

## CHAPTER XII ESSENTIALS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

*Some conditions of spiritual enlightenment-Faith-Resignation to God-Necessity of **Ishta** or Chosen Deity- Truth **Brahmacharya** or continence- **Viveka** or discrimination- **Vairagya** or aversion to worldly objects-Perseverance-Spiritual practice Concentration and meditation*

### Some conditions of Spiritual Enlightenment

488. If a person possessed by an evil spirit becomes conscious that he is so possessed, the evil spirit at once leaves him. Similarly the **Jiva** which is possessed by the evil spirit of **Maya**, on realising that he is so possessed, becomes at once free from it.

489. He alone enters the Kingdom of Heaven who is not a thief of his own thought. In other words, guilelessness and simple faith are the roads to that Kingdom.

490. A person once said: "The innate nature of substance can never be changed." Another retorted, "When fire enters charcoal it destroys its innate blackness." So when the mind is burnt by the fire of Knowledge, its innate nature too is destroyed, and it ceases to be a snare.

491. The mind is everything. If the mind loses its liberty, you lose yours. If the mind is free, you too are free. The mind may get dyed in any colour, like a white cloth fresh, from the laundry. Study English, and you will mix English words in your talk in spite of yourself. The **Pandit** who studies Sanskrit must quote verses. If the mind is kept in bad company, the evil influence of it will colour one's thought and conversation. Placed in the midst of devotees, the mind is sure to meditate on God and God alone. It changes its nature according to the things amongst which it lives and acts.

492. The mind is everything. The attraction for the wife is of one kind, and the affection for the child is of quite a different nature. On one side is one's wife, on another side is the child, one caresses both, but moved by quite different impulses.

493. Bondage is of the mind; freedom too is of the mind. If you say, "I am a free soul. I am a son of God! Who can bind me?" free you shall be. If one is bitten by a snake and can say with all the force of will and faith, "There is no venom, there is no venom," one will surely get rid of the venom.

494. Q. When shall I be free?

A. When 'I' shall cease to be. 'I and mine' is ignorance. 'Thou and Thine' is Knowledge.

### Faith

495. To a disciple who criticised some people's faith as 'blind faith', the **Master** remarked: "Well, can you explain to me what you mean by 'blind faith'? Is not faith wholly 'blind'? What then are its eyes? Say either 'faith' or 'knowledge'. Or else, what is this queer notion that faith in some instances is 'blind' and in others is 'with eyes'?"

496. Man suffers through lack of faith in God.

497. There are physiological signs indicating who are endowed with faith and who not. The bony sort of fellows, the hollow-eyed, the squint-eyed-these types cannot have faith easily.

498. To kill another, sword and shield are needed, whilst to kill oneself even a pin will do. So to teach others one must study many scriptures and sciences, while to acquire spiritual illumination for oneself, firm faith in single scriptural utterance will suffice.

499. There are various sects and creeds among the Hindus. Which of them should we take to? **Parvati** once asked **Mahadeva**, "O Lord, what is the root of the eternal, everlasting, all-embracing Bliss?" To her **Mahadeva** replied, "The root is faith." So the peculiarities of creeds and sects matter little or nothing. Let everyone take to devotional practices and perform the duties of his own creed with faith.

500. Knowledge relating to God keeps pace with faith. Where there is little faith, it is idle to look for much Knowledge. The cow which is over-nice in matters of eating is not liberal in its supply of milk. But the cow which welcomes all kinds of food-herbs, leaves, grass, husks, straw and the rest-and eats them up with great appetite, gives an abundant supply. Her milk comes down from the udder into the pail in torrents. .

501. He who has faith has all, and he who lacks it lacks all.

502. If you are keen on realising God repeat His 'name' with firm faith, and try to discriminate between the Real and the unreal.

503. Unless one becomes child-like in faith, it is difficult for one to realise God. If the mother says to the child, 'He is your brother,' the child fully believes that the person referred to is really its brother. If the mother says, "Don't go there, there is a boggy," the child is indeed convinced that there is a boggy. God is

moved to pity when He sees in a man that kind of child-like faith. None can attain God with the calculating nature of the worldly-minded.

504. One day, [Sri Krishna](#), while going in a chariot along with [Arjuna](#), looked up to the sky and said, "Behold! What a nice flight of pigeons there!" [Arjuna](#) at once turned his eyes in that direction and exclaimed, "Really, friend, very beautiful pigeons indeed!" But the very next moment [Sri Krishna](#) looked up again and said, "No, friend, they are not pigeons, surely." [Arjuna](#), too, saw again and said, "True, they are not pigeons." Now try to understand the meaning of this. A great adherent of truth that [Arjuna](#) was, he did not certainly assent to whatever [Sri Krishna](#) said, simply for flattering him. But he had such an unflinching faith in [Sri Krishna](#) that he actually perceived at once whatever [Sri Krishna](#) said there was.

