

## CHAPTER XXII

### PARABLES

*The bane of worldliness - Sex and its bondage - Spiritual progress depends on mind - Dangers of misunderstood philosophy - The foolishness of fanaticism - Faith, devotion and resignation - Yoga and Vairagya - Nature of Maya - Realisation of the Divine*

#### The Bane of Worldliness

1059. God is like the wish-yielding tree of the celestial world ([Kalpataru](#)), which gives whatever one asks of it. So one should be careful to give up all worldly desires when one's mind has been purified by religious exercise. Just hear a story. A certain traveller came to a large plain in the course of his travels. As he had been walking in the sun, for many hours, he was thoroughly exhausted and heavily perspiring; so he sat down in the shade of a tree to rest a little. Presently he began to think what a comfort it would be if he could but get a soft bed there to sleep on. He was not aware that he was sitting under the celestial tree. As soon as the above thought rose in his mind, he found a nice bed by his side. He felt much astonished, but all the same stretched himself on it. Now he thought to himself how pleasant it would be were a young damsel to come there and gently stroke his legs. No sooner did the thought arise in his mind than he found a young damsel sitting at his feet and stroking his legs. The traveller felt supremely happy. Presently he felt hungry and thought:.. "I have got whatever I have wished for; could I not then get some food?" Instantly he found various kinds of delicious food spread before him. He at once fell to eating, and having helped himself to his heart's content, stretched himself again on his bed. He now began to revolve in his mind the events of the day. While thus occupied, he thought, "If a tiger should attack me all of a sudden!" In an instant a large tiger jumped upon him and broke his neck and began to drink his blood. In this way the traveller lost his life. Such is the fate of men in general. If during your meditation you pray for men or money or worldly honours, your desires will no doubt be satisfied to some extent; but mind you, there is the dread of the tiger behind the gifts you get. Those tigers--disease, bereavements, loss of honour and wealth, etc.,-are a thousand times more terrible than the live tiger.

1060. A group of fisher-women who were on their way home from a distant market held on an afternoon, were overtaken by a heavy hail-storm at nightfall and were compelled to take shelter in a florist's cottage nearby. Their kindly host allowed them to sleep that night in a room where he had kept some baskets of sweet-smelling flowers for supplying his customers on the morrow. The atmosphere of the room, filled with the fragrance of flowers, was too good for the fisher-women and they could not, therefore, get even a wink of sleep. At last one of them suggested a remedy. "Let us sprinkle," she said, "a little water on our empty fish-baskets and place them close to us. That would keep this troublesome smell of flowers from spoiling our sleep." Every one gladly agreed to the proposal and acted accordingly; and soon all began to snore. Such indeed is the power and influence of habit! The worldly soul brought up in and accustomed to materialistic thoughts and surroundings cannot breathe long in an atmosphere of purity and renunciation without feeling restlessness and discomfort.

1061. Once a sage was lying by the roadside deeply immersed in [Samadhi](#). A thief, while passing by that way, saw him and thought: "This fellow here must be a thief. He must have broken into some houses last night and is now sleeping through exhaustion. The police will be very soon here to catch him. So let me escape in time." Thus cogitating, he ran away. Soon after, a drunkard came there, and seeing the sage, said, "Hallo! you have fallen into the ditch by drinking too much. Eh! I am steadier than yourself and am not going to tumble down." Last of all there came a sage, and realising that a great saint was lying in the state of [Samadhi](#), sat down by his side and began to press his holy feet gently. (Thus do our worldly tendencies prevent us from recognising true holiness and piety).

1062. With regard to the priestly class, [Sri Ramakrishna](#) used to tell an incident from the life of [Gauranga](#). When [Sri Gauranga](#), being wholly self-absorbed in [Bhava Samadhi](#), fell into the ocean, he was hauled up in a net by the fishermen; but as they came into contact with his sacred person",- through the net, they too were thrown into a trance. Abandoning all their work, they roamed about like maniacs simply chanting the sacred name of [Hari](#). Their relatives could not cure the malady by any means, and finding no other remedy, they came at last to [Sri Gauranga](#) and told him about their sorrow. [Sri Gauranga](#) then said to them, "Get some rice from a priest's house and put it into their mouth, and you will see them cured." They did accordingly, and the fishermen lost their blissful ecstasy. (Such is the contaminating influence of worldliness and impurity on spiritual growth).

1063. The steward of a certain rich man was left in charge of his master's property. When asked by someone as to whose property it was, he used to say: "Sir, this is all my property; these houses and these gardens are all mine." He would speak in this strain and go about with an air of vanity. One day he

happened to catch fish in a pond of the master's garden-house in contravention of his strict prohibition. As ill luck would have it, the **master** came upon the scene just then and saw what his dishonest steward' was doing. Finding out the faithlessness of his servant, the **master** at once drove him away from his estate, disgraced and dishonoured, and confiscated all his past earnings. The poor fellow could not take with him even his rickety box of utensils which was his sole private property. Such is the punishment that overtakes false pride.

1064. A barber, who was passing under a haunted tree, heard a voice say, "Will you accept seven jars full of gold?" The barber looked around, but could see no one. The offer of seven jars of gold, however, roused his cupidity and he cried aloud, "Yes, I shall accept the seven jars." At once came the reply. "Go home, I have carried the jars to your house." The barber ran home in hot haste to verify the truth of this strange announcement. And when he entered the house, he saw the jars before him. He opened them and found them all full of gold, except the last one which was only half-full. A strong desire now arose in the mind of the barber to fill the seventh jar also; for without it his happiness was incomplete. He therefore converted all his ornaments into gold coins and put them into the jar; but the mysterious vessel was as before, unfilled. This exasperated the barber. Starving himself and his family, he saved some more amount and tried to fill the jar; but the jar remained as before. So one day he humbly requested the king to increase his pay, saying his income was not sufficient to maintain himself on. Now the barber was a favourite of the king, and as soon as the request was made the king doubled his pay. All this pay he saved and put into the jar, but the greedy jar showed no signs of filling. At last he began to live by begging from door to door, and his professional income and the income from begging all went into the insatiable cavity of the mysterious jar. Months passed, and the condition of the miserable and miserly barber grew worse every day. Seeing his sad plight, the king asked him one day, "Hallo! When your pay was half of what you now get, you were happy, cheerful and contented; but with double that pay, I see you morose, careworn and dejected. What is the matter with you? Have you got 'the seven jars'?" The barber was taken aback by this question and replied, "Your Majesty, who has informed you of this?" The king said, "Don't you know that these are the signs of the person to whom the Yaksha consigns the seven jars. He offered me also the same jars, but I asked him whether this money might be spent or was merely to be hoarded. No sooner had I asked this question than the Yaksha ran away without any reply. Don't you know that no one can spend that money? It only brings with it the desire of hoarding. Go at once and return the money." The barber was brought to his senses by this advice, and he went to the haunted tree and said, "Take back your gold, O Yaksha." The Yaksha replied, "All right." When the barber returned home, he found that the seven jars had vanished as mysteriously as they were brought in, and with it also had vanished his life-long savings. Such is the state of some men in the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who do not understand the difference between what is real expenditure and what is real income, lose all they have.

1065. Once in the month of June a kid was playing near its mother. With a merry frisk it told her that it intended to make a good feast of Ras-flowers (a species of flowers budding abundantly during the festival of *Rasa-lila* in November). "Well, my darling," replied the dame, "it is not such an easy thing as you seem to think. You will have to pass through many a danger before you can hope to feast on Ras-flowers. The ensuing months of September and October are not very auspicious to you. For someone may take you to be sacrificed to the Goddess. **Durga**. Then there is the terrible time of **Kali-puja**; and if you are fortunate enough to survive that period also, there is still the Jagaddhatripuja when almost all that remain of the male members of our species are sacrificed. If your good luck carries you safely through all these crises, then you can hope to make a feast of Ras-flowers in the beginning of November." Even like the dame in the fable, we should not hastily approve of all the aspirations which our youthful fancies may entertain, considering the manifold crises which we may have to pass through in our lives.

### **Sex and its Bondage**

1066. A gentleman of modern education was once arguing with the **Master** that it was possible for family men to remain uncontaminated by worldliness. To him the **Master** said, "Do you know of what sort is your so-called 'uncontaminated family man' of the present day? Being uncontaminated by the world, and therefore having no concern in money matters, his finances and all his household affairs are managed by his wife. So if a poor **Brahmin** comes to beg of this 'master of the house', he tells him, 'Sir, I never touch money. Why do you waste 'your time in begging of me?' If the **Brahmin**, however, be an importunate fellow, your uncontaminated family man, being tired of his entreaties, thinks that the man must be paid something, and tells him 'Well, sir, come tomorrow. I shall see what I can do for you.' Then going in, this

exemplary family man tells his wife, 'Look here, my dear, a poor Brahmin is in great distress. Let us give him a rupee.'

Hearing the word 'rupee' the wife flares up with anger and says tauntingly, 'Ah, what a generous man you are! Rupees are to you like leaves and stones to be thrown away without the least thought.' 'Well, my dear,' replies the master of the house in an apologetic tone, 'the Brahmin is very poor, and we should not give him less.' 'No,' says the wife 'I cannot spare that much. Here is a two-anna bit; you may give him that, if you like.' But as the Babu is a family man quite uncontaminated by worldliness, he takes, of course, what his wife gives him and next day the beggar gets only the two-anna piece. So you see, your so-called uncontaminated family men are not really masters of themselves. Because they themselves do not look after the family affairs, they think that they are very good and holy men, while, as a matter of fact, they are hen-pecked husbands guided entirely by their wives, and so are but very poor specimens even of common humanity."

