

3. Read life histories of saints and sages

Books are available in plenty, and at very cheap prices. The *Vedas*, scriptures (*sastras*), and *Puranas* can be obtained and read by everyone. There is also no dearth of spiritual teachers (*gurus*). Schools abound and are ostensibly granting the boon of knowledge. Facilities for training the mind are plenty and within reach. And yet, from nowhere is heard the note of content at having partaken of the nectar of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

When I see the heaps of books that lie around everywhere, I feel that the wisdom inside a book cannot succeed in penetrating the heavy binding and emerge into the light. God is hidden by the mountain ranges of lust, anger, envy, and selfishness. So too, the sun of wisdom is hidden by these huge heaps of books. Though these books have spread to all corners of the earth, we can't say that culture or wisdom has increased; the human is still not far from the ape. An attractive binding and title, a beautiful picture —these are what the reader seeks, viz. transitory pleasure and momentary contentment.

Only those who, by means of discrimination, select the books they read and practice what they read can realise truth and enjoy everlasting bliss. Only those people live worthwhile lives. Therefore, those who seek the highest path and who revel in thoughts of God should strive to read only the life histories of saints and sages and books that help the contemplation of the Divine. Aimless reading of books all and sundry, whatever comes to hand, will make confusion only worse confounded. It gives no profit; it confers no peace.

4. Cultivate one-pointedness and equal vision

Above all, cultivate one-pointed steadfastness (*ekagratha*) in whatever you do. Impartial vision (*sama-drishti*) is auspicious vision (*subha-drishti*).

The lion, though king of the forest, turns back every few steps while walking through the woods, because it is afraid of being pursued. Fear in the mind makes the vision falter. Violence within the heart distorts the vision and distracts the sight.

People must have impartial vision. All creation must appear as equally auspicious to their eyes. They must look upon all with as much love and faith as they have in themselves, for nothing is evil in creation, no, not even an iota. Evil appears as such only through faulty vision. Creation gets coloured by the nature of the glasses we wear. By itself, it is eternally pure and holy.

There have always been, there are, and there will always be teachers who reveal to people and who instruct them in attaining the heights they can reach through one-pointed steadfastness and the fullest manifestation of their physical, mental, and intellectual powers. But people's minds revel in external objects and in purposeless observation and criticism of the outside world. How then can their minds be trained to be steadfast?

Each one should ask himself this question: Great souls (*mahatmas*) and outstanding sages were also people like me; they were also embodied beings. If they could attain perfection, so can I, if I follow their method. What profit do I get spending my time in discovering the faults and weakness of others?