

CHAPTER VI
RELIGIOUS TEACHERS-FALSE AND TRUE
Pitfalls of teachership- True teachers
Pitfalls of Teachership

168. Do you, O preacher, carry the badge of authority? the humblest servant of the king, authorised by him, is heard with awe and respect, and can quell a riot by showing his badge; so must you, O preacher, first obtain your commission and inspiration from God Himself. So long as you do not have this badge of Divine inspiration, you may preach all your life, but it will be a mere waste of breath.

169. None has the patience or desire to dive deep into Divine love. None cares for discrimination and dispassion for worldly things ([Viveka](#) and [Vairagya](#)), or for devotional practices (Sadhanas). On the other hand, all men rush to lecture and to teach with only a bit of book-learning.

Strange indeed! To teach others is the most difficult of tasks. He alone can teach, who gets a commission from God after having realised Him.

170. What do you think of the man who is a good orator and preacher, but whose spiritual powers are undeveloped? He is like the person who squanders another's property entrusted to him. He can easily advise others, for it costs him nothing since the ideas he expresses are not his own but borrowed.

171. A well-known speaker was lecturing once in a Harisabha (religious association). In the course of his speech he said, "The Lord is totally devoid of Rasa (sweetness); we must make Him sweet by lending to Him the sweetness of our own nature." By Rasa he meant love and other divine attributes. When I heard this, I was reminded of the boy who said that his mother's brother had many horses, and sought to convince his hearers by explaining that they occupied a whole cowshed. Of course, the intelligent could at once see that cowsheds are not meant for horses, that the youngster was telling a lie, and that he had no experience or knowledge of horses:

To say that God is devoid of Rasa was an absurdity, which proved that the speaker was totally ignorant of what he was saying. He had never realised the Supreme Being, Who is the very fountain of eternal love, wisdom and joy.

172. What is your opinion about the method employed by present-day religious preachers? It is like inviting a hundred persons to a dinner with food enough only for one. It is only pretending to be a great religious teacher with a small stock of spiritual experience.

173. First install God in the temple of your heart; first realise Him. Speeches, lectures and the rest may be taken up after you have seen God, not before. People talk glibly of God and [Brahman](#), while they are attached to the things of the world. What does all this amount to? Mere blowing of the conch (Sankha) for Divine Service without an Image to worship within the temple.

174. One day as I was going through the [Panchavati](#), I heard the frightful croaking of a frog. I guessed it must have been caught by a snake. When after a long time I was returning that way, I again heard the same noise. Peeping through the bushes, I saw a water snake with a frog in its mouth. It could neither swallow it, nor let it go, and there was no end to the agony of the frog. Then I thought, "Well, had it been the victim of a cobra, it would have been silenced for ever after three croaks at the most (and then there would have been no more suffering for either the frog or the snake). But here the snake's suffering is almost equal to the frog's." So if an unenlightened man takes upon himself in his foolhardiness the responsibility of saving another, there is no end to the misery of both. Neither does the ego of the disciple vanish, nor are his worldly ties cut asunder. If the disciple comes under the influence of an unworthy teacher, he never gets liberation. But under a competent teacher' the egotism of the [Jiva](#) perishes with three croaks;

175. There was a professional preacher who could rouse strong devotional feelings in the hearts of his hearers whenever he delivered religious discourses; but personally he was not a man of character. Pained at the kind of life he led, I asked him one day how it was that he moved so many hearts to devotion, while he himself lived such an unworthy life. The man bowed and said, "Yes, Sir, the broom, though a contemptible thing, removes the dust and dirt on the floor and the street!" Of course I could not answer him.¹

Who is a True Teacher?

176. He alone is the true teacher who is illumined by the light of true Knowledge.

177. As many people have merely heard of ice but not seen it, so many religious preachers have only read in books about the attributes of God, but not realised them for themselves. And as many others have seen ice but not tasted it, so many religious teachers have obtained only a glimpse of Divine glory but have not understood its real essence. Only he who has tasted the ice can say what it is like. Similarly, he alone

can describe the attributes of God, who has associated with Him in His different aspects in the relationship of a servant, a friend and a lover, and has realised his oneness with Him in complete absorption in Him. .

178. If one has the idea that one is a leader and has formed a sect, one's ego is 'unripe'. But if one gets a commission from God after realising Him, and preaches for the good of others, there is no harm. [Sukadeva](#) had such a commission to reveal the [Bhagavata](#) to [Parikshit](#).

179. When the jar is full, it does not make a noise any more. So the man of realisation too' does not talk much. But what then about [Narada](#) and others? Yes; [Narada](#), [Sukadeva](#) and a few others like them came down several steps after the attainment of [Samadhi](#), and out of mercy and love they taught mankind.

180. There are two classes of perfect men in the world those who, on attaining Truth, become silent and enjoy it all by themselves without any thought of others; and those who attain Truth, but finding no pleasure in keeping it to themselves, cry out in a trumpet voice to all-"Come ye, and enjoy the Truth with us."

181. Bees come of themselves to the full-blown flower when the breeze wafts its fragrance all around. Ants come of themselves to the spot where sweets are placed. No one need invite the bee or the ant. So when a man becomes pure and perfect, the sweet influence of his character spreads everywhere, and all who seek the Truth are naturally drawn towards him. He need not go in search of an audience to listen to him.

182. Ants gather of themselves where the sweet-meats have fallen. Try to become sugar candy, *i.e.*, have within yourselves the sweetness of an enlightened spiritual con-sciousness, and the ants (devotees) will come to you of themselves. If you preach without commission from God, your preaching will be powerless, and none will listen to it. One must attain God by devotion or by any other means, and then, if one receives His word, one may teach and preach anywhere and everywhere. For, only thus can one get power and strength from Him; and only then can one rightly discharge the responsible duties of a preacher.

183. When fire burns, the moths come, one knows not whence, and fall into it. The fire never goes about inviting the moth. Such is the preaching of the perfect. They do not go about inviting others, but hundreds and thousands, of their own accord, come to them--one knows not whence-seeking instruction from them.

184. What is true preaching like? Instead of preaching to others, if one worships God all the time, that is preaching enough. He who exerts himself to attain emancipation from birth and death is the real preacher. To him who is free, hundreds of people come from all sides anxious to be taught. When a rose blossoms, bees come from all sides uninvited.

185. When corn is measured out to a purchaser from the ,granary of a big merchant, the man engaged. In measuring out goes on unceasingly with his work, having, a constant supply of grain. A petty dealer's store, on the other hand, ,is soon exhausted. Similarly, it is God Himself Who unfailingly inspires thoughts and sentiments in His devotees, and that is why they are never/lacking in what is new and wise. But the book-learned, like petty grocers, soon find themselves short of thoughts and ideas.

186. Gas-light illumines different parts of the city in varying degrees. But the life of the light, namely, the gas, comes from one common source. So the true religious teachers of all climes and ages are like lamps through which is revealed the life of the Spirit flowing constantly from the one source, the Almighty Lord.

187. Rain-water falling upon the roof of a house flows down to the ground through spouts shaped grotesquely like a tiger's head. One gets the impression that the water comes from the tiger's mouth, but in reality it descends from the sky. In the same way the holy teachings that come from the mouths of godly men seem to be uttered by those men themselves, while in reality they proceed from God.