1067. In former days, the priests of the temple of Govindaji in Jaipur never married. Then they were supremely puissant with the strength of the Self Once the king sent for them, but they did not go. They said, "Ask the king to come to us." But afterwards they began to marry and then there was no necessity for the king to send for them! They, of their own accord, would go to the king and say, "Maharaj, Maharaj, we have come to bless you. Here we have brought the offered flowers from the shrine for you. Please accept them." For they were now compelled to do so. What could the poor fellows do? One day they had to build their houses; another day they had to perform the Annaprasana ceremony (giving the first morsel of cooked rice to a child) of their sons, still another day they had to marry their daughters and so on. All these kept them in constant need of money!

You can see for yourself what you have become by serving an English and educated after the Western model silently put up with the kicks of their masters. Do you know what is at the back of all these humiliations and pangs of thralldom? It is 'woman'-subjection to the attractions of sex.

1068. A poor man was in great distress for want of employment. He went several times to an office and danced attendance on the Bara Babu (head-clerk or manager) of the place, but was always sent back with such evasive answers as, "Not to-day, come tomorrow." "Come and see me now and then," and so on. The poor man had spent much time in this way. One day he spoke about his lot to one of his friends. The friend at once said, "How thoughtless you are! Why have you worn away the soles of your feet by going to that fellow? Go to Golap and supplicate her, and believe me, you will get an appointment tomorrow." In great surprise the poor man exclaimed, "Is that so! Just now I shall run up to her." Golap was the mistress of the manager of the office. The poor man went to her and said, "Mother, I am in great distress, and none but you can save me from it. I am a Brahmin and have no other means. I have been without any employment for a long time, and my wife and children are starving. I can get a job if you only say a word." Then Golap said, "Yes, but on saying \_o whom can it be managed?" And she thought compassionately, "Ah, what a pity that the Brahmin is in such a plight!" The poor man at once said, "If you say one word to the Bara Babu on my behalf, I am sure to get a job." Then Golap promised to ask the Bara Babu that very night to give him a job, and lo! the next morning a peon came to the poor man from the Bara Babu requesting him to attend his office from that day. The Bara Babu recommended the man to the chief officer with the words, "Sir, this gentleman has very high qualifications, and thinking that it would greatly benefit our office to have his services, I have given him a place here." Such is the charm' that, woman weaves upon man. The whole world is mad after 'woman and gold'.

1069. A poor Brahmin had a rich cloth merchant as his disciple. The merchant was very miserly by nature. One day the Brahmin was in need of a small piece of cloth for covering his sacred book. He went to his disciple and asked for the required piece of cloth; but the merchant replied, "I am very sorry, Sir. Had you told me of this a few hours earlier, I would have given you the thing wanted. Unfortunately, now I have no small piece of cloth which will answer your purpose. However, I shall remember your requirement, but please remind me of it now and then." The Brahmin had to go away disappointed. This conversation between the Guru and his worthy disciple was overheard by the wife of the latter from behind a screen. She at once sent a man after the Brahmin, and calling him inside the house, said, "Revered Father, what is it that you were asking from the master of the house?" The Brahmin related all that had happened. The wife said, "Please go home, Sir., You will get the cloth tomorrow morning." When the merchant returned home at night, the wife asked him, "Have you closed the shop?" The merchant said, "Yes, what is the matter?" She said, "Go at once and bring two cloths of the best quality in the shop." He said, "Why this hurry? I shall give you the very best cloths tomorrow morning." The wife, however, insisted, "No, I must have them just

now, or not at all." What could the poor merchant do? The person whom he had now to deal with was not the spiritual **Guru** whom he could send away with vague and indefinite promises, but the 'curtain Guru' whose behests must be instantaneously obeyed, or else there would be no peace for him at home. At last the merchant, willingly enough, opened the shop at that late hour of the night, and brought the cloths for her. Early next morning, the good lady sent the article to the **Guru** with the message, "If in future you want anything from us, ask me, and you will get it." (Therefore those who pray to the merciful Divine Mother and ask for Her blessings have better chances of having their prayers heard than those who worship God in the sterner paternal aspect).

1070. When asked why he did not lead the life of a householder with his wife, the **Master** replied: "Ganesh (son of **Siva**) one day happened to scratch a cat with his nail. On going home, he saw that there was a mark of the scratch on the cheek of his divine mother, Palvati. Seeing this he asked her, 'Mother, how did you get this ugly scar on your cheek?' The Mother of the universe replied, 'This is the work of your hand; it is the scratch of your nail.' Ganesh asked in wonder, 'How is it, Mother? I do not remember to have scratched you at any time.' The Mother replied, 'Darling, have you forgotten the fact of your having scratched a cat, this morning?' Ganesh said, 'Yes, I did scratch a cat, but how did your cheek get the scar?' The Mother replied, 'Dear child, nothing exists in this world but myself. The whole creation is myself; whomsoever you may hint, you only hurt me.' Ganesh was greatly surprised to hear this; and then he determined never to marry. For, whom could he marry? Every woman was mother to him. Realising thus the motherhood of woman, he gave up marriage. I am like Ganesh. I consider every woman as my Divine Mother."

### **Spiritual Progress Depends on Mind**

1071. The spiritual gain of a person depends upon his mental condition and thought-life. It results from his heart, and not from any of his external actions. Two friends, while strolling about, happened to pass by a place where the **Bhagavata** was being expounded. One of them said, "Well, let us go there for a while and hear the holy scripture." The other replied, "No, my dear friend, what is the use of hearing the **Bhagavata**? Let us spend the time in yonder brothel in amusement and pleasure." The first one did not consent to this proposal. He went to the place where the **Bhagavata** was being read and sat down to hear it. The other went to the brothel, but did not find there the pleasure which he had anticipated. So he was thinking within himself, "Ah me! Why have I come here? How happy must my friend be to be hearing all the while an account of the sacred deeds of Lord **Hari**." Thus he meditated on **Hari** even though he was in an unholy place. The other man, who was hearing the exposition of the **Bhagavata**, did not also find pleasure in it. Sitting there he began to blame himself, saying, "Ah! What a fool I was not to have accompanied my friend to the brothel! What great pleasure he must be having at this time there!" The result was that he was merely sitting where the **Bhagavata** was being read, while all the time his mind was dreaming of the pleasures he might have enjoyed in the bawdy house. Now as his mind was blackened with these thoughts, he got all the sin of visiting the brothel, although he did not go there in person. And the man who had gone to the brothel acquired all the merit of hearing the **Bhagavata**, because his mind was meditating on the sacred book even though he was in that bad place.

1072. A **Sannyasin** dwelt by the side of a temple. There was the house of a harlot in front. Seeing the constant concourse of men in the prostitute's house, the **Sannyasin** one day called her and censured her saying, "You are a great sinner. You sin day and night. Oh, how miserable will be your lot hereafter!" The poor prostitute became extremely sorry for her misdeeds, and with genuine inward repentance she prayed to God beseeching forgiveness. But as prostitution was her profession, she could not easily adopt any other means of gaining her livelihood. And so, whenever her flesh sinned, she always reproached herself with greater contrition of heart and prayed to God more and more for forgiveness. The **Sannyasin** saw that his advice had apparently produced no effect upon her, and thought, "Let me see how many persons will visit this woman in the course of her life." And from that day forward, whenever any person entered the house of the prostitute, the **Sannyasin** counted him by putting a pebble for him, and so in course of time there arose a big heap of pebbles. One day the **Sannyasin** said to the prostitute, pointing to the heap, "Woman, don't you see this heap? Each pebble in it stands for every commission of the deadly sin you have been indulging in since I advised you last to desist from the evil course. Even now I tell you, 'Beware of your evil deeds!'" The poor wretch began to tremble at the sight of the accumulation of her sins and she prayed to God shedding tears of utter helplessness, and inwardly repeating: "Lord, wilt Thou not free me from the miserable life that I am leading?" The prayer was heard, and on that very day the angel of death passed by her house, and she ceased to exist in this world. By the strange will of God, the **Sannyasin** also died on the same day. The messengers of **Vishnu** came down from Heaven and carried the spirit boy of the contrite

prostitute to the heavenly regions, while the messengers of Yama bound the spirit of the Sannyasin and carried him down to the nether world. The Sannyasin, seeing the good luck of the prostitute cried aloud. "Is this the subtle justice of God? I passed all my life in asceticism and poverty and I am carried to hell, while that prostitute, whose life was a whole record of sin, is going to Heaven!" Hearing this, the messengers of Vishnu said, "The decrees of God are always just; as you think, so you reap. You passed your life in external show and vanity, trying to get honour and fame; and God has given you this. Your heart never sincerely yearned after Him. This prostitute earnestly prayed to God day and night, though her body sinned all the while. Look at the treatment which your body and her body are receiving from those below. As you never sinned with your body, they have decorated it with flowers and garlands, and are carrying it with music in a procession to consign it to the sacred river. But this prostitute's body, which had sinned, is being torn to pieces at this moment by vultures and jackals. Nevertheless, she was pure in heart and is therefore going to the regions of the pure. Your heart was always absorbed in contemplating her sins and thus became impure. You are therefore going to the regions of the impure. You were the real prostitute and not she."

