

**CHAPTER VII**  
**THE WORLDLY-MINDED AND THEIR WAYS**

*Characteristics of the worldly-minded-Fickle devotion of the worldly-minded- The worldly-minded and spiritual practices*

**Characteristics of the Worldly-Minded**

188. Men are of two classes-men in name only (Manush) and the awakened men (Man-hush). Those who thirst after God alone belong to the latter class; those who are mad after 'woman and gold' are all ordinary men in name only.

189. As one mask may be worn by various persons, so also various kinds of creatures have donned the garb of humanity. Some are tearing wolves, others are ferocious bears, and some again are cunning foxes or venomous snakes, though they all look like men.

190. Just as it is the nature of the sieve to reject the fine grains and to keep the coarse ones, so it is the nature of evil souls to reject the good and retain the evil. Just the opposite is the nature of the winnowing basket and of good souls.

191. There are people who are so situated in life that naturally they have nothing in the world to attract them, but would yet create for themselves some attachment and get themselves bound by it. They neither want nor like to be free. A man who has no family to care for, nor relatives to look after, generally takes a cat or a monkey or a dog or a bird for a pet and fondles it, and thus 'slakes his thirst for milk with mere whey'. Such is the snare that Maya's charm has set for humanity.

192. The new-born calf looks very lively and gay. It runs and frisks about all day long, only stopping now and then to suck the sweet milk from its dam. But no sooner is the rope tied round its neck than it begins to pine away gradually, and, far from being merry, wears a dejected and sorrowful look, and gets emaciated. In the same way, so long as a boy has no concern with the affairs of the world, he is quite merry and gay. But when he once gets himself yoked to the world, as it were, with the strong bar of wedlock, and is harnessed with the responsibilities of family life, all his joy vanishes. He wears a look of dejection, care and anxiety; no more is there the glow of health on his cheeks, and deep wrinkles gradually furrow his forehead. Blessed is he that remains a boy throughout his life, free as the morning air, fresh is a newly opened flower, and pure as a dew-drop.

193. As a little boy or girl can have no idea of conjugal pleasure, even so a worldly man cannot at all comprehend the ecstasy of Divine communion.

194. The worldly man cannot easily resist the lure of 'woman and gold' and turn his mind to God, although he may be relentlessly buffeted by the miseries and sufferings of life.

195. A worldly man is best known by his antipathy to whatever savours of religion. Not only does he himself dislike to hear any hymn or sacred music or the chanting of the holy 'name' of God, but he dissuades others from listening to them. He who scoffs at prayers, religious societies and pious men, is indeed a true worldling.

196. Sometimes I see worldly-minded men coming to me with pious devotees. These worldly men have no liking for religious conversations. So they become very impatient and restless while the others are having long talks about God and spirituality. They find it very difficult even to sit still and hence whisper in their friends' ears, "When are you going? How long will you stay?" Occasionally their friends would say, "Wait a little. We are coming presently." Disgusted with their words, these worldly men would reply, "Then you had better continue your talk. We shall go now and wait for you in the boat" (which was to take them back to Calcutta).

197. While talking with a worldly man, one can see dearly how his heart is stuffed with all kinds of worldly thoughts and desires, just as the crop of the pigeon is filled with grain.

198. The heart of a sinful man is like curly hair. You will never succeed in straightening it, howsoever you may try. So also the heart of the wicked cannot be easily made upright and pure.

199. The mendicant's calabash jug (**Kamandalu**) may have been to the four Dharmas (the four chief places of pilgrimage which a **Sadhu** is expected to visit), yet it remains as bitter as ever. Such is the nature of worldly-minded men.

200. The potter shapes various forms with unburnt clay, but he cannot work the clay that has once been burnt. In the same way the heart that has been burnt in the fire of worldly desires cannot be acted upon by any higher sentiment, and is incapable of being moulded into any lovely form.

201. As water can never soak a piece of stone, so religious teachings can produce no impression on a soul in bondage (**Baddha-jiva**) .

202. As a nail cannot be driven into a stone but enters easily into the earth, so the advice of the pious does not affect the soul of a worldly man while it goes deep into the heart of a believer.

203. As soft clay easily takes an impression, but not hard stone, so also Divine wisdom impresses itself on the heart of a devotee, but not on a bound soul.

204. As the water under a bridge enters from one side and passes out at the other, so religious advice given to the worldlings enters the mind through one ear and goes out by the other, without leaving any impression.