505. Boil your sugar well over a burning fire. As long as there is dirt or impurity in it, the sweet infusion smokes and simmers. But when all the impurity and scum are cast out, there is neither smoke nor sound; only the delicious crystalline syrup heaves in its unmixed worth. Then whether liquid or solid, it becomes the delight of men and of gods. Such is the character of the man of faith.

506. A man wanted to cross a river. A sage gave him an amulet and said, "This will carry you across." The man, taking it in his hand, began to walk over the water. Before he had gone half the way, he was seized with curiosity, and opened the amulet to see what was in it. Therein he found, written on a piece of paper, the sacred name of Rama, the Lord. At this the man said depreciatingly, "Is this the whole secret?" No sooner did this scepticism enter his mind than he sank down. It is faith in the 'name' of the Lord that works wonders; for faith is life and want of faith is death.

507. A disciple who had firm faith in the infinite power of his [Guru](#) walked over a river by simply uttering his name. Seeing this, the [Guru](#) thought, "Well, is there such a power in my mere name? Then how very great and powerful must I be!" The next day, the [Guru](#) also tried to walk over the river uttering 'I, I, I, I', but no sooner did he step on the water than he sank and was soon drowned; for the poor man did not know how to swim even. Faith can achieve miracles while vanity or egotism brings about the destruction of man.

508. [Sri Ramachandra](#), who was God incarnate, had to bridge the ocean before he could cross over to Lanka (Ceylon). But [Hanuman](#), his faithful monkey devotee and servant, crossed the ocean at one leap, because of his firm faith in Rama. Here the servant achieved more than the [master](#), simply through faith.

509. A king guilty of the heinous sin of killing a Brahmana went to the hermitage of a [Rishi](#) to learn what penance he must perform in order to be purified. The [Rishi](#) was absent but his son was in the hermitage. Hearing the report of the king, he said, "Repeat the 'name' of God (Rama) three times; and your sin will be expiated." When the [Rishi](#) came back and heard of the remedy prescribed by his son, he remarked indignantly, "Sins committed in myriads of births are purged immediately by uttering the 'name' of the Almighty but once. How weak must be your faith! O fool, that you have ordered the holy 'name' to be repeated thrice? For this weakness of your faith, you shall become an outcaste." And the son became [Guhaka](#) of the [Ramayana](#).

510. The stone may remain in water for numberless years; yet the water will never penetrate into it. But clay is soon soaked into mud by the contact of water. So the strong heart of the faithful does not despair in the midst of trials and persecutions, but the man of weak faith is shaken even by the most trifling cause.

511. One becomes as one thinks. They say that by constantly thinking of a particular kind of insect ([Brahmarakita](#)) a cockroach is transformed into the insect. Similarly, he who constantly thinks of the Bliss Absolute himself becomes full of bliss.

512. Why talk of sin and hell-fire all the days of your

life? Chant the 'name' of God. Do say but once, "I have, O Lord, done things that I ought not to have done, and I have left undone things that I ought to have done. O Lord, forgive me!" Saying this, have faith in Him, and you will be purged of all sins.

513. The faith-healers of India instruct their patients to repeat with full conviction the words, "There is no illness at all." The patients repeat them, and this mental suggestion helps to drive off the disease. So if you think yourself to be morally weak, you will actually become so in a short time. Know and believe that you are of immense power, and then power will come to you at last.

514. He who thinks that he is a [Jiva](#) verily remains as a [Jiva](#); but he who considers himself to be God, verily becomes a God. As one thinks, so does one become.

### Resignation to God

515. He who can resign himself to the will of the Almighty with simple faith and guileless love realises the Lord very quickly.

516. To live in the world or to leave it depends upon the will of God. Therefore work, leaving everything to Him. What else can you do?

517. A shallow pool of water in an open field will soon be dried up, though no one may lessen the quantity of its water by using it. So a sinful man is sometimes purified by simply resigning himself totally and absolutely to the mercy and grace of God.

518. Q, What are we to do when we are placed in this world?

A. Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him, and there will be no more trouble for you. Then you will come to know that everything is done by His will.

519. There is no path safer and smoother than that of Ba-kalam (power of attorney). Here Ba-kalam means resigning oneself to the will of the Almighty and having no feeling that anything is one's own.

520. The young of a monkey clings to its mother tightly when she moves about. The kitten on the other hand does not do so but mews piteously, and the mother grasps it by the neck. If the young of the monkey lets go its hold of its mother, it falls down and gets hurt. This is because it relies upon its own strength. But the kitten runs no such risk, as the mother herself carries it about from place to place. Such is the difference between self-reliance and entire resignation to the will of God.

