

CHAPTER V
BONDAGE OF BOOK-LEARNING

Barrenness of mere book-learning- Vanity of disputation- The true end of learning.

Barrenness of Mere Book-Learning

137. One day the late [Keshab Chandra Sen](#) came to [Sri Ramakrishna](#) in the temple of Dakshineswar and asked him, "How is it that even learned people remain so profoundly ignorant of things that truly matter in spiritual life, although they have read a whole library of religious books?" The [Master](#) replied, "The kite and the vulture soar high up in the air, but all the time their eyes remain fixed on charnel-houses in search of putrid carcasses; similarly the minds of the so-called learned men are attached to the things of the world, to lust and wealth, in spite of their erudition in sacred lore, and hence they cannot attain true Knowledge. "

138. That knowledge which purifies the mind and heart alone is true Knowledge, all else is only a negation of Knowledge.

139. What is the use of mere book-learning? The Pandits may be familiar with plenty of sacred texts and couplets. But what is the good of repeating them? One must realise in one's life the truths embodied in the scriptures. Mere reading will not bring Knowledge, or salvation as long as one is attached to the world, as long as one is fond of 'woman and gold'.

140. Our so-called Pandits will talk big. They will talk of [Brahman](#), of God, of the Absolute, of [Jnana Yoga](#), of philosophy, of ontology, and the rest. But there are very few who have realised what they talk about. The rest are dry and hard, and are good for nothing.

141. It is easy to utter '*sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*' with the mouth, but it is difficult to play them on an instrument. So it is, easy to talk on religion, but difficult to practise it.

142. A parrot repeats by rote the holy name of Radha-Krishna, but as soon as it is caught by a cat it screams 'kang, kang', betraying its -natural cry. Worldly-wise men sometimes repeat the name of Han (God) and perform various pious and charitable deeds with the hope of worldly gains, but when misfortune, sorrow, poverty and death overtake them, they forget Him and all such deeds.

14J. Can love of God be acquired by reading holy books? In the Hindu almanac it is mentioned that on a particular day there will be twenty Adas (a unit of measure) of rainwater. But you will not be able to squeeze out of the almanac a single drop! So also many good sayings are to be found in holy books, but merely reading them will not make one religious. One must practise the virtues taught in such books in order to acquire love of God.

144. In the kingdom of God, reason, intellect and learning are of no avail. There the dumb speak, the blind see, and the deaf hear.

145. To explain God after merely reading the scriptures is like explaining to a person the city of Banaras after seeing it only in a map.

146. The intoxication of hemp is not to be had by repeating the word 'hemp' even a thousand times. Get some hemp, pound it with water into a solution and drink it; you will then really get intoxicated. What is the use of crying aloud, "O God, O God !" Regularly practise devotion, and you will see God.

147. This knowledge of God comes not to the person who is proud of his learning or wealth. You may say to such a person, "There is a holy man in a certain place. Do you like to see him?" He is, however, sure to put forward excuses and say that he cannot go. He thinks he is too big a man to pay a visit to such a person. Such pride is born of ignorance.

148. Those who have read a little become puffed up with pride. I had a conversation with a certain person on God. He said, "Oh, I know all this." I said to him, "Does one who has been to Delhi go about boasting of it? Does a gentleman ever tell us that he is a gentleman?"

149. Grantha does not always mean a holy scripture, but often it comes to mean a 'Granthi' or a knot. If a man does not read it with an intense desire to know the Truth, and renouncing all vanity, the mere reading

of books only give rise to pedantry, presumption, egotism etc., which will be an encumbrance on his mind like so many knots.

150. Water is dried up at once if poured on a heap of ashes. Vanity is like this heap of ashes. Prayer and contemplation produce no effect upon the heart puffed up with vanity.

Vanity of Disputation

151. Water poured into an empty vessel makes a bubbling noise, but when the vessel is full, no sound is heard. Similarly, the man who has not found God is full of vain disputation about His existence and nature. But he who has seen Him, silently enjoys the bliss Divine.

152. Common men talk 'bagfuls' of religion but do not practise even a 'grain' of it. The wise man speaks little, even though his whole life is religion expressed in action.

153. When a large number of guests are invited to a feast, you first hear a tremendous noise produced by them; but it continues only till they commence eating. When the dishes are served and the guests fall to, three-fourths of the noise subsides. Then, comes the course of sweetmeats. The more they are served, the more does the noise subside; and finally, when the turn comes for curds (the last course), only one sound is heard *viz.*, 'soop-soop'. The feast over, the next thing for the guests to do is to go to sleep!

The nearer you come to God, the less you are disposed to questioning and reasoning. When you actually attain Him, when you behold Him as the reality,-then all noise, all disputations, come to an end. Then is the time for sleep, *i.e.*, for enjoyment which comes in [Samadhi](#), the state of communion with the Divine.

154. So long as the bee is outside the petals of the flower and has not tasted the sweetness of the nectar within, it hovers round humming; but when it gets into the flower, it drinks the nectar noiselessly. So long as a man disputes about doctrines and dogmas, he has not tasted the nectar of true faith. Once he tastes that, he becomes silent.

