

	<p style="text-align: center;">Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita</p> <p style="text-align: center;">by Mahendranath Gupta</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sri Ramakrishna</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Volume IV of V</p>

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M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta)

Mahendra Nath was born on Friday, 14 July, 1854, 31st of Ashadha, 1261 B.Y., on the Naga Panchami day in Shiva Narayana Das Lane of Shimuliya locality of Calcutta. Mahendra Nath's father was Madhusudan Gupta and mother Swarnamayi Devi. Madhusudan was a bhakta (a pious man) and Thakur was aware of his bhakti. Mahendra Nath was the third child of Madhusudan. It is said that Madhusudan got this son after performing mental worships of Shiva twelve times one after the other. For this reason, he had a special affection for this son and he was particularly careful that this child may not come to any harm. The boy Mahendra was extremely good -natured and had great love for his parents. Mahendra could recall many incidents of his early childhood. For example, he went with his mother to witness the Ratha festival of Mahesh when he was five. On their return journey the boat touched the Dakshineswar ghat. When everybody was busy having darshan of gods and goddesses in the temple, M. somehow got lost and found himself alone in the Nata Mandir in front of Bhavatarini shrine. And not finding his mother there he began to cry. At that moment somebody seeing him crying consoled and silenced him. Mahendra Nath used to say that this incident remained always uppermost in his mind. He would witness with his mental eye the bright radiance of the newly constructed and dedicated temple. He who came to console him was probably Thakur himself.

As a boy Mahendra Nath studied in the Hare School. He was a very bright student and always held first or second position in his class. On his way to and from the school there was the shrine of Mother Sheetla of Thanthania. This shrine can now be seen in front of the College Street Market. On his way to and from the school he would never forget to stand before the deity to pay his obeisance. By virtue of intelligence and hard work he won scholarship and honours in his Entrance, F.A. and B.A. examinations. In his Entrance examination he won the second top position. In the F.A. examination though he missed one of his Mathematics papers, he was placed fifth in the merit list. In his B.A. he stood third in the year 1874. He was a favourite student of Prof. Tony in the Presidency College. While still in the college he was married to Nikunja Devi, the daughter of Thakur Charan Sen and a cousin sister of Keshab Sen in 1874. Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother had great love and affection for Nikunja Devi too. When Nikunja Devi lost her son, she almost became mad with grief. At that time, Thakur would bring peace to her mind by stroking her body with his hand.

Before entering the education line, he served for sometime with the government and then in a merchant house. But he could not stick to them. Thakur had already arranged a different way of life for him. He took up teaching in school and college. In Rippon, City and Metropolitan colleges, he taught English, Psychology and Economics. When he started going to Thakur in 1882, he was the headmaster of the Shyampukur branch of Vidyasagar's school.

Rakhal, Purna, Baburam, Vinod, Bankim, Tejachandra, Kshirode, Narayana and some other intimate devotees of Thakur were all students of his school. That is why they all called him Master Mahashay. For the same reason, he became famous in Sri Ramakrishna's group of devotees as 'Mahendra,' 'Master,' or 'Master Mahashay'. Thakur also called him 'Master' or 'Mahendra Master'.

Mahendra Nath was inclined towards religion since his early years. During these days Keshab Sen came up as a famous preacher and a founderthe founder of Navavidhan Brahmo Samaj. These days Mahendra Nath used to keep company with Keshab. He would take part in worship in Navavidhan Mandir, or in his house. At this time Keshab was his ideal. Later, he said that at times during worship Keshab Sen used to pray with such moving words that he looked like a divine personality. Mahendra Nath said that later on when he met Thakur and heard him, he realized that Keshab had derived this heart charming bhava from Thakur himself.

Mahendra Nath met Thakur in Dakshineswar on February 26, 1882. As Thakur saw M., he recognized him as a right person eligible for divine knowledge. At the end of the first meeting when M. was leaving, Thakur said to him, 'Come again.' He felt sad when he came to know that M. was married and had children. But he also told him that there were very good (yogi like) signs on his forehead and eyes. At that time Mahendra Nath liked to meditate on the formless Brahman. He did not like to worship Bhagavan, or the deity in clay images.

M. was very well read in Western pPhilosophy, Literature, History, Science, Economics and so on. He also had mastery on the Puranas, Sanskrit scriptures and epics. He knew by heart verses from Kumarsambhava, Shakuntala, Bhattikavya, Uttar Ramacharita etc. He had also studied Buddhist and Jain philosophies. He had digested the Bible, particularly the New Testament, very well. As a result of all this Mahendra Nath considered himself a scholar.

However, during his first meeting with Thakur this pride of his received a blow. Thakur showed him the insignificance of the knowledge he had acquired. He made him realize that real knowledge is only to know God and all the rest is ignorance. A couple of blows received by him from Thakur's words silenced Mahendra Nath. As Thakur would say, 'A big frog is silenced forever after a croak or two when it falls a prey to a king cobra..' So it happened with M.

In his very first meeting Thakur taught M. how to keep both sides — of this world and the other world during one's journey through the world. This is called 'sannyasa in the household'. The essence of it can be summed up in this: Do all your work but keep your mind in God. Live with your wife, son, father, mother and others. Serve them taking them to be your very own but know in your mind that none of them is yours.

Just as a the 'mother of the pearl' swimming on water receives a drop of rain of Swati

(nakshatra, a conjunction of stars) and then dives deep into the sea and lies there rearing the pearl, M. followed this instruction of Thakur, and began to practise sadhana in the mind, in the forest, or in some solitary corner. He understood that the aim of human life is God-realization. He began his sadhana in a lonely place and whenever found time, he went and sat at Thakur's feet. Lest he should fall into the whirlpool of household later on, Thakur put him to test from time to time and he would ask him the reason if he did not come to him for long.

Thakur knew from the very beginning that M. would speak out Bhagavata to the people and teach it to them. Should he fall into the whirlpool of avidya (ignorance), Thakur's desire would not be fulfilled through him. So with a keen sight he would keep observing whether some knot was not forming within M. When he made sure that M. had become efficient, Thakur said to him in January, 1884, 'Now go and live at home. Let them know as if you are their own but be sure in your mind that you are not theirs, nor they are yours.' Throughout his life Mahendra Nath practised this mantra of sannyasa in household. Thakur would always say, 'Be in the world but not of the world.' Thakur said to him, 'Your eyes and forehead show as if a yogi has come here while practising austerity, as if you are an intimate companion of Chaitanya Deva.'

"I recognised you from your reading of Chaitanya Bhagavata."

"You belong to the class of the perfect by nature."

"Do you know what you are! Narada began transmitting Brahmajnana to all (to Sanat, Sanatan and others). So Brahma bound him in maya by a curse."

"You will be able to recognise all people."

"You are my intimate companion. Had it not been so, how could your mind have been so much on this side even when lacked nothing worldly."

"Mother, do grant Your darshan to him again and again. Otherwise, how will attend to both sides? Let him keep both. What is the need of renouncing all at once? Yet may Thy Your wish prevail. You may make him renounce all later on if that is Thy Your will."

"Mother, awaken him. Otherwise how would he awake others? Why have you put him in worldly life? What would have been lost if it had not been so and the same had continued?"

"Narendra and Rakhal would keep away from women. You too will. You will also not be able to go after women."

"He is a deep soul like the Falgu river, he has real spirituality within."

"Your bhava is that of Prahlada — 'I am That' and 'I am God's servant.'"

"The Master (M.) is very pure."

"He has no pride."

"You are my own, of the same class substance like father and son."

"You are the inner as well as the outer pillar of Nata Mandir."

A struggle kept raging in Mahendra Nath's mind while he was with Thakur, 'Why have I not embraced sannyasa?' Had it been so, his mind could have soared like a free bird in chidakasha (in the firmament of divine consciousness). Thakur would assure him from time to time and said, "He who has renounced from the mind is a renouncee. Nobody who comes here is a householder."

"The householder bhaktas of Chaitanya Deva also lived with their family unattached."

"When you take up a work, you lessen the involvement of worldly intellect in it."

Just as a weak child holds his mother with full force having embraced her tightly when overwhelmed with fear knowing her to be the chief and sure shelter, Mahendra Nath also kept holding Thakur in the fear of weaknesses born of family life, so much so that he absorbed himself throughout his life in Thakur's bhava. He talked of nothing but Thakur. He thought of Thakur as his only refuge, his most desirable goal and the only one attainable. He had become one with Thakur. Thakur alone was his supreme attainment —

Yam labdhva chaparam manyate nadhikah tatah,

Yasmin sthito na dukhena guruna api vichalyate.

— Gita 6:22

[And having gained which, he thinks that there is no greater gain than that, wherein established he is not shaken even by the heaviest affliction.]

Day and night M. would proclaim the tact to save oneself in this age of Kali: 'Keep company of the holy, practise of spiritual discipline in solitude for some days and faith in the words of Guru.' They who saw him in his old age felt that here was a yogi, a rishi

who was living in the ashrama soliciting the human beings to shower the love of Sri Ramakrishna on them. Morning, afternoon or evening whenever one went to him, one would see him in the company of devotees talking of love of God. It was the story of the Lord which flowed continuously from the Vedas, the Puranas, the Bible, the Quran, the holy book of the Buddhists, the Gita, the Bhagavata, the Adhyatma (Ramayana). No weariness, no pause — unceasing talk of Thakur, the embodiment of all faiths and spiritual practices. What an extraordinary way of serving Thakur! He had dedicated his body, mind and wealth all to his work. Does this constitute what is called the ‘servant I,’ the way of Hanuman?

Who does not and would not like to be fortunate enough to be the servant of Ramakrishna Deva? And then his intimate disciples were, of course, his servants. M. too was a marked servant of Sri Ramakrishna. ‘You are my own, the same substance like father and son’ — these holy words of Thakur indicate this. That Narendra Nath would carry out the mission of Thakur had been written by Thakur while referring to him. That Mahendra Nath too would do Thakur’s work was hinted by him so often. We can find it in the Kathamrita at several places, ‘Mother, I can say no more. Please grant power to Rama, Mahendra, Vijay and others that they may carry out Your work from now onwards.’

"Mother, why have You given him (M.) one kala Shakti (one sixteenth of Your power)? O, I understand, it will be enough for Your work. One day Thakur said to Master Mahashay, ‘The Mother has kept the Bhagavata Pundit (the preacher of the divine word) in the world tying him with one bond. Otherwise, who will speak out Bhagavata?’ And so on. Thus we see that just as Narendra Nath had come for Thakur’s work and Thakur too gave him the badge of authority of his power; similarly, Mahendra Nath was also not deprived of his share in his inheritance — he too got power and bhakti from Thakur. To make him competent to work for welfare of mankind, Sri Ramakrishna made him undergo austerities from time to time. For more than a month, from 14 December, 1883 to almost the middle of January, 1884 he practised continuous sadhana under the benign care of Thakur in Dakshineswar. While living with Thakur not only M.’s heart had opened out but his pride had also vanished. Thakur used to say, ‘His pride has gone.’ Had he retained his pride, M. could not have accomplished the task assigned by Thakur to him. This task was to speak out Thakur’s words to others. In the five volumes of ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita,’ having kept himself hidden, M. has proclaimed fully the glory of Sri Ramakrishna Deva. He gave himself a number of pseudo names — ‘Mani,’ ‘Mohini Mohan,’ ‘A Particular Bhakta,’ ‘M.,’ ‘Englishman’ and so on. The writer’s personality, however, manifests nowhere at all. Only at some places one comes across his reflections. But even they are based on what Thakur had said and are merely an effort to proclaim Thakur’s glory. These thoughts and reflections are nothing but just the image of Sri Ramakrishna on the pure expanse of the heart of a servant. This is how he erased and hid himself. That is why Swami Vivekananda on reading the Gospel in 1897 wrote, ‘I now understand why none of us attempted his life before. It has been reserved for you, this great work. Socratic dialogues are Plato all over. You are entirely hidden.’

Sri Keshab Gupta wrote, "Repression of the temptation of being a literary figure is the veracity of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita.' Like tuberoses spreading its their perfume while keeping themselves hidden is the great beauty of this spiritual book."

The tests to which Thakur used to subject him have also been mentioned in the Kathamrita — 9 November, 1884. In this way, it appears that this work (the recording of the Kathamrita) had been reserved for him. Mahendra Nath had annotated these nectar- like immortal words of Thakur while living in his company in his diary with year, date, day of the week and the lunar date. Taking these notes as foundation the 'Gospel' and the five volumes of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita' have been produced. This work is unique in history — the life of a divine personality, avatara, has never been recorded in this way anywhere. This is a new genre. N. Ghosh said rightly about 'Sri Sri Kathamrita' in the 'Indian Nation': "They take us straight to the truth and not through metaphysical maze. The style is Biblical in simplicity. What a treasure would it have been to the world, if all the sayings of Sri Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Nanak, Chaitanya could have been preserved thus."

Can anybody and everybody accomplish such a work? Even if one does, it cannot be with such a pure bhava. It was possible only by the grace and desire of Thakur. That is why, Thakur first rid the writer of his pride. This is the reason why Mahendra Nath hid himself by taking up a number of pseudonyms. They are found in the Kathamrita.

It is obvious from the words coming out of the lips of Mahendra Nath and also from his bhava that he lived with Thakur in the perfect state of mind of a servant while making a sannyasi of himself. He would often quote: 'We ought to have the only aim. To be as perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect[170].'

After the demise of Thakur, he used to visit Barahnagar Math now and then to live with his brother disciples, so that the ideal of their seva (service) and sadhana, renunciation and hard life may get firmly rooted in him.

With the aim of cultivating the spirit of complete dependence on God he would, at times, spend nights in front of the Senate Hall like the indigent.

At times he would go to Uttar Pradesh to live in a hut[171] and practise austerities like sadhus.

Sometimes he would go to the Howrah Station to see people coming back from their pilgrimage and would pay his obeisance to them. He would ask for prasad from them, take it himself and also give it to his companions, if there was were any, saying 'The prasad brings you in contact with Bhagavan Himself.'

Whenever he found time or opportunity, Mahendra Nath would seek the company of Thakur in Dakshineswar, or in the house of some devotee. He would be with Thakur even during the recess time in his school whenever Thakur came to a devotee's house. Once the result of the Shyampukur school was rather low because of his frequent visits to Thakur. Vidyasagar Mahashay said to him rather sarcastically, 'Master (M.) is busy with the Paramahansa. He has no time to think of the schools affairs.' As this remark involved his guru's name, he immediately resigned his job. When Thakur came to know of it, he said, 'You have done the right thing. The Mother will arrange all for you.'

Whenever Thakur was in need of anything, he would tell Mahendra Nath, adding at the same time, 'I cannot accept from all.'

Mahendra Nath was very popular with Sri Ramakrishna's group of devotees for his goodness and simplicity of heart. When Narendra Nath was in straightened circumstances after the death of his father and was very anxious to carry out sadhana, Mahendra Nath arranged for his family expenses for three months, thus enabling him to attend to his spiritual pursuit with a free mind as directed by Thakur. At times Mahendra Nath would also go to Narendra Nath's mother and give her some help secretly.

After Sri Thakur's maha samadhi, his devotees established a math in Barahnagar. In earlier stages Suresh Mitra, Balaram Bose, M. and others rendered financial help to them. At that time Mahendra Nath was teaching in two schools. He used to donate his income from one school to the Math. From 1890 to 1893 Narendra Nath lived the life of a wandering monk. Inspired by his example some of his brother disciples went to Himalayas, or Uttarkhanda to carry out tapasya there. During this period Mahendra Nath kept himself absorbed in his diaries day and night, meditated on Thakur and took refuge at the feet of the Holy Mother. Whenever a conflict arose in his mind, he would give himself up completely to the Holy Mother. He would also bring her to his house at times and serve her. The Holy Mother would stay in Mahendra Nath's house sometimes for more than a fortnight and sometimes for more than a month. As directed by Thakur in her dream, the Holy Mother went to the house of Mahendra Nath and installed the holy water vessel with her own hands and arranged puja. In this shrine the Holy Mother carried out a lot of puja, japa and meditation.

Since 1889 M. used to send some money for the service of the Holy Mother every month regularly. Whenever the Holy Mother was in need of anything, she too informed Mahendra Nath. When a piece of land was to be bought for Jagadhatri puja, she directed Mahendra Nath to send money. On reading the letter, he sent Rs. 320/-. When once he was asked to send some money for digging a well in her village, in times of at the time of water scarcity, Mahendra Nath sent Rs. 100/-. M. also used to send money to the sadhus of the Math who went to the hills or distant places for sadhan and bhajan.

M. had already received a number of requests to publish this book. And later, when more and more requests started pouring in, M. one day read it out to the Holy Mother at her instance. She was extremely pleased to hear it. Blessing M. she said, 'On hearing it from your lips I felt as if Thakur himself is talking all this.' And she directed M. to publish the book.

The first edition of 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' (According to M., a son of the Lord and Disciple) was published by Mahendra Nath in English in 1897.

Thus Gospel began to be known in English. Sri Ramachandra Dutta wrote in the Tattva Manjari published from Yogodyan, in the month of Agrahayana, 1304 B.Y. (November-December, 1897).

"Revered Mahendra Nath Gupta... who has so much faith in the Lord that he is making a humanly effort of spreading His words by recording it in a book for the good of the ordinary man... We request Gupta Mahashay that instead of bringing these teachings in parts he may publish them in the form of a big volume. . It would be of greater service to the common man.

