

## CHAPTER VIII VARIETIES OF ASPIRANTS AND THEIR IDEALS

*Some types of aspirants-Characteristics of true aspirants-Kinship of the spiritually-inclined-Ideals of the aspirant entangled in the world-Ideals of the Sannyasin*

### Some Types of Aspirants

227. Out of the myriads of paper kites that are seen flying in the air, only one or two get free by the snapping of the string. So out of hundreds of aspirants practising spiritual disciplines only one or two get free from worldly bondage.

228. There is a fabled species of birds called 'Homa'. They live so high up in the heavens and love these high regions so dearly- that they never come down to earth. And it is said that they even lay their eggs in the sky, and that their young ones are hatched in mid-air as the eggs fall, pulled down by gravity. No sooner do these fledglings find out that they are falling downwards, than they immediately change their course and instinctively fly up towards their home. Men like Sukadeva, Narada, Jesus and Sankaracharya are like these birds. Even in their boyhood they became free from all attachment to the things of the world and betook themselves to the highest regions of true Knowledge and Divine light.

229. There are two classes of Yogis, hidden and open. The former go through religious practices in secret and keep themselves hidden from public gaze. The latter carry about them the external symbols of the Yogi, such as a staff, and converse freely on spiritual subjects.

230. Though it is the general rule that flowers appear first and fruits then, there are some plants and creepers which bear fruits first and then flowers. Similarly, ordinary persons have to go through Sadhanas before they realise God but there is a class of aspirants who realise God first, and then perform the Sadhanas.

231. Of the grains of paddy fried in a frying pan, the few that leap out of the pan and burst outside are the best fried, for they are without any mark of charring. On the other hand, every one of the properly fried grains in the pan is sure to have some charred mark on it, however small. So of all good devotees, those few who give up the world altogether and go out of it are perfect without any spot, while even the best of those who are in the world must have at least some small spot of imperfection in their character.

232. Butter churned early in the morning is the best; that churned after sunrise is not so good. Addressing his young disciples who became sannyasins later on, the Master used to say, "You are like butter churned early in the morning while 'my householder disciples are like butter churned late in the day."

233. The young bamboo can be easily bent, but the full grown bamboo breaks when it is bent with force. It is easy to bend the young heart towards God, but the untrained heart of the old escapes the hold whenever it is so drawn.

234. The parrot cannot be taught to sing when the vibrating membrane in its throat has hardened too much because of age. It must be taught to sing while young, before the collar line appears on its neck. So in old age it is difficult to learn how to fix the mind on God, but it can be easily learnt in youth.

235. A ripe mango may be offered to God, or used for some other purpose; but if it is pecked by a crow even once, it is unfit for any use. It can neither be offered to the Deity, nor presented to a Brahmana, nor may it be eaten by the pure. So boys and girls should be dedicated to the service of God before the impurities of worldly desires taint their hearts. Once worldly desires enter their minds, or the demon of sensual pleasures casts his baneful shadow over them, it is very difficult indeed to make them tread the path of virtue.

236. The love in the heart of a boy is whole and undivided. When he gets married in time, half of his heart, if not more, is given away to his wife, and when children are born to him, he loses another quarter thereof, while the remaining quarter is divided among father, mother, honour, fame, pride, dress, and the rest; therefore he has no love left to offer to God. Hence if the undivided mind of a boy is directed early enough to God, he may gain His love, and realise Him easily. But it is not quite so easy for grown-up people to do so.

237. If you ask whether there is any-difference between the Jnanis who live in the world and those who renounce it, I would say that the two are the same. Both of them have the same Jnana in common. But if the Jnani is in the world, he has cause to fear; for life in the midst of sensual attractions is attended with the fear of a fall, slight though it is. If you live in a sooty room, you are sure to get a little tainted by the soot, however careful you may be.

238. To someone the Master said: "Well, you have now come to seek God when you have spent the best part of your life in the world. Had you entered the world after realising God, what peace and joy you would have found!"