521. A father was once passing through a field with his two little sons. He was carrying one of them in his arms while the other was walking along with him holding his hand. They saw a kite flying, and the latter boy, giving up his hold of his father's hand, began to clap with joy, crying, "Behold, papa, there is a kite!" But immediately he stumbled down and got hurt. The boy who was carried by the father also clapped his hands with joy, but did not fall, as his father was holding him. The first boy represents self help in spiritual matters, and the second self-surrender.

522. Blessed [Radha](#) was once called to prove her chastity. She was subjected to the ordeal of fetching water in a jar with a thousand holes. She succeeded in doing so with not even a drop of water leaking out, and everyone applauded her, declaring that such a chaste woman never was and never will be. At this [Radha](#) exclaimed, "Why do you heap praise on me? Say rather, 'Glory to [Krishna](#)! Glory to Him alone!' I am only a handmaid of His."

523. What is the nature of absolute reliance on God? It is like that happy state of relaxation felt by a fatigued worker when, reclining on a pillow, he smokes at leisure after a day's hard work. It is the cessation of all anxieties and worries.

524. Live here like a leaf cast off after being used for taking food. It is at the mercy of the winds; it is blown here and there; sometimes indoors and sometimes abroad in dirty places. Well, now you are placed here; all right, 'remain here. And when He will take you away and put you in a better place, then, too, you should say 'Amen' and resign to His will with perfect unattachment. Let things take care of themselves.

#### Necessity of [Ishta](#) or Chosen Deity

525. The young wife in a family respects her father-in-law and mother-in-law, ministers to their wants, and does not despise or disobey them; but at the same time she loves her husband more than either of them. In the same way be firm in your devotion to your own Chosen Deity ([Ishta](#)), but do not despise other Deities. Honour them too; for they all represent one Authority and one Love.

526. In the play of dice called Ashta-kashta, the pieces must pass through all the squares of the chequer before they reach the central square of rest and non-return. But so long as a pawn does not reach that central square, it is liable to return again and again to its starting point and commence its weary journey over and over again. If, however, two pawns happen to start their journey in unison and move jointly from square to square, they cannot be forced back by any winner. Similarly, those who start on their career of devotional practices, first uniting themselves with a [Guru](#) and an [Ishta](#), have no fear of reverse and difficulties on the way. Their progress will be smooth, unimpeded and without any retrogression.

527. Many roads lead to Calcutta. Dr. Doubtful started from his home in a distant village to go to the metropolis. He asked a man on the road, "Which is the shortest route to Calcutta?" The man said, "Follow this road." Proceeding some distance, he met another man and asked him, "Is this the shortest road to Calcutta?" The man replied, "Oh no! You must retrace your steps and take the road to your left." The man did so. Going along that new road for some distance, he met a third man who pointed out another road to Calcutta. Thus Dr. Doubtful made no progress, but spent the whole day in changing roads. One who really wishes to reach Calcutta must stick to a single road pointed out by an honest man; so also those who want to reach God must follow steadily one particular guide.

528. A man began to sink a well, but having dug down to a depth of twenty cubits, he could not find any trace of water there. So he gave up that site and selected another spot for the purpose. There he dug still deeper, but even then could not find any water. So he selected yet another site and dug deeper than before, but it was also of no avail. At last in utter disgust he gave up the task altogether. The total depth of all these three wells was only a little short of one hundred cubits. Had he the patience to devote even half of the whole of this labour to his first well instead of changing the site again and again, he would surely have succeeded in getting water. The same is the case with men who continually change their faith. In order to succeed we have to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to one object of faith without being in the least doubtful as to its worth.

529. As a chaste woman wholly devoted to her husband is united with him for ever even after death, so the man who is solely devoted to his own Chosen Deity certainly obtains union with God.

### Truth

530. Have **Bhakti** within, and give up all cunning and deceit. Those who are engaged in business, such as work in office or trade, should also stick to truth. Truthfulness is the **Tapasya** (austerity) of this age of **Kali**.

531. Unless one always speaks the truth, one cannot find God Who is the soul of truth.

532. One must be very particular about telling the truth. Through truth one can realise God.

533. Everything false is bad. Even false garb is bad. If your mind is "not quite in accord with the garb, then terrible ruin shall visit you. In this way, one grows hypocritical, and all fear of doing wrong or uttering falsehood disappears.

534. A certain person, deeply involved in debt, feigned madness to escape the consequences of his liabilities. Physicians failed to cure his disease; and the more medicines were administered to him the greater became his madness. At last a wise physician found out the truth, and taking the man feigning madness aside, rebuked him saying, "Sir, what are you doing? Beware that by feigning madness you do not become actually mad. Already I see some genuine signs of insanity in you." This warning roused the man from his folly and he left off feigning madness. You will actually become what you constantly pose yourself to be.