"Our second request is that he may not give up writing in Bengali language because the deep essence of the narratives get somewhat changed at several places while translating into English — we need not tell it to Master Mahashay. The common man of this region would find it difficult to understand it (in English)." And this is how it happened later. Bearing the name of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita' by Sri M., it began to appear in Tattva Manjari, Banga Darshan, Udbodhan, Hindu Patrika and some other monthly magazines of the time. Then they were collected and published as Volume I through the Udbodhan Press by Swami Trigunatitananda. The second volume appeared in 1904, the third in 1908, the fourth in 1910 and the fifth in 1932. This work has been translated in so many Indian and foreign languages. Everybody began to say, "An invaluable gem is being added to the Bengali literature."

"The Nava Bharat wrote: Except for M. nobody possesses this gem.

"The Sanjivani wrote: 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita' is truly the treasure of nectar. Romain Rolland, the savant, wrote: The exactitude is almost stenographic.

With the publication of the Kathamrita new and still new devotees began to visit the Math and the Holy Mother's house. More and more sannyasis began to read the Kathamrita. The Ganga of peace began to flow in their world of trials and tribulations.

Swami Premananda wrote: Thousands and thousands of people are getting new life from the Kathamrita, thousands are receiving bliss from it. Bent under the weight of trials and sufferings of the worldly life so many thousands of people are gaining peace in their family life of sorrow and attachment.

All recognized that Sri Ramakrishna, avatara of the age, has incarnated for the good of humanity. And man will attain peace and gain fearlessness only by taking shelter at his feet.

Presiding at the birth anniversary of M. in 1955, Sri Hemendra Prasad Ghosh said: M. has presented Sri Ramakrishna to the world through his Kathamrita and that too in a very short time. Had he not written the Kathamrita, it would have taken long for the world to know Thakur. God can be realized even while living in household — the truth taught by Sri Ramakrishna is clearly manifest in M.

Many western devotees also used to meet M. at M.'s house. M. would talk only of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna for days, months and years continuously.

He said, 'I am an insignificant person. But I live by the side of an ocean and I keep with me a few pitchers of sea water. When a visitor comes, I entertain him with that. What else can I speak of but his words.'

He would speak in such a touching manner and so full of affection that it appeared to the visitors that they were listening these words sitting close to Thakur himself. A bridge as if was built between the spot where he used to sit and talk of Thakur and the spots of Thakur's leela. His narratives became real. Paul Brunton met Mahendra Nath and he narrated this meeting in his book 'Search in Secret India'. While describing his first meeting with M., he writes, 'A venerable patriarch has stepped out from the pages of Bible and a figure from Mosaic times has turned to flesh.'

Swami Yogananda in his book 'Autobiography of a Yogi,' recorded how he was inspired by Mahendra Nath in his earlier years while entering his future spiritual life.

Mahendra Nath was a sannyasi in household. His life is a bright illustration of renunciation. 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita' by M. is not only an excellent piece of literature, it is but also the immortal words of divine life.

Many a young man embraced sannyasa by coming in contact with Mahendra Nath and found new inspiration in their religious life. They who saw him even once can never forget his yogi like figure, his humbleness and his simplicity.

When the translation of some chapters of Kathamrita appeared as Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Volume II and was also published in the Morn Star without M.'s permission and consultation, how hurt M. felt within is evident from his letter: Dear Ayukta Babaji. My love and salutations to you all. The translation of the Gospel in the Morn Star is, I regret to say, not satisfying to me. Being an eyewitness I naturally want the spirit to be kept up in the translation. Moreover, the report of a meeting should not

appear in a mutilated form. The translation should be done by myself. You may do the work after my passing away which is by no means a distant contingency. I am 76 and my health is not at all good. It is painful to see the Gospel presented in this way. I do not approve the translation which has appeared as Volume II from Madras...

Mahendra Nath never made disciples and he never initiated anybody with a mantra. He tried to literally follow each and every word of Thakur. He was not fanatic. In all religions he saw the 'harmonizing image' of Sri Ramakrishna. He spent his whole life in spreading the nectarine words of Thakur, as if it was his life long vow.

Mahendra Nath Dutta in his book 'Master Moshayer Anudhyan' wrote —

"He (M.) believed that the Guru and the ideal deity are one — the Guru is the deity and the deity is Guru, they are one and the same. By discussing and meditating on Sri Ramakrishna, thinking upon him, recollecting him and continuous talking of him made M. inwardly filled with Ramakrishna, though outwardly he was Mahendra Nath Gupta. He tried to be one with Sri Ramakrishna by giving up his own individuality and independent thinking. He retained no other thought, no bhava of his own. That which is called in English as fiery independent spirit or self assertion, he retained none. From within he was all Ramakrishna. It seems as if his main objective in life was to live as a reflection of Sri Ramakrishna. So, I say that having given up his independent thinking, his own individuality, or personal views he became one with his Guru. The instructions of the Guru, his word and his talks were the only subjects of his thought. Of course, while attending to worldly work, or teaching in the school, that is to say works of lower plane, he did retain his individuality and independent thinking. When he attended to his household work, or managed his school he had his personal views (these are matters of lower plane.) But even on such work the impact of Sri Ramakrishna and his views were quite evident. So, I say that Master Mahashay was Sri Ramakrishna within and Mahendra Nath Gupta without."

During the lifetime of Sri Ramakrishna, Mahendra Nath was first among the bhaktas to visit the native village of his guru. For him it became the holiest place of pilgrimage. Taking every spot there as holy he offered obeisance lying prostrate on the ground. And he brought some dust from this place knowing it to be sacred. Hearing this Thakur said, 'Nobody asked and you did it of your own...!' He shed tears of joy and moving his hand on his head and body, he blessed him and said, 'Bringing dust shows bhakti.'

Mahendra Nath felt unspeakable joy by touching the idol of Jagannath in Puri and Tarakanath in Tarkeshwar as desired by Thakur. Hearing of it Sri Ramakrishna touched Mahendra Nath's hand and said, 'You are pure.'

Whenever M. started writing Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita in a book form, he would take to holy acts of one meal a day and that too havishya (boiled sunned rice with clarified butter.) And till the completion of printing and publication of the book he

would keep up this vow.

At the time of publication of the fifth volume, he left his mortal frame.

Thakur used to say, ‘Bhagavata[172], bhakta and Bhagavan — all the three are one.’ That is why, whenever the character of Mahendra Nath, the bhakta, is discussed mostly it is related to Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita. The recorder of Bhagavata lives forever along with the Bhagavata. Thus Mahendra Nath has also attained immortality. So long as the name of Sri Ramakrishna remains alive in this world, his Bhagavata — ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita’ will also live and with it will live M.

It was the night of the 20th Jaishtha when Mahendra Nath fell ill after completing the writing of ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita’ — V. In the following morning at 6 o’clock on Saturday repeating the name of Sri Thakur and Mother, and with this last prayer on his lips, — ‘O Gurudeva, Mother, take me in your lap’ — this highest of the yogis, left his body at the age of 78. It was the departure of a great yogi, as if he was just asleep.

In the cremation ground at Cossipore, the last rites on the holy body of Sri M. were performed to the right of the spot where Sri Thakur’s body was cremated. Mahendra Nath was ever a servant of Thakur and at the end he found a place close to him. Many intimate devotees of Sri Ramakrishna had left this world of maya before the demise of Mahendra Nath but this precious point was as if reserved by Thakur for this beloved servant-- disciple of his.

At that time the place of Thakur’s samadhi was like a platform of white marble. While planning M.’s samadhi his two worthy sons — Prabhas Chandra Gupta and Charu Chandra Gupta — bore almost all the expenses for the construction of canopy of both Sri Thakur and Master Mahashay.

Bengali Publisher

Publisher's Note

We are immensely pleased to bring before our English-speaking readers the fourth volume of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita. By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, the first edition was published in 2001, followed by Volume II in 2002 and Volume III in 2005. A second, enhanced edition of Volume I would be printed in few months. In this five-volume series we attempt to translate the original Bengali edition as published by M., which is currently published by the Kathamrita Bhawan, Calcutta.

In the new edition a discerning reader will notice three main enhancements. First, we have used the expression 'lust and greed' or 'lust and gold' instead of 'woman and gold' as a translation of *kamini kanchana*. Second, we have made the Bengali spellings for places, personalities, and Sanskrit words consistent with the Ramakrishna literature, for words such as *purashcha-rana*, *jivanmukta*, Jadu Mallick, and so on, so as to enable the readers of Sri Ramakrishna literature to quickly identify with places, persons, and technical terms.

Moreover, we have added an index of words, another index of songs, and an index of Sri M.'s visits to Sri Ramakrishna by date.

Before you dive deep into the Kathamrita, a look at its publishing history may be of interest. The five volumes of the Kathamrita in Bengali by M. saw the light of day in the years 1902, 1904, 1908, 1910, and 1932. Reading all five volumes, one sees the development of the mind: from intellectual to intellectual-spiritual, from intellectual-spiritual to spiritual-intellectual, and from spiritual-intellectual to pure spiritual, and then to the practical pure spiritual state. In the first volume we find profound truths explained with the help of illustrations as guide to intellectual reasoning. For example, the tortoise moves about in water, but do you know where its mind abides? Rub your hands with oil before you break the jackfruit, and so on. In Volume II the highest Truth is explained by an intellect that is soaked in spirit. In Volume III Sri Ramakrishna is found expounding sublime truths from a totally spiritual perspective. In Volume IV a practical spirit shows how to internalize and apply the injunctions in everyday life. Volume V additionally contains an index of characters and the songs of all five volumes. The five volumes of the Kathamrita, then, are five steps leading us from the gross to the Mahakarana (the Great Cause).

Smt. Ishwar Devi Gupta, who left her mortal body on Buddha Purnima, 26 May 2002, remains the driving spirit behind the translation and publication of these volumes of the Kathamrita, both in English and in Hindi. It was her strong desire that an English version of the five volumes be published. Her husband, Sri Dharm Pal Gupta, maintaining the same spirit of faithful translation, prepared the original English draft with the assistance of a few dedicated devotees.

May our readers, friends, and associates attain supreme bliss and peace by reading this book. This is our heartfelt prayer at the feet of the Lord.

Durga Puja,
21 October 2007

Publisher

Prayer

Om Thakur, our beloved Father! This day we open this centre named Sri Ramakrishna Sri Ma Prakashan Trust (Sri Ma Trust) to propagate your holy name to all people of the world in our humble way for the peace and happiness of all. Yourself, accompanied by the Holy Mother and your beloved disciples like Swami Vivekananda and revered 'M.', do bless us; be always with us; do guide us in the right direction.

By this unselfish work, by this labour of love may we realise your real nature, God-incarnate on earth!

May we have peace and happiness real; may all beings of the universe be peaceful and happy; may the entire universe be the abode of peace and happiness real and eternal!

I am your humble son and servant,

Swami Nityatmananda

Civil Lines, Rohtak

December 20, 1967

Life of Thakur as Told by Himself

Three Classes of Evidence

It has been a long-cherished desire to publish the life of Thakur from his childhood in serial form. After completing the Kathamrita, material will be available to write his life as he himself chronicled it in six or seven volumes. In this regard three classes of evidence will be available.

First: Direct and recorded on the same day: what Thakur Sri Ramakrishna said about his childhood, his states of sadhana (spiritual practices) and so on, and what his devotees recorded that very day. The life of Thakur as told by himself, published in *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, belongs to this class of evidence. Whatever M. saw Thakur do or heard him say, he recorded the same day or night in his diary. This kind of testimony is obtained only by direct seeing and hearing. As well, M. recorded the year, the date, the day of the week, and the lunar date.

Second: Direct but unrecorded at the time of the Master. This is what devotees themselves heard Thakur say, which they later recalled and then described. This kind of testimony is also very good – the record of other avatars (Divine Incarnations) is generally of this kind – but twenty-four years have passed between now and Thakur's passing. So there is greater possibility of mistake in such testimony of recollection than in that of a diary kept daily at the time of incidence.

Third: Hearsay and unrecorded at the time of the Master. What one hears about Thakur's childhood or his states of sadhana from his contemporaries, such as Hriday Mukherji, Roy Chatterji, and other devotees; or what one hears about the life of Thakur from the residents of Kamarpukur, Jayrambati, Shyambazar, and from the circle of Thakur's devotees belongs to the third class of evidence.

At the time of writing *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, M. relied only on the first class of evidence, his daily diary. Were he to have published Thakur's life in serial form, he would have relied mainly on such first-class evidence. In other words, the contents of Thakur's life would have been written relying only on his own words.

Mahendranath Gupta

Calcutta, 1317 B.Y., A.D. 1910

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Section I

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Temple with Rakhal, Prankrishna, Kedar, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

At Dakshineswar with Prankrishna, M., and others

Sri Ramakrishna is seated with the devotees in his room at the Kali Temple. He remains intoxicated day and night with ecstatic love for God – with an intense love for the Divine Mother.

A mat is spread on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna comes and takes his seat on it. In front of him are Prankrishna and M. Rakhal is also in the room. Hazra is sitting outside on the southeastern verandah.

It is winter, the month of Pausha. Thakur has wrapped himself in a moleskin shawl. It is Monday at eight o'clock on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Agrahayana, 1 January 1883.

A number of devotees belonging to Thakur's inner circle have now come in contact with him. For more than a year Narendra, Rakhal, Bhavanath, Balaram, M., Baburam, Latu, and others have been visiting him regularly. Ram, Manomohan, Surendra, and Kedar had come a year earlier.

Almost five months ago Thakur had visited Vidyasagar's Badurbagan house. Two months ago he went with Keshab Sen on a pleasure trip by steamer to Calcutta. They were accompanied by Vijay and some Brahmo devotees.

Prankrishna Mukherji lives in Calcutta's Shyam-pukur locality. His ancestral home is in the village of Janai. He is a high government exchange officer who supervises auctions. Since he had no child from his first wife, he married a second time, with the former's consent. The second wife has given birth to a son. Prankrishna has great love and devotion for Sri Ramakrishna. Because he is rather stout, Thakur sometimes calls him "the fat brahmin." He is very good-natured. Some nine months ago, Thakur accepted his invitation to visit his home with the devotees. Prankrishna had prepared various dishes and sweets to offer him.

Thakur is sitting on the floor. Close to him is a basket of jilipis brought by a devotee. Thakur breaks off a piece and eats it.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Prankrishna, smiling*): “You see, I repeat the name of the Divine Mother, so I get all these things to eat. (*Laughter.*)

“But She doesn’t give gourd and pumpkin. She gives the fruit of amrita, immortality – divine knowledge, intense love for God,

[1]

discrimination, and dispassion.”

A young boy six or seven years old enters the room. Sri Ramakrishna is childlike. Just as a child conceals sweets from another child lest he should eat them, Thakur behaves in the same childlike manner. He covers the small basket of jilipis with his hand to conceal it and then pushes it aside.

[2]

Though Prankrishna is a householder, he discusses Vedanta. He says, “Brahman is real and the world illusory. I am indeed He – So ’ham.” Thakur says to him, “Life depends on food in the

[3]

Kaliyuga. The path of devotion enjoined by Narada is best suited to this age.

“God is a matter of the heart. How can He be held devoid of any feelings of the heart?”

As he is covering the sweets with his hand to conceal them, like a child, Thakur merges into samadhi.

Chapter II

In the domain of ecstasy and vision of divine forms

Thakur is in samadhi for a long time; he remains absorbed in ecstasy. His body does not move, his eyes are fixed. One is not sure if he is breathing.

He exhales a long breath, as if returning to the domain of the senses.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Prankrishna*): “God is not just formless. He

has form too. You can behold His form. You can have the vision of His wondrous divine form through feeling, through love,

[4]

through devotion for Him. The Divine Mother reveals Herself in various forms.”

Vision of Gauranga – Divine Mother in the form of Rati’s mother

“I saw the Divine Mother yesterday. She wore an ochre garment with an unstitched hem. She talked with me for some time.

“On another day She came to me in the form of a Muslim girl.

[5]

She had the sectarian holy mark on her forehead, and She was naked – a girl six or seven years old. She walked with me and joked and chatted like a child.

“When I was at Hriday’s house, I had the vision of Gauranga. He wore a black-bordered cloth.

“Haladhari used to say, ‘God is beyond being and non-being.’ I went to the Mother and said, ‘Mother, Haladhari says this. So are Your forms illusory?’ The Mother came to me in the form of Rati’s mother and said, ‘You must remain in an ecstatic

[6]

state.’ I told Haladhari what She said.

“Time and again when I forget Her command, I suffer. I broke my tooth when I was not in that state. So I will remain in an ecstatic mood until I hear a divine command directly or have a different experience. I’ll follow the path of love for God. What do you say?”

Prankrishna: “Yes, sir.”

Why does an incarnation of God entertain devotion? – it is Rama’s will

Sri Ramakrishna: “But why should I ask you about it? There is someone within me who does all this through me. Sometimes I used to go into a divine mood when I could not be at peace without offering worship.

“I am the machine and He is the operator. I do as He makes me do. I speak as He makes me speak.

“Ramprasad, the poet, says:

I sail my boat in the ocean of the world.

I rise with the tide and subside with the ebb.

“During a storm a dry leaf is sometimes blown onto a clean surface and sometimes into a gutter. The wind carries it where it wills.

“The weaver said, ‘It was by Rama’s will that a robbery took place. It was by Rama’s will that the police arrested me. And it was by Rama’s will that I was set free.’