239. Q. What is the difference between the Sattvic, the Rajasic and the Tamasic ways of worship?  
A. The man who worships from the very depth of his heart without the least ostentation or vanity is a Sattvic worshipper. The man who gives much attention to decorating his house, makes much fuss about

music and dancing, and makes all costly and elaborate arrangements for a rich feast when celebrating the worship of the Deity, is a **Rajasic** worshipper. The man, who immolates hundreds of innocent goats and sheep on the altar, has dishes of meat and wine for offerings, and is absorbed only in dancing and singing while conducting worship, is a **Tamasic** worshipper.

#### **Characteristics of True Aspirants**

240. The flint may remain for myriads of years under water and still not lose its inner fire. Strike it with steel whenever you like, and out flashes the glowing spark. So is the true devotee firm in his faith. Though he may remain surrounded by all the impurities of the world, he never loses his faith in, and love of God. He warms up with devout enthusiasm as soon as he hears the 'name' of the Lord.

241. Just as gold and brass are tested by a touch-stone, so are the sincere and the hypocritical Sadhus distinguished by persecution and calumny.

242. The railway engine easily drags with it a train of heavily loaded carriages. So the loving children of God, firm in their faith and devotion, feel no trouble in passing through life in spite of all troubles and anxieties, and at the same time they lead many to God along with them.

243. When does the attraction of the pleasures of the senses die away? When one realises the consummation of all happiness and of all pleasures in God-the indivisible, eternal ocean of bliss. Those who enjoy Him can find no attraction in the cheap, worthless pleasures of the world.

244. He who has once tasted the refined crystal of sugar candy finds no pleasure in tasting the dirty treacle. He who has slept in a palace will not find pleasure in lying down in a dirty hovel. The soul that has tasted the sweetness of Divine bliss finds no happiness in the vulgar pleasures of the world.

245. The lady who has a king for her lover will not accept the addresses of a street beggar. The soul that has found favour in the eyes of the Lord does not fall in love with the paltry things of the world.

246. It is the nature of the winnowing basket to reject whatever is light and useless, and retain whatever is weighty and good. Such is the nature of all pious souls.

247. Sugar and sand may be mixed together, but the ant rejects the sand and carries away the grains of sugar. So the holy Paramahansas and pious men successfully sift the good from the bad.

248. The water of a rapid stream moves round and round in eddies and whirlpools in some places; but passing these it resumes again a straight and swift course. So the heart of the **devotee** is caught every now and then in the whirlpool of despondency, grief and unbelief; but this is only a momentary aberration and does not last long.

249. Wherein is the strength of a **devotee**? He is a child of God, and his devotional tears are his mightiest weapon.

250. The more you scratch the part affected by ringworm, the greater grows the itching, and the more the pleasure you derive from scratching. So the worshippers of God never get tired of singing His praise.

251. That man whose hair stands on end at the mere mention of the 'name' of God, and from whose eyes flow tears of love-he has indeed reached his last birth.

252. What happens when an impure woman tempts a pious man and tries to cast her evil influence upon him? Just as the skin of a ripe mango, when pressed hard, is left in the hand, the stone and the kernel having slipped out of it, so does the mind of the pious man glide away to God, leaving behind its earthly tabernacle to be acted on by the woman.

253. The truly religious man is he who does not commit any sin even when he is alone, and when no man observes him, because he feels that God sees him even then. He who can resist the temptations of a young and seductive woman in a lonely forest, where he is unobserved by human eye, through the fear-that God sees him and who, through such fear, will not even cast an immoral glance at her,-he is truly a religious man. He who finds a bag full of gold in a lonely and uninhabited house, and resists the temptation of appropriating it, he is a truly religious man. But he who practises religion for the sake of show, through fear of public opinion, cannot be called truly religious. The religion of silence and secrecy is the true religion, but it is all sham and mockery when attended with vaunting and vanity.

#### **Kinship of the Spiritually-Inclined**

254. The spiritually minded belong to a caste of their own, beyond all social conventions.

255. A woman naturally feels shy to relate to all the conversation she daily holds with her husband. She neither communicates it to anyone nor feels inclined to do so; and if it gets divulged in any way, she feels annoyed. But she would herself relate it to her intimate companion without reserve; nay, she would even be impatient to tell it to her and would find pleasure in doing so. Similarly, a **devotee** of God does not like to

relate to anyone but a true **Bhakta** the ecstatic joy that he experiences in Divine communion; nay, sometimes he is impatient to relate his ex-periences to such a person and feels happy to do so.