### Dangers of Misunderstood Philosophy

1073. A Rajah was once taught by his Guru the sacred doctrine of Advaita, which declares that the whole universe is Brahman. The king was very much pleased with this doctrine. Going in, he said to his queen, "There is no distinction between the queen and the queen's maidservant. So the maid-servant shall be my queen henceforth." The queen was thunderstruck at this mad proposal of her lord. She sent for the Guru and complained to him in a piteous tone, "Sir, look at the pernicious result of your teachings," and told him what had occurred. The Guru consoled the queen and said, "When you serve dinner to the king today, have a potful of cow dung also served along with the dish of rice." At dinner-time the Guru and the king sat down together to eat. Who could imagine the rage of the king :when he saw a dish of cow-dung served for his meal! The Guru, seeing this, calmly interrogated, "Your Highness, you are well-versed in the knowledge of Advaita. Why do you then see any distinction between the dung and the rice?" The king became exasperated and exclaimed, "You who pride yourself to be such a great Advaitin, eat this dung if you can." The Guru said, "Very well," and at once changed himself into a swine and devoured the cow-dung with great gusto and afterwards again assumed his human shape. The king became so ashamed that he never made again his mad proposal to the queen.

1074. A Brahmin was laying out a garden. He looked after it day and night. One day a cow strayed into the garden and browsed on a mango sapling of which the Brahmin used to take special care. When he saw the cow destroying his favourite plant, the Brahmin became wild with rage, and gave such a severe beating to the animal that it died of the injuries received. The news soon spread like wild-fire that the Brahmin had killed the sacred animal. When anyone attributed the sin of that act to him, the Brahmin, who professed himself to be a Vedantin, denied the charge, saying, "No, I have not killed the cow; it is my hand that has done it; and as God Indra is the presiding deity of the hand, it is he who has incurred the sin of killing the cow, not I." Indra in his heaven heard of this. He assumed the shape of an old Brahmin, and coming to the owner of the garden, said, "Sir, whose garden is this?"

**Brahmin:** Mine.

**Indra:** It is a beautiful garden. You have got a skilful Gardener; for, see how neatly and artistically he has planted the trees!

**Brahmin:** Well sir, that is also my work. The trees were planted under my personal supervision and direction.

s path? It is very well-planned and neatly executed.

**Brahmin:** All that has been done by me.

Then Indra said with folded hands, "When all these things are yours, and when you take credit for all the work done in this garden, it is not proper that poor Indra should be made responsible for killing the cow."

1075. A serpent dwelt in a certain locality. No one dared to pass by that way; for whoever did so was instantaneously bitten to death by that serpent. Once a holy man passed by. As usual the serpent pursued that sage with a view to biting him, but when it approached the holy man, it lost all its ferocity and was over-powered by his gentleness. Seeing the snake, the holy man said, "Well, friend, do you want to bite me?" The snake was abashed and made no reply. At this the sage said again, "Hearken, friend, do not injure anyone in future." The snake bowed and nodded assent. After the sage had gone his own way, the snake entered its hole, and thenceforth began to live a life of innocence and purity without even wishing to harm anyone. In a few days it became a common belief in the neighbourhood that the snake had lost all its venom

and was no more dangerous, and so people began to tease it. Some pelted stones at it, and others dragged it mercilessly by the tail. Thus there was no end to its troubles. Fortunately, sometime after, the sage again passed that way and seeing the bruised and battered condition of the poor snake, was very much moved to pity and inquired about the cause of its distress. At this the snake replied, "Sir, I have been reduced to this state, because I have not been injuring anyone since I received your instruction. But alas! They are so merciless!" The sage smilingly said, "Dear friend, I only advised you not to bite anyone, but I never asked you not to hiss and frighten others. Although you should not bite any creature, still you should keep every one at a considerable distance from you by hissing." Similarly, if you live in the world, make yourself feared and respected. Do not injure anyone, but do not at the same time let others injure you.

1076. A teacher once instructed his disciple, "Everything that exists is God," The disciple understood this instruction literally and not in its true spirit. One day, while he was passing through a street, he came across an elephant. The driver (Mahout) shouted aloud from the back of the animal, "Move away, move away!" The disciple, however, argued within himself, "Why should I move away? I am God and also is the elephant. What fear has God from Himself?" Reflecting thus, he did not move. So the elephant caught hold of him by his trunk and dashed him aside. He was hurt severely, and going back to his teacher, related the whole story. The teacher then said, "All right. You are God and the elephant too is God; but God in the shape of the elephant-driver was warning you from above. Why did you not pay heed to His warning?"

#### **The Foolishness of Fanaticism**

1077. Be not a bigot like Ghantakarna. There was a man who worshipped **Siva** but hated all the other deities. One day **Siva** appeared to him and said, "I shall never be pleased with you so long as you hate other Gods." But the man was inexorable. After a few days **Siva** again appeared to him. This time He appeared as **Hari-Hara**-a form, of which one half was **Siva** and the other **Vishnu**. At this the man was half-pleased and half-displeased. He laid his offerings on the side representing **Siva** but laid nothing on that representing **Vishnu**. When he offered the burning incense to **Siva**, his beloved form of the deity, he was audacious enough to press the nostrils of **Vishnu** lest he should inhale the fragrance. Then **Siva** said, "Your bigotry is ineradicable. By assuming this dual aspect, I tried to convince you that all Gods and Goddesses are but the various aspects of the one Being. You have not taken the lesson in good part, and you will have to suffer for your bigotry. Long must you suffer for this." The man went away and retired to a village. He soon developed into a great hater of **Vishnu**. On coming to know this peculiarity of his, the children of the village began to tease him by uttering the name of **Vishnu** within his hearing. Vexed at this, the man hung two bells on his ears, and when the boys cried out, "**Vishnu, Vishnu**," he would ring the bells and make those names inaudible to his ears. And thus he came to be known by the name of Ghantakarna or the Bell-eared.

1078. Four blind men went out to see an elephant. One touched the leg of the elephant and said, "The elephant is like a pillar." The second touched the trunk and said, "The elephant is like a thick club." The third touched the belly and said, "The elephant is like a big jar." The fourth touched the ears and said, "The elephant is like a big winnowing basket;" Thus they began to dispute hotly amongst themselves as to the shape of the elephant. A passer-by, seeing them thus quarrelling, said, "What is it you are disputing about?" They told him everything and asked him to arbitrate. The man said, "None of you has seen the elephant. The elephant is not like a pillar; its legs are like pillars. It is not like a winnowing basket, its ears are like winnowing baskets. It is not like a stout club, its trunk is like a club. The elephant is the combination of all these legs, ears, belly, trunk and so on." In the same manner, those who quarrel (about the nature of God) have each seen only some one aspect of the Deity.

1079. A frog lived in a well. It had lived there for a long time. It was born and brought up there. And it was a small little frog. One day another frog that had lived in the sea came and fell into that well. The frog of the well asked the new-comer, "Whence are you?" The frog of the sea replied, "I am from the sea." The frog of the well questioned, "The sea! How big is that?" The frog of the sea said, "It is very big." The frog of the well stretched its legs and questioned, "Ah! is your sea so big?" The frog of the sea said, "It is much bigger." The frog of the well then took a leap from one side of the well to the other and asked, "Is it as big as this, my well?" "My friend," said the frog of the sea, "how can you compare the sea with your well?" The frog of the well asserted, "No, there can never be anything bigger than my well. Indeed, nothing can be bigger than this! This fellow is a liar, he must be turned out." Such is the case with every narrow-minded man. Sitting in his own little well, he thinks that the whole world is no bigger than his well.

#### **Faith, Devotion and Resignation**

1080. Once a washerman was beating a devotee severely and the devotee was crying, "Narayana! Narayana!" Lord Narayana was in Sri Vaikuntha, sitting near Lakshmi. As soon as He heard the cry of the devotee, He got up and proceeded to protect the man. But He returned to His seat after going only a few steps. Seeing this, Lakshmi asked the Lord why He had returned so quickly. Lord Narayana replied, "Because I found no need of my going there. That fellow too has become a Dhobi (washerman). He has begun to protect himself; he is now giving blows in return to the man who has been beating him before. So where is the necessity of my going there?" The lord saves one, only if one surrenders oneself completely to Him.

1081. Having received no news of her Gopal (Krishna, God-incarnate) Yasoda once came to Radha and asked her if she had any news from him. At that time Radha was in a deep trance, and so did not hear Yasoda. Subsequently, when her trance was over she saw Yasoda, the queen of Nanda, sitting before her. Bowing down to her at once, Radha asked Yasoda the reason of her visit and when Yasoda stated the reason, she said, "Mother, shut your eyes and meditate upon the form of Gopala and you will be able to see him." And as soon as Yasoda shut her eyes, Radha, who was herself the very essence of spiritual feelings (Bhava), overwhelmed her with her power and in that super conscious mood, Yasoda saw her Gopala. Then Yasoda asked this boon of Radha, "Mother, grant me that I may see my beloved Gopala whenever I close my eyes."