“Hanuman said, ‘O Rama, You are my only refuge, [\[7\]](#)
I [\[8\]](#)
surrender to You. Bless me that I may have pure love for
Your lotus feet and grant that I may never be enchanted by
Your world-bewitching maya.’

“A bullfrog, at the point of death, said to Rama, ‘Rama, when I’m seized by a snake, I shout for Your help, “Rama, protect me!” But since I’m dying now by Rama’s own arrow, I can only stay silent.’

“Before, I used to see God with these physical eyes, the way I [\[9\]](#)
see you. Now I behold visions in ecstasy.

“After realizing God, one develops the nature of a child. One acquires the nature of Him on Whom one meditates. God’s nature is like that of a child. Just as a child builds a house, breaks it down, and then rebuilds it in play, in the same way God creates, preserves, and dissolves. Just as a child is not

[\[10\]](#)
subject to any guna, He too is beyond the three gunas of
sattva, rajas, and tamas.

“That’s why a paramahansa keeps five or ten children with him – to absorb their nature.”

A young man between twenty and twenty-two years old has come from Agarpara. Whenever he comes, he takes Thakur, by a sign, to a solitary corner and whispers his thoughts to him. He has only recently begun visiting Thakur. Today he is sitting on the floor near Sri Ramakrishna.

[11]

Feminine attitude and conquest of lust – guilelessness and God-realization

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the young man*): “You can change your nature by imitating something. If you cultivate a feminine nature, you gradually slay enemies like lust. Then you begin to act just like a woman. Men who play the role of women in a

[12]

religious theatrical performance, begin to brush their teeth like women and talk like women when they bathe.

“Please come again, either on Saturday or Tuesday.

[13]

(*To Prankrishna*) “Brahman and His Power are one and the same. If you don’t believe in His Power, the world becomes illusory for you. I, you, hearth and home, and the family – all of them become illusory. It is because of the Primordial Energy that the world stands firm. A framework can’t be made without bamboo poles. You can’t even make a beautiful image of Durga.

“A person can’t attain spiritual awakening and realize God without getting rid of worldliness. Worldly desire leads to hypocrisy. God cannot be realized unless one is guileless at heart.

Let go of cleverness and hypocrisy, and be sincerely devoted to God.

Embracing service, worship, and self-surrender, you will easily attain

[14]

Ragurai.

“People who are engaged in worldly activities – in office work or some business – should also follow the path of truth.

Truthfulness is the spiritual austerity in the Kaliyuga.”

Prankrishna: “On this spiritual path, one should speak the

truth, control the senses, serve others unceasingly, remain

[\[15\]](#)

steadfast, and be a refuge to others.’ This is what the Mahanirvana Tantra says.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, one must internalize all these qualities.”

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna’s attitude in ecstasy akin to Yashoda’s

Sri Ramakrishna goes to the smaller cot and sits down. Filled

[\[16\]](#)

with God-consciousness, he looks at Rakhal. In an ecstatic mood he becomes overwhelmed with maternal affection as he gazes at him. The hair on his body stands on end. Is he seeing

[\[17\]](#)

Rakhal as Yashoda used to see baby Krishna?

Thakur merges again into samadhi. The devotees sit speechless with wonder as they watch his marvelous state of God-consciousness.

Coming down a little to normal consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna says, “Why am I inspired at the sight of Rakhal? The more one advances towards God, the less one sees of His glories and splendour. A spiritual aspirant first beholds the vision of a deity with ten arms. There is a greater representation of splendour in this image. Then there is a vision of a two-armed deity – no longer holding weapons and missiles. Still later is the vision of Gopala. There is no show of power, only the form of a little child. Beyond that there is only divine light.”

The state of brahmajnana after attaining samadhi –reasoning and attachment given up

“After realizing God and communing with Him in samadhi, all

reasoning and discrimination disappear.

“How long does one reason? As long as there is the consciousness of plurality. You reason as long as you are aware of the world and its embodied beings, ‘I’ and ‘you.’ Attaining

[\[18\]](#)

true knowledge, you become silent. Trailanga Swami is like that.

“Haven’t you seen a feast when brahmins are invited? The feast starts with a great uproar. As their stomachs are filled, the noise lessens. When curds with sugar drops are served, there is just the sound of ‘sup sup’ – no other sound is heard then. And when the feast is over, they go to sleep – that is samadhi. Then there is no sound at all.

(To M. and Prankrishna): “Most people talk about the knowledge of Brahman, but their minds are preoccupied with lower worldly things – home and hearth, money, name and fame, and sense pleasures. As long as you stand at the foot of

[\[19\]](#)

the monument you see carriages, horses, English men and women, and so on. But when you climb to the top of the monument, you see the vast expanse of sky and ocean. Then you don’t enjoy the sight of buildings, carriages, horses, and people – they all appear to be so many ants.

“On attaining the knowledge of Brahman, attachment to the world and enthusiasm for ‘lust and greed’ vanishes. You attain perfect peace. A piece of burning wood produces a crackling sound and gives out heat. When it is consumed and has turned to ash, all sound ceases. As soon as you get rid of attachment, the restlessness for ‘lust and greed’ vanishes. Finally you attain tranquility.

“The nearer you come to God, the more tranquility you feel. Peace, peace, profound peace. The nearer you approach the holy Ganges, the cooler you feel. A dip in it is even more soothing.

“The world, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles [\[20\]](#)

– these exist because God exists. Give up God and nothing

remains. Adding zeroes to the digit *one* increases the number. But if you remove the one, the zeroes have no value.”

Is Sri Ramakrishna hinting at his own state in his next words to be gracious to Prankrishna?

Sri Ramakrishna’s state – the ‘I of a devotee’ after attaining the knowledge of Brahman

“After attaining the knowledge of Brahman – merging in samadhi – some people come down to a lower plane and live with the ‘I of knowledge,’ or the ‘I of devotion.’ When the market shuts down, some people stay there of their own sweet will – for example, some like Narada, who retained the ‘I of knowledge’ to teach people.

“Even if only a little attachment to the world remains, one cannot realize Him. Just a little fibre sticking out from a thread keeps it from passing through the eye of a needle.

“One who has attained God retains only the appearance of passions like lust and anger – they’re like a burnt string. There is the shape of a string, but it is blown away by a mere puff.

“God is seen when the mind is completely rid of attachment. Whatever rises in a pure mind is the voice of God. Pure mind is the same as pure intellect, and it is also the same as pure Atman. Except for God, there is nothing pure.

“Only by realizing God does one go beyond dharma and [\[21\]](#) adharm.”

Saying this, Thakur sings a song of Ramprasad in his celestial voice.

[\[22\]](#)
Come, O mind, let us go for a walk to Kali, the wish-fulfilling tree,
[\[23\]](#)
and gather there the four fruits of life.

[\[24\]](#) [\[25\]](#)
Of your two wives, Worldliness and Dispassion, take only
Dispassion along, and ask her eldest son, Discrimination, for the truth
[\[26\]](#)
about Reality.

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna in the mood of Radha

Thakur is sitting on the southeastern verandah of his room. Prankrishna and other devotees are with him. Hazra is also sitting on the verandah. Laughing, Thakur says to Prankrishna:

“Hazra is not an insignificant man. If one finds the big dargah [27]

here [referring to himself], Hazra is a small dargah.” (*All laugh.*)

Navakumar comes to the door of the verandah. At the sight of the devotees sitting there, he leaves. Thakur says, “The image of egotism.”

It is about half past nine. Prankrishna salutes Sri Ramakrishna and takes his leave. He is going to his house in Calcutta.

In Thakur’s room a renunciate sings a song to the [28]
accompaniment of a single-stringed instrument:

Nityananda’s ship is here.

Catch hold if you want to cross over.

Six handsome angels ever guard it,

Their backs and chests masked by shields.

Opening the main portal, they dole out precious jewels.

He sings another song:

Build your house now, for torrential rains will soon approach. Be [29]
prepared. Take ginger water; be up and doing to construct it.

[30]
When the month of Shravana arrives, you’ll not be able to see.
Bamboo and thatch will rot, and you will not be able to lay a roof.
With a gust of wind, the thatch will fly away, along with its frame,
Leaving a gaping hole.

You will look agape, and you will leave.

Once more he sings:

In what mood are you repeating Hari's name, while roaming about Nadia in pauper's garb, though you yourself are Hari?

I cannot comprehend why you have assumed this attitude and such behavior.

Thakur is listening to the songs when Kedar Chatterji enters and salutes him. He is in his office clothes, and wearing a cloak and a pocket watch and chain. Whenever he hears about God, his eyes fill with tears. He is a very loving soul and cherishes the attitude of the gopis of Vrindavan.

Seeing Kedar, Thakur is instantly inspired with the divine sport at Vrindavan. In a mood of ecstatic love, he stands up and sings, addressing Kedar:

[31]

Tell me, friend, How far is that grove where my Shyamasundar is?

I cannot walk much farther.

Singing the song in the attitude of Sri Radha, Thakur enters into samadhi – he stands still like a portrait. Tears of joy flow from both corners of his eyes.

Kedar kneels before him and, touching Thakur's feet, sings a hymn:

I bow to Brahman-Consciousness, the primal seed of the universe, abiding in the lotus of the heart,

Who, without attributes, rests in undifferentiated repose, known only to Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh,

Who is attained only by yogis in the depth of meditation,

Who removes the fear of life and death and is the essence of Knowledge and Truth.

After some time, Thakur returns to normal consciousness. Kedar was going to work in Calcutta from his home in Halishahar when he stopped to visit the Dakshineswar Kali Temple to see Thakur. After a little rest, he leaves.

While Thakur talks to the devotees, midday approaches. Ramlal brings Sri Ramakrishna a plate of Mother Kali's prasad. He eats the prasad facing south. Like a child, he takes a little of

everything.

After eating, Thakur rests awhile on the smaller cot. Later the
[32]
Marwari devotees arrive.

Chapter V

[33]

Yoga of practice – two paths: that of discrimination and that of loving devotion to God

It is three o'clock. The Marwari devotees sit on the floor and ask Thakur a few questions. M., Rakhal and several other devotees are seated in the room.

A Marwari devotee: "Sir, what is the way?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "There are two paths: the path of
[34]
discrimination and the path of fervent love for God.

"Discrimination means differentiating between the real and the unreal. The only real or eternal Substance is God and everything else is unreal or impermanent. Only the magician is real, his magic is illusory. One must discriminate in this way.

[35]

"Discrimination and dispassion. Differentiating between the real and the unreal in this manner is discrimination. Dispassion means a distaste for worldly things. This does not come about all of a sudden. It has to be practiced daily. To begin with, you have to renounce 'lust and greed' in the mind. Then, God willing, you can renounce them externally as well as internally. It is not possible to ask Calcutta people to renounce everything for the sake of God. You have to say to them, 'Renounce these mentally.'

"One is able to renounce the attachment to 'lust and greed' by the yoga of practice. The Gita says this. Practice brings extraordinary strength to the mind. Then you don't find it difficult to subdue the senses, to control passions like lust and anger. For instance, a tortoise doesn't bring out its limbs once it

has drawn them inside its shell, even if you cut it into four pieces with an axe.”

The Marwari devotee: “Sir, you said that there are two paths. What is the other one?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is the path of ardent love for God. Weep for Him with a yearning heart, in solitude or in a secret corner, and cry to Him, ‘Grant me Your vision!’

Cry out with yearning, O mind, and see how Mother Shyama can

[\[36\]](#)

withhold Herself from you!

The Marwari devotee: “Sir, what is the meaning of worshipping a form of God? And what is the meaning of God without form or attributes?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Just as you are reminded of your father when seeing his photograph, similarly, by continuously worshipping an image of God, you will have revealed to you in a flash His real nature.

“Do you know what the form of Reality is like? Just like bubbles rising on an expanse of water. Different forms arising in the

[\[37\]](#)

[\[38\]](#)

subtle space of Consciousness, in the Great Space of Consciousness. An incarnation of God is one of such forms. As for the divine play of an incarnation, well, it’s the sport of the

[\[39\]](#)

Primal Energy.”

Learning and scholarship – Who am I? I am none other than You

“What is there in learning and scholarship? You can attain God by calling upon Him with a yearning heart. Knowledge of different kinds is not essential.

“Religious teachers need to know many things; for killing others, you need a sword and a shield. To kill yourself, even a needle or a nail-knife will do.

“Who am I? When you try to discover that, you find God. Am I flesh or bone or blood or marrow – or am I the mind or intellect? Through such reasoning you ultimately see that you are none of

[\[40\]](#)

these – ‘not this, not this.’ The Atman cannot be touched or

[\[41\]](#)

grasped. It is without attributes and qualities.

“But according to the path of loving devotion, God has attributes. Krishna is Consciousness and His abode is Consciousness. Everything is Consciousness.”

The Marwari devotees salute Sri Ramakrishna and take their leave.

Evening worship at Dakshineswar Temple

It is dusk. Thakur is watching the Ganges. A lamp is burning in his room. He chants the name of the Divine Mother and, sitting on the smaller cot, meditates on Her.

In the temple, arati is being performed, and people strolling in the panchavati or on the embankment hear the sweet tones of the gong from a distance. The flood tide on the river flows northward with a soft murmuring sound. The music of the arati mingled with its murmur makes even a sweeter sound.

Surrounded by such an atmosphere, Thakur sits intoxicated with love for God. Everything is sweet, the heart is filled with sweetness. Sweet, sweet, sweet.

[\[1\]](#)

. Jnana, prema, viveka, and vairagya.

[\[2\]](#)

. Garhasthya.

[\[3\]](#)

. Naradiya bhakti: self-surrender and loving devotion to God.

[\[4\]](#)

. Bhakti.

[\[5\]](#)

. Tilak.

[6]

. Bhava.

[7]

. Sharanagata.

[8]

. Shuddha bhakti.

[9]

. Bhava.

[10]

. One of three types of universal energies: sattva, rajas and tamas.

[11]

. Prakriti bhava.

[12]

. Yatra.

[13]

. Shakti.

[14]

. A name for Rama.

[15]

. asmindharme maheçi syät satyavädé jitendriyaù|
paropakāranirato nirvikāraù sadāçayaù||

[16]

. Later Swami Brahmananda.

[17]

. Gopala.

[18]

. Trailanga Swami was a famous monk in Benares who had taken a vow of silence. Sri Ramakrishna met him on his second pilgrimage there.

[19]

. Ochterloney Monument in Calcutta.

2. The twenty-four categories or cosmic principles enunciated in the Samkhya Philosophy are: mahat, cosmic intelligence; buddhi, the discriminating faculty; ahamkara, the sense of ego; manas, perceiving mind; chitta (mind-stuff), the recording faculty or memory; five organs of sense-perception (hearing, touch, sight, taste, smell); five organs of action (hands, feet, speech, organ of excretion, organ of generation); five subtle elements (tanmatras – the potential of sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell), which, in differing combinations produce the gross elements (mahabhutas – ether/akasha/space, air, fire, water, and earth).

[21]

. Virtue and vice, righteousness and unrighteousness.

[22]

. Kalpataru.

[23]

. Four fruits: Dharma (virtue), artha (wealth), kama (legitimate desires), and moksha (liberation).

[24]

. Pravritti.

[25]

. Nivritti.

[26]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section II, Chapter VI.

[27]

. Burial place of a Muslim saint, considered sacred.

[28]

. Gopiyantara.

[29]

. Ginger helps in digestion.

[30]

. A time of incessant downpour during which visibility is very low.

[31]

. Sakhi; gopi friend of Radha in Vraja and female lover of the Lord.

[32]

. Devotees from the Burrabazar district of Calcutta.

[33]

. Abhyasa Yoga.

[34]

. Anuraga.

[35]

. Viveka and vairagya.

[36]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section I, Chapter V.

[37]

. Chidakasa.

[38]

. Mahakasa.

[39]

. Adyashakti.

[40]

. Neti, neti.

[41]

. Nirupadhi.

Section II

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Temple with Rakhal, Ram, Nityagopal, Choudhury, and Others

Chapter I

Practicing spiritual discipline in a solitary place – philosophy – God-realization

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in his room with the devotees after the midday service. It is 25 February 1883.

Rakhal, Harish, Latu, and Hazra are living with Thakur these days. Ram, Kedar, Nityagopal, M., and other devotees, including Choudhury, have arrived from Calcutta.

Choudhury has recently lost his wife. He has visited Thakur many times to attain peace of mind. He has four university degrees and is employed as a government official.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Ram and other devotees*): “Rakhal, [\[1\]](#)

Narendra, and Bhavanath are ever-perfect. They have been spiritually awake since birth. They’ve assumed human bodies only to teach others.

“There’s another class of devotees – those who are perfected by [\[2\]](#)

God’s grace. All of a sudden God’s grace descends on them and immediately they have His vision and spiritual wisdom. It is like a room which has been lying dark for a thousand years; the very moment a light is brought in, it is lit up. It is not lighted little by little.

“Those who are householders should practice spiritual disciplines. They should go to a solitary place and call upon God with a yearning heart. (*To Choudhury*) One cannot attain God by learning and scholarship.

“What can one comprehend of God by reasoning? Everyone

must do whatever brings loving devotion to His lotus feet.”

Bhishma Deva in tears – victory and defeat – divine eyes and the Gita

“Infinite are God’s glories. How much can you grasp? Can one ever understand the ways of God?