### Brahmacharya (Continenence)

535. As one's face may be seen reflected in a sheet of glass coated with quicksilver, so the glorious image of the Almighty God can be seen reflected in the heart of a person who has preserved his power and purity through perfect, continence.

536. Unless one practises absolute continence, one cannot comprehend the subtle truths of spirituality.

537. **Sukadeva** was an **Urdhvaretas** (a man of complete and unbroken continence); he had never any emission of semen. There was another class called **Dhairyaretas**, who had discharge of semen at one time but subsequently practised absolute continence. If a man remains a **Dhairyaretas** continually for twelve years he acquires a superhuman power. A new nerve is developed in him. It is called the 'nerve of intelligence' (**Medhanadi**), and he can remember everything, and know everything.

538. If a man practises absolute continence for twelve years, the **Medhanadi** will open (*i.e.* his powers and understanding will blossom). His understanding will become capable of penetrating and comprehending the subtlest of ideas. With such an understanding man can realise God. God can be attained only through a purified understanding of this type.

539. Waste of the vital fluid entails loss of energy. Involuntary emission, however, is not of much consequence. That is due to food. But still one (a truly spiritual man) should not know any woman carnally.

540. He who has relinquished sexual enjoyment has indeed renounced the world! God is indeed very near him!

### Viveka or Discrimination

541. Practise discrimination. 'Woman' and 'gold' are both unreal; the one reality is God. Of what use is money? Why, it gives us food and clothing and a place to live in. Thus far it is useful, and no further. Surely you cannot see God with the help of money. Money is certainly not the end of life. This is the process of discrimination. What is there in money or in the beauty of women? Using your discrimination you shall find that the body of the most beautiful woman is made up only of flesh and blood, skin and bones, fat and marrow, nay, as in the case of all animals, of entrails, urine, excreta, and the rest. The wonder is that man can lose sight of God, and give his mind entirely to things of this kind!

542. **Viveka** and **Vairagya-Viveka** means the sifting of the real from the unreal; and **Vairagya**, indifference to the objects of the world. They do not come all on a sudden; they have to be practised daily. 'Woman and gold' have to be renounced, first mentally, and God willing, they should be renounced afterwards both internally and externally. It is said in the **Gita** that by **Abhyasa Yoga** (continuous practice of meditation) dislike for 'woman and gold' is engendered. Continuous practice brings to the mind extraordinary power; then one feels no difficulty in subjugating the senses, passions and lust. It is like a tortoise that never stretches out its limbs, once it has drawn- them in. Even if you cut it to pieces, it would never stretch them out.

543. Q. Is this world unreal?

A. It is unreal so long as you do not know God. For you do not see Him in everything, and so fasten yourself to the world with the tie of 'I and mine.' Being thus deluded by ignorance, you become attached to sense-objects and sink deeper and deeper into the abyss of **Maya**. **Maya** makes men so utterly blind that they cannot get out of its meshes even when the way lies open. You yourself know how unreal this worldly life is. Think a little of the very house that you are in. How many men were born and how many died in it! Things of the world appear before us for a moment and vanish in the next. Those whom you know to be your 'own' will cease to exist for you, the moment you close your eyes in death. How strong is the hold of attachment upon a worldly man! There is nobody in the family

verse? When you thus recognise the world to be unreal and ephemeral, you will no longer have any love for it. You will renounce it from the mind, and become free from all desires. When you succeed in this act of renunciation, you come to know God who is the cause of the universe. One who gains the realisation of God in this way-if he is not all-knowing, what else is he?

#### **Vairagya**

546. Even when we are blinded to reality by the fulfillment of every worldly desire, there may arise in us the question, "Who am I who enjoy all this?" This may be the moment in which a revelation of the secret begins.

547. In a forest full of thorns and briars it is impossible to walk bare-foot. One can do so if the whole forest is covered with leather, or if one's own feet are protected with leather shoes. It is impossible to cover the whole forest with leather, so it is wiser to protect one's feet with shoes. Similarly, in this world man is troubled with innumerable wants and desires, and there are only two possible ways of escape from them, viz., either to have all those wants satisfied, or to give up all of them. But it is impossible to satisfy all human wants; for with every attempt to satisfy them, new wants arise. So it is wiser to decrease one's wants' by contentment and the knowledge of Truth.

548. It is very pleasant to scratch an itching ringworm, but the sensation one gets afterwards is very painful and intolerable. In the same way the pleasures of this world are very attractive in the beginning, but their consequences are terrible to contemplate and hard to endure.