205. What is the characteristic of the worldly-minded man? He is like the mongoose in the tamer's pot. The mongoose-tamer fixes a pot high up in a wall to serve as a nest for the animal. He ties one end of a rope round the neck of the mongoose while the other end is fastened to a weight. Coming out of the pot, the mongoose goes down the wall and wanders about here and there, but when frightened, runs back into the pot to hide itself there. Unfortunately it cannot stay there long, as the weight at the other end of the rope drags it down from its comfortable home. Similarly, the worldly man is often forced by the chastening influence of the sufferings and miseries of life to soar high above the world and take refuge in God, but the deadweight of the world with all its attraction soon pulls him down.

206. Seeing the gleaming water pass through the valve of the bamboo trap placed in rice fields, small fish enter the trap with great glee. But having once entered, they cannot come out. Similarly, foolish men enter the meshes of the world, lured by its false glitter; but it is much easier to enter than to escape; and they are caught like little fish and imprisoned for good.

207. The fettered ones-the worldlings-are never awakened. How sorrows assail them, how frauds deceive them, and how dangers threaten them! Yet they do not 'wake up', even as the camel, so fond of the prickly bush and the nettle, does not cease browsing on them though they make its mouth bleed. The man of the world suffers so much, yet in a few days he forgets everything. Perhaps his wife has died or proved faithless; and lo! he marries again. Or perhaps his child has died, and he weeps; but in a short while everything has slipped out of his memory. And the mother of the child, who has been so overwhelmed with grief, is again looking to her toilet, and wearing ornaments and jewels. Parents are impoverished by their daughter's marriage, and yet annually children are born to them. And these men, though ruined by law-suits, will yet go for litigation. They have not the wherewithal to provide well for their children, yet they will beget more children every year!

The worldling is sometimes like a snake that has caught hold of a mole which it can neither swallow nor throw out. Possibly he has come to see that there is nothing substantial in the world, that it is all skin and stone like sour-sop (Amrah fruit), yet he cannot forget the world and set his heart on God. If you remove him from a worldly environment and place him in holy surroundings, he will lose heart and pine away, even as a worm which lives and thrives on filth will die if kept in a pot of rice.

208. None would keep milk in an earthen pot which has once been used for preparing curd lest the milk should get curdled. Nor can it be safely used for cooking, because it may crack upon the fire. It is therefore almost useless. So also a good and experienced Guru does not entrust valuable and exalted precepts to a worldly man, for he is sure to misinterpret and misuse them for his own mean ends. Nor will he ask him to do any useful work which may cost a little labour lest he should think that the preceptor is taking undue advantage of him.

209. Man cannot renounce the world even if he wishes, because he is thwarted by the Karmas that are bearing fruit in the present birth and by the impressions of previous actions left on the mind (Prarabdha and Samskara). Once a Yogi asked a king to sit down near him and meditate upon God. To him the king replied, "No, Sir, that cannot be. I can remain near you, but still the thirst for worldly enjoyment will be with me. If I remain in this forest, perhaps there will arise a kingdom within it, as I am still destined to enjoy."

#### **Fickle Devotion of the Worldly-Minded**

210. Worldly persons may perform many pious and charitable acts in the hope of earthly rewards, but at the approach of misfortune, sorrow and poverty, their piety and charity forsake them. They are like the parrot that repeats, 'Radha-Krishna, Radha-Krishna' the live-long day, but cries, 'Kang, Kang' when caught by a cat, forgetting the Divine name.

Therefore, I say unto you, preaching religion to such men will prove useless. In spite of all your sermons they are sure to remain as worldly as ever.

211. A spring cushion is pressed down when one sits upon it but soon resumes its shape when the pressure is removed. So it is with worldly men. They are full of religious sentiment as long as they hear

religious talk; but as soon as they enter upon the routine of their daily life they forget all those high and noble thoughts, and become as impure as before.

212. Iron appears red-hot in the furnace, but becomes black soon after it is taken out. In the same way worldly men are full of religious emotion as long as they are in a temple or in the society of the pious; but no sooner do they leave these associations, than the flood of devotion in them subsides.

213. As the fly now sits on an unclean sore and next on offerings to God, so the mind of the worldly man is at one time engaged in religious topics and at the next loses itself in the pleasures of wealth and lust.

214. The heart of the worldly man is like the worm in a dung-hill. The worm always lives in the dung and loves to live therein. If by chance someone takes it out of that filthy habitation and puts it on a lotus-flower, it will soon die of the fragrance of the flower. So the worldly man cannot live even for a moment outside the dirty atmosphere of worldly thoughts and desires.