“Bhishma Deva, who was one of the eight Vasus, even he began to shed tears lying on a bed of arrows. He said, ‘How strange! The Lord [Sri Krishna] is a constant companion of the Pandavas, and yet there is no end to their trials and tribulations.’ Who can understand God’s ways?

“A person thinks, ‘I have practiced a little prayer and austerity, so I have won.’ But victory and defeat lie in God’s hands. I saw a

[3]

prostitute dying in the Ganges and retaining consciousness to the end.”

Choudhury: “How can one see God?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Not with these eyes. God grants divine eyes, and then you have His vision. The Lord gave divine eyes to Arjuna in order to reveal His Universal Form.

“Your philosophy is mere calculating and speculation. It only reasons. You cannot attain God that way.”

[4]

Ahetuki bhakti – the main thing is to acquire zealous love and devotion for God

“If you have loving devotion – zealous love and devotion – God cannot remain unmoved.

“How great is God’s fondness for devotion! It can be likened to a cow’s fondness for fodder mixed with oil cake. She just gobbles it down.

[5]

“Fervent love and selfless devotion to God, pure love for its own sake – that’s what Prahlada had.

“You may visit a rich man just because you like to see him. When you’re asked if you’d like a favour, you reply, ‘Sir, I want

nothing at all. I come just to see you.’ This is called ahetuki bhakti. You ask God for nothing – only to love Him.

“Saying this, Thakur begins to sing:

Though I [\[6\]](#) am not loath to grant liberation, [\[7\]](#) pure love I hesitate to give.

Whoever wins pure love surpasses all, is adored by all; Such a one triumphs over the three worlds.

[\[8\]](#)
Listen, O Chandravali, I shall tell you of pure love: One may gain liberation, but devotion is rare indeed.

Out of love alone did I become King Bali’s doorkeeper in the netherworld.

Only in Vrindavan can pure love be found.

None but the cowherd boys and milkmaids know its secret.

Out of love alone I dwelt in Nanda’s house;

Taking him as My father, I carried his burden upon My head.

[\[9\]](#)
“The fundamental thing is to acquire passionate love for God. And along with this, you must develop discrimination and

[\[10\]](#)
dispassion.”

Choudhury: “Sir, is it not possible to succeed without a guru?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Sat-chit-ananda Himself is the Guru.

[\[11\]](#)
“After one has practiced spiritual disciplines on a corpse and

[\[12\]](#)
is about to attain the vision of the chosen deity, the guru appears and says, ‘See, here is your ideal.’ And then the guru merges into it. The guru and the chosen deity are one and the same. The guru makes you hold the thread that leads to God.

[\[13\]](#)
Spiritual aspirants take the ‘vow of the Infinite,’ but perform the worship of Vishnu. In Him are the ‘infinite’ forms of God.”

Harmony of religions according to Sri Ramakrishna

(To Ram and other devotees) “If you ask which form of God should be meditated upon, well you should meditate upon that form you like best. But you must keep in mind that all forms of God are one and the same.

“You must have malice toward none of the forms of God. Shiva, Kali, and Hari – all are indeed only different forms of one and the same God. Blessed is he who knows even one deity.

“Shiva on the outside, Kali in the heart, and Haribol on the lips.

“The body does not survive without a trace of lust, anger, and so forth. You should try to minimize them.

(Thakur points to Kedar) “He’s right. He not only accepts the Absolute, but also God’s divine sport. On the one hand, there is the Absolute and on the other, gods – even divine incarnations.”

Kedar said that God had incarnated Himself in Thakur’s body.

The sannyasin and woman – women devotees

Pointing at Nityagopal, Thakur says to the devotees: “He’s in a very nice mood.”

(To Nityagopal) “Don’t go there too often – you may go once in a while. She may be a devotee, but she’s also a woman. Do be cautious.

“There is a very strict rule for a sannyasin. He must not even see the picture of a woman. This doesn’t apply to householders.

“Even if a woman is a great devotee, it’s not right to associate with her too much. Even if a sannyasin has conquered his passions, this rule must be followed for teaching others.

[\[14\]](#)

“Seeing a sadhu renounce sixteen annas, others will learn to renounce. Otherwise, they will sink. A sannyasin is a world teacher.”

Thakur and the devotees rise and stroll about. M. stands before the picture of Prahlada and looks at it thoughtfully. Thakur had said that Prahlada’s love was absolutely natural.

[15]

[1]

. Nityasiddha.

[2]

. Kripasiddha.

[3]

. It is considered by Hindus a sign of great spiritual merit and pious living.

[4]

. Spontaneous love for God.

[5]

. Raga bhakti.

[6]

. Sri Krishna.

[7]

. Mukti.

[8]

. A gopi of Vrindavan.

[9]

. Raga bhakti.

[10]

. Viveka and vairagya.

[11]

. Shava sadhana.

[12]

. Ishta.

[13]

. Anantavrata.

[14]

. A figure of speech meaning “one hundred percent” (sixteen annas make one rupee).

[15]

. Ahetuki bhakti.

Section III

At Balaram's House with Narendra, Rakhal, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna enjoys devotional songs with Narendra and other devotees

Sri Ramakrishna is seated with the devotees in the room northeast of the parlour in Balaram's house. It is about one o'clock. Narendra, Bhavanath, Rakhal, Balaram, and M. are with him.

It is Saturday, 7 April 1883, twenty-fifth day of Chaitra, and Amavasya, the day of the new moon. Thakur arrived at Balaram's house in the morning and had his midday meal there. Narendra, Bhavanath, Rakhal, and a few other devotees had also been invited and dined with him. Thakur often says to Balaram, "Feed them. It will bring you the same merit as feeding a number of holy men."

Some days ago Thakur had gone to Keshab's house to see the play *Nava Vrindavan*. Narendra and Rakhal had accompanied him. Narendra had also acted in the performance, and Keshab had played the role of Pavhari Baba.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Narendra and other devotees*): "Keshab was acting the part of a sadhu and sprinkling the water of peace – something that I did not like. Sprinkling the water of peace after a theatrical performance!

"Another person (Ku Babu) played the part of Sin. It's not right to play such a role. One should not commit sin; one should not even feign it."

Narendra is not feeling well, but Thakur wishes very much to hear him sing. He says, "Narendra, everybody is asking for you to sing."

Narendra sings to the accompaniment of the tanpura.

Sing, O bird, nesting in the depth of my heart.

Sing, O bird, who are perched on Brahman's wish-fulfilling tree.

[\[1\]](#)

Sing of the glories of All-pervading God.

[\[2\]](#)

Eat the ripe fruits of righteousness, wealth, fulfillment, and liberation.

Sing the name of Atmaram,³ the delight of life. Repeat His name.

Sing, O bird of life, forever in my heart.

Call on Him like the thirsty chatak bird. Sing and be not idle!

He sings another song:

O Brahman, joy of the universe, the light supreme,

God without beginning, Lord of the universe, Soul of the soul.

He sings again:

O King of kings, reveal Yourself to me.

At Your feet I dedicate my soul and my life,

Seared by the fire of this world,

And a heart stained with wrongful acts.

O compassionate Lord, entangled in maya, I live as one who is dead.

Revive me by Your life-giving glance.

He sings another song:

On the salver of the sky blaze two lamps, sun and moon.

And yet another:

[\[3\]](#)

In the firmament of wisdom, the moon of divine love rises full.

Narendra now stops and, at Thakur's request, Bhavanath sings:

O Compassionate One, who but You is my friend?

Who else remains a friend in happiness and sorrow; who else can assuage the pain of my misdeeds?

This sea of the world is full of peril; who but You can take me safely across?

Whose grace but Yours can calm the raging storm of my passions?

Who but You pours out the water of peace to extinguish the burning torment of my soul?

And when all others have forsaken me, who but You embraces me in my dying hour?

Narendra (*smiling*): “This fellow (Bhavanath) has given up fish
[4]
and betel-leaf.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Bhavanath, smiling*): “Well, why is that? What’s wrong with fish and betel leaf? They’re not harmful. Giving up ‘lust and greed’ is the real renunciation. Where is Rakhal?”

A devotee: “Sir, Rakhal is asleep.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “A person went to see a theatrical
[5]
performance, carrying a mat under his arm. Seeing that there was still a lot of time before the play was to begin, he spread the mat on the floor and went to sleep. He woke up to find that the play was over. (*General laughter.*) Taking the mat under his arm, he went back home.” (*Laughter.*)

Ramdayal is very sick. He is lying in bed in another room. Thakur goes to the doorway and inquires about him.

Panchadashi – Vedanta scripture and Sri Ramakrishna – worldly man and discussion on scriptures

It is about four o’clock. Thakur is sitting in the parlour with Narendra, Rakhal, M., Bhavanath, and some other devotees. A number of Brahmo devotees are among them. Sri Ramakrishna talks with them.

A Brahmo devotee: “Sir, have you read the Panchadashi?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “At first one should hear books like that and reason them out. But later:

Cherish the beloved Mother Shyama in your heart.

[6]
O mind, may you and I alone behold Her, and let no one else intrude.
“One should hear the scriptures in the early stages of spiritual practice. But after attaining God, there’s no lack of spiritual knowledge. The Divine Mother provides it more and more.

“When learning to write, you have to spell out every word, but later you can write fluently.

“You have to be up and doing while melting gold. You have to hold the bellows in one hand, the fan in the other, and the pipe in your mouth till the gold is melted. When the gold is melted, you pour it in the mould and you can sit down in peace.

“Simply studying the scriptures is not much help. Living in the midst of ‘lust and greed,’ you can’t understand the real significance of the scriptures. Attachment to the world keeps spiritual knowledge from you.

Though I learned many poems and dramas with great delight,

[7]

I have forgotten them all in my love for Krishna. (*All laugh.*)

Thakur now talks about Keshab with the Brahmo devotees.

“Keshab has both yoga and bhoga – he performs spiritual practices but enjoys worldly pleasures as well. He lives as a householder, but his mind is turned towards God.”

A devotee talks about a university convocation, saying, “I saw any number of people there. It was a forest of human beings!” Sri Ramakrishna: “Seeing big crowds, I’m inspired with the thought of God. Had I seen that gathering, I would have been overwhelmed with spiritual feeling.”

[1]

. Vibhu.

[2]

. Dharma, artha, kama, and moksha.

3. The Divine Self.

[3]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section I, Chapter II.

[4]

. Unnecessary luxuries.

[5]

. Yatra, a religious play.

[6]

.. For the complete song refer to Section IX, Chapter I.

[7]

. Ramakrishna is making a play on words. He refers to Krishna by the word *kala*, which means “black” or “deaf.” That is why the devotees laugh.

Section IV

Sri Ramakrishna at the Nandan Bagan Brahmo Samaj with Rakhal, M., and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Sight of the shrine inspires Sri Ramakrishna – Sri Radha seized with the madness of ecstatic love

Sri Ramakrishna has arrived at the Brahmo Samaj temple in Nandan Bagan, accompanied by Rakhal, M., and a few other devotees. He is talking with the Brahmo devotees. It is about five o'clock.

Kashisvara Mitra's house is in Nandan Bagan. He was a retired sub-judge and a member of the Adi Brahmo Samaj who used to worship the Lord in a big hall on the second level of his house. Now and then he would invite devotees for a festival. After his death, his sons Srinath, Yajnanath, and others continued to hold celebrations on a few occasions in the same manner as their father had done. It is they who have earnestly invited Thakur here.

After arriving, Thakur at first sits in the drawing-room on the ground floor. Gradually, Brahmo devotees arrive and gather there. Rabindra (Tagore) and other members of the Tagore family are present. When asked to go to the worship hall, Thakur and the devotees go upstairs to the second level. Thakur takes his seat there. A dais has been set up on the eastern side of the hall and a piano placed in the southwest corner. Many chairs are placed in the north part of the room, to the west of a door leading to the women's quarters. The worship will begin in the evening. Bhairava Bandopadhyaya of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, along with one or two devotees, will sit at the dais and perform the worship.

It is summer, 2 May 1883, Wednesday, the 10th day of the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra. Many of the Brahmo devotees are strolling around the big courtyard below or on the verandah. Janaki Goshal and a few others come to the worship hall, wishing to sit near Sri Ramakrishna. They want to hear him talk about God. When Thakur enters the room, he bows before the altar and then takes a seat. He says to Rakhal, M., and others:

“Narendra once asked me, ‘What good is there in bowing before

the shrine of the Samaj?’

“At the sight of a shrine, I’m reminded of Him. I feel divine inspiration. God is present wherever people talk about Him. One feels the presence in all the holy places of pilgrimage. Such places remind one of God.

“A devotee went into an ecstatic mood at the sight of a babul tree. It reminded him that the same wood is used for making the handles of axes used in Lord Radhakanta’s garden.

“Another devotee had such loving devotion for his guru that he became overwhelmed with divine emotion to see a resident from his guru’s neighbourhood.

“Srimati (Radha) would become inspired with Krishna at the

[\[1\]](#)

sight of a cloud or blue clothing or a picture of Krishna. She was so filled with yearning for him that she would cry like a mad woman, ‘Where are you, my Krishna?’”

Goshal: “Madness isn’t good.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What do you mean? Is this like the madness born of worrying about worldly things that makes you unconscious? This state of madness comes after meditating on

[\[2\]](#)

God. Haven’t you heard of the madness of love for God and

[\[3\]](#)

the madness of knowledge?”

[\[4\]](#)

The way: to love God and to turn around the six enemies

A Brahmo devotee: “How can one find God?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “By developing love for Him. You must think constantly that God alone is real and everything else is of a fleeting nature.

“The Ashwattha tree alone is permanent. Its fruit lasts but a few days.”

The Brahmo devotee: “Lust and anger are the real enemies. What can we do about them?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Turn the six enemies around – towards God.
“Have *lust* for union with the Atman.

“Show *anger* to those who are an obstacle in the way to God.
Have *greed* to attain Him. If you have to say, ‘Me and mine,’ say it in relation to Him – as, for example, ‘My Krishna or my Rama.’ If you have *pride*, let it be like the pride of Bibhishana who said, ‘I have bowed to Rama. This head shall never bow to anybody else.’”

The Brahmo devotee: “If everything is really being done by Him, you’re not responsible for your sins.”

Free will – responsibility

[5]

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Duryodhana said: ‘O Hrishikesh, I act as You, seated within my heart, make me act.’

“If you have the right kind of faith – that God alone is the Doer and you do nothing, you can’t commit a sin. The person who knows how to dance well never takes a wrong step.

“But unless you’re pure in heart, you don’t even have the faith that God exists.”

Thakur glances at the people gathered in the worship hall and says, “It’s very good to gather like this now and then to meditate on God and sing His name and glories.

[6]

“But the love of worldly people for God is momentary, drying up like drops of water falling on a hot iron. They don’t last long.”

Worship of the Brahmos and Sri Ramakrishna

The worship is about to begin. The large worship hall is full of Brahmo devotees. Several of the Brahmo women take their seats on chairs to the north of the room, holding music books in their hands.

They sing Brahmo songs to the accompaniment of piano and harmonium. There is no end to Thakur’s joy to hear the music,

which is followed by an invocation, a prayer, and then the

[7]

worship. The acharyas sitting on the platform recite mantras from the Vedas.

You are our Father, grant us right understanding. We bow to You. Pray do not destroy us.

The Brahmo devotees chant in unison with an acharya:

Om! Brahman is infinite truth and knowledge.

Immortal and blissful, it glitters.

Brahman is peace, all-good, and one without a second.

It is pure, untouched by sin.

Now the acharyas sing a hymn of praise:

Om! We bow to the real, the cause of the universe.

We bow to pure consciousness, the refuge and support of all.

The religious teachers now pray, reciting another prayer:

Lead us from the unreal to the Real and from darkness to Light,

Lead us from death to immortality and reach us through and through.

O Rudra, protect us always with Your compassionate face.

Thakur becomes absorbed in ecstasy when he hears these hymns. Now an acharya reads a paper.

Sri Ramakrishna, without anger and full of supreme bliss – ocean of motiveless grace

The worship is over. Preparations are underway to serve luchi and sweets to the devotees. Most of the Brahmo devotees are enjoying fresh air in the courtyard below and on the verandah.

It is 9 p.m. Thakur has to return to the Dakshineswar Temple. The hosts are so busy attending to their invited guests that they completely forget to take care of him and his party.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Rakhal and others*): “Why, no one is paying any attention to us!”

Rakhal (*angrily*): “Sir, let us leave this place and return to Dakshineswar.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Oh, angry man! Who will pay the carriage fare of three rupees and two annas? Such stubbornness won’t get you anywhere. You have no money and you’re simply getting angry! Besides, where shall I eat so late at night?”

After quite some time, they hear that the leaf plates have been laid. All the devotees are asked to sit at the same time. Thakur, Rakhal, and others join the crowd and return to the second storey to eat. They find no place to sit in such a crowd. With great difficulty they find a place in a corner for Thakur to sit.

The spot is not clean. A brahmin woman cook serves vegetable curry. Thakur doesn’t feel like eating it. He eats luchi with a pinch of salt and some sweets.

Thakur is an ocean of compassion. The hosts are young. How could he be annoyed with them for not showing him the proper respect? If he had left without eating anything, it would have been unlucky for them. Besides, they had arranged the feast in the name of God.

After eating, Thakur gets into a carriage. Who will pay the fare? The hosts are nowhere to be found. Later Thakur relates this incident of the carriage fare to the devotees with humor: “Someone went to the hosts to ask for the carriage fare. At first he was ignored. But finally, with great difficulty, they scraped up three rupees. He was not given the two annas! The hosts said, ‘This should certainly be enough.’”