549. A kite with a fish in its beak was chased by a large number of crows and screaming kites, pecking at it and trying to snatch away the fish. In whichever direction it went" the flock of kites and crows also followed it. Tired of this annoyance, the kite threw away the fish which was instantly caught by another kite. At once the flock of kites and crows turned to the new possessor of the fish. The first kite was left unmolested; it calmly sat upon the branch of a tree. Seeing it in this quiet and tranquil state, the **Avadhuta** saluted it and said, "You are my **Guru**, O kite; you have taught me that so long as man does not throw off the burden of worldly desires, he cannot escape from worldly distractions and be at peace with himself."

550. A shy horse moves straight when its eyes are protected by blinkers. Similarly, the mind of a worldly man, restrained from looking around by the blinkers of discrimination and aversion for worldly objects, *Goes* not stumble, or stray into evil paths.

551. Why paper is wetted with oil, it cannot be written upon. So the soul stained by the oil of vice and luxury is unfit for spiritual devotion. But when the paper wetted with oil is overlaid with chalk, it may be written upon; so when such a soul is 'chalked' over with renunciation, it becomes fit again for spiritual progress.

552. There is a venomous spider whose poison no medicine can counteract till the wound is magnetised by passes with turmeric roots held in the hand. After the wound is thus treated, other remedies are seen to produce their effect. So when the spider of lust and wealth has infected a man, he must first get thoroughly saturated with the magnetic remedy of renunciation before he can have any spiritual progress.

553. If you put a purifying agent, say, a piece of alum, into a vessel of muddy water, the impurities settle down at the bottom and the water is made clear. Discrimination and dispassion for worldly objects are the two purifying agents. It is through these that the worldly man ceases to be worldly and becomes pure.

554. The caterpillar gets itself imprisoned in its own cocoon. Even so is the worldly soul caught in the meshes of its own desires. But when the caterpillar develops into a bright and beautiful butterfly, it bursts the cocoon and flies out freely enjoying the light and air. Even so the worldly soul can fly out of the meshes of **Maya** with the wings of discrimination and dispassion for worldly things.

555. Reverse turns the key of the room wherein God lives. To reach Him you have to renounce the world and all.

556. It is useless to pore over the holy scriptures if one's mind is not endowed with **Viveka** and **Vairagya**. No spiritual progress can be made without these.

557. How may one attain God? One has to sacrifice body, mind and riches to find Him.

558. What must be the condition of the mind of a bound soul before he can hope to be liberated? If by the grace of God he can acquire intense dispassion for worldly things, then only can he get released from the attachment to 'woman and gold'. And what is this intense dispassion, this vehement desirelessness? "By and by I shall realise God"-this is the attitude of feeble **Vairagya**. But he whose **Vairagya** is acute and strong-his heart longs and pants for God, even as the mother's heart pants for her child. He never seeks anything but God, and to him the world appears as a veritable well wherein he fears he may be drowned any moment. To him his relations then seem to be so many venomous serpents from whom he is inclined to fly away. And such is the strength of his impulse and determination that he never thinks of settling his domestic affairs first before he would seek the Lord.

559. Why does a God-lover renounce everything for the sake of Him Whom he loves? The moth after seeing it light has no mind to return to darkness; the ant dies in the heap of sugar but does not turn back. So the God-lover gladly sacrifices his life for the attainment of Divine bliss, and cares for nothing else.

560. One becomes a real **Jnani**, a true **Paramahansa**, only when one has tested all possible conditions of life, from the humblest position of a scavenger to the highest role of a king, through observation, report of others and actual experience, and has become convinced thereby of the trivial nature of all worldly enjoyments.

561. **Jnana** never comes without renunciation of lust and possessions. With the dawn of renunciation is destroyed all ignorance, all **Avidya**. Many things can be burnt by means of a lens held in such a manner that the rays of the sun fall on it directly, but you cannot use it so in the shade of a room. Even so with the mind. You must take it out of the dark cell of this world and expose it to the full blaze of self-effulgent Divinity. Then alone true renunciation will come, and with it all ignorance will be destroyed.

562. Knowledge (**Jnana**) cannot be communicated all at once. Its attainment is a question of time. Suppose a fever is of a severe type, the doctor cannot give quinine in that circumstance. He knows that it will do no good. The fever must first leave the patient, which depends upon time, and then quinine or any other medicine should be administered. Analogous is the case with a man who seeks Knowledge. Religious precepts often prove useless as long as one is immersed in worldliness. Allow a man a certain time for the enjoyment of the things of the world. When his attachment to the world has somewhat lessened, then comes the time for fruitful religious instructions. Till then all such instructions will only be lost upon him.