256. If a strange animal were to approach a herd of *cows*, it would soon be driven off by the combined attack of the whole herd. But let a cow come, and all the cows would make friends with her, with much mutual licking of bodies. Thus, when one **devotee** meets another **devotee**, both experience much delight and are loath to part from each other. But when a scoffer enters this circle, they sedulously avoid him. .

257. Why is it that one who loves the Lord does not like to live in solitude? The hemp-smoker finds no pleasure in smoking without company. The pious man, like the hemp-smoker, finds no pleasure. in chanting the sacred 'name' of God away from the company of other devotees.

### **Ideals of the Aspirant Entangled in the World**

258.- It is said that, when a Tantrika tries to invoke the Deity through the medium of the spirit of the dead, he sits on a fresh human corpse and keeps near him food and wine. In the course of the invocation, if at any time the corpse is, as they say, vivified temporarily and opens its mouth, the intrepid invoker must pour the wine and thrust the food into its gaping mouth to appease the elemental that has, for the time being, taken possession of it. If he does not do so, the invocation is interrupted by the elemental, and the higher spirit does not appear. So, remaining on the carcass of the world, if you desire to attain beatitude, first provide yourself with all the things necessary to pacify the clamour of worldly demands on you; otherwise your devotions will be broken and interrupted by the cares and anxieties of life.

259. There is necessity of money, no doubt, in worldly life; but do not ponder much over it and other material gains. Contentment with what comes of its own accord is the best attitude. Do not be anxious to hoard. Those who dedicate their very life and soul to Him, those who are His devotees and have taken refuge in Him, can never think of such worldly matters. With them, expenditure is commensurate with income. As money comes into their hands in one way, it is spent in another.

260. A householder disciple: Sir, may I try to earn a larger income?

The **Master**: Yes, if you mean to devote it to the life in the family based on discrimination. But take care that you earn money by honest means. For it is not earning money but the service of the Lord that is your aim; and wealth devoted *to* God is beyond cavil.

Disciple: How long, Sir, have I obligations to the family?

The **Master**: So long as the family is not provided with enough to maintain itself. But if your children can support themselves, you have no more duty to them.

261. To some householder devotees the **Master** said: "You will look upon money only as a means of getting food, clothes and shelter, of worshipping the Deity and serving Sadhus and devotees. But it is wrong to hoard it. Bees labour hard to build their hives, but man comes and robs them. You need not renounce 'woman' completely. But after a few children are born, you and your wife should live like brother and sister."

262. *Q*, How can I go through my devotional practices when I have always to think of my daily bread?

*A*. He for whom you work will supply you with your necessaries. God made provisions for your support before He sent you into this world.

263; We possess home, family and children for a short time, but these are all ephemeral. The palm tree itself is real, but when one or two of its fruits fall to the ground, why should we regret it?

264. Renunciation of 'woman and gold' has been laid down only for those that lead a monastic life. Monks must not even look at the pictures of women. Even the thought of spiced pickles causes the mouth to water-not to speak of the sight or the touch of those dainties. But this hard rule is not meant for men of the world like you (addressing the householder devotees present); it is intended purely for monks. As for you, you may go amongst women with a mind unattached and fixed upon God. That your mind may be thus unattached and fixed upon God, it is good that you should often retire into solitude-a place away from either men or women; "a place where you may be left absolutely to yourself, praying to the Lord with a yearning heart for true knowledge; a place where you may stay at least for three days, if not more, or for at least one day, if not three.

Your path, again, as married man, is to live with your wife just as brother and sister, after one or two children are born to you, and to pray to the Lord constantly that both of you may have strength to live a perfect life of spirituality and self-control.

265. Live in the world, but be not worldly. As the saying goes, make the frog dance before the snake, but let not the snake swallow the frog.

266. A boat may stay in water, but water should not stay in the boat. An aspirant may live in the world, but the world should not live within him.

267. It matters not if you live the life of a house-holder, only you must fix your mind on God. Do your work with one hand, and hold the feet of the Lord with the other. When you have no work in the world to do hold His feet fast to your heart with both your hands.