1082. Sri Ramachandra in the course of His travels through the forest, descended into the lake called Pampa for drinking water, leaving His bow and arrow fixed on the ground. Coming up, He found that a frog was lying covered all over with blood, having been run through by His bow. He was very sorry and said to the frog, "Why did you not make some kind of sound? Then I could have known that you were here and you would not have come to this plight." The frog replied, "O Rama, when I fall into danger, I call on Thee, saying, 'O Rama, save me.' Now that Thou Thyself art killing me, to whom else shall I turn and pray?"

1083. Once a servant of a rich man came to his master's house and stood in a corner with great reverence and humility. He held in his hand something covered with a cloth. The master enquired, "What is there in your hand?" The servant brought out a small custard apple from the cloth and kept it humbly before the master, feeling that he would be much gratified if the master would take it. The master was much pleased to see the loving devotion of the servant and accepted the offering, though it was a trifle. With great delight he exclaimed, "Ah, what a fine fruit this is! Where did you get it from?" In the same way God looks into the heart of the devotee. He is infinite in His grandeur, yet He is responsive to the influence of love and devotion.

1084. The Master (to Pratap Chandra Mazumdar): You are an educated and intelligent man and you are a deep thinker too. Keshab and yourself were like the two brothers, Gaur and Nitai. You have had enough of this world - enough of lectures, controversies, schisms and the rest. Do you still care for them? Now it is high time for you to collect your scattered mind and turn it towards God. Plunge into the ocean of Divinity.

Mazumdar: Yes, revered Sir, that I ought to do; there is no doubt about it. But all this I do simply to preserve Keshab's name and reputation.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling): Let me tell you a story. A man built a cottage on a mountain top. It cost him hard labour and much money. After a few days there came a cyclone and the cottage began to rock to and fro. The man, being very anxious to save it, prayed to the Wind-god, saying, "Lord, I beseech Thee, do not destroy this/cottage." But the Wind-god did not listen. He prayed again, but the cottage kept on rocking. Then he thought of another plan to save it. He remembered that according to mythology, Hanuman was the son of the Wind-god. So he cried out, "Lord, I beg of Thee to spare this cottage; for it belongs to Hanuman, Thy son." But the Wind-god did not listen. Then he said, "Lord, I pray Thee, spare this cottage, for it belongs to Hanuman's Lord, Rama." Still the Wind-god did not listen. Then, as the cottage began to topple over, the man ran out of it to save his life, and he began to swear saying, "Let this miserable cottage be destroyed. What is it to me?"

You may now be anxious to preserve Keshab's name; but console yourself with the thought that it was after all owing to God's will that the religious movement connected, with his name was set on foot and that if the movement has had its day, it is also due to that same Divine will. Therefore dive deep into the sea of Immortality.

1085. A man went to a Sadhu and said with a great show of humility, "Sir, I am a very low person. Tell me, O Master, how I am to be saved." The Sadhu, reading the heart of the man, told him, "Well, go and bring me that which is meaner than yourself." The man went out and looked all round, but found nothing whatsoever meaner than himself. At last he saw his own excrement and said, "Well, here is something

which is certainly worse than myself." He stretched forth his hand to take it up and carry it to the **Sadhu** when suddenly he heard a voice say from within the ordure, "Touch me not, O sinner, I was a sweet and delicious cake, fit to be offered to the Gods, and in appearance so pleasing to all the spectators. But my ill-fortune 'brought me to you, and by your evil contact I have been reduced to such a detestable condition that men run away from me with faces turned and with handkerchiefs covering their noses. Once only did I come in contact with you and this has been my fate. What deeper degradation may I not be thrown into if you touch me again?" The man was thus taught true humility and became the humblest of the humble. As a result he attained the highest perfection.

1086. Once upon a time conceit entered into the heart of **Narada** and he thought there was no greater devotee than himself. Reading his heart, the Lord said, "**Narada**, go to such and such a place, a great devotee of mine is living there. Cultivate his acquaintance; for he is truly devoted to me." **Narada** went there and found an agriculturist who rose early in the morning, pronounced the name of **Hari** (God)

only once, and taking his plough, went out and tilled the ground all day long. At night, he went to bed after pronouncing the name of **Hari** once more. **Narada** said to himself "How can this rustic be a lover of God? I see him busily engaged in worldly duties and he has no signs of a pious man about him." Then **Narada** went back to the Lord, and spoke what he thought of his new acquaintance. Thereupon the Lord said, "**Narada**, take this cup of oil and go round this city and come back with it. But take care that you do not spill even a single drop of it." **Narada** did as he was told, and on his return the Lord asked him, "Well, **Narada**, how many times did you remember me in the course of your walk round the city?" "Not once, my Lord," said **Narada**, "and how could I, when I had to watch this cup brimming over with oil?" The Lord then said, "This one cup of oil did so divert your attention that even you did forget me altogether. But look at that rustic, who, though carrying the heavy burden of a family, still remembers me twice every day."

1087. Once there lived two Yogis who were practising austerities with a view to realising the Lord. One day **Narada**, the divine sage, was passing by their hermitage, when one of them asked him, "Are you coming from Heaven?" **Narada** replied, "Yes, that is so." The **Yogi** said, "Do tell me what you saw the Lord doing in Heaven." **Narada** replied, "I saw the Lord playing by making camels and elephants pass through the eye of a needle." At this the **Yogi** observed, "There is nothing in it to marvel at. Nothing is impossible with God!" But the other man exclaimed, "O nonsense! That is impossible! It only shows that you have never been to the Lord's abode."

The first man was a **Bhakta** and had the faith of a child. Nothing is impossible to the Lord, nor can anyone know His nature fully. Everything of Him cannot be predicted by anyone.

1088. Once the son of a certain man lay at the point of death, and it seemed that none could save his life. A **Sadhu**, however, said to the father of the dying son, "There is but one hope. If you can get in a human skull the venom of a cobra mixed with a few drops of rain-water under the constellation of the Svati star, your son's life can be saved." The father looked up the almanac and found that the constellation of Svati would be in the ascendant on the morrow. So he prayed, saying, "O Lord, do Thou make possible all these conditions, and spare the life of my son." With extreme earnestness and longing in his heart, he set out on the following evening and diligently searched in a deserted spot for a human skull. At last he found one under a tree and holding it in hand, waited for the rain, praying. Suddenly a shower came and a few drops of rain were deposited in the upturned skull. The man said to himself, "Now I have the water in the skull under the right constellation." Then he prayed earnestly: "Grant, O Lord, that the rest may also be obtained." In a short time he discovered, not far from there, a toad, and a cobra springing to catch it. In a moment the toad jumped over the skull, followed by the cobra whose venom fell into the skull. With overwhelming gratitude the anxious father cried out, "Lord, by Thy grace even impossible things are made possible. Now I know that my son's life will be saved." Therefore I say, if you have true faith and earnest longing, you will get everything by the grace of the Lord.

1089. Spiritual practices (Sadhanas) are absolutely necessary for Self-realisation, but if there be perfect faith, then a little practice is enough. The sage **Vyasa** was about to cross the river Jumuna. Just then the Gopis arrived at the place where the sage was. They also wanted to cross the river, but there was no ferry-boat. So they asked **Vyasa**, "Sir, what shall we do?" **Vyasa** replied, "Do not worry. I will take you across the river. But before that, can you give me something to eat? For I am very hungry." The Gopis had with them a quantity of milk, cream and fresh butter, which they offered him, and he consumed them all. The Gopis, then asked, "What about crossing the river?" **Vyasa** stood near the bank of the water and prayed "O **Jamuna**, if I have not eaten anything to-day, by that virtue I ask you to part your waters, so that we may walk across your bed and reach the other side." No sooner did he utter these words than the

waters parted, and the dry river-bed was laid bare. The Gopis were amazed. They thought: "How could he say, 'If I have not eaten anything today,' when he ate so much just now?" They did not understand that this was the proof of Vyasa's firm faith-that he did not eat anything but the Lord who dwelt within him was the real eater.

1090. There was a Certain [Brahmin](#) priest who served in a household chapel. Once he went away leaving the charge of the service in the chapel to his little son. He asked the boy to place the daily offering food before the Deity and see that He ate it. The boy, following the injunctions of his father, placed the offering before the image and silently waited. But the image neither spoke nor ate. The boy watched for a long time. He had the firm faith that the Deity would come down from the altar, take the seat before the offering and eat it. So he prayed, "O Lord, come and eat. It is getting very late; I cannot wait any longer." But the Lord did not speak. Then the boy began to cry, saying, "Lord, my father asked me to see that Thou didst eat the offering. Why dost Thou not come? Thou comest to my father and eatest his offering. What have I done that Thou dost not come to me and partake of my offering?" He cried bitterly for a long time. Then, as he looked up at the seat, he saw the Deity in a human form eating the offering! When the service was ended and the boy came out, the people in the house said to him, "If the service is over, bring out the offering." The boy replied, "Yes, but the Lord has eaten everything." In amazement they asked, "What do you say?" In absolute innocence the boy repeated, "Why, the Lord has eaten all that I offered." Then they entered the chapel and were dumbfounded at the sight of the empty dishes. Such is the power of true faith and true yearning!

1091. Extreme longing is the surest way to God-vision. One should have faith like an innocent child, and a child's longing for its mother.

