

CHAPTER III

MAYA AS 'WOMAN AND GOLD' ¹

The bondage of sex-Sex and spiritual progress-How to conquer sex? Riches and the spiritual aspirant

The Bondage of Sex

66. What is **Maya**? It is lust which forms an obstacle to spiritual progress.
67. Is it **Maya** or Meya (woman, sex) which has devoured everything?
68. Souls enmeshed in worldliness cannot resist the temptation of 'woman and gold' and direct their minds to God, even though these things bring upon them a thousand humiliations.
69. Be careful, O householders! Put not too much confidence in women; they establish their mastery over you very insidiously!
70. You cannot live in a sooty room, and at the same time escape being somewhat blackened in spite of all your caution. So also, if a man lives in the company of women, some carnality, however little, is bound to arise in him, even though he may be very circumspect and has his senses under control.
71. If pitchers of ice-cold water and bottles of savoury sauce are placed near a man who is suffering from a very high fever and is semi-delirious, do you think that it is possible for him, thirsty and restless as he is, to resist the temptation of drinking the water or tasting the sauce? Similarly the worldly man who suffers from the high fever of lust, and is thirsty for sensual pleasures, cannot resist temptations when he is placed between the charms of beauty on one side, and those of wealth on the other. He is sure to deviate from the path of devotion.
72. Once a **Marwari** gentleman, approached **Sri Ramakrishna** and said, "How is it, Sir, that I do not see God, although I have renounced everything?"
The **Master**: Well, haven't you seen leather jars for keeping oil? If one of them is emptied of its contents, still it retains something of the oil as well as its smell. In the same way there is still some worldliness left in you, and its odour persists.
73. 'Woman and gold', remember, keep men immersed in worldliness and away from God. It is strange that no one has anything but praise for his own wife, be she good, bad or indifferent.
74. As the monkey sacrifices its life at the feet of the hunter, so does a man at the feet of a beautiful woman.

Sex and Spiritual Progress

75. Those who wish to attain God or make progress in their devotional practices should particularly guard themselves against the snares of lust and wealth. Otherwise they will never attain perfection.
76. **Nityananda** asked **Sri Chaitanya**, "Why is it that all my teaching of Divine love produces no tangible result on the minds of men?" **Sri Chaitanya** replied, "Because, due to their association with woman they cannot retain the higher teachings. Listen, Brother **Nityananda**, there is no salvation for the worldly-minded."
77. When does the indicator of a balance move away from the pointed needle attached to the top? When one of the scales becomes heavier than the other: Similarly the mind runs away from God and gets unbalanced when the pressure of woman and wealth is placed upon it.
78. If there is a small hole at the bottom of a jar of water, the whole water will leak out. Similarly, if there is the smallest tinge of worldliness in the aspirant, all his exertions will come to naught.
79. Try to gain absolute mastery over the sexual instinct. If one succeeds in doing this, a physiological change is produced in the body by the development of a hitherto rudimentary nerve known as **Medha** (the function of which is to transmute the lower energies into the higher). The knowledge of the higher Self is gained after the development of this **Medha** nerve.

80. The mind steeped in affection for 'woman and gold' is like the green betel-nut. So long as the betel-nut is green, its kernel remains adhering to its shell, but when it dries up, shell and nut are separated, and the nut moves within, if shaken. So when the affection for 'woman and gold' dries up, the soul is perceived as quite different from the body.

81. When the mind is free from attachment to sense objects, it turns to God and is fixed on Him. The bound soul becomes free in this way. That soul is bound which takes the path leading away from God.

82. When attachment for wealth and sex is wiped out from the mind, what else is left in the soul? Only the bliss of [Brahman](#).

How to Conquer Sex?

83. As persons living in a house infested with venomous snakes are always alert, so should men living in the world be always vigilant against the allurements of lust and greed.

84. On coming across a snake usually we say, "Mother Manasa, please move away showing your tail and hiding your head." So also it is wise to hold aloof from such influences as have a tendency to excite sensuality. It is far better not to come in contact with them than to gain experience by a fall.

85. A disciple once asked [Sri Ramakrishna](#) how he was to conquer lust; for though he was passing his days in religious contemplation, evil thoughts were arising in his mind from time to time. To him the [Master](#) said: "There was a man who had a pet dog. He used to caress it, carry it about in his arms, play with it and kiss it. A wise man, seeing this foolish behaviour of his, warned him not to lavish such affection on a dog. For it was, after all, an irrational brute, and might bite him one day. The owner took the warning to heart and putting away the dog from his arms, resolved never again to fondle or caress it. But the animal could not at first understand the change in his [master](#), and would run to him frequently to be taken up and caressed. Beaten several times, the dog at last ceased to trouble his [master](#) any more. Such indeed is your condition. The dog that you have been cherishing so long in your bosom will not easily leave you, though you may wish to be rid of it. However, there is no harm in it. Do not caress the dog any more, but give it a good beating whenever it approaches you to be fondled, and in course of time you will be altogether free from its importunities. "

86. 'Woman and gold' have drowned the whole world in sin. Woman is disarmed when you view her as the manifestation of the Divine Mother. God cannot be seen so long as one's passion for 'woman and gold' is not extinguished.