268. What is the state of a man who is in the world but is free from its attachments? He is like a [lotus-leaf](#) in water, or like a mud-fish in the marsh. Neither of these is polluted by the element in which it lives. The water wets not the leaf, nor does the mud stain the glossy coat of the fish.

269. It does not matter much whether you are a family man or not. Always perform your duties unattached, with your mind -fixed on God. As for instance, the man who has got a carbuncle on his back talks with his friends and others, and even carries out undertakings, but his mind is all the while on his pain.

270. Living in the world one is safe, if one has [Viveka](#) (discrimination of the Real from the unreal), and [Vairagya](#) (dispassion for worldly things), and along with these intense devotion to- God.

271. What are you to do when you are placed in this world? 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.

272. It may be given even to the householder to see God. It was the case with Raja [Janaka](#), the great royal sage. But one cannot rise to the height of Raja [Janaka](#) *all* of a sudden. [Janaka](#) spent many long years in solitude away from the din and bustle of the world, practising devotional exercises. Thus it would do infinite good to men of the world, if they would retire now and then into solitude, even for three days at a time, so that God might be realised.

273. Some [Brahmo](#) boys once told me that they followed Janaka's example-they lived in the world but quite unattached to it. I said to them that it was easy to say one was [Janaka](#) but quite a different matter to be actually one. It is so hard to move among worldly objects without being contaminated. What terrible austerities did not [Janaka](#) practise at the outset! But I do not advise you to go through similar hardships. What I want you to do is to practise devotion, and to live alone for some time in some quiet place. Enter the world after gaining [Jnana](#) and [Bhakti](#). The best curd is formed when the milk is left quite still; shaking, or even changing the pot, spoils it. [Janaka](#) was unattached; hence one of the epithets applied to him is [Videha](#)-literally 'bodiless'. He led the life of a [Jivanmukta](#). The annihilation of the idea of the body is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. Truly [Janaka](#) was a great hero. He handled with ease the two swords---one of Knowledge ([Jana](#)) and the other of work ([Karma](#)).

274. Men always quote the example of king [Janaka](#) as a man who lived in the world and yet attained spiritual illumination. But throughout the whole history of mankind he is the solitary example of this type. He was not the rule but the exception. The general rule is that no one can attain spiritual perfection without renouncing 'woman and gold'. Do not think yourself to be a [Janaka](#). Many centuries have rolled away, and the world has not yet produced a second [Janaka](#).

275. If you desire to live in the world unattached, you should first practise devotion in solitude for some time-a year, six months, a month, or at least twelve days. During this period of retirement, you should constantly meditate upon God and pray to Him for Divine love. You should think that there is nothing in the world which you may call your own, drat those whom you consider as your own are sure to pass away some day or other. God alone is really your own. He is your all-in-all. How to obtain Him? - this should be your only concern.

276. When you are engaged in devotional practices, keep aloof from those who scoff at them and also from those who ridicule piety and the pious.

277. If you first smear your palms with oil and then cut open the jack fruit the milky exudation of the fruit will not stick to your hands and inconvenience you. If you first fortify yourself with the true knowledge of the Universal Self, and then live in the midst of wealth and worldliness, surely they will in no way affect you.

278. The magnetic needle always points to the North, and hence it is that the sailing vessel does not lose her direction. So long as the heart of man is directed towards God, he cannot be lost in the ocean of worldliness.

279. In the game of [hide-and-peek](#), if the player succeeds in touching the 'Granny' ([Boori](#)), he is no longer liable to be made a 'thief by the seeker. Similarly by once seeing God, we are no longer bound by the fetters' of the world. Just as the person touching the [Boori](#) is free to go about wherever he chooses, without being pursued and made a 'thief', so also in the world's play-ground there is no fear for him who has once touched the feet of God. He attains freedom from all worldly cares and anxieties, and nothing can ever bind him again.

280. Alligators love to float on water, but as soon as one rises up, it is made a mark by the hunters. Necessarily it is obliged to remain under water and cannot rise to the surface. Yet, whenever it finds a safe opportunity, it rises up with a deep whizzing noise, and swims happily on the expanse of water. O man, entangled in the meshes of the world, you too are anxious to swim on the surface of the ocean of bliss, but are prevented by the importunate demands of your family. Yet be of good cheer. Whenever you find leisure, call upon God eagerly, pray to Him earnestly and tell Him all your sorrows. In due time, He will surely emancipate you and enable you to swim merrily on the ocean of bliss.