155. One who has just taken to the study of a foreign language, constantly resorts, while talking, to words belonging to that language in order to make a show of his attainments; but he who knows the language well seldom uses it when speaking in his own mother tongue. Such indeed is the case with those who are well advanced in religion.

156. At a distance from the market, we hear only a loud buzzing noise; but entering the market, we hear it no longer, and perceive the bargains that are being carried on. Similarly, so long as a person is far away from God, he cannot but be in the midst of the confusion of sophistry, vain argument and discussion; but once he approaches God, all arguments and discussions cease, and he gains a clear and vivid perception of the mysteries of God.

157. Throw an unbaked cake of flour into hot [ghee](#), and it will make a sizzling noise. But the more it is fried, the less is the noise; and when it is fully fried, the bubbling ceases altogether. So long as a man has a little knowledge, he goes about talking and preaching; but when the perfection resulting from true Knowledge is gained, he no more makes a vain display.

158. When the grace of the Almighty descends on any one, he immediately understands his mistakes; knowing this, you should not dispute.

The True End of Learning

159. Sacred books only point out the way to God. Once you have knowt1 the way, what is the use of books? Then comes the time for the culture of the soul in solitary communion with God. A person received a letter from his village-home, asking him to send certain things to- his kinsmen. When he was going to order them, he wanted to ascertain again from the letter the articles requisitioned. So he searched for the letter, which was then missing. At last, to his great delight, it was found out after a long search. He took it up eagerly, and went through the contents which ran as

follows: "Please send five seers of sweetmeats, a hundred oranges and eight pieces of cloth." Knowing the contents, he threw the letter aside and set about procuring the articles.

How long then does one care for such a letter? So long as one does not know the contents. The contents being once known, the next step is to put forth the necessary effort to get the things desired. Similarly the sacred books tell us only the way to God, *i.e.*, of the means for the realisation of God. That way being known, the next step is to work one's way to the goal. Realisation is the goal.

160. Para-*vidya*, *i.e.*, higher knowledge, is that by which we know God. All else, scriptures, philosophy, logic, grammar etc. only burden and puzzle the mind. The Granthas (books) are sometimes Granthis (knots). They are good only when they lead to the higher knowledge.

161. Many think that knowledge of God cannot be attained except through the study of books. But higher than reading is hearing, and even higher than hearing is seeing or realising. The hearing of the truth from the lips of the preceptor makes a greater impression on the mind than the mere reading of books; but seeing makes the greatest impression. Better than reading about Banaras is hearing about the place from the lips of one who has actually visited it; but the best is to see Banaras with one's own eyes.

162. Only two kinds of people can attain self-knowledge: those who are not encumbered at all with learning, that is to say, whose minds are not over-crowded with thoughts borrowed from others; and those who, after studying all the scriptures and sciences, have come to realise that they know nothing.

163. People talk of errors and - superstitions, and feel proud *of* their book-learning; but the sincere devotee finds the loving Lord ever ready to lend him a helping hand. It matters not if he had been walking along a wrong path, for a time. The Lord knows what he wants and in the end fulfils his heart's desires.

164. Two friends went into an orchard. One of them possessing much worldly wisdom, immediately began to count the mango trees there and the number of mangoes each tree bore, and to estimate what might be the approximate value of the whole orchard. His companion went to the owner, made friends with him, and then, quietly going to a tree, began at his host's desire to pluck the fruits and eat them. Whom do you consider to be the wiser of the two? Eat mangoes. It will satisfy your hunger. What is the good of counting the trees and leaves and making calculations? The vain man of intellect busies himself uselessly with finding out the 'why' and 'wherefore' of creation, while the humble man of wisdom makes friends with the Creator and enjoys His gift of supreme bliss.

165. One ray of light from my Divine Mother, Who is verily the Goddess of Wisdom, has power to cow down even the most learned of Pandits and make him appear like an insignificant worm crawling upon the earth.

166. Utter the word *Gita*, in quick succession, a number of times-Gi-ta-gi-ta-gi-tag-i. It is then virtually pronounced as 'Tagi', 'Tagi', which means one who has renounced the world for the sake of God. Thus, in one word, the *Gita* teaches, "Renounce, ye world-bound men! Renounce everything, and fix the mind on the Lord."

167. In the course of his pilgrimage through the southern parts of India, *Chaitanya Deva* came across a certain devotee who was in tears all the while a *Pandit* was reading from the *Gita*. Now this devotee knew not even the alphabet. He could not follow a single verse of the *Gita*. On being asked why he shed tears, he replied, "It is indeed true that I do not know a word of the *Gita*. But all the while it was being read, I could not help seeing with my inner eye the beautiful form of my Lord *Sri Krishna* seated before *Arjuna* in a chariot in the field of Kurukshetra, and giving out all those sublime thoughts embodied in the *Gita*. This it was that filled my eyes with tears of joy and love."

This man, who knew not letters, had the highest Knowledge, for he had pure love for God and could realise Him.