There was a boy named Jatila. He used to go to school alone through the woods. Often he felt lonely and afraid. He told his mother about it and she said to him, "Why are you afraid, my child? You call aloud for [Krishna](#) when you get frightened," "Who is [Krishna](#), mother?" the boy asked. The mother answered, "[Krishna](#) is your brother." After that, when Jatila was passing through the woods alone and felt frightened, he called aloud, "Brother [Krishna](#)!" When no one came, he called again, "O brother [Krishna](#), where are you? Come to me and protect me. I am frightened." Hearing the call of the child, so full of faith, [Krishna](#) could no longer remain away. He appeared in the form of a young boy and said, "Here am I, your brother! Why are you frightened? Come, I will take you to school." Then having escorted him to school Lord [Krishna](#) said to him, "I will come to you whenever you call me. Do not be afraid." Such is the power of true faith in the Lord and of real longing for Him.

1092. A milk-maid used to supply milk to a [Brahmin](#) priest living on the other side of a river. Owing to the irregularities of the boat service, she could not supply him milk punctually every day. Once, being rebuked for her going late, the poor woman said, "What can I do? I start early river bank for the boatman and the passengers." The priest said, "Woman! They cross the ocean of life by uttering the 'name of God, and can't you cross this little river?" The simple-hearted woman became very glad at heart on learning this easy means of crossing the river. From the next day the milk began to be supplied early in the morning. One day the priest said to the woman, "How is it that you are no longer late now-a-days?" She said, "I cross the river by uttering the name of the Lord as you told me to do, and don't stand now in need of a boatman." The priest could not believe this. He said, "Can you show me how you *cross* the river?" The woman took him with her and began to walk over the water. Looking behind, the woman saw the priest in a sad plight and said, "How is it, Sir, that you are uttering the name of God with your mouth, but at the same time with your hands you are trying to keep your Cloth untouched by water? You do not fully rely on Him." Entire resignation and absolute faith in God are at the root of all miraculous deeds.

1093. Once, finding it difficult to reconcile the contradictory doctrine of man's free will and God's grace, two disciples of the [Master](#) went to him for a solution of the problem. The [Master](#) said, "Why do you talk of free will? Everything is dependent upon the Lord's will. Our will is tied to the Lord's like the cow to its tether. No doubt we have a certain amount of freedom even as the cow has, within a prescribed circle. So man thinks that his will is free. But know that his will is dependent on the ' Lord's."

Disciples: Is there then no necessity of practising penance, meditation and the rest? *For*, one can as well sit quiet and say, 'It is all God's will; whatever is done, is done at His will.'

[Sri Ramakrishna](#): Oh! To what effect, if you simply say that in so many words? Any amount of your verbal denial of thorns can never save you from their painful prick when you place your hand on them. Had it been entirely with man to do spiritual practices according to his will, everybody would have done so. But no; everyone can't do it, and why not? But there is one thing. If you don't utilise properly the amount of strength He has given you, He never gives more. That is why self-exertion is necessary. And so everyone

has to struggle hard even to become fit for the grace of God. By such endeavour and through His grace, the sufferings of many lives can be worked out in one life. But some self effort is absolutely necessary. Let me tell you a story:

Once Vishnu, the Lord of Goloka, cursed Narada, saying that he would be thrown into hell. At this Narada was greatly disturbed in mind; and he prayed to the Lord, singing songs of devotion and begging Him to show where hell was and how one could go there. Vishnu then drew the map of the universe on the ground with a piece of chalk, pointing out the exact positions of heaven and hell. "Is it like this? This is hell then!" So saying, he rolled himself on the spot and exclaimed he had undergone all the sufferings of hell. Vishnu smilingly asked, "How is that?" and Narada replied, "Why, Lord, are not heaven and hell Thy creation? When Thou didst draw the map of the universe Thyself and point out to me hell in the plan, then that place became a real hell; and as I rolled myself there, my sufferings were intense. So I do say that I have undergone the punishments of hell." Narada said all this sincerely and so Vishnu was satisfied with the explanation.

1094. Pride once entered the heart of Arjuna, the beloved friend of Sri Krishna. Arjuna thought that none equalled him in love and devotion to his Lord and friend. The omniscient Lord, Sri Krishna, reading the heart of His friend, took him one day for a walk. They had not proceeded far when Arjuna saw a strange Brahmana eating dry grass as food, but nevertheless he had a sword dangling at his side. Arjuna at once knew him to be a holy and pious devotee of Vishnu, one whose highest religious duty was to injure no being. As even grass has life, he would not eat it green, and sustained his life by eating it dry and lifeless. Yet he carried a sword. Arjuna, wondering at the incongruity, turned towards the Lord and said, "How is this? Here is a man who has renounced all ideas of injuring any living being, down to the meanest blade of grass; yet he carries with him a sword, the symbol of death! and hatred!" The Lord said, "You better ask the man, yourself." Arjuna then went up to the Brahmana and said, "Sir, you injure no living being, and you live upon dry grass. Why then do you carry this sharp sword?"

The Brahmana: It is to punish four persons if I chance to meet them.

Arjuna: Who are they?

The Brahmana: The first is the wretch, Narada.

Arjuna: Why, what has he done?

The Brahmana: Why, look at the audacity of that fellow: he is perpetually keeping my Lore awake with his songs and music. He has no consideration whatsoever for the comfort of the Lord. Day and night, in and out of season, he disturbs the peace of the Lord by his prayers and praises.

Arjuna: Who is the second person?

The Brahmana: The impudent Draupadi.

Arjuna: What is her fault?

The Brahmana: Look at the inconsiderate audacity of the woman; she was so rash as to call my beloved Lord just at the moment He was going to dine. He had to give up His dinner and go to the Kamyaka Vana to save the Pandavas from the curse of Durvasas. And her presumption went so far that she even caused my beloved Lord to eat the impure remnant of her own food.

Arjuna: Who is the third?

The Brahmana: It is the heartless Prahlada. He was so cruel that he did not hesitate for a moment to ask my Lord to enter the boiling cauldron of oil, to be trodden under the heavy feet of elephants and to break through an adamant pillar.

Arjuna: Who is the fourth?

The Brahmana: The wretch Arjuna.

Arjuna: Why, what fault has he committed?

The Brahmana: Look at his felony. He made my beloved Lord take the mean office of a charioteer of his car in the great war of Kurukshetra.

Arjuna was amazed at the depth of the poor Brahmana's devotion and love and from that moment his pride vanished and he gave up thinking that he was the best devotee of the Lord.

1095. In a certain village there lived a very pious weaver. Everyone loved and trusted him. The weaver used to go to the market to sell his cloths. If a customer asked the price of a piece of cloth, he would say: "By the will of Ram a, the yarn costs one rupee; by the will of Rama, the labour costs four annas; by the will of Rama, the profit is two annas; by the will of Rama the price of the cloth as it stands is one rupee and six annas." People used to have such confidence in him that they would immediately pay the price and take the cloth. The man was a true devotee. At night after supper he would sit for a long time and meditate on God and repeat His holy 'name.'

Once it was late in the night. The weaver had not yet gone to sleep. He was sitting alone in the courtyard near the entrance, smoking. A gang of robbers was passing that way. They wanted a porter and seeing this man, they dragged him away with them. Then they broke into a house and stole a great many things, some of which they piled on the poor weaver's head. At this moment the watchman came. The robbers at once ran away, but the poor weaver was caught with his load. He had to spend that night in confinement. Next morning he was brought before the magistrate. The people of the village, hearing what had happened, came to see the weaver. They unanimously declared, "Your Honour, this man is incapable of stealing anything." The magistrate then asked the weaver to describe what had occurred. The weaver said: "Your Honour, by the will of Rama, I was sitting in the courtyard. By the will of Rama, it was very late in the night. By the will of Rama, I was meditating upon God and repeating His holy 'name.' By the will of Rama, a band of robbers passed that way. By the will of Rama, they dragged me away with them. By the will of Rama, they broke into a house. By the will of Rama, they piled a load on my head. By the will of Rama, I was caught. Then by the will of Rama, I was kept in prison and this morning I am brought before your Honour." The magistrate, seeing the innocence and spirituality of the man, ordered him to be acquitted. Coming out, the weaver said to his friends, "By the will of Rama, I have been released."

Whether you live in the world or renounce it, everything depends upon the will of Rama. Throwing your whole responsibility upon God, do your work in the world.

1096. A thief entered the palace of a king at the dead of night and overheard the king saying to the queen, "I shall give my daughter in marriage to one of those Sadhus (holy men) who are dwelling on the bank of the river." The thief thought within himself, "Well, here is good luck for me. I will go and sit among the Sadhus tomorrow in the disguise of a Sadhu and perchance I may succeed in getting the king's daughter." The next day he did so. When the king's officers came soliciting the Sadhus to marry the king's daughter, none of them consented to it. At last they came to the thief in the guise of a Sadhu and made the same proposal to him. The thief kept quiet. The officers went back and told the king that there was a young Sadhu who might be influenced to marry the princess and that there was none other who would consent. The king then went to the Sadhu in person and earnestly entreated him to honour him by accepting the hand of his daughter. But the heart of the thief was changed at the king's visit. He thought within himself, "I have only assumed the garb of a Sadhu, and behold! the king himself comes to me and is all entreaties. Who can say what better things may not be in store for me if I become a real Sadhu!" These thoughts so strongly affected him that, instead of marrying under false pretences, he began to mend his ways from that very day and exerted himself to become a true Sadhu. He did not marry at all and ultimately became one of the most pious ascetics of his day. The counterfeiting of a good thing sometimes leads to unexpected good results.