281. When you are forced by circumstances to go to a place *of* temptations, always remember the Divine Mother. She will protect you from the many evils that may be lurking even in your heart. The presence of the Mother will shame you away from evil deeds and evil thoughts.

282. The world and God-how is it possible to harmonise these two? Look at the carpenter's wife, how diversely busy she is! With one hand she stirs the flattened rice in the mortar of a Dhenki, with the other hand she is nursing her child, and at the very same time she bargains with a customer about the flattened rice. Thus, though her occupations are many, her mind is fixed on the one idea that the pestle of the Dhenki does not fall on her hand and bruise it. So be in the world, but always remember Him, and never go astray from His path.

283. As a boy holding to a post or pillar whirls about it with headlong speed without any fear of falling, so perform your worldly duties, fixing your hold firmly upon God, and you will be free from danger.

284. As the village maidens in India carry four or five pots of water placed one over the other upon their heads, talking all the way with one another about their joys and sorrows, and yet do not allow a single drop of water to spill, so must the traveller in the path of virtue walk along his route. In whatever circumstances he may be placed, let him always take heed that his heart does not swerve from the true path.

285. As an unchaste woman, busily engaged in house hold affairs, will all the while be thinking of her secret lover, so do you, O man of the world, perform your round of worldly duties, but let your heart be fixed always on God.

286. As a wet-nurse in a wealthy family brings up her master's child, loving it as if it were her own, yet knowing well that she has no claim upon it, so you also think that you are but trustees and guardians of your children whose real father is the Lord Himself.

287. As the street minstrel plays the guitar with one hand and with the other strikes a drum, while at the same time he sings a song, so do you, O man of the world, perform all your worldly duties with your hands, never forgetting to repeat and glorify the 'name' of the Lord with all your heart.

288. The maid-servant says with reference to her master's house, "This is our house." All the while she knows that the house is not her own, and that her own house is far away in a distant village of Burdwan or Nadia. Her thoughts are all really directed to her village home. Again, referring to her master's child in her arms, she says, "My Hari has grown very naughty," or "My Hari likes to eat this or that," and so on. But all the while she knows for certain that Hari is not her own. I tell those who come to me, to lead a life unattached like the maid-servant. I tell them to live unattached to this world-to be in the world, but not of the world-and at the same time to have their mind directed to God, the heavenly home whence all come. I tell them to pray for *Bhakti*, and base their lives on it.

289. Always consider that your family concerns are not yours; they are God's and you are His servant come here to obey His commands. When this idea becomes firm, there remains nothing indeed that a man may call his own.

290. He is a true hero who performs all the duties of the world with his mind fixed on God. None but a strong man can, while carrying a load of two maunds (more than a hundredweight) on his head, stop to admire a bridal procession passing his way.

291. Those who live in the world and still try to gain salvation are like the soldiers that fight from behind the ramparts of a fort, while the ascetics who renounce the world in search of God are like the soldiers fighting in the open field. To fight the enemy from within the fort is more convenient and far safer than to fight in the open field.

292. Before soldiers go out to meet the enemy, they learn the art of fighting in their barracks, where they do not have to put up with the hardships incidental to action in the open field. So avail yourselves of the conveniences of your home-life to raise your spiritual condition before you take to the austerities of an ascetic life.

293. He indeed is blessed, in whom all the qualities of head and heart are fully developed and evenly balanced. He acquits himself admirably well in whatever position he may be placed. He is full of guileless faith and love for God, and yet his dealings with others leave nothing to be desired. When he is engaged in

worldly affairs, he is a thorough man of business. In the assembly of the learned he establishes his claims as a man of superior learning, and in debates he shows wonderful powers of reasoning. To his parents he is obedient and affectionate; to his relations and friends he is loving and sweet; to his neighbours he is kind and sympathetic and always ready to do good; to his wife he is the god of love. Such a man is indeed perfect.

