on that account," or again, "Always you must discriminate in your mind between the true and the false, the

eternal and transient; and then leaving aside all that is transient, you should fix your mind upon that alone which is eternal"

Conquest of Desires

422. He is a true man who is dead even in this life—that is, whose passions and propensities have been curbed to extinction as in a dead body.

423. So long as the heavenly expanse of the heart is troubled and disturbed by the gusts of desire, there is little chance of our beholding therein the brightness of God. The beatific vision dawns only in the heart that is calm and rapt in Divine communion.

424. God cannot be seen so long as there is the slightest taint of desire. Therefore have your minor desires satisfied, and renounce the major ones through right reasoning and discrimination.

425. As one who is standing by the brink of a deep well is always careful lest he should fall into it, even so should one living in the world be always on his guard against its temptations. He who has once fallen into the well of the world, so full of temptations, can hardly come out of it uninjured and stainless.

426. On being asked when the enemies of man, such as lust, anger etc., will be vanquished, the **Master** replied: "So long as these passions are directed towards the world and its objects, they behave like enemies. But when they are directed towards God, they become the best friends of man, for then they lead him unto God. The lust for the things of the world must be changed into the hankering for God, the anger that man feels in relation to his fellow man should be turned towards God for not revealing Himself to him. One should deal with all the passions in the same manner. These passions cannot be eradicated but can be educated."

427. **Mandodari** told her royal husband **Ravana**, "If you are so intent upon having **Sita** as your **queen**, why don't you impose on her by assuming the form of her husband Rama with the help of your magical powers?" "Fie on you!" explained **Ravana**, "Can I stoop to the pleasures of the senses while I am in the holy form of Rama—a form the very thought of which fills my heart with such unspeakable joy and blessedness that even the highest heaven appears to me worthless?"

428. When an elephant is let loose, it goes about uprooting trees and shrubs; but as soon as the driver applies the hook on its head it becomes quiet. So the mind, when unrestrained, wantons in the luxuriance of idle thoughts, but becomes at once calm when pulled up with the goad of discrimination.

429. The more is a man's attachment to the world, the less is he likely to attain Knowledge. The less his attachment to the world, the more is the probability of his gaining Knowledge.

430. When butter is produced by churning curds, it should not be kept in the same vessel with the buttermilk, for then it will lose something of its sweetness and hardness. It should be kept in pure water and in a different vessel. Similarly after attaining partial perfection in the world, if one still continues to mix with the worldly and remains in the midst of the temptations of the world, one is likely to become tainted, but one can remain pure by living out of the world,

431. Q, How may we conquer the old Adam that is in us?

A. When the flower develops into fruit, the petals drop off of themselves. So, when the divinity in you increases, the weakness of human nature in you will vanish of its own accord.

432. If once through intense **Vairagya** (dispassions) one attains God, then the inordinate temptations of lust fall off, and a man finds himself in no danger even from his own wife. If there are two magnets at an equal distance from a piece of iron, which of them will draw it with a stronger force? Certainly the larger. Verily God is the larger magnet; what can the smaller magnet ('woman') do against it?

433. Q, How does the attraction of sensual pleasures die away? A. In God, who is at once the embodiment of all happiness and pleasures. They who realise Him can find no attraction in the mean and worthless pleasures of the world.

434. Taking **Helanchari** (a medicinal herb) is not the same as taking a pot-herb, and taking a piece of sugar candy is not the same as taking common sweets; for **Helanchari** and sugar candy are not injurious to health and even a sick man may use them. The mystic **Pranava** too is no mere word but a phonetic symbol of the Divinity. In the same way the desire for holiness and devotion cannot be deemed to be equal to the common polluting desires of the world.

Attitude Towards Women

435. All women are parts of the Divine Mother, and therefore they should be looked upon as mothers by all.

436. Women, whether naturally good or not, whether chaste or unchaste, should always be looked upon as images of the blissful Divine Mother.

437. Q. How should we look upon the fair sex?

A.. He who has known the Real, who is blessed with the vision of God, does not regard them with any fear. He sees them as they really are-parts of the Divine Mother of the universe. So he not only pays all honour and respect to women, but actually worships them as a son does his mother.

438. Q, How can we conquer lust?

A.. Look upon all women as your own mother. Never look a woman in the face, but always look at her feet. All evil thoughts will then flyaway.

439. The woman who observes continence even while living with her husband is veritably the Divine Mother Herself.

440. Q. Sir, what do you think of the mode of devotional practices in the company of women, as enjoined by the Tantras?

A. Those are not safe 'paths'; they are very difficult, and are often attended with slips. There are three ways of practising devotion (according to the Tantras)--one may cultivate the attitude of the 'hero', or the 'hand-maid', or the 'son' towards the divine Mother. Mine is the attitude of the 'son'. To think of oneself as the handmaid of the Divine Mother is also good. But the path of the 'hero' ¹ is fraught with danger. Very pure is the path of 'sonship' (*i.e.* thinking of oneself as the son of the Divine Mother.)

441. Do you aspire after Divine grace? Then propitiate the Mother, the Primal Divine Energy (*Sakti*). Yes, She is *Mahamaya* Herself. She it is Who has deluded the whole world, and is conjuring up the triple device of creation, maintenance and dissolution. She has spread a veil of ignorance over all, and unless She unbars the gate, none can enter the 'Inner Court'--Left outside, we see only the external things, and the Eternal One, Sachchidananda, remains ever beyond our ken.

The Divine *Sakti* has two aspects-*Vidya* and *Avidya*. *Avidya* deludes and is the mother of Kamini-Kanchana 'woman and gold'; and it binds. But *Vidya* is the source of devotion, kindness, knowledge and love, and it takes us towards God.