### **Tyaga and Vairagya**

1097. A man who was out of employment was constantly pressed by his wife to seek some job. One day when his son was dangerously ill and the doctors pronounced the case to be hopeless, he went out in search of employment. In the meantime the son died and a search was made for the father, but he could not be found anywhere. At last, late in the evening, he returned home and was seriously taken to task by his wife for his callousness in leaving the house at a time when his son lay dying. The husband replied with a smile, "Well, once I dreamt that I had beget me a king and had seven sons, with whom I passed my time happily. But when I woke up I found none of them. It was all a dream. Well, tell me for whom should I grieve—for those seven sons of mine, or for the one you have lost just now?" He who feels this world to be a dream, does not feel, as ordinary men do, the pleasure or pain springing from worldly attachments.

1098. Once a young Sannyasin went to a house to beg his meal. He had embraced the monastic life from his very boyhood and so had not much knowledge of the world. A young lady came out from the house to give him alms. Seeing her breasts, the young Sannyasin questioned her if she was suffering from boils on her chest. To that her mother replied, "No, my son, she hasn't got any boil. A child will be soon born to her and so God has provided her with two breasts to suckle the child. The child will suck milk from those breasts after it is born." No sooner did the young Sannyasin hear this than he exclaimed, "No more will I beg my meals. He who created me, will feed me too."

1099. A husband and wife renounced the world and together undertook a pilgrimage to various holy shrines. Once as they were walking along a road, the husband, being a little ahead of the wife, saw a piece of diamond on the road. Immediately he began to scratch the ground to hide the diamond in it, thinking that, if his wife saw it, perchance she might be moved to avarice and thus lose the merit of her renunciation. While he was thus scratching the ground, the wife came up and asked him what he was doing. He gave her

in an apologetic tone an evasive reply. She, however, finding out the diamond and reading his thoughts, remarked, "Why did you leave the world, if you still feel the distinction between diamond and dust."

1100. How does a man come to have **Vairagya** (dispassion)? A wife once said to her husband, "Dear, I am very anxious about my brother. For the past one week he has been thinking of becoming an ascetic and has been busy preparing for that life. He is trying to reduce gradually all his desires and wants." The husband replied, "Dear, be not at all anxious about your brother. He will never become a **Sannyasin**. No one can become a **Sannyasin** that way." "How does one become a **Sannyasin** then?" asked the wife. "Thus" exclaimed the husband; so saying, he tore his flowing dress to pieces, took a piece and tied it round his loins and told his wife that she, and all of her sex were thenceforth mothers to him. He left the house, never more to return.

1101. "I shall complete it by and by." "I am about to take it up." "I am going to begin this"-all this is indicative of a procrastinating mood and can result only in a lukewarm spirit of **Vairagya**. But he in whose heart the fire of renunciation burns intensely, who pants after God as a mother's heart does for her child-he wants nothing except God. To him the world appears like a well without a wall; and he is always cautious lest he should fall into it. He does not think like others, "Let me first settle my family -affairs and then I shall meditate on God." He has a fiery determination with him.

Once there was a great drought in a country and all the husbandmen were busy bringing water into their fields by digging canals. One of them was a man of great determination and had resolved to go on digging until he could connect his canal with the river. So he went on working though it was getting late for his bath and meal. His wife sent him oil by their daughter, who came and said, "Papa, it is almost noon; rub this oil and have your bath." The father replied, "Wait, I have work still." It was past two o'clock and still the peasant gave no thought to his bath and meal. At last his wife came to the field herself and said: "Why have you not taken your bath as yet? The meal has become cold and stale. You always go to extremes. Come away now at least. Do the rest of the work tomorrow, or after you have taken your food." The man at once grew furious and chased her away with the hoe in hand, calling her names and abusing her. "Foolish and senseless woman!" he exclaimed, "don't you see the crop is drying up and all of you will have to die of starvation? First I am determined to bring the water into the field today and then shall thin\_ of other things." At this' the woman went away. After Herculean labour till late in the night, the man was at last able to carry out his determination. When he saw the water of the river flowing into the fields with a murmuring noise, his delight knew no bounds. Then coming home, he asked his wife to give him some oil and prepare a pipe of tobacco. After his bath and meal, he slept soundly. This sort of determination is the right example of intense **Vairagya**.

Another peasant was also engaged in the same task. But when his wife came and asked him to come home, he followed her without any protest, laying the hoe on his shoulder and saying, "Well, as you have come, I must go." He was never able to bring the water into his field in time. This illustrates idle and procrastinating **Vairagya**. Without intense determination the irrigation of the field is not practicable; so too without intense longing for Him no one can attain the blessed state of God-vision.

1102. Once a fisherman stealthily entered the garden of a certain gentleman at night and was poaching fish in his pond. The gentleman, having come to know of this, ordered his men to surround the place, and came with torches to find out the thief. In the meantime the fisherman, finding no means of escape, sat down underneath a tree like a **Sadhu**, having smeared his body with some ashes. So when the people came they found no thief anywhere but only a **Sadhu** besmeared with holy ashes and deeply absorbed in meditation underneath a tree. Next morning news spread among the people of the neighbourhood that a great **Sadhu** had come to such-and-such a person's garden. And so hundreds of people began to pour in with various presents of fruits and sweets to pay their homage to the **Sadhu**. Coins of silver and gold also. began to gather in heaps before him. Then the fisherman thought within himself: "How wonderful! I am not a real **Sadhu**; still they are showing so much reverence to me! Then assuredly, if I become a real **Sadhu**, I can realise God." Thus even mere pretension brought about real awakening in the mind of that fisherman.

1103. Once a **Sadhu** acquired great occult powers and so-became very vain. But he was, on the whole, a good man and had performed many austerities. So, to correct him, the Lord appeared -before him in the garb of a **Sannyasin** and said, "Sir, I hear that you have attained great occult powers!" The **Sadhu** welcomed him with great respect and asked him to sit down there. Just then an elephant was passing by, and seeing it, the **Sannyasin** said to the **Sadhu**, "Well, Sir, can you kill this elephant if you choose?" The **Sadhu** replied, "Yes, it can be done," and so saying, he took a handful of dust and threw it at the elephant, chanting certain incantations. The elephant at once fell down dead, writhing in agony. Then the **Sannyasin** observed, "Oh! how wonderful is your power! How easily have you killed the elephant!" The **Sadhu** smiled at these words

of praise. The [Sannyasin](#) said again, "Well, can you bring the elephant back to life?" "Yes, that too can be done," he replied, and threw again a handful of dust at the dead elephant, whereupon the animal got up quite revived. At this the [Sannyasin](#) remarked, "Wonderful indeed is your power! But I would like to ask you one question. Just now you killed the elephant and then revived it, but what benefit did it bring to you? What improvement has it brought in you? Did it help you to attain God?" So saying he disappeared.

1104. A wood-cutter led a very miserable life with the slender earning he could make by selling daily the load of wood he brought from a neighbouring forest. Once a [Sannyasin](#), who was wending his way through the forest, saw him at work and told him that he should go further into the forest and that he would be a gainer thereby. The wood-cutter obeyed the injunction and proceeded onward until he came to a sandalwood tree. He was much pleased and took away with him as many sandal logs as he could carry and sold them in the market at a great profit. Then he began to consider why the good [Sannyasin](#) did not tell him anything about the sandal trees, but simply advised him to proceed into the interior of the forest. So next day he went even beyond the region of the sandal trees, till at last he came upon a copper mine. He took with him as much copper as he could carry and by selling it in the market got much money. Next day, without stopping at the copper mine, he proceeded further still, as the [Sadhu](#) had advised him to do and came upon a silver mine. Then he took with him as much silver as he could carry and sold it all and got even more money. And thus daily proceeding further and further, he reached gold mines and diamond mines and at last became exceedingly rich. Such is also the case with the man who aspires after true Knowledge. If he does not stop in his progress after attaining a little of any extraordinary supernatural power, he at last becomes really rich in the eternal knowledge of the Supreme Truth.

1105. During the reign of [Akbar](#) there lived a [Fakir](#) (a [Muslim](#) ascetic) in a certain forest near Delhi. Many used to resort to the cottage of this holy man. But as he had nothing with which to show hospitality to these visitors, he was in need of some money for this purpose and went for help to [Akbar](#) Shah, who was well known for his kindness to holy men. [Akbar](#) Shah was then saying his prayers and the [Fakir](#) took his seat in the prayer room. In the course of his prayers [Akbar](#) was heard to say, "O Lord, do Thou grant me more wealth, more power, more territories!" At once the [Fakir](#) rose and was about to steal out of the room, when the Emperor beckoned him to be seated again.

At the end of the prayer, [Akbar](#) asked the [Fakir](#), "Sir, you come to see me. How is it then that you wanted to depart without saying anything to me?" The [Fakir](#) said, "The object of my visit to Your Majesty. . . Well, I need not trouble you with that." When [Akbar](#) repeatedly pressed him to say what he wanted, the [Fakir](#) at last said, "Your Majesty, many people come to me to be taught, but for want of money I am unable to see to their comforts. So I thought it well to come to Your Majesty for help." [Akbar](#) then asked why he was about to go away without having told him the object of his visit. The [Fakir](#) replied, "When I saw that you were yourself a beggar begging the Lord for fortune and power and territory, I said to myself, 'Why should I go a-begging to a person who is himself a beggar? I had better beg of the Lord Himself, if indeed it is not possible for me to do without begging altogether.'"