563. In a room away from their mother, little children play with dolls just as they like; but as soon as the mother comes in, they throw aside the dolls and run to her, crying "Mamma, Mamma". You also are now playing in this world, deeply absorbed in the dolls of wealth, honour and fame, without caring for anything else. But if once you see the Divine Mother in you, you will no more find pleasure in any of these, be it wealth, honour or fame. Leaving them all away, you will run to Her.

564. **Vairagya** is of many kinds. One kind of it springs from acute pain due to worldly misery. But the better kind arises from the consciousness that all worldly blessings though within one's reach, are transitory and are not worth enjoying. Thus, having all, one has not anything.

565. How many kinds of **Vairagya** are there? Generally two: the intense and the moderate. Intense **Vairagya** is like digging a large tank in one night until it gets filled with water then and there. Moderate **Vairagya** is slow in its growth and is procrastinating. There is no knowing when it will become complete.

566. A person was going to a river to bathe when he heard that a certain gentleman had been preparing for some days past to renounce the world and become a **Sannyasin**. This somehow produced a conviction in the man's mind that the Sannyasin's is the highest mode of life. He immediately determined to be a **Sannyasin** and without returning home went away in his half-naked condition. This illustrates intense **Vairagya**.

567. Dive deep into the ocean of the Absolute Existence Knowledge - Bliss. Fear not those deep sea-monsters- avarice and anger. Paint yourself thickly with the turmeric of [Viveka](#) and [Vairagya](#) and these alligators will not approach you; for the scent of this turmeric is too much for them.

### Perseverance

568. Do you know how peasants buy their teams? Oh, they are expert in these matters, and know very well how to distinguish the good ones from the bad. They know how to find out the mettle of an animal. They simply touch the tail, and the effect is miraculous. Those that have no mettle in them offer no resistance, but lie down on the ground as if they are going to sleep. But those that have mettle jump about, as if in protest against the liberty taken with them. The peasants choose the latter.

One must have the true mettle of a man within, if one wishes to be successful in life. But there are many who have no grit in them-who are like popped rice soaked in milk, 'Soft and cringing! No strength within! No capacity for sustained effort! No power of will ! They are failures in life.

569. The angler, anxious to hook a big fish, waits calmly for hours together, having thrown the bait and the hook into water. Similarly the [devotee](#) who patiently goes on with his devotions is sure at last to find his God.

570. The hereditary peasant does not give up tilling the soil though it may not rain for twelve years; but a merchant who has recently taken to agriculture is discouraged by one season of drought. The true believer is never discouraged even if he fails to see God in spite of lifelong devotion.

571. He who will learn to swim must attempt swimming for some days. None can venture to swim in the sea after a single day's practice. So if you want to swim in the sea of [Brahman](#), you must make many ineffectual attempts at first before you can successfully swim therein at last.

572. The newborn calf feels unsteady and tumbles down scores of times before it learns to stand steady. So in the path of devotion slips are many and frequent until success is finally achieved. red so long as it is in the fire, but it becomes black the moment it is removed from fire. So man is imbued with God so long as he is in communion with Him.

578. The mind is like the curly hair of a Negro; you may draw it straight as long as you please, but the moment you let it go it again becomes curled. As long as the mind is forcibly kept straight and steady, it works well and to advantage; but when you slacken your vigilance, it turns away from the right path.

579. Tota [Puri](#)<sup>1</sup> used to say, "If a brass vessel is not scoured daily, it gets dim in colour. So if a man does not meditate daily on the Deity, his heart gets impure." To hint the [Master](#) once replied that a gold vessel does not require daily cleaning. The man who has reached God no more needs the help of prayers and penances.

### Spiritual Practice

580. To drink pure water from a shallow pond one should gently take the water from the surface without disturbing the pond in the least. If it is disturbed, the sediments rise up and make the whole water muddy. If you desire to be pure, have firm faith, and slowly go on with your devotional practices, without wasting your energy in useless scriptural discussions and arguments. Your little brain will otherwise be muddled.

581. There are many who inquire about the houses and riches of a wealthy citizen of Calcutta like Jadunath Mullick, but only a few go to see him person and cultivate his acquaintance. Similarly, many are the men who study scriptures and talk of religion, but very few are those who wish to see God or take pains to approach Him.

582." Adopt adequate means for the end you seek to attain. You cannot get butter by crying yourself hoarse, saying, "There is butter in the milk." If you wish to get butter, turn the milk into curd and churn it well, and then you will have butter. So if you long to see God, take to spiritual practices (Sadhanas). What is the good of merely crying, "O God! O God!"?

583. If a man desires to see the king 'in his palace, he will have to go to the palace and pass through all the gates; but, if, after entering the outermost gate only he exclaims, "Where is the king?" he will not find him. He must go through the seven gates, and then he will see the king.