This *Avidya* has to be propitiated, and hence the institution of *Sakti* worship. Various are the ways of worship for gratifying Her-as Her 'handmaid', or 'hero', or child'. *Sakti-sadhana* is no joke. There are very strenuous and dangerous practices in it. I passed two years as Mother's 'hand-maid' and 'friend'. Mine, however, is the mood of the 'child', and to me the breasts of any woman are like unto my mother's.

Women are so many images of *Sakti*. In the western parts of this country the bridegroom holds a knife in his hand during marriage, and in Bengal, a nutcracker. The idea is that he will cut the bonds of *Maya* with the help of the bride who is *Sakti* Herself. This is Virabhava, 'the way of the hero'. But I never practised it. Mine is the attitude of the 'child'.

Devotee and His Family

442. Q. Suppose a wife tells her husband who is given to religious practices, 'If you do not look after me properly, I will commit suicide.' What should one do in that case?

A. One should give up such a wife-the wife that stands in the way to God-realisation. Let her commit suicide or let her not! The wife who thus puts obstacles in one's path to God is an embodiment of *Avidya*, (nescience). But then all become amenable to one who has a sincere devotion to God-even the king, wicked persons and the wife. If one has true devotion, then one's wife also gradually turns God-ward. If one is good-natured, it is quite possible that she too becomes good through the grace of God.

443. Father and mother are of prime importance to man. Unless they are pleased, no devotional practice will be of any avail. Look at *Sri Chaitanya*. Though mad with love of God, he took much pains to console his mother before he took *Sannyasa*. He told her, "Mother, do not be sorry, I will come now and then to see you." There are so many debts that one has to repay-the debt to the gods, the debt to the Rishis, and also the debt to the parents and the wife. No pious work can succeed unless the debt to the parents is paid off. There is a debt even to the wife. *Harish* is staying here, having renounced his wife. If his wife had not been provided for, I would have called him a wicked fellow. Ramaprasanna is always wandering about for milk and opium for the Hatha *Yogi*. He says that *Manu* has enjoined service to Sadhus. Meanwhile, his old mother is starving and has to do her own shopping. I feel so angry at this.

444. But there is one consideration. If a man becomes mad with love of God, then who is father, who is mother and who is wife? He loves God so deeply that he becomes mad. He has no duty; he is absolved from all debts. When a man reaches that state, he forgets the whole world; he becomes unconscious of even the body which is so dear to everyone.

445. The parents deserve the highest respect in this 'world. As long as they live, they should be served to the best of one's capacity, and after their death, their post funeral rites ought to be performed according to one's means. Even if the son be the poorest of the poor, and has no means to perform the post-funeral rites

of his parents, he should resort to the forest and shed tears there, remembering his inability. Only then can he free himself from his obligation to them. For the sake of God alone, one may disobey one's parents without incurring sin. For instance, [Prahlada](#) did not refrain from taking the name of Lord [Krishna](#), although ordered by his father not to take that name. And [Dhruva](#) went to the forest in order to practise austerities, even though forbidden by his mother. They had not done any wrong in this.

Prayer and Devotion

446. Q. Should we pray aloud to God?

A.. Pray to Him in any way you like. He is always sure to hear you. He can hear even the footfall of an ant.

447. Q. Is there really any efficacy in prayers?

A.. Yes. When mind and speech unite in earnestly asking for a thing, that prayer is answered. Of no avail are the prayers of that man who says with his mouth, "These are all Thine, O Lord!" and at the same time thinks in his heart that all of them are his.

448. Be not a traitor to your thoughts. Be sincere; act according to your thoughts; and you shall surely succeed. Pray with a sincere and simple heart, and your prayers will be heard.

449. That which you think, you should speak. Let there be harmony between your thought and word. Otherwise, if you merely say that God is your all in all, while in your mind you have made the world your all in all, you cannot derive any benefit.

450. To approach a mighty monarch a man must ingratiate himself with the officials who keep the gate and guard the throne. So to reach the Almighty Lord and obtain His grace, one must practise much devotion, serve many devotees, and keep for long the company of the wise.

451. Do not let worldly thoughts and anxieties disturb your mind. Do everything that is necessary in the proper time, and let your mind be always fixed on God.

452. There is little fear that a ship will drift or run into danger as long as its compass points due North. So the ship of life steers clear of every danger, if the mind, its compass needle, is always turned towards God, without any oscillation.

453. How to pray is the question. Let us not pray for things of the world, but pray like saint [Narada](#). [Narada](#) said to [Ramachandra](#), "O Rama, grant that I may be favoured with [Bhakti](#) (love, devotion and self-surrender) for Thy [lotus](#)-feet." "Be it so, [Narada](#)," said Rama, "but will you not ask for anything else?" [Narada](#) replied, "Lord, may it please Thee to grant that I may not be attracted by Thy [Maya](#), which fascinates the universe." [Ramachandra](#) said once more, "Be it so, [Narada](#), but will you not ask for anything else?" [Narada](#) replied, "No, Lord, that is all I pray for."

454. If you cannot settle whether God has form or not, then pray in this way: "O Lord, I cannot understand whether Thou art with form or without. Whatever mayst Thou be, have mercy on me. Do reveal Thyself unto me."

455. One may attribute the various forms and aspects of God that are believed in by people to the work of imagination, and may have no faith in them. Yet God will shower His grace on a person if he believes in a Divine Power that creates and directs the world, and prays with a distressed heart, "O God, I do not know Thy real nature. Deign to reveal Thyself to me as Thou really art."

456. God is extremely attentive, my boys. He has heard every time you have prayed to Him. He will surely reveal Himself to you some day or other, at least at the time of death.