

VII THE IDEAL OF RENUNCIATION

1. "You are a living god. Who is able to renounce all for God's sake? Even the injunctions of Destiny are cancelled if one takes refuge in God. Destiny strikes off with her own hand what she has written about such a person."

2. "Will a man who has strong desires for worldly pleasures listen to me if I ask him to renounce them? But if a fortunate soul has realized the world to be the sport of Maya and God alone to be real, shall I not help him a little? Is there any end to the suffering in the world?"

3. "Don't marry, don't enter the world. What do you lose if you don't marry? You are free wherever you may be."

4. "An unmarried person who leads a pure life will advance towards Him with rapid strides, whether he prays to Him or not. The others, being tied hand and foot, find it difficult to extricate themselves from the bondage of worldliness, even though they try to think of God."

5. "What is there in the worldly life? What an inordinate attachment people have for it. See how out of one so many come out, and how one's attention and energies are all dissipated. Is it possible for a person placed under such conditions to attain to spiritual greatness? Have you not seen crabs? The mother crab peeps out of her hole again and again, and then goes down. It struggles hard repeatedly to free itself, but fails. And why? Because of her attraction for her numerous progeny living in the hole. This attraction drags her into the hole in spite of all her efforts. Such is the case of those who are immersed in worldly life."

6. The mother of a monk requested Holy Mother to ask her son to go back to worldly life. Mother replied, "It is a rare good fortune to be the mother of a monk. People cannot give up attachment even to a brass pot. Is it an easy thing to renounce the world? Why should you worry?"

7. About a boy who wanted to embrace monastic life and was being encouraged by Swami Shivananda to do so. Mother said, "One needs good fortune, indeed, to accept the ideal of renunciation taught by the Master. Tarak (Swami Shivananda) is right, How few can be rescued from the world once they are entangled in it! The boy has real strength of mind."

8. A woman devotee requested Holy Mother to order her daughter to marry.

Mother replied, “Is it not misery to remain in lifelong slavery to another and always dance to his tune? Though there is some risk in being a celibate, still, if one is not inclined to lead a married life, one should not be forced into it and subjected to lifelong worldliness. Those girls that are drawn to the ideal of complete renunciation should be encouraged to lead a celibate life.”

9. When someone criticized Holy Mother for giving a disciple ‘the ochre robe, she replied, “Look here, child, they are children of light. They live on this earth as pure as flowers. Can you tell me anything happier than this? You have seen for yourself what kind of happiness worldly life can give. What have you learned from me all these days? Why so much attraction for worldly life? Why so much animal propensity? What sort of happiness do you derive from it? Can you not even conceive in dream a pure ideal of life? Can’t you live with your husband even now as brother and sister? Why this desire to lead a piggish life? This misery of the world has been gnawing into my bones.”

10 . “He has done very well to become a Sadhu. What is there in this cage of flesh and bones? ... What is after all in this body? Why should one become enmeshed in this Maya? It will ultimately come to an end after a few days. Then when it is burnt, there will remain only a seer and a half of ash. Banku has become a Sannyasin, he has taken to the path of God. He has done well, he has done well indeed!”

11. “People find opportunities according to their fate and Karma. ... The fact is, if one’s time to go beyond the world is ripe, one will break all bonds and come; nobody will check him. Lack of money, awaiting somebody’s approval, fear of having to go back, these are nothing.”

12. “You see, my dear, many people seek God only after disappointment in other spheres. But he, who from childhood can place at the Master’s feet a heart as pure as a flower, is blessed indeed I”

13. ‘The other day X- said to me, ‘Mother, we are always to be alert. We always tremble with fear lest we should think any unholy thought.’ That is very true. A monk is like a bleached cloth. ... One does not notice the spots in a black cloth so much, but even a drop of ink looks so prominent on white linen. The monk’s life is always beset with dangers. The whole world is engrossed in lust and gold* The monk must always practise renunciation and dispassion. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘A monk must always be

alert and careful.”

14. “Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘O Sadhu, beware!’ Sadhus should always be alert. The path of a Sadhu is always slippery. When one is on slippery ground, one should walk tiptoe. Is it a joke to become a Sannyasin? If one had so desired, one could have married and lived the life of a householder. Now that you have given up such intentions, the mind should not be allowed to think of these things. What has once been spat out, is not eaten again. The ochre robe of a Sadhu protects him as the collar of a dog protects it from danger. No one molests a dog with a dollar, as it belongs to someone or other. All gates are open to a Sadhu. He has admission everywhere.” 360

15. Devotee: “Mother, I am overtaken by fear on seeing how even high spiritual persons meet with a fall.”

Mother: “If you are constantly in touch with objects of enjoyment, you are likely to succumb to their influence.”

16. At Jayrambati when a young man was initiated into Brahmacharya, he asked, “How long will I have to fulfil its vows?” Mother answered him at once with a firm voice, “As long as there is life in your body.”

17. “Faith and firmness are the basic things; if faith and firmness are there, then you have it all.”

18. ‘Forgetting your personality, try to understand your identity [with God].’

19. “It is extremely bad for a monk to possess money. There is nothing impossible for the round pieces to do- even to the extent of endangering life.”

20 . To a disciple who had been busy with accounts the whole day. Mother said, “Can anyone who has renounced the world relish these things? Once there was a mistake in the accounts relating to the salary of the Master. I asked him to talk to the manager of the Temple about it. But he said, ‘What a shame! Shall I bother myself about accounts?’ Once he said to me, ‘He who utters the Name of God never suffers from any misery. Why do you worry?’ These are his very words. Renunciation was his ornament.”