87. Once a man attains God through intense [Vairagya](#) (freedom from worldly passions), temptations of sex disappear, and he finds himself in no danger even from his own wife. If there are two unequal magnets at an equal distance from a piece of iron, which of them will draw it with greater force? Certainly the larger one. Verily, God is the larger magnet. What can the smaller magnet, woman, do against it?

88. Snakes are venomous reptiles. If you try to catch them, you are sure to be bitten. But to the man who has learnt the art of snake-charming by the use of magnetised dust, it is not a very difficult affair to catch them. He can play even with seven of them twisted together and coiled round his neck. (Similarly a man of realisation is immune from the dangers of worldly life).

89. One day a [Marwari](#) gentleman went to [Sri Ramakrishna](#) and asked him for permission to present him with some thousands of rupees. But the [Master](#) had nothing but a stern refusal for this well-meant offer. He said, "I shall have nothing to do with your money; for if I accept it, my mind would always be dwelling on it." The gentleman then proposed to invest the amount in the name of one of [Sri Ramakrishna's](#) relatives to be used by him for the [Master's](#) service. To this the [Master](#) replied, "No, it would be double-dealing. Moreover, it would always be in my mind that I am keeping my money with so-and-so." But the [Marwari](#) still persisted in his proposal, quoting one of [Sri Ramakrishna's](#) own sayings, "If the mind is like oil, it will float even upon an ocean of 'woman and gold.'"

At this the **Master** retorted: "That is true indeed; but if the oil floats on water for a considerable length of time, it becomes putrefied. In the same way, even if the mind were only to float over the ocean of 'woman and gold' the continuous contact of the latter for a long period would surely tend to vitiate the mind and make it give out an evil odour."

Riches and the Spiritual Aspirant

90. Referring to the fact that the pursuit of wealth diverts an aspirant from the path of God, the **Master** once said to a young disciple: "Like a man of the world you have accepted a paid appointment. But you are working for your mother. Otherwise I should have said, 'For shame! For shame!' "He repeated this several times and then said, "Serve the Lord alone."

91. Referring to the degradation that service undertaken for the sake of money brings about, the **Master** said of a young disciple: "A change for the worse has come over his face. A dark shadowy film seems to have spread over it. All this is due to office work. There are the accounts and a hundred other matters to attend to."

92. Money is an **Upadhi** (a deceptive influence) of a very strong nature. As soon as a man becomes rich, he is thoroughly changed. A **Brahman** who was very meek and humble used to come here (Dakshineswar) every now and then. After some time he stopped his visits, and we knew nothing of what happened to him. One day we went to Konnagore in a boat. As we were getting down from the boat, we saw him sitting on the bank of the **Ganges**, where, in the fashion of big folk, he was enjoying the pure breeze of the river. On seeing me, he accosted me in a patronising tone with the words, "Hallo, Thakur! How do you do now?" At once I noticed the change in his tone and said to **Hriday** who was with me, "I tell you, **Hriday**, this man must have come by some riches. See what a great change has come over him!" And **Hriday** burst into laughter.

93. Money can fetch you bread alone. Do not consider it as your sole end and aim.

94. There are some who boast of their wealth and power, of their name and fame, and high status in society; but all these are for a few days only. None of these will follow them after death.

95. On two occasions the Lord smiles. First when the doctor comes to the bed-side of a patient who is seriously taken ill and is about to die, and says to his mother, "Why madam, there is no cause for anxiety at all, I take upon myself the responsibility of saving your son's life." Next He smiles when two brothers, who are busy partitioning their land, take a measuring tape, put it across the land and say, "This side is mine, that side is yours."

96. There is nothing to be proud of in money. If you say you are rich, there are richer and richer men than you, in comparison with whom you are a mere beggar. After dusk when the glow-worms make their appearance, they think, "We are giving light to the world." But when the stars begin to twinkle, the pride of the glow-worms is humbled. Now the stars begin to think, "We are illumining the universe." But after a while the **moon** ascends the sky, and her silvery light humiliates the stars and they pale away in sadness. Again, the **moon** grows proud and thinks that by her light the world is lighted and bathed in beauty. But presently the dawn proclaims the ascent of the sun on the eastern horizon. And where is the **moon** now!

If they who think themselves rich ponder these facts of Nature, they would never, never boast of their riches and power.

97. Water always flows out under a bridge but never stagnates so money passes through the hands of the free, and is never hoarded by them.

98. He is truly a man to whom money is only a servant; but, on the other hand, those who do not know how to make a proper use of it, hardly deserve to be called men.