[1]

. Krishna’s body was dark blue.

[2]

. Premonmada.

[3]

. Jnanonmada.

[4]

. Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and envy.

[5]

. An epithet of Krishna.

[6]

. Anuraga.

[\[7\]](#)

. Religious teachers.

Section V

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Temple with Rakhal, Ram, Kedar, Tarak, M., and other Devotees

Chapter I

At Dakshineswar Temple – worship
holy feet

of Thakur's

After the evening worship in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna stands before the image of the Divine Mother. He fans

[\[1\]](#)

her with a chamara for some time.

It is summer, Friday, 8 June 1883, the third day of the bright fortnight of the month of Jaishtha. (Some incidents that happened on the new

[\[2\]](#)

moon day were recorded in Volume II, Section V of the *Kathamrita*.) After dusk Ram, Kedar (Chatterji), and Tarak arrived from Calcutta in a carriage. They have brought flowers and sweets for Thakur.

Kedar must be about fifty years old. He is a great devotee. As soon as there is talk of God, his eyes are filled with tears. He used to visit the Brahmo Samaj and then the Kartabhaja and several other new religious sects. At last he has taken refuge at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. He holds a government accountant's job. His home is in the village of Halishar near Kanchdapara.

[\[3\]](#)

Tarak is about twenty-four years old. He had married but his wife died after only a few days. His home is in the village of Barasat. His father is a spiritual aspirant of a high order and has visited Sri Ramakrishna a number of times. After the death of Tarak's mother, his father married a second time.

Tarak frequently visits Ram at his house. He often comes to visit Thakur with Ram and Nityagopal. He works in an office these days but his attitude is always one of indifference to worldly things.

Sri Ramakrishna comes out of the Kali Temple and lies prostrate on the platform in salutation to the Mother.

He sees Ram, M., Kedar, Tarak, and the other devotees standing there.

Affection for Tarak – Kedar and ‘lust and greed’

He touches Tarak’s chin affectionately. Indeed, he is very happy to see him.

Thakur sits on the floor of his room in an ecstatic mood. He stretches his legs out before him. Ram and Kedar decorate his feet with various kinds of flowers and garlands. Thakur is in samadhi.

Kedar has the attitude of a new devotee. He holds the big toe of Sri Ramakrishna, believing that by doing so, he will receive power from Thakur. Returning somewhat to the normal state, Thakur says, “Mother, what can he do to me by holding my toe?” Kedar humbly folds his hands.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Kedar, in the state of ecstasy*): “Your mind is attracted to ‘lust and greed.’ What use is it just to say that your mind does not dwell in them?

“Go forward. There is more after the sandalwood forest. A silver mine, a goldmine, and then diamonds and jewels. You’ve attained a little divine inspiration – don’t think you’ve achieved everything.”

Thakur again begins to talk to the Divine Mother, “Mother, please take him away.”

Kedar says to Ram, his throat dry with fear, “What is Thakur saying!”

God-incarnate and his intimate disciples

Seeing Rakhal, Thakur is again absorbed in ecstasy and addresses him: “I have been here many days! When did you come?”

Is Thakur hinting that he is an incarnation of God and Rakhal is his intimate disciple, a companion of his inner circle?

[1]

. Fan made from the tail of a yak, used in Hindu ritual worship.

[\[2\]](#)

. Amavasya.

[\[3\]](#)

. Later Swami Shivananda.

Section VI

Sri Ramakrishna with Rakhal, Ram, M., Bhavanath, and Other Devotees at the Panihati Festival

Chapter I

Thakur in the joy of devotional songs – is he Gauranga?

Sri Ramakrishna is dancing amidst a kirtan group on the crowded main road during the festival at Panihati. It is about one o'clock, Monday, 18 June 1883, the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Jaishtha.

People stand around Sri Ramakrishna in rows to watch him during devotional singing. He dances intoxicated with divine love. Some people wonder whether Gauranga has again incarnated himself. The sound of the Lord's name swells from all sides like ocean waves. Flowers are raining from all directions, and it appears as if 'Hari is being looted.'^[1]

Navadvip Goswami was proceeding toward the Raghava temple singing the Lord's name all the way. Suddenly Thakur shot into the kirtan group with the speed of an arrow and began to dance.

It is the 'Festival of Flattened Rice'^[2] of Pundit Raghava. It is celebrated every year on the thirteenth day of the lunar month in the bright fortnight. This festival was first celebrated by Raghunath Das. Thereafter, Raghava Pundit celebrated it every year. Nityananda said to Raghunath Das, "Oh, you thief! You just come running from your home and steal the taste of divine love without any of us knowing it. I am going to punish you today. Celebrate a festival of flattened rice and serve the devotees."

Thakur visits the event almost every year. Today he came with Ram and other devotees. Ram had gone from Calcutta to Dakshineswar with M. in the morning. They had met Thakur, saluted him, and then taken their prasad meal on the northern verandah. Thakur went to Panihati by the same carriage in which Ram had come from Calcutta. Rakhal, M., Ram, Bhavanath, and one or two other devotees were also in the carriage. One of them sat on top.

The carriage traveled along the Magazine Road before coming to the Chanke Main Road (trunk road). On the way Thakur cuts many jokes with the young devotees.

[\[3\]](#)

Sri Ramakrishna in mahabhava at the Panihati festival

As soon as the carriage reaches the venue of the Panihati festival, Ram and the other devotees are amazed to see Thakur, who had been in such a joyous state in the carriage, suddenly get down and shoot forth like an arrow. After looking for him for a long time, they found him dancing among the kirtan group of Navadvip Goswami and going into samadhi every now and then. Navadvip Goswami carefully supported him when he was in samadhi so that he would not fall down. Devotees on all sides were shouting the name of Hari and throwing flowers and sweet

[\[4\]](#)

confections at his feet. They were pushing each other to have a view of him.

Thakur dances in a semiconscious state. Returning to full consciousness, he sings:

Behold, the brothers have come! The two who shed tears while chanting Hari's name.

They, who weeping, make others weep; they, who in ecstasy dancing, make the world dance;

They, who receiving the world's blows, offer Hari's love.

They are Kanai and Balai of Vraja, who would steal butter from the gopis' pots;

Who, indifferent to caste, embrace the lowest of the lowly;

Who, themselves inebriated, inebriate others;

Who chant Hari's name, though they are none other than Hari Himself.

They, who redeemed Jagai and Madhai and distinguish not friend from foe,

These two brothers, Gaur and Nitai, have come to redeem humanity.

Everyone dances with Thakur, intoxicated with divine love and feeling that Gaur and Nitai are dancing in their presence.

Thakur sings again:

Behold, the whole of Nadia trembles under the waves of Gauranga's love!

The wave of devotees singing the kirtan advances toward the Raghava Temple. Dancing all the way and having circumambulated the temple, they bow to the images of Radha-Krishna. Now the wave of people moves toward the temple of Radha-Krishna which was established by the babus of Gangakul.

Some of the singing party enter the temple of Radhakanta, but the majority are unable to enter. They push each other aside, trying to peep inside the doorway.

Dancing in the Radha-Krishna temple courtyard

Thakur dances again in the courtyard of Radha-Krishna. He is fully intoxicated with the joy of the kirtan. He goes into samadhi every now and then, flowers and sweets falling at his feet from all sides. Time and again the name of Hari is raised in the courtyard. The same sound, reaching the main road, is echoed by a thousand voices. Passengers on the boats sailing

[\[5\]](#)
the Ganges listen wonderstruck to the chanting, like ocean waves, of Hari's name. They themselves begin to chant, "Haribol, Haribol."

Thousands of men and women assembled at the festival think to themselves that Sri Gauranga himself must assuredly have manifested in this great saint. One or two feel that he is none other than Gauranga.

Several people have assembled in the small courtyard. The devotees bring Sri Ramakrishna out of the courtyard very carefully.

Sri Ramakrishna in Mani Sen's drawing room

Thakur comes with the devotees to Mani Sen's drawing room and takes a seat. The same Sen family is in charge of serving Sri Radha and Krishna in the temple at Panihati. It is also this family who arranges the great festival every year and who invites Thakur.

After Thakur has rested for a while, Mani Sen and his spiritual preceptor, Navadvip Goswami, take him to another room where

he is served prasad. A little while later Ram, Rakhal, M., Bhavanath, and other devotees are taken to a room where they take their seats. The gracious loving Lord of the devotees, Sri Ramakrishna, stands up, full of joy, and feeds devotees.

Chapter II

Instructions to Navadvip Goswami

Mahabhava and ecstatic love of Gauranga, his three states of consciousness

It is afternoon. Thakur is seated in Mani Sen's drawing room with Rakhal, Ram, and other devotees. After prasad and feeling refreshed, Navadvip Goswami enters the drawing room and sits beside Thakur.

Mani Sen offers to pay Thakur's carriage fare. Thakur, who is sitting on a couch in the drawing room, says, "Why would these people (Ram and other devotees) accept the carriage fare from you? They earn money."

He then talks with Navadvip Goswami about God.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Navadvip*): "When love and devotion for

God matures, one experiences ecstasy. ^[6] It is followed by

mahabhava. After mahabhava comes ecstatic love ^[7] and then the attainment of the goal (God-realization).

"Gauranga would experience mahabhava and ecstatic love for God.

"When one feels ecstatic love, one not only forgets the world but one's own body which is so dear. Gauranga experienced this ecstatic love. Seeing the ocean and thinking it was the Jamuna, he jumped in.

"An ordinary person does not experience either mahabhava or

ecstatic love – he goes only as far as ecstasy. ^[8] Gauranga used to experience all three states of consciousness. Am I right?"

Navadvip: "Yes, sir. The inmost state, the state of semi-

consciousness, and the conscious state.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He would remain in samadhi during the inmost state. In the state of semi-consciousness, he could only dance, and in the outward conscious state he would sing the name and glories of God.”

Navadvip brings his son and introduces him to Thakur. His son is a young man and studies scriptures. He salutes Thakur.

Navadvip: “He studies holy books at home. It used to be very difficult to get a copy of the Vedas in this country. Max Müller translated them and printed them. That’s how people are able to read them now.”

Scholarship and scriptures – try to understand the essence

Sri Ramakrishna: “Too much study of the scriptures brings more harm than good.

“You should know the essence of them. After that the holy book is not needed.

“Having understood the essence, you should dive deep to attain God.

“The Divine Mother has told me that the essence of the Vedanta is that Brahman is the reality and the world an illusion. The essence of the *Gita* is what you get after pronouncing the word *Gita* ten times – in other words, *tyagi*, *tyagi* [a man of renunciation].”

Navadvip: “It doesn’t exactly become *tyagi*, it becomes *tagi*. But both words convey the same meaning. From the root *tag* you have *taga*, and adding the suffix *i*, it becomes *tagi*. Both *tyagi* and *tagi* have the same meaning.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The essence of the *Gita* is: O man, renounce everything and practice spiritual disciplines to realize God.”

Navadvip: “But how can we make our minds willing to renounce?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You who are goswamis serve the deity. You can’t afford to renounce family life. If you do, who will carry out the worship and service of the deity? You must renounce

mentally.

“God Himself has kept you in the household to set an example for mankind. Resolve a thousand times and still you will not be able to renounce family life. He has given you such a nature that you are bound to carry out the affairs of the world.

“Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, ‘What do you mean, you will not fight? Even if you wish otherwise, you will not be able to desist from fighting this war. Your very nature will compel you to fight.’”

Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi – yoga and bhoga of Goswami

When Thakur says, “Sri Krishna said to Arjuna,” he passes into samadhi. His body immediately becomes perfectly still; he does not even blink. It is not possible to perceive if he is breathing or not. Navadvip Goswami, his son, and the devotees watch him, speechless with wonder.

Returning somewhat to normal, Thakur says to Navadvip: “Yoga and bhoga! You belong to the line of goswamis who strive for union with God and at the same time enjoy worldly pleasures.

“Now pray to God – pray sincerely – only this prayer: ‘O Lord, I don’t want the glories of Your world-bewitching maya, I want You alone!’

“He is present in all elements and beings, no doubt. But do you know who a real devotee is? He who dwells in Him; he whose mind, heart, and soul have been merged in Him.”

Thakur has now returned completely to the normal state of consciousness. He says to Navadvip: “Some people say that the state (of samadhi) I pass into is a disease. But I ask, can one be unconscious while contemplating Him whose Consciousness has made the whole world conscious?”

Mani Sen says goodbye to the visiting brahmins and Vaishnava devotees. He offers to each of them a rupee or two, according to his status. He offers five rupees to Thakur, but Sri Ramakrishna says: “I cannot accept money.”

Mani Sen insists.

Thakur then says, “In the name of your guru, please do not offer me anything!” Mani Sen still offers the money. Thakur anxiously asks M., “Must I accept it?” M. objects severely, saying, “Certainly not. By no means.”

Mani Sen’s people give the money to Rakhal on the pretext of buying mangoes and sandesh.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “I have refused the money in his guru’s name. I am free now. Rakhal has accepted it. It is now his responsibility.”

Sri Ramakrishna boards the carriage with the devotees to return to the Dakshineswar temple.

Meditation on formless God and Sri Ramakrishna

Mati Seal’s shrine is on the way. Several times Thakur had said to M., “We will go together to see Mati Seal’s lake and I can teach you how to meditate on the formless God.”

Thakur has a bad cold. Even so, he goes inside the shrine with the devotee. In this shrine Gauranga is worshiped.

It is a little before dusk. Thakur and the devotees salute the image of Sri Gauranga by lying prostrate on the ground.

Now they go to the lake in the eastern part of the temple garden and enjoy the view of the lake and the fish. People do not harm the fish here. As soon as they throw puffed rice and other food to the fish, a swarm of big ones comes to eat it. Then, free from all fear, they swim and play in the water joyfully.

Thakur says to M., “Look at these fish swimming joyfully in the ocean of Blissful Consciousness. ^[9] Be like these fish.”

^[1] . A Bengali expression meaning to scatter before a crowd something to be picked up.

^[2] . Chinra Festival.

- [\[3\]](#) . The highest manifestation of divine love.
- [\[4\]](#) . Batasas.
- [\[5\]](#) . Bhagirathi.
- [\[6\]](#) . Bhava.
- [\[7\]](#) . Prema.
- [\[8\]](#) . Bhava.
- [\[9\]](#) . Chidananda.

Section VII

Sri Ramakrishna as Guru at Dakshineswar with Intimate Disciples

Chapter I

Listening to the life of Prahlada puts Thakur into ecstasy – he condemns cohabiting with one's wife

Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the floor in his room at Dakshineswar, listening to Ramlal reading the life of Prahlada from the Bhaktamala. It is about eight o'clock.

It is Saturday, 15 December 1883, the first day of the dark fortnight of Agrahayana. Mani is on retreat with Thakur in Dakshineswar. Seated near Thakur, he is listening to the narration of the life of Prahlada. Rakhal, Latu, and Harish are in the room. Some devotees are seated, while others are moving about. Hazra is on the verandah.

Thakur goes into ecstasy while he listens to Prahlada's life.

[\[1\]](#)

When Hiranyaksha was killed by Narasimha, Brahma and the other gods saw his frightful aspect and heard his mighty roar. Fearing that such anger might lead to the dissolution of

[\[2\]](#)

the world, they sent Prahlada to him. Like a child, Prahlada chanted a hymn of praise to the deity who, filled with love for devotees, licked Prahlada's body affectionately. With deep emotion, Thakur exclaims, "Ah, ah! What love for the devotee!" As he says this, he goes into bhava samadhi. His body is motionless, and tears of intense love fall from the corners of his eyes.

When Sri Ramakrishna's ecstasy is over, he goes to his smaller cot and sits there. Mani sits on the floor at his feet. Thakur talks with Mani, expressing his anger and disgust for those treading the path of God while at the same time cohabiting with their wives.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Are you not ashamed of yourself! You have

children and you still cohabit with your wife. This is the conduct of an animal! Have you no aversion to saliva, blood, excreta, urine? Whoever contemplates the lotus feet of God sees even the most beautiful woman as ash from a cremation fire. To enjoy a body which will not last and which contains all kinds of impurities – worms, pus, phlegm and so on! Don't you feel ashamed of yourself?"

Thakur is intoxicated with love for God – worship of Mother Kali

M. sits still, hanging his head from the harsh rebuke. Sri Ramakrishna adds, "When a person gets even a drop of God's ecstatic love, 'lust and greed' become so insignificant! When you get a drink sweetened with sugar candy, how can you care for one mixed with molasses? When you pray to God with a yearning heart, when you chant His name and glories incessantly, you gradually develop that kind of love for Him."

Saying this, Thakur is intoxicated with ecstatic love and dances around in his room, singing:

Who is chanting the name of Hari on the bank of the Ganges?

Is it Nitai, the bestower of love, who has come?

Who but he can bring peace to the soul?

It is now about ten o'clock. Ramlal has ended the daily worship of Mother Kali in the temple. Thakur goes to the temple, accompanied by Mani. Entering the shrine, Thakur sits on the worshiper's seat. He offers a flower or two at the feet of the Mother, and placing a flower on his head, he meditates. Then he sings a hymn of praise to the Divine Mother:

I have heard, O Consort of Shiva, Your fear-dispelling name and have laid
[3]
on You my burden. Save me as You will.