1106. A Brahmana met a [Sannyasin](#) and both had a long talk on worldly and religious topics. At last the [Sannyasin](#) said to the Brahmana: "Behold, child, there is no depending upon any one in this world. None whom you call your own is yours." The Brahmana would not believe it. How could he think that those for whom he was toiling day and night, that is, the members of his own family, were not his friends on whom he could count for help? So the Brahmana said: "Sir, when I am troubled with even a slight headache, my mother is so much concerned that she is ready to give up even her life gladly if it will only bring relief to me. That such a mother is not a friend whom I can depend upon, is something I cannot conceive." The [Sannyasin](#) replied: "If such be the case, then of course she is a friend. But, to tell you the truth, you are greatly mistaken. Never believe for a moment that your mother, wife and son will sacrifice their lives for your sake. You can verify the truth of this if you like; go home and feign excruciating pain in your stomach and groan with it; I will come and show you some fun."

The Brahmana acted accordingly. Physicians were called in, but no one could afford any relief. The mother of the patient was sighing and sorrowing; the wife and children were crying. The [Sannyasin](#) turned at this moment.

"The disease is of a serious nature said the [Sannyasin](#), "and I do not see any chance of the patient's recovery unless someone comes forward to give up his or her life for the sake of the patient." At this, all of them looked aghast. The [Sannyasin](#), addressing the old mother of the patient, said: "To live or to die will be the same thing to you, if in your old age you lose your son who earns for himself and for you all. If you can give your life in exchange for his, I can save your son. If you, as his mother, cannot make this sacrifice for him, who else in this world will care to do it?"

The old woman blabbered forth through her tears: "Revered father, I am ready to do anything you order for the sake of my son. But the thing is, my own life. . . and what is my life in comparison to that of my son? The thought-what will become of my little ones after my death-makes me a coward. Unfortunate that I am, these little ones are in my way."

While listening to this dialogue between the [Sannyasin](#) and the mother-in-law, the wife of the patient wept bitterly and said, addressing her own parents, "For your sake, dear father and mother, I cannot make the sacrifice." The [Sannyasin](#) turned to her and asked her whether she would not sacrifice her life for the sake of her husband, now that his mother had fallen back. The wife said: "The wretch that I am! If widowhood is to be my lot, be it so. I cannot make up my mind to cause grief to my father and mother for the loss of their child." In this way everyone wriggled out of the difficulty. Then the [Sannyasin](#) told the patient: "Look now, no one is ready here to sacrifice a life for you. Do you understand now what I meant by saying that there was no depending upon anybody in this world?" When the Brahmana saw all this, he abandoned his so-called home and followed the [Sannyasin](#).

1107. A disciple said to his [Guru](#) that his wife loved him very much and so he could not renounce the world. The disciple used to practise [Hathayoga](#). To convince him of the hollowness of his plea, the [Guru](#) taught him some secrets of this branch of [Yoga](#). One day all on a sudden there was great consternation in the disciple's house and wailings and sobbings were heard all around. The neighbours came running to the house and saw the Hatha [Yogi](#) disciple in a room, quite motionless, in a peculiar convoluted posture. They all thought that life was extinct in the body. The wife of the man was crying: "Alas! where have you gone, dear? Why have you forsaken us? Ah! we never knew that such a calamity would befall us!" In the meantime the relatives brought a cot to take the corpse out for cremation. Then they found themselves face to face with a serious difficulty. As the man was in a contorted posture, his body would not come out through the door. Seeing that, one of the neighbours brought an axe and began to cut the wooden frame of the door. Till then the wife was weeping in an uncontrollable fit of sorrow; but no sooner did she hear the sound of the axe than she ran to the spot, and though still weeping, anxiously enquired what they were about. One of the neighbours told her that they were cutting the door as her husband's body could not otherwise be taken out owing to its peculiar posture. "No, no," cried out the wife, "don't do so now. I have been widowed and there is none to look after me. I have to bring up my fatherless children. If you now cut the door, it cannot be repaired again. Whatever was to happen has happened to my husband. You had better cut his hands and legs and take him out." Hearing this, the Hatha [Yogi](#) at once stood up, the effect of the drug having gone by this time and bawled out, "Woman, you want to cut my hands and legs!" And so saying, he went away with his [Guru](#) renouncing hearth and home.

### Nature of [Maya](#)

1108. A man was going through the woods. On his way he was caught by a band of three robbers. They robbed him of everything he had. Then the first robber asked, "What is the use of letting this man live?" And drawing his sword, he was about to kill him, when the second robber stopped him, saying, "What is the good of killing him? Tie his hands and feet and throw him aside." So they bound him hand and foot and went away leaving him there. After they had gone some distance, the third robber returned and said to him, "Ah! are you hurt? Come, let me untie the cords and release you." Then when he had removed the cords he said, "Now, come with me. I will show you the road." After walking a long distance, they found the road, and then the robber said, "Look, there is your home. Follow the road and you will soon reach it". The man thanked him and said, "Sir you have done me a great service; I am greatly obliged to you. Will you not come with me to my house?" The robber answered, "No, I cannot go there, the police will find me out."

This world is the wilderness. The three robbers are the three Gunas (constituents) of Nature-[Sattva](#), [Rajas](#) and [Tamas](#). [Jiva](#) or the individual soul is the traveller. Self knowledge is his treasure. [Tamas](#) wants to destroy him, while [Rajas](#) intercedes and binds him with the fetters of the world, but [Sattva](#) protects him from the action of [Rajas](#) and [Tamas](#). By taking refuge in [Sattva](#), the [Jiva](#) becomes free from lust, anger and delusion which are the effects of [Tamas](#); thus the [Sattva](#) quality emancipates the [Jiva](#) from the bondage of the world. But the [Sattva](#) quality itself is also a robber. It leads one, however, up to the path of the Supreme Abode and then it says, "Behold, there is your home!" Then it disappears. Even the [Sattva](#) quality cannot go into the region of the Absolute.

1109. A priest was once going to the village of a disciple of his. He had no servant with him. Seeing a cobbler on the way, he addressed him, saying, "Hallo! good man, will you accompany me as a servant? You will be fed well and taken good care of if you come with me." The cobbler replied, 'Sir, I am of the lowest caste. How can I come as your servant?' The priest said, "Never mind. Do not tell anybody what

you are. Do not also speak to anyone, or make anybody's acquaintance." The cobbler agreed. At twilight, while the priest was sitting at prayers in the house of his disciple, another Brahmana came and said to the priest's servant, "Go and bring my shoes from there." True to the behest of his **master**, he made no response. The Brahmana repeated his order a second time, but even then the servant remained silent. The Brahmana repeated again and again, but the cobbler did not move an inch. At last, getting annoyed, the Brahmana angrily said "Sirrah! how dare you disobey a Brahmana's command? What is your name?"

Are you indeed a cobbler?" The cobbler, hearing this, began to tremble with fear and looking piteously at the priest, said, "O venerable Sir! I am found out. I dare not stay here any longer. Let me flee." So saying, he took to his heels. Just so, as soon as **Maya** is recognised, she flies away.

1110. **Maya** is unknowable. Once **Narada** besought the Lord of the universe, "Lord, show me that **Maya** of Thine which can make the impossible possible." The Lord nodded assent. Subsequently the Lord one day set out on a travel with **Narada**. After going some distance, He felt very thirsty and fatigued. So He sat down and told **Narada**, "**Narada**, I feel very thirsty; please get me a little water from somewhere." **Narada** at once ran in search of water.

Finding no water nearby, he went far from the place and saw a river at a great distance. When he approached the river, he saw a most charming young lady sitting there and was at once captivated by her beauty. As soon as **Narada** went near her, she began to address him in sweet words, and ere long, both fell in love with each other. **Narada** then married her and settled down as a householder. In course of time he had a number of children by her. And while he was thus living happily with his wife and children, there came a pestilence in the country. Death began to collect its toll from every place. Then **Narada** proposed to abandon the place and go away somewhere else. His wife acceded to it and they both came out of their house leading their children by the hand. But no sooner did they come to the bridge to cross the river than there came a terrible flood and in the rush of water, all their children were swept away one after another and at last the wife too was drowned. Overwhelmed with grief at his bereavement, **Narada** sat down on the bank and began to weep piteously. Just then the Lord appeared before him, saying, "O **Narada**, where is the water? and why are you weeping?" The sight of the Lord startled the sage and then he understood everything. He exclaimed, "Lord, my obeisance to Thee and my obeisance also to Thy wonderful **Maya**!"

1111. Once a tigress attacked a flock of sheep. She was with child and so when she jumped on the flock, she gave birth to a cub and died. But the cub survived and grew up among the flock of sheep. The sheep grazed in the field and the cub too did accordingly. They bleated and it also tried to imitate them. In course of time it became a full-grown tiger. By chance, one day, another tiger came and attacked the flock, but he was surprised to see the sheep-tiger in the flock. Then he chased it and caught it by the neck. But it began to bleat in fear like the sheep. The old tiger, however, dragged it to a pond and showing it the reflection of both of them in the water, said, "Look, your form is similar to mine. You are also a tiger like myself. Now eat this piece of flesh." And saying so he forced the flesh into its mouth. But at first the sheep-tiger would by no means eat it. It bleated and said that it was a sheep. As soon as it got a little taste of blood, however, its dormant instinct was quickened and it began to eat the flesh. Then the old tiger said, "Now have you understood that you are the same as myself? So come along with me into the forest." In the same way if one has the grace of the **Guru**, there is no fear. The **Guru** will open your eyes and tell you who you are and what your real self is.