584. Effort is necessary for realisation. One day in [Bhava Samadhi](#) (spiritual absorption), I saw the [Haldarpukur](#)<sup>1</sup> and found there a rustic taking water. He removed the sedge from the surface and examined it now and again, taking it up in his hand. This was shown to me, as if to signify that just as water can never be seen unless one removes the sedge, love of God and realisation of Him cannot be had if one does not work for them. Meditation, repeating the 'name' of the Lord, singing His glories, praying to Him, charity, performance of sacrifices-these are the holy works that lead to God.

585. Even **Sri Krishna** went through tremendous spiritual practices relating to the worship of the Radhayantra. The **Yantra** is the Brahmayoni (Creative Power of **Brahman**), and the **Sadhana** consists of its worship and meditation. From this **Brahma** yoni there spring myriads of worlds!

586. The course of **Sadhana** is of three kinds, viz., (1) of the nature of birds, (2) of the nature of monkeys and (3) of the nature of ants.

(1) The bird comes and pecks at a fruit which perhaps falls down at the jerk, and the bird cannot get it for eating. So there are devotees who try to rush on with devotional practices with such violence that they often frustrate their attempts.

(2) It is the nature of the monkey to jump from branch to branch, holding a fruit in its mouth, and while jumping, the fruit often falls down from its mouth. Thus at times, distracted by the changing events of life the aspirants lose sight of the devotional path, if the grasp is not firm.

(3) The ant creeps gently and steadily towards a grain of food, and carries it back to its hole where it enjoys it comfortably. The course of **Sadhana** like that of the ant is considered the best there is sureness of attaining and enjoying the fruit.

587. He who is fond of fishing, and wishes to be informed if good fish abound in a certain pond, goes to those persons who have already fished in it, and eagerly asks them: "Is it true that there are big fish in this pond? And what is the most suitable bait to catch them?" Having gathered the necessary information from them, he resorts to the pond with his fishing rod, waits there patiently after throwing his line, and allures the fish with dexterity. At last he succeeds in hooking a large and beautiful dweller of the deep. Similarly, with implicit trust in the sayings of holy saints and sages, one must try to secure God in one's own heart with the bait of devotion, and the rod and hook of one's mind. With unceasing patience one must wait for the fullness of time. Then only can one catch the Divine fish.

588. The **Master** used to say: "Will you be able to obey to the fullest extent the commands that I give you? Verily, I tell you, your salvation is assured if you put into practice even one-sixteenth of what I say to you."

589. Spiritual practices (Sadhanas) are absolutely necessary for Self-knowledge, but if there is perfect faith, then a little practice is enough.

590. Once a person comes to believe in the power of His holy 'name' and feels inclined to repeat it constantly, neither discrimination nor devotional exercises of any sort are necessary for him. All doubts are set at rest, the mind becomes pure, and the Lord Himself is realised through the force of His holy name.

591. The Vedas and the Puranas must be read and heard, but one must act according to the precepts of the Tantras. The 'name' of Lord **Hari** must be uttered by the mouth and heard with the ear as well. Indeed in some diseases it is necessary not only to apply medicine externally but also to take it internally.

592. There are two kinds of Siddhas (perfect men) **Sadhana**-siddhas and Kripasiddhas (those who have gained perfection through religious discipline and those who have gained perfection through grace). To get a good crop, some have to irrigate their fields with great labour by cutting canals, or by drawing water. But some others are lucky enough to be saved all this trouble of getting water; for there comes the rain and floods the whole field. Almost all have to perform devotional practices assiduously in order to get freedom from the shackles of **Maya**. But Kripasiddhas are saved from all this trouble; they attain perfection through the grace of God. Their number, however, is extremely small.

### **Concentration and Meditation**

**593.** Meditation and contemplation should be kept up always.

**594.** Throwing away all work, you must meditate upon

God in the evening: The thought of God naturally comes to the mind at dusk. Everything was visible a while ago, but ah t now it is all shrouded in darkness. Who has done this? Such thoughts come to the mind. Haven't you marked how the Mohammedans give up all work and sit down to pray in the evening?

595. As it is very difficult to gather the mustard seeds that escape out of a torn package and get scattered in all directions, so it is \not a very easy affair to ingather and concentrate the mind which runs after worldly things in diverse directions.

596. Meditate on God either in an obscure corner, or in the solitude of forests, or within the silent sanctuary of your own heart.

597. In the beginning a man should try to concentrate his mind always in a lonely place; otherwise many things may distract him. If we put milk and water together, they are sure to get mixed; but if the milk is changed into butter by churning, the transformed milk (*i.e.*, butter), instead of mixing with water, will float upon it. So when a man has gained the power of mental concentration by constant practice, his mind will always rise above his environment and rest in God, wherever he might stay.