### Ideals of the Sanyasin

294. The first birth of man is from his father; [Upanayana](#) marks his second birth, and [Sannyasa](#) the third.

295. The mind is much wasted while one is engaged in worldly pursuits. And that loss can be made good, only if one takes to the life of renunciation ([Sannyasa](#)).

296. Who is a fit candidate for the holy order of Sannyasins? He who gives up the world altogether without having any thought of the morrow, as to how he will eat or how he will be clothed, is fit to be a true [Sannyasin](#). His mentality must be like that of a man who can, if need be, let himself fall fearlessly from the top of a tall tree; without any thought of saving his own life or limbs.

297. Yogins and Sannyasins are like snakes. The snake does not dig out a hole for itself, but lives in the hole made by the mouse. When one hole becomes uninhabitable, it enters into another hole. Just so Yogins and Sannyasins make no house for themselves. They pass their days in other men's houses-today in one house, tomorrow in another.

298. Sadhus never settle down in a place where there are no 'jungles' nearby and where 'food and drink' is hard to get. 'Jungles' means solitary spots for answering the calls of nature; and 'food and drink' means alms. As Sadhus live on alms, they select only those places for their temporary residence where alms can be easily procured. When they get tired in the course of their journey they may halt at a place for a day or two, in spite of the difficulty of procuring alms. But they never stay anywhere if there is scarcity of water and of solitary spots for answering the calls of nature. Good Sadhus never attend to these matters of physical cleanliness in places where they may be observed by others. They finish these things in solitude, far away from the haunts of men.

299. If a white cloth is stained even with a small spot, the stain appears very ugly indeed. So the smallest fault of a holy man.

300. A [Sannyasin](#) may himself be perfectly unattached and may have full control over his senses. Yet to set an example to mankind he must make a rigorous renunciation of woman and gold'. For only when they notice the thoroughness of the Sannyasin's renunciation, will men take courage; only then will they make efforts to renounce sex and riches. And who indeed will impart this lesson on renunciation, if not the [Sannyasin](#) ?

301. What is the sign of a genuine [Sannyasin](#) and a Tyagi? Both must be entirely unconnected with lust and gold. Should they feel an attachment for gold, or be troubled by pollution even in a dream, all their spiritual exercises would come to naught.

302. When one has taken up the garb of a [Sannyasin](#), one has to conduct oneself precisely like a true [Sadhu](#). Don't you see in the drama how the person playing the part of a king always acts like a king and how he who is in the role of the minister always plays the minister? Once a village clown put on the garb of a [Sannyasin](#) and appeared before the Zamindar of the place. The Zamindar wanted to present him with a purse, but he refused to accept it and went away. After a while he came back, having washed himself and changed his dress, and asked for the money that the Zamindar wanted to give. When he dressed like a [Sadhu](#), he could not even touch the money, but now he was ready to feel gratified even with a four-anna bit.

303. A person went to a holy man to get some medicine for his sick child, carrying the little patient in his arms. The holy man asked him to come next day. Next day, when the man went, the [Sadhu](#) said, "Give no sweets to the child, and the child will soon be cured." The man replied, "Sir, you could have told me this yesterday itself." The [Sadhu](#) said, "Yes, I could have, but yesterday I had a quantity of sugar lying before me, and seeing that, your child would have thought that the [Sadhu](#) who advised others not to take sugar but ate it himself was a hypocrite."

304. The man who becomes an ascetic owing to some misunderstanding with his father, or mother, or wife may be called an -'ascetic-by-disgust'. His asceticism is momentary; he gives up the ascetic way of life as soon as he gets a good lucrative job in a wealthy family.

305. A disciple: How can we recognise a truly pious man ([Sadhu](#)) ?

The [Master](#): He is truly pious whose heart and soul are wholly dedicated to God. Truly pious is he who has renounced 'woman and gold'. The truly pious man never views women in the ordinary worldly light. He always remains at a distance from them, and if they happen to come

near, he looks on them as his mother and shows respect to them. He thinks constantly of God, and serves all creatures knowing that He resides in all. These are the general traits of the truly pious.

306. Trust not a [Sannyasin](#) who practises medicine, uses spells and incantations, receives money, and displays his piety with the sign-boards of elaborate external marks.

307. Forgiveness is the true nature of the ascetic.