215. Do you know what worldly people's idea of God is like? It is like the children's prattle while they play among themselves. Sometimes they swear, saying, "By God, I say!" They learn this from their elders when they hear them taking an oath. Or, at best, it is like the utterance of the dandy who with all his foppish airs goes to a garden in one of his idle promenades, whistling and twirling his stick about, and picks up a flower and exclaims, "O what a beautiful flower God has made!" It is only a momentary mood like the abiding of a drop of water on a bar of red-hot iron. So, I say, you must thirst for Him. You will have to take a deep plunge into the ocean.

### **The Worldly-Minded and Spiritual Practices**

216. A husbandman was watering a sugar-cane field throughout the day. After finishing his task he saw that not a drop of water had entered the field; all the water had run underground through several big rat-holes. Such is the state of the devotee who worships God, secretly cherishing ambitions and worldly desires in his heart. Though he may be praying daily, he makes no progress because his entire devotion runs to waste through the rat-holes of these desires, and at the end of his lifelong devotion, he remains the same as before.

217. Why does the mind become unsteady when engaged in contemplation? The fly sits at times on the sweetmeats kept exposed for sale in the shop of the confectioner; but when a scavenger passes by with a basketful of filth, the fly leaves the sweets and at once settles on the filth. On the other hand, the bee in search of honey sits only on flowers and never on filthy objects. Worldly men, like flies, get occasionally a momentary taste of the sweetness of Divine love, but their natural hankering after filth soon brings them back to the dung-hill of worldliness. The great Paramahansas are, however, always absorbed in the contemplation and enjoyment of Divine love.

218. An evil spirit is exorcised by throwing charmed mustard seeds on the possessed; but if the evil spirit has possessed the mustard seeds themselves, how can they be of any use in exorcising it? If the mind with which you contemplate the Deity is tainted with the vicious thoughts of the world, how can you expect to do your religious devotions successfully with such a corrupt instrument?

219. A wet match does not ignite, however hard you may strike it; it only smokes. But a dry match lights at once, even with the slightest rubbing. The heart of the true devotee is like the dry match; the slightest mention of the name of the Lord kindles the fire of love in his heart, while the mind of the worldly man, soaked in lust and attachment for wealth, resists all warmth like the moistened match. Though God may be preached to him several times, the fire of Divine love can never be kindled in him.

220. A worldly man may be endowed with as much intelligence and knowledge as a Jnani, may take as much pains and trouble as a Yogi, and may make as great sacrifices as an ascetic; but all his exertions are in vain since his energies are misdirected, and since he does all these for the sake of worldly honour and wealth, and not for the sake of the Lord.

221. The soiled mirror never reflects the rays of the sun; similarly those who are impure and unclean at heart and are deluded by Maya never perceive the glory of the Lord. But the pure in heart see the Lord as the clear mirror reflects the sun. Therefore be pure.

222. When a certain quantity of pure milk is mixed with double the quantity of water, it requires a good deal of time and labour to condense it into Kshira (condensed milk). The mind of a worldly man is largely diluted with the filthy water of evil and impure thoughts and he has to work long and hard to purify it and give it the proper strength and consistency characteristic of a truly pious heart.

223. Q. Why is it that worldly men do not give up everything to find God?

A. Can an actor coming on the stage throw off his mask at once? Let worldly men play out their part, and in time they will throw off their false appearance.

224. The soul that is wholly world-bound is like the worm that lives for ever in filth, and dies there and has no idea of anything better. The soul whose worldliness is of lesser intensity, is however, like the fly that sits now on filth and now on sugar. The free soul alone is like the bee that always drinks honey and tastes nothing else.

225. The worldly man is like the alligator. As the body of the alligator is not pervious to the strokes of any weapon, and as it cannot be put to death except by striking at the belly, so no matter how much good advice you give to the worldly man, and no matter how much self-disgust you arouse in him, he will never realise his situation fully unless you wean him from the objects of his attachment.

226. Worldly men will not act up to your advice if you ask them to renounce everything and devote themselves to the lotus-like feet of the Lord. Hence, after much deliberation as to how to attract such souls, Gour and Nitai<sup>1</sup> hit upon a plan of alluring them, and said, "Come, take the name of Hari, and you will have a nice soup of Magur fish and the caress of a young damsel." These two items tempted many to join them and take the name of the Lord. When by and by they came to have a little taste of the nectar of the holy name, they understood the hidden meaning of Nitai's teaching. The soup of the Magur fish is nothing but the streams of tears they shed in love of God. The earth is 'the young damsel', and to be caressed by her, means to roll on earth in the rapture of Divine love.