1112. In the course of self-analysis, when the mind reaches the state of perfect peace, there comes the revelation of the Supreme **Brahman**.

Once a man wanted to see the king. The king lived in the inner apartment of the palace beyond seven gates. The man came to the palace and saw at the first gate a person sitting in great pomp surrounded by a retinue. Seeing him, the man who was going to the king asked his friend, "Is that the king?" The friend said with a smile, "No." Next he passed through the other gates one after another and in each successive gate he saw persons sitting surrounded by greater and greater pomp and show. The more he advanced into the interior of the palace the more was the grandeur of the people whom he saw. And at every succeeding stage he thought that he beheld the king and so questioned his friend. But when he crossed the seventh gate and came face to face with the king himself, he felt no necessity of asking his friend whether the man was the king. For he was dumb-founded by the very sight of the immense grandeur 'of the king and felt sure that he was standing in the august presence of royalty.

## Realisation of the Divine

1113. A certain devout lady, who was also a faithful wife, lived with her husband, serving him and their children with a loving heart and at the same time keeping her mind fixed on the Lord. At her husband's death, as soon as the cremation was over, she broke her glass bangles and wore a pair of gold bracelets in their place. People wondered at her unnatural conduct, but she explained to them, "Hitherto my husband's body was fragile like the glass bangles; that ephemeral body is now gone and he is therefore like one. unchangeable and whole in every respect. His body is no longer fragile. So I have discarded the fragile glass bangles and put on ornaments of a permanent nature."

1114. Once there came to Dakshineswar two Sadhus who were father and son. The son had attained true Knowledge, but the father had not. Both were sitting in the room where [Sri Ramakrishna](#) lived and were talking with him. In the meantime, a young cobra came out of a rat-hole and bit the son. Seeing that, the father was terribly frightened and began to call all the people around. But the son sat quiet and that puzzled the father still more. When he asked the son why he was sitting quiet, the son laughed and was

heard to explain, "Which is the snake and whom has it bitten?" He had realised the Unity, and hence he could not make any distinction between a man and a snake.

1115. An outcaste was carrying baskets of meat from a slaughter-house. On the way he met [Sankaracharya](#) who was returning after his bath in the sacred [Ganges](#). It chanced that the outcaste touched the person of the holy man [Sankara](#) was offended and cried out, "You have touched me, sirrah!" The outcaste replied, "Sir; neither have I touched you, nor have you touched me! Please reason with me and say whether your true Self is the body or the mind or the intellect; tell me what you truly are. You know that the true Self is not attached to any of the three Gunas of Nature, [Sattva](#), [Rajas](#) and [Tamas](#)." Then [Sankara](#) was abashed and had the true awakening.

1116. Once a [Sadhu](#) placed his disciple in a magnificent garden with the intention of imparting to him the knowledge of the real Self and went away. After a few days he came back and asked the disciple, "Do you feel any want, my boy?" On being answered in the affirmative, he left with him a fair woman named Shyama, and advised him to take fish and meat freely. After a considerable time he came again and asked the same question as before. This time the disciple replied, "No, I have no want, thank you." The [Sadhu](#) then called both the disciple and Shyama to him and pointing to Shyama's hands, asked the disciple, "Can you tell me what these are?" "Why, these are Shyama's hands," replied the disciple. He put the same question several times, pointing to Shyama's eyes, nose and other parts of the body, and the disciple gave appropriate answers. Presently the idea struck the disciple, "I am talking of everything as Shyama's 'this' and Shyama's 'that'. What then is this Shyama?" Bewildered, he asked his [Guru](#) the question, "But who is this Shyama, to whom belong these eyes, ears and the rest?" The [Sadhu](#) said, "If you wish to know who this Shyama is, come with me and I will enlighten you." So saying, he revealed to him the secret.

1117. A certain father had two sons. When they were old enough, they were admitted to the first stage of life ([Brahmacharya](#)) and placed under the care of a religious preceptor to study the Vedas. After a long time the boys returned home, having finished their studies. Their father asked them if they had read the 'Vedanta. On their replying in the affirmative, he asked, "Well, tell me what is [Brahman](#)." The elder son, quoting the Vedas and other scriptures, replied: "O Father, It is beyond words and thought. It is so and so. I know it all." And to support what he said, he again quoted Vedantic texts.

"So you have known [Brahman](#)!" said the father, "you may go about your business." Then he asked the younger son the same question. But the boy remained silent; not a word came out of his mouth, nor did he make any attempt to speak. At this the father remarked. "Yes, my boy, you are right. Nothing can be predicated of the Absolute and the Unconditioned. No sooner do you talk of It than you state the Infinite in terms of the finite, the Absolute in terms of the relative, the Unconditioned in terms of the conditioned. Your silence is more eloquent than the recitation of a hundred verses and the quoting of a hundred authorities. "

1118. A learned Brahmana once went to a wise king and said, "I am well-versed, O king, in the Holy Scriptures. I intend to teach you the [Bhagavata](#)." The king, who was the wiser of the two, knew well that a man who had really studied the [Bhagavata](#) would seek to know his own Self rather than go to a king's court for wealth and honour. So the king replied, "I see, O Brahmana, that you yourself have not mastered that book thoroughly. I promise to make you my tutor, but first learn the scripture well." The Brahmana went his way, thinking, "How foolish it is of the king to say that I have not mastered the [Bhagavata](#), seeing that I have been reading the book over and over all these years !" However, he went through the book carefully once more and appeared again before the king. The king told him the same thing again and sent him away. The Brahmana was sorely vexed, but thought that there must be some meaning in the behaviour of the king.

He went home, shut himself up in his room and applied himself more than ever to the study of the book. By and by hidden meanings began to flash into his mind and the vanity of running after the bubbles of riches and honour, kings and courts, wealth and fame, appeared to his unclouded vision. From that day onward he gave himself up entirely to attaining perfection by the worship of God and never thought of returning to the king. A few years after, the king thought of the Brahmana and went to his house to see what he was doing. Seeing him, now radiant with Divine light and love, he fell upon his knees and said, "I see that you have now realised the true meaning of the scriptures. I am ready to be your disciple if you will duly condescend to make me one."

1119. There was a Hindu monastery in a certain village. The monks used to go out every day with begging bowls to gather food. One day, a monk, while going on his rounds, saw a Zamindar (landlord) severely beating a poor man. The holy man, being very kind-hearted, entreated the Zamindar to stop beating the man. The Zamindar, blind with rage, immediately turned on the monk and vented all his anger upon him. He belaboured him so heavily that the monk fell down unconscious on the ground. Another man, seeing the condition of the monk, went to the monastery and reported what had happened. His brethren ran to the spot where he was lying. They carried him to the monastery and laid him in a room; but the holy man still remained unconscious for a long time. Sorrowful and anxious, the brothers fanned him, bathed his face with cold water, poured milk into his mouth and did all that was possible to revive him. Gradually he regained consciousness: When he opened his eyes and looked at the monks, one of them, desiring to know whether he could recognise his friends, asked him in a loud voice, "Revered Sir, do you recognise him who is feeding you with milk?" The holy man answered in a feeble voice, "Brother, he who beat me is now feeding me." One cannot realise this oneness of spirit unless one has reached God-consciousness and has gone beyond good and evil, and virtue and vice.

1120. Once in a certain village there lived a young man named [Padmalochan](#), who was nicknamed Podo by the villagers. In that village there was an old 'dilapidated temple. There was no sacred image of God inside the temple and the whole building was overgrown with shrubs and trees and formed a convenient residence for birds and bats. One evening, all of a sudden, people heard the sounds of bell and conch issuing from the deserted temple. Men, women and children all ran eagerly to the place, thinking that some [devotee](#) might have newly installed an image of God, and be performing the evening service. With folded hands they all waited outside to see the image, listening to the sacred sounds. But one of them, more inquisitive than the rest, had the courage to peep in through the doors. To his surprise he saw that it was Podo who was ringing the bell and blowing the conch inside. The floor of the shrine was as dirty as before, and there was no image to worship. He then called out saying, "O Podo, you have no image of [Madhava](#) in your temple! And behold! you have not even taken the trouble of cleansing and purifying the temple! Day and night the eleven bats screech there. Ah, for nothing you my tutor, but first learn the scripture well." The Brahmana went his way, thinking, "How foolish it is of the king to say that I have not mastered the [Bhagavata](#), seeing that I have been reading the book over and over all these years !" However, he went through the book carefully once more and appeared again before the king. The king told him the same thing again and sent him away. The Brahmana was sorely vexed, but thought that there must be some meaning in the behaviour of the king. He went home, shut himself up in his room and applied himself more than ever to the study of the book. By and by hidden meanings began to flash into his mind and the vanity of running after the bubbles of riches and honour, kings and courts, wealth and fame, appeared to his unclouded vision. From that day onward he gave himself up entirely to attaining perfection by the worship of God and never thought of returning to the king. A few years after, the king thought of the Brahmana and went to his house to see what he was doing. Seeing him, now radiant with Divine light and love, he fell upon his knees and said, "I see that you have now realised the true meaning of the scriptures. I am ready to be your disciple if you will duly condescend to make me one."

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