21. “What is there in wealth, my dear? The Master could not bear even to

touch money. His hand would twist away. He would say, 'The world itself is unreal. Look here, if I believed that this world is real I would gild the whole of Kamarpukur with real gold before I go. But I know all that is unreal and God alone is real.'"

22. "Only people who have renounced the world can resist the temptation of wealth."

23. "My dear child, even the tinklings of the coins produce greed in the minds of the needy-such is the power of money."

24. "Money always taints the mind. ... Such is the fascination of money that if you involve yourself too much in it, you will feel attracted to it. You may think that you are above money and that you will never feel any attraction for it, as you have once renounced it. You may further think that at any moment you may leave it behind. No, my child, never harbour this thought in your mind. Through a tiny little loop-hole it will enter into your mind and then strangle you gradually quite undetected. You will never know it. ... Sri Ramakrishna could never bear the touch of money. ... Always remember his words. Money is at the root of all the disasters you see in the world. Money may lure one's mind into other temptations: Beware!"

25. "A monk must not lower the ideal of renunciation. Even if a wooden image of a woman lies upside down in the road, he must not turn it the other way, even with his foot, to look at its face."

26. "A monk should be above attachment and jealousy. He must be the same under all circumstances. Sri Ramakrishna used to say to Hriday, 'You must bear with me and I must bear with you; then everything will go on well. Otherwise we shall have to summon the manager to make up our differences.'"

27. "A monk must sever all the chains of Maya. Golden chains are as much of a bond as iron chains. A monk must have no attachments."

28. "A monk should not visit his home. Meeting his people revives old memories, He must forget these, nay his very body. Then only he can have a vision of God."

29. "Who is one's father or one's mother? God is all."

30 , “A monk once came to the Panchavati. In the beginning he had no attachments. But alas, in the end he began to store away things like a mouse-utensils, pitchers, grain, and everything. The Master noticed it and said one day, ‘Poor thing. This will be the end of him!’ He was about to be entangled in the snare of Maya. The Master advised him strongly about renunciation and asked him to leave the place. Then he went away.”

31. Mother scolded a Swami because he was showing undue love for the ashrama. “You have renounced the world to repeat God’s Name. But now you are involved in activities. The ashrama has become your second world. People come to the monastery, giving up their families, but they become so attached to the monastery that they do not want to give it up. *A man eager to keep away from acid food builds a home under a tamarind tree!”

32. “Whenever you go on some work, make it a point to return as soon as it is finished. In this life you will find that in digging for earthworms we often, go deeper and bring out snakes.”

33. To a woman disciple who was to lead an exclusive spiritual life: “Never be intimate with any man-not even your own father or brother. What to speak of others then! Let me again repeat, don’t be intimate with any man, even if God comes to you in that form.”

34. To a woman in an ochre robe, who said she had not been initiated. Mother said, “Without initiation, and without any spiritual realization, you have put on this sacred robe. This is not proper for you. The robe you have put on is very holy. I was about to salute you with folded hands. All will bow down at your feet. You must acquire the power to assimilate the honour.”

35. Disciple: “Mother, the monastic life begets terrible vanity.”
Mother: “Yes, that is true. A monk may become very vain. He may think, ‘See, he does not respect me. He does not bow down before me,’ and so on. (Pointing to her own white cloth). One should rather live thus (meaning possessed of inner renunciation). ... Is it possible, my child, to get rid of vanity-vanity of beauty, vanity of virtue, vanity of knowledge and vanity of a holy life?”

36. Disciple: “Mother, all your children are learned, but these beings (referring to the inmates of the Koalpara Ashrama) are your illiterate

children. Sarat Maharaj has written books and ... your other children are giving lectures. So much is being done to spread Sri Ramakrishna's ideas." Mother: "What do you mean? Our Master did not know much of reading and writing. The real thing is devotion to God. Through you, much work will be done in this part of the country. The Master was born on earth this time to liberate all, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate. The Malaya breeze is blowing here. He who will unfurl his sail and take refuge in the Master will be blessed indeed. ... Why should you be worried? You are my own people. But remember this, that an educated Sadhu is like an elephant whose tusks are covered with gold."

37. A disciple who had renounced the world visited Mother at Jayrambati and then went on to Hrishikesh. Just a few days later he wrote, "Mother, you told me that in time I would see the Master, but why have I not done so?" Mother listened to the letter and said, "Go write to him that just because he has gone to Hrishikesh, the Master will not be waiting for him there. He has become a monk; what should he do now but call upon God? He will appear when He wishes."

38. "It is a monk's duty to call on God. The monk cannot complain that God-vision is denied him in spite of hard struggle. God will reveal Himself at His will. He is not at anybody's beck and call."

39. Disciple: "What is the aim of life?" Mother: "To realize God and remain immersed in His contemplation. You are Sannyasins, you are His own. He takes care of your spiritual welfare both here and hereafter. What then is there for you to worry about? Is it possible to contemplate on God always? Sometimes work; at other times think of God. ... Always discriminate between the real and the unreal."

40 . "The Master will be your protector. It will be a heinous sin on the part of the Master if he does not protect those who have taken shelter at his feet, who have taken refuge in him renouncing all, and who want to lead a good life. You must live in a spirit of self-surrender to him. Let him do good to you if he so desires, or let him drown you if that be his will. But you are to do only what is righteous, and that also according to the power he has given you."