Returning from the temple, Thakur sits on the southeast verandah of his room. It is about ten o'clock. The offering of food to the deities and their worship has not yet been performed. Thakur takes some butter and fruits which had been offered earlier to Mother Kali and Radhakanta. Rakhal and other devotees also have some.

Rakhal is sitting near Thakur. He is reading Smile's *Self Help*, about Lord Erskine.

**Work without expectation of any reward – a man of knowledge reads
no scriptures**

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "What does he say?"

M.: "That Lord Erskine used to perform his duties without the expectation of any reward. The book is about selfless work."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Then it is very good. But the mark of a man of perfect knowledge is that he doesn't keep a single book with him. For instance, Sukadeva. All knowledge was on the tip of his tongue.

"Holy books, scriptures, contain sand mixed with sugar. A holy man takes only the sugar, leaving the sand. A holy man takes only the essence."

Is Thakur alluding to his own state by referring to Sukadeva to make the devotees understand?

Vaishnavcharan, the singer, arrives and sings the kirtan, "Subol Milan."

After a while Ramlal brings prasad for Thakur on a tray. After eating it, Thakur rests for some time.

M. spends the night in the nahabat. Whenever the Holy Mother came to Dakshineswar to serve Sri Ramakrishna, she would stay there. For many months now she has been living in Kamarpukur.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna with Rakhal, Latu, Mukherji of Janai, and other devotees

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on the western circular verandah with Mani. In front of them the Ganges is flowing southward. Close by are flowering oleander, bela, jasmine, rose, and poinciana. It is about ten o'clock.

It is Sunday, 16 December 1883, the second day of the dark fortnight of Agrahayana.

Thakur sings as he gazes at Mani:

O Mother Tara! You will have to take me across for I have taken refuge in You.

I am like a bird in a cage.

I have committed wrongdoings beyond number.

I am bereft of spiritual knowledge, and like a cow that has lost its calf,

I wander to and fro, drowning in maya's spell.

Earnest longing like Sita's – thoughts on Rama

“But why? Why should I be like a bird in a cage? For shame!”

While talking, Thakur goes into ecstasy, his body and mind still, his eyes shedding tears. After some time, he prays, “Mother! Make me like Sita. Grant that I may absolutely forget everything – body, organ of generation, hands, feet, and breasts – may I not be aware of any of these. My only thought should be: Where is Rama?”

Is Thakur inspired with Sita to make Mani realize how much yearning is needed to attain God? Sita was mad for Rama. She lived for him and centered all her thoughts on him. She had forgotten and was oblivious of the body, which is so dear to everyone.

It is four o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna is again sitting in the room with the devotees. Mukherji of Janai has come. He belongs to the same gotra (sub-caste) as that of Prankrishna. With him is a Brahmo friend well versed in the scriptures. Mani, Rakhal, Latu, Harish, Jogin, and other devotees are also present.

[\[4\]](#)

Jogin is a member of the Savaran Choudhury family of Dakshineswar. Almost every afternoon he comes to visit Thakur and goes home at night. Jogin has not yet married.

Mukherji (*after saluting Sri Ramakrishna*): “It is a great joy to meet you.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “God is present within everyone; all have the same gold within. It is only that with some there is a greater manifestation; in the worldly-minded the gold lies buried under so much dirt.”

Mukherji (*laughing*): “Sir, what is the difference between

worldly and otherworldly?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “While practicing spiritual disciplines, one must renounce, saying to oneself, ‘Not this. Not this.’ After attaining God, one realizes that God Himself has become everything.

“When Ramachandra felt dispassion for the world, Dasharatha approached Rishi Vasishtha Deva in great anxiety and asked for his help in dissuading Rama from renouncing family life. Rishi Vasishtha went to Ramachandra and found him in a sad mood, feeling deep dispassion for the world. Vasishtha said, ‘Rama, why do you want to renounce worldly life? Is the world outside God? Let’s discuss this.’ Rama then saw that the world was also made of the same Supreme Brahman. So he kept quiet.

“Butter comes out of the same substance that makes buttermilk. It belongs to the substance to which buttermilk belongs, as buttermilk belongs to the substance to which butter belongs. When you have churned buttermilk assiduously to take out the butter (that is, attained Brahmajnana), you see that both butter and buttermilk exist together – where there is butter, there is also buttermilk. As long as one feels that Brahman exists, then living beings, the world, and the twenty-four cosmic principles also exist.”

How to attain knowledge of Brahman

“One cannot tell what Brahman is from words. Everything has become polluted through human speech. No one has been able to say what Brahman is. Thus It has not been polluted. I said this to Vidyasagar. He was very pleased to hear it.

“The knowledge of Brahman cannot be attained when there is the least trace of worldliness. It is only possible when the mind is completely rid of ‘lust and greed.’ Parvati said to Giriraj, ‘Father, if you want the knowledge of Brahman, seek the company of holy men.’”

Is Thakur saying that the knowledge of Brahman is not possible if a worldly person or a sannyasin lives amidst ‘lust and greed’?

Fall from yoga – living in the world after attaining knowledge of

Brahman

Sri Ramakrishna, addressing Mukherji, continues: “You have wealth and riches. Even then you call on God. This is very good. The Gita says that the one who falls from yoga is reborn as a devotee in a rich family.”

Mukherji (*laughing, to his friend*): “One fallen from yoga is
[5]
reborn in the house of the prosperous.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “If God wills, He can keep a man of spiritual knowledge in the world. The world and all living beings have come into existence at His will. His will prevails.”

Mukherji (*laughing*): “Why does He will? Does He lack anything?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing*): “What’s the harm in it? Water remains water whether it is still or in waves.”

Are the world and its living beings illusory?

“It is the same snake, whether it is coiled up and motionless or slithering along in an undulating manner.

“A gentleman remains the same individual whether he is working or sitting still.

“How can you leave out the world and the living beings? If you do that, it loses its full weight. A bel fruit weighs much less when its skin is peeled off and its seeds taken out.

“Brahman is free from attachment to anything. Air carries both good and bad smells, but it remains unaffected. Brahman and His Power are not separate from each other. The world and its creatures have been created by the same Primal Power.”

The way to attain samadhi: weep for God – path of love and path of meditation

Mukherji: “Why does one fall from yoga?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “There is a saying, ‘When I was in my mother’s womb, I was in union with God. Coming into the world, I have eaten its dirt. The midwife has cut the umbilical

cord, but how am I to cut the cord of maya?

“‘Lust and greed’ is maya. One attains union with God when the mind is rid of these two. The Atman, the Supreme Soul, is the magnet. The embodied soul is like a needle. When the former pulls the latter, it results in union. But if the needle is covered with dirt, the magnet can’t pull it. When, however, the dirt is removed, it is drawn again. You have to clean yourself of the dirt of ‘lust and greed.’”

Mukherji: “How can we do this?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Weep for God with a longing heart. The water of your tears will wash off the dirt. And then the magnet can pull it. Only then will you attain union with God.”

Mukherji: “Oh, wonderful!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “When you can weep for God, He grants His vision. And you attain samadhi. Perfection in yoga is samadhi.

[\[6\]](#)

When you weep, suspension of breath occurs by itself. Samadhi comes after that.

“And then there is the practice of meditation. Shiva manifests especially in the Sahasrara. Meditate on Him. The body is like a saucer, and the mind and intellect are like water. In this water, the sun of Sat-chit-ananda is reflected. By meditating on that reflected sun, one has the revelation of the real sun through God’s grace.”

Associate with holy men and give the power of attorney to God

“People living in the world need the constant company of the holy. It is necessary for everyone. Even a sannyasin must associate with holy men. But with householders the disease is chronic. They have to live amidst ‘lust and greed’ all the time.”

Mukherji: “Yes, sir. Their disease is chronic.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Give your power of attorney to God. Let Him do what He likes. You just cry to Him longingly, like a kitten. Wherever a mother cat places her kitten is all right. Sometimes she places it on a bed, sometimes she takes it to the kitchen.”

A beginner studies the scriptures – spiritual practice leads to realization of God

Mukherji: “It is good to read the Gita and such holy books.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “How will it help to just read, or listen to holy books? Someone may have heard of milk, someone else have seen it, another may have drunk it. You can have the vision of God, you can even talk to Him.

“The first stage is that of a beginner. He studies and listens to the reading of scriptures. The next is that of the aspirant who calls on God, who meditates and thinks about Him and sings

[7]

His Name and glories. Next, one becomes perfected and

[8]

knows God intuitively. In the last stage one attains God’s

[9]

vision and becomes the most perfect of the perfected. This was the state of Chaitanya Deva. He was at times in the

[10]

attitude of a mother toward her child and at other times

[11]

that of a beloved.”

In amazement Mani, Rakhal, Jogin, Latu, and other devotees listen to this talk on the highest truth, rarely heard even by gods.

Now Mukherji and his friends take their leave. They salute and then stand up. Thakur also stands up out of respect for them.

Mukherji (*smiling*): “Why should you have to stand up or sit?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “What is the harm? Water is water whether it is still or moving. A leaf plate thrown away is carried wherever a wind storm carries it. I am the instrument, God is the operator.”

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna's realization and the inner meaning of Vedanta –

[\[12\]](#)

**non-dualism and qualified non-dualism – is the world an illusion?
– identity of the Undifferentiated and the differentiated**

Mukherji from Janai has left. Mani is reflecting that according to the philosophy of Vedanta everything is like a dream. Would it be true, then, that the embodied soul, the world, and oneself are illusory?

Mani has studied the Vedanta, and he has also read a little Hegel and other German scholars which are an indistinct echo of Vedanta. But Sri Ramakrishna does not reason like feeble human beings. The

[\[13\]](#)

Mother of the Universe has revealed everything to him. Mani thinks about this.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna talks to him alone on the western circular verandah. Before them the Ganges is flowing south with a gurgling sound. It is cold. The sun is still visible in the southeastern sky. He whose life is full of the Veda, whose words are the Vedas, he through whom God speaks, whose sweet words inspire the hearer to internalize the true import of the Veda, the Vedanta and the Bhagavata, this very person, an ocean of motiveless grace, is speaking as guru.

Mani: "Is the world illusory?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Why should it be an illusion? What you are talking about is only a matter of philosophical reasoning.

"In the very beginning when a person discriminates 'Not this, not this,' it is perceived that Brahman is not living beings, or the world, or the twenty-four cosmic principles – that all these

[\[14\]](#)

are like a dream. Then comes reversal. That is, one has gone up to the Absolute and now comes down to the phenomenal universe. Then the perception is that God Himself has become the universe and all living beings.

"You climb to the roof by the stairs. As long as you are conscious of the roof, you are aware of the stairs. The person who is aware

of the high is also aware of the low.

“But after you have climbed to the roof, you see that the material of which the roof is made – bricks, lime, and brickdust – has also been used for making the stairs.

“It is like the bel fruit illustration that I have given.

“He to whom the Absolute (the Unchangeable) belongs is the same as He to whom the phenomenal (the ever-changing) universe belongs.

“‘I-ness’ simply does not go away. As long as there is the awareness that ‘I am a pot (the body),’ there are the individual soul and the universe. When one attains God, one realizes that God Himself has become the living beings and the universe. Just reasoning about this is of no help at all.

“Shiva has both states of mind. When immersed in samadhi, in [\[15\]](#) mahayoga, he is absorbed in the joy of the Self. When he comes down from this state, he retains a little ‘I-ness.’ Then he dances, chanting, ‘Rama, Rama.’”

Is Thakur alluding to his own state by describing the state of Shiva?

It is dusk. Thakur chants the names of the Mother of the Universe and meditates on Her. The devotees also go to solitary places to meditate on their ideals. Vesper services begin and arati is performed in Mother Kali’s Temple, in Sri Radhakanta’s temple, and in the twelve temples of Shiva.

Today is the second day of the dark fortnight. The moon appears at nightfall. Under its light, the temple spires, the surrounding trees and creepers, and the Ganges to the west of the temple gain a wonderful beauty. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in his room. Mani is sitting on the floor. Thakur again discusses the question which Mani had raised earlier.

Visions of Consciousness everywhere – the treasurer writes a letter to Mathur

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Why should the world be an illusion? These words are only a matter of reasoning. After realizing God, you realize that He Himself has become the universe and its living beings.

“The Divine Mother showed me in the Kali Temple that it is She who has become everything. She showed me that everything is filled with divine consciousness – the image, the altar, the

[\[16\]](#)

water vessels, the door frame, the marble floor – all was divine consciousness.

[\[17\]](#)

“Whatever I saw in the room was filled with the essence – the essence of Sat-chit-ananda.

“I saw a wicked man in front of the Kali Temple. But even within him I saw the splendour of Her Power.

[\[18\]](#)

“That is why I fed a cat luchi that was to be offered to the Divine Mother. I saw that She had become everything – even the cat. The treasurer wrote a letter to Mathur Babu to tell him

[\[19\]](#)

that the priest was feeding a cat with the food to be offered to the deity. Mathur Babu knew the state I was in. He replied, ‘Let him do what he likes. Say nothing to him.’

“When you have attained God, you see correctly that He Himself has become the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles.

“But what happens when God completely wipes out ‘I-consciousness’ cannot be described in words. As Ramprasad says in one of his songs, “Only You know whether You are good or I am good.” I sometimes get in this state too.

“When you reason, you see it one way. But when God reveals it to you, you see it in quite a different way.”

Chapter IV

The goal of life is God-realization – the way is intense love

The next day is Monday; it is eight o'clock. Thakur is seated in his room. Rakhal, Latu, and other devotees are also there. Doctor Madhu has arrived. He is sitting close to Thakur on his small cot. Doctor Madhu is a wise old man. He often comes to see Thakur when he is not

feeling well. He is a very witty man.

Mani enters the room, salutes, and takes his seat.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Love of Sat-chit-ananda is the main thing.”

Thakur’s vision of Sita – Gauri Pundit’s comments

“What is the intensity of this love? How can you develop love for God? Gauri used to say, ‘To understand Rama, you have to be like Sita. To understand Bhagavan, you have to be like Bhagavati (the Divine Mother). You will have to practice austerities – hard austerities – the way Bhagavati did for Shiva. To know Purusha (the Supreme Lord), you have to assume the attitude of Prakriti – the attitude of a friend, of a handmaid, or of a mother.’

“I had a vision of Sita. I saw that her whole mind was given to Rama. She was oblivious to anything else – body, hands, feet, clothes, jewelry, and so on. Her entire life was filled with thoughts of Rama. Without Rama, without having him, she felt she could not survive.”

Mani: “Yes, sir. Like a mad woman.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Lovelorn! Oh, you have to be mad for God to attain Him!

“This does not happen if the mind dwells on ‘lust and greed.’ What joy is there in intercourse with a woman? One feels ten million times that joy from a vision of God. Gauri used to say that in ecstatic love for God all the pores of the skin on the body become mahayoni, the great sexual organ. One feels the joy of union with the Atman in every pore.”

The Guru must be a perfect jnani

Sri Ramakrishna: “You must call on God with great yearning. You can hear from the lips of the guru how God can be realized.

“But only when the guru himself is a perfect man of knowledge can he show the way.

“Desires disappear when you attain perfect knowledge. You

become like a child five years old. Both Dattatreya and Jadabharata had the nature of a child.”

Mani: “Yes, I know about them. But there have also been so many others.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “A man of knowledge is freed from all desires. Whatever little desire remains can do him no harm. When a sword touches the philosopher’s stone, it turns into gold. Then it can’t kill anyone. In the same way, the desire and anger of a man of knowledge are only superficial, they are just in name. They can do no harm.”

Mani: “Sir, just as you say, a man of knowledge is beyond the three gunas. He is not under the control of any of them – sattva, rajas, or tamas. These three are robbers.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You must assimilate this truth.”

Mani: “It seems there are not many people of perfect knowledge on earth, perhaps no more than three or four.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why do you say that? You see a number of sadhus and sannyasins in monasteries in western India.”

Mani: “Sir, I can also become a sannyasin like one of them.”

Hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna gazes fixedly at Mani for a few moments.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “By renouncing everything?”

Mani: “What can a person achieve without going beyond maya? If one is not able to subdue maya, what can mere sannyasa do?”

Everyone is silent for a few moments.

A devotee beyond the three gunas is like a child

[\[20\]](#)

Mani: “Sir, what is the love that is beyond the three gunas?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Having developed such devotion for God that a devotee sees everything permeated with divine consciousness: Krishna as consciousness, His abode as consciousness, the devotees as divine, everything permeated with consciousness. Only a very few devotees attain such love for God.”

Doctor Madhu (*smiling*): “It is the love beyond the three gunas – that is, the devotee is not subject to any of the gunas.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Yes. Like a child five years old. He is not yet under the control of any guna.”

After the midday meal, Sri Ramakrishna takes a little rest. Manilal Mallick comes in, salutes him, and takes his seat on the floor. Mani is also sitting on the floor. Lying on the cot, Thakur exchanges a few words with Mani Mallick every now and then.

Mani Mallick: “Did you go to see Keshab Sen?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes. How is he now?”

Mani Mallick: “A little better.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I found him to be very rajasic. I had to wait a long time before I could see him.”

Thakur now sits up on his bed and talks with the devotees.

**Sri Ramakrishna’s life story in his own words – he is mad uttering,
“Rama, Rama”**

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “I went mad repeating the name of Rama. I used to roam around with Ramlala, the deity the sannyasin gave me. I’d give him a bath, feed him, and put him to bed. Wherever I had to go, I would take him along. I was mad, repeating, ‘Ramlala, Ramlala.’”

