

## 16. Avoid argumentation and exhibition of scholarship

Many a spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*), recluse, and renunciant (*sanyasin*) has allowed all excellences won by long years of struggle and sacrifice to slip away through this attachment to the self. Power without the bliss of God-realisation is a wall without a basement. Mere punditry is of no use at all; the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the scriptures (*sastras*) are doctrines for living out in daily practice. Without this practice, whatever the wealth of words, whatever the standard of scholarship, it is all a colossal waste. To bring the teachings of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and scriptures into one's actual life, one has to scotch the feeling "I know", open one's eyes to the real essence, and introspect on it. Then, one can attain bliss, without fail.

The almanac might indicate that ten units of rain will fall, but even if the calendar is folded ten times and squeezed, not a drop of rain can be extracted. The purpose of the calendar is not to give rain but only to give information about rain and its quantity. Its pages do not contain the ten units of rain. Rain is in the clouds above.

So, too, the scriptures (*sastras*) can give only information about doctrines, axioms, rules, regulations, and duties. The sublime characteristics of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and scriptures are that they give instruction in the methods of attaining peace and liberation. But they aren't saturated with these essences of bliss; one can't collect the essences by squeezing the texts. One has to discover the path, direction, and goal as described in them; then, one has to tread the path, follow the direction, and reach the goal. However, if the I-consciousness produces the pride "I know all", a fall is inevitable; the delusion causes death. The secret of salvation lies in the realisation of this danger; rebirth is inevitable if this danger is not averted.

Aware of all this, if you get immersed in spiritual practice, the world and its worries will not affect you. It is only when you are far from this truth that you suffer, feel pain, and experience travail. At a distance from the bazaar, one hears only a huge indistinct uproar. But as one approaches it and walks into it, one can clearly distinguish the separate bargainings. So too, until the reality of the Supreme (*Paramatma*) is known to you, you are overpowered and stunned by the uproar of the world; but once you enter deep into the realm of spiritual endeavour, everything becomes clear and the knowledge of the reality awakens within you. Until then, you will be caught up in the meaningless noise of argumentation, disputation, and exhibitionist flamboyance.