598. the **Master** sometimes used to instruct his disciples: "Before beginning your meditation, think of this (me) for some time. Do you 'know why I say so? Because, on account of your faith in this (me), your thoughts, if directed towards this (me), will at once turn Godward. It is just as a herd of cows reminds one of a cowboy; or the son of the father; or the lawyer of the law-court. The mind that remains scattered over a thousand and one objects will be collected together when you will think of this (me) ; and if the mind, thus concentrated, is then directed towards God, meditation in its true sense will be possible."

599. The easiest way of concentrating the mind is to fix it on the flame of a candle. Its inmost blue portion corresponds to the **causal body** or the Karanasarira. By fixing the mind on it, the power of concentration is soon obtained. The luminous portion that envelops the blue flame represents the Sukshmasarira or the **subtle body**; and outside of that there is what represents the gross body or the Sthulasarira.

600. Referring to the days of his **Sadhana**, the **Master** used to tell his disciples: "Well, my boys, in those days, before meditating upon God, I would imagine that I was thoroughly washing the mind of all the various impurities (evil thoughts, desires, etc.) that were there, and then installing the Deity therein. Do like this."

601. During meditation you should imagine that you are tying your mind to the **lotus** feet of the Deity with a silk thread, so that it may not wander away from there. But why must the thread be silken? Since His **lotus** feet are too delicate, any other band will give Him pain.

602. In the course of his meditation, a beginner sometimes falls into a kind of sleep that goes by the name of Yoganidra. At that time he invariably sees some kind of Divine visions.

603. Do you know how a man of Sattvika (pure) nature meditates? He meditates in the dead of night, upon his bed, within the mosquito-curtain, so that he may not be seen by others.

604. Be dissolved in the Lord even as the crude medicine is dissolved by spirit.

605. When all the clamourings of the mind are hushed, there comes the suspension of breath or the state of **Kumbhaka**. The **Kumbhaka** comes even through **Bhakti Yoga**; through intense love of God also, too breath is suspended.

606. Deep meditation brings out the real nature of the object of meditation, and infuses it into the soul of the meditator.

607. An **Avadhuta** (a great **Yogi**) once saw a bridal procession passing along a meadow with much pomp, to the accompaniment of drums and trumpets. Hard by the way through which the procession was passing, he saw a hunter so deeply absorbed in aiming at a bird that he was perfectly inattentive to the procession and did not cast even a side glance at it. The **Avadhuta**, saluting the hunter, said: "Sir, you are my **Guru**. When I sit in meditation, let my mind be concentrated on the object of meditation as yours has been on the bird."

608. An angler was fishing in a pond. The **Avadhuta** approaching him, asked, "Brother, which road leads to Banaras?" The man was at that time all attention to his fishing rod, as the float was indicating that a fish was nibbling at the bait. So he did not give any reply to the question. When the fish was caught, he turned round and said, "What was it you were saying, sir?" The **Avadhuta** saluted and said, "Sir, you are my **Guru**. When I sit in contemplation of the Supreme Being, let me follow your example and not attend to anything else before finishing my meditation." .

609. Once a heron was slowly moving towards the edge of a pond to catch a fish. Behind, there was a hunter aiming an arrow at it; but the bird was totally unmindful of this fact. The **Avadhuta**, saluting the heron, said, "When I sit in meditation, let me follow your example and never turn back to see who or what is behind me."

610. "To him, who is perfect in meditation, salvation is very near," is an old saying. Do you know when a man becomes perfect in meditation? When, on sitting down to meditate, he becomes immediately surrounded with a divine atmosphere and his soul communes with God.

611. There occurs deep concentration in meditation when nothing else can be seen or heard. Even perceptions and feelings disappear. A snake may crawl over the body, but one does not feel it. Neither the person meditating nor the snake has any feeling of each other.

612. He who at the time of contemplation becomes so unconscious of everything outside that he does not know even if birds were to nest in his hair---such a man has really acquired the perfection of meditative power.

613. In deep meditation all the functions of the senses are inhibited. The outward flow of the mind comes to a dead stop as if the door of the outer apartment is closed. All the five objects of the senses-light, sound, taste, touch and smell-lie outside unperceived. At first, visions of sense objects appear before the mind during meditation, but when it becomes deep, they never rise at all-they lie outside, debarred.

614. The secret is that the union with God ([Yoga](#)) can never happen unless the mind is rendered absolutely calm, whatever be the 'path' you follow for God-realisation. The mind is always under the control of the [Yogi](#), and not the [Yogi](#) under the control of his mind.