Chapter V

Sri Ramakrishna at the foot of vilwa tree and under the panchavati

Sri Ramakrishna is talking with Mani near the vilwa tree. It is about nine o’clock.

It is Wednesday, 19 December 1883, the fifth day of the dark fortnight.

Under this same vilwa tree Thakur had practiced spiritual disciplines – a very solitary spot. To its north is the magazine and a wall. To the west willow trees rustle like a soul indifferent to the world. Nearby flows the Ganges. The panchavati can be seen to the south. There are so many trees and plants that the temples are barely visible.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “But nothing will help without

renouncing 'lust and greed.'”

Mani: “But why? Rishi Vasishtha said to Ramachandra, ‘Rama, you may renounce the world if the world is outside God.’”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling a little*): “That was because Ravana had to be killed. It was for this reason that Rama lived in the world and married.”

Mani stands, like a log of wood, speechless.

After saying this, Sri Ramakrishna goes toward the panchavati to reach his room.

Spiritual disciplines for formless God are very difficult

Sri Ramakrishna is talking with Mani at the foot of the panchavati. It is about ten o'clock.

Mani: “Sir, isn't it possible to practice disciplines to attain the impersonal God?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why is it not possible? But it is a very

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difficult path. The rishis of olden days used to have the

[\[22\]](#)

inner experience of God's existence by practicing a great many austerities. They would feel the reality of Brahman. But how hard was their labour? They would leave their huts early in the morning, practice austerities throughout the day, and return only at dusk. Then they would have a small meal of fruits and roots.

“This kind of spiritual practice [on the formless] is not possible until one is completely rid of worldliness. The mind has to be completely free from the sense of form, taste, smell, touch, and sound. Only then is it purified. That pure mind is the same as the pure Atman. It must be absolutely free from 'lust and greed.'

“Then one has quite a different experience: ‘God indeed is the doer, I am a non-doer.’ One no longer thinks that without the ‘I’ one cannot carry on, whether in happiness or sorrow.

“A wicked fellow beat a sadhu of a monastery into unconsciousness. When he regained con-sciousness, he was

asked who was offering him milk. He replied, ‘He who beat me is now feeding me.’”

Mani: “Yes, I know that story.”

[\[23\]](#)

Steady samadhi and sudden samadhi

[\[24\]](#)

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, it is not enough to just know. You have to internalize what it means.

“Worldly thoughts prevent the mind from entering into samadhi.

“One becomes steady in samadhi when one is completely free of worldly thoughts. It is possible for me to quit the body in steady samadhi, but I still have a little desire to enjoy the love of God and the company of devotees. So I keep my mind a little on the body.

“And then there is sudden samadhi, when the scattered mind is gathered suddenly. You understand this, don’t you?”

Mani: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “A scattered mind suddenly becomes withdrawn. This samadhi does not last long. Worldly thoughts intrude and end it. The yogi breaks from his union with God.

“In the village [Kamarpukur] a mongoose was living in a hole in the wall. As long as it was in the hole it felt comfortable.

Someone tied a brick to its tail and it was forced to come out of its hole by the pull of the brick. Every time it tried to go back into the hole for peace, it was pulled out by the pull of the brick. Worldly thoughts divert the mind of the yogi from meditation.

“A man of the world can sometimes experience samadhi. A lotus opens at sunrise. But as soon as the sun is covered by clouds, it closes its petals again. Worldly thoughts are the clouds.”

Mani: “Can’t one develop both spiritual knowledge and love for God through spiritual disciplines?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “They can both be acquired through love for God. You get both. When it is needed, God Himself grants the knowledge of Brahman. Having a high spiritual ideal, a single receptacle can hold both knowledge and love of God.”

[1]

. Vishnu in His incarnation as man-lion.

[2]

. Pralaya.

[3]

. For the complete song refer to Volume III, Section IV, Chapter II.

[4]

. Later Swami Yogananda.

[5]

. Bhagavad Gita 6:41.

[6]

. Kumbhaka.

[7]

. Siddha.

[8]

. Bodhebodha.

[9]

. Siddha of siddhas.

[10]

. Vatsalya.

[11]

. Madhura.

[12]

. Advaitavada and Vishishtadvaitavada.

[13]

. Through transcendental perception, God-vision.

[14]

. Consciousness has an eternal pulsation, outward and inward. Evolution is the outward movement of Consciousness, resulting in the manifestation of the universe; involution is the reversal or inward movement of Consciousness in which all names and forms dissolve back into the unity of the Absolute. M. says in his *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Part I: "You go backwards to the Supreme Being and your personality becomes lost in His personality. You then retrace your steps. You get back your ego (personality) and come back to the point where you started, only to see that the world and your ego or self were involved in the same Supreme Being."

[15]

. Atmarama.

[16]

. Kosha and kushi.

[17]

. Rasa.

[18]

. Fried bread.

[19]

. Bhattacharya.

[\[20\]](#)

. Trigunatita bhakti.

[\[21\]](#)

. kleṣo 'dhikataras teñām avyaktāsaktacetasām |
avyaktā hi gatiṃ duḥkhaṃ dehavadbhir avāpyate || Bhagavad Gita 12:5

[\[22\]](#)

. Bodhebodha.

[\[23\]](#)

. Sthita.

[\[24\]](#)

. Unmana.

Section VIII

Sri Ramakrishna in the Role of Guru at the Dakshineswar Temple with Devotees

Chapter I

Thakur in samadhi – his vision of God and state of a paramahansa

Sri Ramakrishna is seated with Rakhal, Latu, Mani, Harish, and other devotees on the southeastern verandah of his room. The time is about nine o'clock. It is Sunday, 23 December 1883, the ninth day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month of Agrahayana.

It is the tenth day of Mani's stay with the guru.

Manomohan has come from Konnagar this morning. He will meet with Thakur, rest for a while, and then go to Calcutta. Hazra is sitting close to Thakur. A Vaishnava from Nilkantha's region sings for him, beginning with a song of Nilkantha.

He sings:

Like Krishna's, the complexion of the handsome Sri Gauranga, the dancing lover of God, is of golden hue.

This time he has incarnated in Nadia in a different guise, hiding his old marks.

He has come to destroy the deep darkness of the Kaliyuga and to manifest the joy of intense love in its surpassing brilliance.

[1]

[2]

This time he has come with three desires and three tastes. He has descended for the sake of all these.

The world is intoxicated by the touch of these three, particularly the delightful nectar of intense love.

This time having exchanged the blue complexion of the incarnate Krishna with Radha's golden hue, you have come.

You have ascended into mahabhava, and sattvic and lesser bhavas have melted within you.

While you roam about wailing in the forest for a taste of that sublime mood, the tide of that intensely longing love floods your surroundings.

You, the new sannyasi seeking holy places, now go to Nilachal and then to

Kashi.

You distribute the abundance of God's love without any distinction of caste.

Says Dwija Nilkantha, How my mind longs to know when my desire to sell

[3]

myself at Gaur's feet will be fulfilled.

[4]

The next song is about mental worship.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hazra*): "This song about mental worship sounded a bit peculiar to me."

Hazra: "It is not for a spiritual aspirant – the lamp of knowledge, the image of knowledge!"

Totapuri weeps in the panchavati – Padmalochan weeps

Sri Ramakrishna: "The song felt a bit odd. "The songs of older times are more genuine. I once sang for Totapuri in the panchavati – 'O man, get ready for battle! Death has entered your house in battle array.'

"And I sang another song – 'O Mother, it is no one else's fault. I drown in the waters of the well these very hands have dug.'

[5]

"The Naked One – such a jnani – did not understand the meaning of the song. And yet it brought him to tears.

"What good things were said in these songs – 'O man, meditate

[6]

on Vishnu. Then you will be freed from even the fear of the

[7]

extremely terrible King of Death.'

"Padmalochan also wept to hear me sing a song of Ramprasad. And you know what a great pundit he was!"

God vision – one and many; unity in diversity – Sri Ramakrishna and

[8]

the philosophy of qualified non-dualism

After his midday meal, Thakur takes a little rest. Mani is sitting on the floor. Thakur greatly enjoys listening to the sanai

[9]

being played at the nahabat.

Later, Thakur explains to Mani that Brahman Himself has become all living beings and the phenomenal universe.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “I heard someone say that the name of God is not chanted at a certain place. No sooner did he say it than I saw that God Himself had become all living beings and

[10]

the phenomenal universe. It is like countless bubbles, reflections, of water. And I saw that they were like innumerable pills.

“One time when I was going to Burdwan from Kamarpukur, I ran toward a field to see how the creatures in it lived and ate. When I got there, I saw ants crawling on the ground. It seemed that every place was imbued with Consciousness.”

Hazra now enters the room and sits on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna: “I also saw flowers with different kinds of petals. Some were small, and others were large images.”

While talking of these divine visions, Thakur enters into an ecstatic state. He says, “I have become! I have come!”

Saying this, he becomes absorbed in samadhi. He is absolutely motionless. After a long time, he regains a little consciousness of the outer world. He begins to laugh like a child. He paces the room, laughing.

One attains the state of a paramahamsa when one is rid of grief and desire – Thakur’s description of a paramahamsa under the banyan tree whom he saw while practicing spiritual disciplines

Thakur’s eyes emanate a luminosity of joy after a wonderful vision. A smile plays on his face. His gaze is unfixed.

Pacing up and down, he speaks: “I saw a paramahamsa under the banyan tree. He was walking and smiling in the same way.

Has my nature become like his?”

Having paced the room, Thakur goes to the smaller cot and sits down. He talks to the Mother of the Universe, saying, “Well, I don’t want to know. Mother, may I only have pure love for Your lotus feet.”

(*To Mani*) “This stage is attained only when one is freed from grief and desires.”

Next he speaks to the Divine Mother, “Mother, You have taken away my worship. Please do not take away all my desires. Mother, a paramahamsa is a child. Doesn’t a child need a Mother? You are the Mother and I am Your son. How can a child live without his mother?”

Thakur talks to the Divine Mother in a tone of voice so touching it could melt even a stone. He says to the Her, “Mother, merely

[\[11\]](#)

the knowledge of non-dualism – I spit on that. As long as there is the feeling of ‘I,’ there is ‘You’ too. A paramahamsa is a child. Doesn’t a child need its mother?”

Mani gazes in speechless wonder at this state of Thakur, which is rare even among the gods. He says to himself, Thakur is an ocean of motiveless grace. It is for my faith, for awakening my own consciousness, and for teaching humanity that he has assumed the role of a guru and taken this state of a paramahamsa.

Mani reflects further. Thakur says, “Non-dualism, Consciousness, and

[\[12\]](#)

Eternal Bliss.” That it is only after attaining the knowledge of the non-dual Reality that Consciousness is awakened. And only then does one enjoy Eternal Bliss. Thakur not only has the knowledge of the non-dual Reality, but he is ever-blissful. He is ever immersed in the joy of intense love for the Mother of the Universe; he is ever intoxicated!

Observing Thakur in this state, suddenly Hazra folds his hands and now and then says, “Blessed. Blessed.”

Sri Ramakrishna says to Hazra, “But where is your faith? You

[\[13\]](#)

are here only like Jatila and Kutila who served to develop the play.”

It is late afternoon. Mani is strolling alone in the temple garden reflecting on Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful state of mind. He asks himself, Why did Thakur say that you attain this state only after getting rid of sorrow and desires? Who is this Thakur in the role of a guru? Or is he the advent of God Himself appearing in human form for our sake? Thakur says that one cannot come down from jada samadhi [14]

unless one is an Ishvarakoti or a divine incarnation.

Chapter II

Secret talk

Ähus tväm āñayaù sarve devarñir nāradas tathä |

asito devalo vyäsaù svayaà caiva bravéñi me ||

[All the rishis have thus acclaimed You, as also the Deva Rishi Narada, so also Asita, Devala, and Vyasa, and now you yourself say so to me.]

– Bhagavad Gita: 10:13

The next day Sri Ramakrishna talks alone with Mani in the Jhautala. It is about eight o'clock, Monday, 24 December 1883, the tenth lunar day of the dark fortnight. It is the eleventh day of M.'s stay with Sri [15]

Ramakrishna.

It is winter. The sun has just appeared in the eastern sky. West of the Jhautala the Ganges is flowing north. There has just been a flood tide. There are trees and creepers all around. Not far away one can see the vilwa tree under which Thakur had practiced spiritual disciplines. Thakur is speaking now, facing the east. Mani faces north and listens to him in all humility. To the right of Thakur is the panchavati and Hanspukur. The winter sunrise spreads like a smile over the world. Thakur talks about the knowledge of Brahman.

Totapuri's instructions to Thakur about the knowledge of Brahman

Sri Ramakrishna: "God with form is as true as the formless God.

"The Naked One used to instruct me about Sat-chit-ananda Brahman. He would say that It is like an infinite ocean, with

water above, below, right, and left, water everywhere – the cause, water. The water is still. There are waves when it is acting. Creation, preservation, and dissolution are its waves.

“And he would say that Brahman is where all reasoning ends. It is like camphor, which leaves no residue after it is burnt.

“Brahman is beyond speech and mind. A salt doll went to fathom the ocean. It never returned to tell its depth. It dissolved into the ocean itself.

“The rishis said to Rama, ‘Rama, Bharadvaja and other rishis speak of you as an incarnation of God. But we don’t say that.

[\[16\]](#)

We worship the Shabda Brahman. We don’t want a human form of God.’ Rama smiled, accepted their adoration, and left.”

The Absolute and the phenomenal world are both true

“But the Absolute and the phenomenal belong to the same reality. As I said earlier a roof and the steps to it are made of the same material. There is divine sport as God, as gods, as

[\[17\]](#)

human beings, and as the world. God-incarnate is His sport as a human being. You know, the sport as a human being is like water accumulated on a big roof rushing down through a drain pipe. It is the power of Sat-chit-ananda that takes its course through the pipe. Only twelve rishis, Bharadvaja and others, recognized Ramachandra as an avatar and declared him so. Not everyone can recognize a divine incarnation.”

Is Sri Ramakrishna an incarnation of God? – life of Thakur from his own lips – Kshudiram’s dream in Gaya – his worship by Hriday’s mother – Mathur’s vision of God within Thakur – possessed by Sri Gauranga in Phului Shyambazaar

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “God incarnates as a human being to teach knowledge and love of God. Well, how do you feel about me?

“My father went to Gaya. Raghuvir appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘I shall be born as your son.’ Seeing him in his dream, my father said to Him, ‘Lord, I am a poor brahmin! How shall I

be able to serve you?’ Raghuvir replied, ‘It will be taken care of.’

“My sister, Hriday’s mother, used to worship my feet with flowers and sandal-paste. One day, touching my feet to her head, I (the Divine Mother in me) said to her, ‘You will quit your body in Kashi.’

“Mathur said, ‘Father, there is nothing but God within you. Your body is like an empty shell, like the form of a pumpkin outside but with no pulp or seeds inside. Once I saw you as someone walking and wearing a veil.’

“I am shown everything beforehand. Once, under the banyan tree (at the panchavati), I saw a party of singers with Chaitanya. I think I saw Balaram in it, and also you.

“I wanted to know Chaitanya’s states of mind and was shown them at Shyambazaar. There were men on trees, on walls, people surrounding me day and night. For seven days I had no time even to answer the call of nature. So I said to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, I have had enough!’ So it is all over now.

“I shall have to incarnate again. That is why I don’t give full knowledge to my intimate disciples. (*Smiling*) Were I to give you complete knowledge, would you come to me so readily again?

[\[18\]](#)

“I recognized you when I heard you read the Chaitanya Bhagavata. You are my own – the same substance, like father and son. All of you who come here are like a bunch of kalmi creeper. Pull one part and it all comes. You’re related to each other like brothers. Suppose Rakhal, Harish, and others have gone to Jagannath Puri. If you also go there, will you live separately?

“You were in a state of forgetfulness until you came here. Now you will be able to know yourself. God comes down as guru to make you know yourself.”

Totapuri’s instructions – God in the form of the guru makes one realize one’s Self

“The Naked One told me the tale of the tiger and the goats. A tigress attacked a herd of goats. Seeing it from a distance, a

hunter killed the tigress. She was pregnant, so a cub was born. That cub began to grow up in the midst of goats. At first it nursed on goat's milk. When it grew up a little, it began eating grass, and it began to bleat like the goats. In due course, it grew into a big tiger, but it still ate grass and bleated. If any animal attacked, it would run away like the goats.

“One day a fierce tiger attacked the herd of goats. It was amazed to see a tiger in the herd, eating grass and running away with the goats. He caught hold of the grass-eating tiger, which began to bleat and tried to run away. The wild tiger dragged it to the edge of a pond and said, ‘Look at your face in the water. See, your face is just like mine, pot-faced.’ Saying this, he thrust some flesh into its mouth. At first the grass-eating tiger absolutely refused to eat it. But after a while, getting its taste, it began to eat. The wild tiger said to it, ‘You were living with goats and eating grass like a goat! Shame on you!’ The grass-eating tiger felt very ashamed.

“Eating grass – that is, living in the midst of ‘lust and greed’ – bleating like a goat, and running away is the conduct of ordinary human beings. To go away with the tiger means to take refuge in the guru, who awakens spiritual consciousness, and to know that he alone is one's own, one's near and dear one. To see one's true face means to recognize one's own real Self.”

Thakur stands up. There is silence all around. Only the rustling of wind in the pine trees and the murmuring of the Ganges are heard. He passes the railing and begins walking with Mani through the panchavati to his room, talking with him all the while. Mani accompanies him, enchanted as though by a magic spell.

Sri Ramakrishna bows down at the panchavati

Reaching the panchavati, he stands under the foot of the banyan tree where a big branch had fallen off. Facing east, he bows to the brick platform and touches it with his forehead. This is the place where he had practiced spiritual disciplines and had wept so with a yearning heart for the Divine Mother, where he had had so many visions of the

forms of God and conversations with the Divine Mother. Is it for this reason that whenever Thakur comes to this spot, he offers salutations?

After his visit to the bakultala, he comes near the nahabat. Mani is with him.

Nearing the nahabat, he sees Hazra and says to him, “Don’t overeat. And give up your worry about purity and impurity. People who worry excessively about such things do not attain spiritual knowledge. Only observe the prescribed rituals that are necessary. Don’t overdo it.” Then Thakur goes into his room.

Chapter III

Rakhal, Ram, Surendra, Latu, and other devotees with Sri Ramakrishna

Thakur is resting after his meal. Today is 24 December and the Christmas holidays have started. Surendra, Ram, and other devotees are arriving from Calcutta.

It is about one o’clock. Mani is strolling around the jhautala alone. Standing near its railing, Harish calls out to Mani, “Thakur wants you. There is going to be a reading from the Shiva Samhita.” It contains instructions on yoga and the six centres.

Mani enters Thakur’s room, salutes him, and takes a seat. Thakur is sitting on his cot; the devotees are on the floor. But there is no reading of the Shiva Samhita. Instead Thakur himself speaks to them.

[\[19\]](#)

Ecstatic love of God and sport at Vrindavan – God-incarnate and
[\[20\]](#)

His activity as a human being

Sri Ramakrishna: “The gopis had intense love for Krishna.
[\[21\]](#)

There are two aspects of ecstatic love: ‘*I*-ness’ and ‘*my*-
[\[22\]](#)
ness.’ ‘If I don’t serve Krishna, he will become sick’ – this is *I*-ness. There is no feeling of God in this attitude.

“My-ness – that is feeling ‘my and mine.’ The gopis had such a feeling of my-ness for Sri Krishna that, lest his soles should get hurt, they laid their subtle bodies under his feet.

[\[23\]](#)

“Yashoda said, ‘I don’t know your Chintamani Krishna. I

[\[24\]](#)

only have my Gopala.’ And the gopis said, ‘Where is my sweetheart, my Beloved?’ They also did not have the feeling of his being God.

“We see young boys saying, ‘My father.’ If someone says to one of them, ‘No, he is not your father,’ he would insist that he is indeed his father.

“An incarnation of God conducts himself just like a human being. That is why it is very difficult to recognize an incarnation. Born as a human being, He acts just like one – the same hunger and thirst, the same disease and sorrow, even fear at times, just like a human being. Ramachandra was stricken with grief for Sita. Sri Krishna carried the shoes and wooden stool of his father Nanda on his head.

“When an actor plays the role of a holy man in the theatre, he acts just like a holy man – and not like the actor who takes the role of a king. He acts as his role demands.

“A quick-change artist played the role of an all-renouncing sadhu. Seeing him dressed that way, a gentleman offered him a rupee. He didn’t accept it, but left, saying, ‘No.’ After he had washed and returned in his normal dress, he said, ‘Now let me have the rupee.’ The gentleman said, ‘Only a while ago you went away saying you wouldn’t take the rupee. Now you are asking for it?’ The man said, ‘I was playing the role of a sadhu. How could I accept the rupee then?’

“It is the same with God. When He assumes the form of a human being, He conducts Himself exactly like a human being.

“When one visits Vrindavan, one can see so many places associated with Krishna’s life.”

Instructions to Surendra – charity in service of devotees and telling

the truth

Surendra: “I went there during the holidays. Visitors are pestered constantly for money, ‘Please give a pice. Please do.’ All the priests started asking. I said to them, ‘I’ll be leaving for Calcutta tomorrow.’ But I fled the very same day.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why did you do that? For shame! You said you would go the next day but ran away the same day. Shame!”

Surendra (*feeling ashamed*): “Here and there I saw babajis seated in the forest. They were meditating and repeating the name of God in solitude.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Did you offer anything to the babajis?”

Surendra: “No, Sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That was not right. Some-thing should be offered to sadhus and devotees. Those who have money should offer something when they come across such persons.”

Life of Thakur from his own holy lips – visit to Vrindavan in 1868 with Mathur

“I went to Vrindavan with Mathur Babu.

“As soon as I got to the Dhruva ghat in Mathura, I suddenly had a vision. I saw Vasudeva crossing the Jamuna with Krishna in his arms.

“And one evening I was strolling on the bank of the Jamuna. There were little huts on the beach. There were also big jujube trees. At dusk the cows started returning from pasture. I saw them crossing the Jamuna. They were followed by a number of cowherd boys.

“No sooner did I see them than I shouted, ‘Where are you Krishna?’ and I became unconscious.

“I wanted to visit the Shyamkunda and Radhakunda. I was sent in a palanquin. It was a long way. They put some luchis and jilipis in the palanquin. While crossing the meadow, I wept and said, ‘O Krishna! All these places are here, but you are not! It is the same field where you used to graze cows.’

“Hriday was following me on foot. Tears fell from my eyes. I

could not ask the palanquin men to stop.

“I saw in Shyamkunda and Radhakunda that the sadhus had built huts for themselves. Lest they should be disturbed by the sight of anything, they were practicing spiritual disciplines with their backs to the outside. The twelve forests are worth seeing.
[\[25\]](#)

“I went into a deep spiritual mood when I saw the image of Bankuvihari. I tried to touch Him. I didn’t feel a desire to see Govindaji a second time. In Mathura, I had seen Krishna as a cowherd boy in a dream. Hriday and Mathur Babu had the same dream.”

Surendra, a devotee of the Divine Mother – union with God and
[\[26\]](#)

enjoyment of sense objects

“You have both – striving for union with God and desire for enjoyment.

“There are brahmarishis, devarishis, and rajarishis. Sukadeva was a brahmarshi – he didn’t keep one book with him. Narada was a devarishi, Janaka a rajarishi – he performed work without expectation of any reward.

“The devotee of the Divine Mother attains both virtue and
[\[27\]](#)

liberation and also enjoys wealth and the fulfillment of

[\[28\]](#)
legitimate desires.

“One day I saw you in a vision as a son of the Divine Mother.
[\[29\]](#)

You have both the desire for God and for enjoyment. If you didn’t have them, your face would look dry.”

**Sri Ramakrishna meets a devotee of the Divine Mother at the
bathing ghat – Nabin Niyogi’s desire for God and desire for
enjoyment**

“A person who has renounced completely looks dry. I met a devotee of the Divine Mother at the bathing ghat. He was eating

and at the same time worshipping the Divine Mother. He was like a child before his mother.

“But it’s not good to have too much money. Jadu Mallick seems to be sunk in worldliness. You see, he has now become very wealthy.

“As for Nabin Niyogi, he has both desire for God and desire for enjoyment. At the time of Durga Puja both the father and the

[\[30\]](#)

son were fanning the Mother with a chamara.”

Surendra: “Sir, why can’t I concentrate when I meditate?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But you remember and think of God, don’t you?”

Surendra: “Yes sir. I go to sleep repeating, ‘Mother, Mother.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That is very good. Remembrance and thinking of God are enough.”

Thakur has taken upon himself the responsibility of Surendra. Why then should he worry?

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna’s instruction on union with God – Shiva Samhita

After dusk Thakur sits with his devotees. Mani is seated on the floor with them. The topic of conversation is yoga and the six centres of consciousness. The Shiva Samhita deals with them.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ida, pingala, and sushumna. All the lotuses are in the sushumna and are formed of consciousness. Think of a tree made of wax. It has branches, twigs, and fruit all made of wax. The kundalini power resides in the bottom, four-petalled muladhara lotus. The Primal Power dwells in all bodies in the form of Kundalini. It is like a sleeping snake coiled up. ‘You have been fast asleep, coiled up in Your abode of muladhara.’

(*To Mani*) “In the path of Bhakti Yoga, the kundalini awakens rapidly. One cannot realize God unless the kundalini wakes up. Sing with full concentration, in solitude, without the knowledge of others:

Waken, O Mother Kundalini! You are the very image of Bliss Eternal.

You have been fast asleep, coiled up in Your abode of muladhara.

“Ramprasad perfected himself by his songs. If you can sing with a longing heart, you realize God.”

Mani: “Sir, by experiencing these only once, one has no more distress of mind.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ah! You no more have distress. Yes indeed.

“I would like to tell you a few important things about yoga.”

Everything indeed is done by the guru – spiritual practice and spiritual perfection – Narendra born spiritually perfect

“You know, a mother bird doesn’t peck the egg till the chick inside has developed. She breaks it open just at the right time.

“A little spiritual practice is necessary, however. Everything is done by the guru, but in the end he makes the disciple practice a little. When you fell a big tree, you have to step away from it a little when it is nearly cut through. Then it falls by itself with a great crash.

“When a canal is cut from a river to bring water to the fields, the farmer stands aside when the canal is about to join the river and only a little cutting remains. Then the earth itself gets soaked and falls of itself, letting the water flow into the canal.

[\[31\]](#)

“When you get rid of ego and limitations you realize God. When you get over the feeling of being a learned man, the son of a certain person, of being wealthy, famous, and so on, you realize God.

“Only God is real, all else is ephemeral. The world is transitory. This is called discrimination. Without discrimination, the mind does not assimilate spiritual instructions.

“By practicing spiritual disciplines, you attain perfection by His grace. Of course some effort is necessary, but it ultimately ends in realization of God and attainment of bliss.

“A pot of gold lies buried at a certain place. Hearing about it, a man quickly runs there and starts digging. He continues to dig,

sweating with the effort. After digging a long time he hears a sound ‘tan’ at the stroke of the spade. He throws away the spade and looks for a vessel. Seeing the pot, he dances with joy.

“Then he takes the pot out and turns it upside down. Gold coins fall into his hand and he counts them. It is such a joyful experience – seeing, touching, enjoying! Isn’t that true?”

Mani: “It is, sir.”

Thakur is silent for a while and then he resumes speaking.

[\[32\]](#)

Who are my very own? – instruction about fasting on ekadashi

“Those who are my very own will come to me even if I reprimand them.

“Ah, look what a fine nature Narendra has! In the beginning, he used to say anything he liked about Mother Kali. Getting irritated one day, I said to him, ‘Rascal, don’t come here again!’ He went out quietly and began to prepare a smoke. He who is one’s own does not become annoyed even when scolded. What do you say?”

Mani: “True, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Narendra is born perfect. He has faith and

[\[33\]](#)

single-minded devotion to the formless God.”

Mani (*laughing*): “Whenever he comes, he creates excitement.”

Thakur laughs, full of joy: “True, he does create commotion.”

The next day is Tuesday, 25 December, the 11th day of the dark fortnight. It is about eleven o’clock. Thakur has not been served his meal yet. Mani, Rakhal and other devotees are in his room.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “It is good to observe the ekadashi. It purifies the mind a great deal and develops love and devotion for God. Do you think so?”

Mani: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But it’s all right to have milk and puffed rice,

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don't you think?"

[1]

. Vanccha, wishes, desires, or longings to be pursued.

[2]

. Asvadan, tastes in the sense of those things that are sweet or desirable.

[3]

. Surrender.

[4]

. Manas puja

[5]

. An epithet of Totapuri.

[6]

. Narkantkari Srikanta.

[7]

. Yama.

[8]

. Vishishtadvaitavada.

[9]

. A double-reed wind instrument similar to an oboe with a somewhat strident, nasal sound.

[10]

. sarvabhūtaṣṭham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani |
ékñate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarṣanaḥ || Bhagavad Gita 6:29 (The Self in all beings and all beings in the Self).

[11]

. Advaita.

[12]

. Advaita, Chaitanya, and Nityananda.

[13]

. Troublemakers in the Radha-Krishna story.

[14]

. Nirvikalpa samadhi, complete absorption, so that all sense of duality is obliterated.

[15]

. Prabhu, master.

[16]

. Sound Brahman, referring to Om, the Impersonal.

[17]

. Ishvara lila, deva lila, nara lila, and jagat lila.

[\[18\]](#)

. Referring to M.

[\[19\]](#)

. Prema bhakti.

[\[20\]](#)

. Nara lila.

[\[21\]](#)

. Ahamta.

[\[22\]](#)

. Mamta.

[\[23\]](#)

. Beloved God.

[\[24\]](#)

. Baby Krishna.

[\[25\]](#)

. There are twelve forests in the 1453-square-mile area surrounding Vraja, the scene of Krishna's play. Each is associated with a different exploit, and each is a place of pilgrimage.

[\[26\]](#)

. Yoga and bhoga.

[\[27\]](#)

. Dharma and moksha.

[\[28\]](#)

. Artha and kama.

[\[29\]](#)

. Deviputra.

[\[30\]](#)

. A fan made from the tail of a yak.

[\[31\]](#)

. Adjuncts.

[\[32\]](#)

The eleventh day of the lunar month.

[\[33\]](#)

. Nishtha.

[\[34\]](#)

. Khil.

Section IX

At the Dakshineswar Temple with Rakhal and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar temple with Rakhal, Ram, Kedar, and other devotees – conversation on brahmajnana with a Vedantist sadhu

Sri Ramakrishna is getting into a carriage to visit the Kali temple at Kalighat. He will first stop at Adhar Sen's house, from where Adhar will accompany him. It is Saturday, 29 December 1883, the new moon

[\[1\]](#)

day. It is about one o'clock.

The carriage is standing near the northern verandah of Thakur's room. Mani approaches the door of the carriage.

Mani (*to Sri Ramakrishna*): "Sir, may I go with you?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Why?"

Mani: "I would like to visit my house in Calcutta."

Sri Ramakrishna (*with concern*): "Must you go? You are all right here."

Mani wants to go home for just a few hours, but Thakur is not

[\[2\]](#)

in favour of it.

It is Sunday, 30th December, the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Pausha. The time is about three o'clock.

While Mani is strolling alone under a tree, a devotee comes and tells him that Thakur wants to see him. Thakur is sitting with devotees in his room. Mani salutes him and takes his seat on the floor with the devotees.

Ram, Kedar, and others have come from Calcutta. A Vedantist monk is with them. Thakur had met him the day he went to see Ram's garden. The monk had been sitting alone on a cot under a tree in the adjacent garden. Ram has now brought him to see

Thakur, at Thakur's request. The monk had also expressed a desire to see him.

Thakur talks happily with the monk. He has made him sit close by, on the smaller cot. They are speaking in Hindi.

Sri Ramakrishna: "What do you feel about all this?"

Monk: "It is all like a dream."

[3]

Sri Ramakrishna: "Brahman is real and the world unreal. Is that not so? Well, what is Brahman like?"

[4]

Monk: "Sound itself is Brahman – the anahata sound."

Sri Ramakrishna: "But my dear, there is something which is indicated by the sound. Isn't that so?"

[5]

Monk: "That itself is both the expresser and the expressed."

Hearing this, Thakur goes into samadhi. Motionless, he sits like a picture. The monk and devotees witness this state in speechless wonder. Kedar says to the sadhu, "Look, sir. This is called samadhi."

Thakur slowly returns to the conscious plane and talks to the Mother of the Universe: "Mother, I want to be normal. Please don't make me unconscious. I want to talk to the sadhu about Sat-chit-ananda. Mother, I want to enjoy myself talking about Sat-chit-ananda!"

The monk sits speechless watching and listening to all this.

[6]

Thakur says to him, "Now do away with your 'I am He'. Let us enjoy 'I' and 'You.'"

Is Thakur saying that as long as there is the feeling of 'I' and 'You,' there is the Divine Mother as well, so let's come and enjoy ourselves with Her?

After some time, when the conversation ends, Thakur strolls in the panchavati. With him are Ram, Kedar, M., and some others.

Sri Ramakrishna instructs Kedar – renunciation of the world

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “What did you think of the sadhu?”

Kedar: “He has dry knowledge. Just like a pot that’s been put on the fire but no rice has been put in it.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That’s true, of course. But he has renounced the world. Whoever has renounced the world has progressed a good deal.

“He is in an earlier stage. All your achievements are of no account unless they lead to the realization of God. Nothing else is appealing when one is intoxicated with ecstatic love. Then:

Cherish the beloved Mother Shyama in your heart.

O mind, may you and I alone behold Her, and let no one else intrude.

Leaving behind all passions, anger and such vices, come, O mind, and let us behold her in solitude,

Taking with us only the tongue, that it may call on Her now and then, repeating, “Mother, Mother!”

O mind, allow neither baseness nor enticement to draw near, but let the eyes of knowledge, ever alert, keep watch.

Kedar sings another song of the same mood as that of Thakur:

O gopi friend! How can I open my heart to you? I am not allowed to speak.

Without a kindred soul to share my grief, I am about to die.

He who is one’s own can be known by the look in his eyes.

Such a one is rare who swims on the wave of ecstasy, immersed in bliss.

Such a one can ride its crest.

Thakur has returned to his room. It is four o’clock, and Mother Kali’s temple is open. He goes there, taking the monk with him. Mani accompanies them.

Entering the temple, Thakur prostrates before the Divine Mother with full devotion. The monk folds his hands, bows his head, and salutes the Mother repeatedly.

Sri Ramakrishna: “My dear sir, what do you think of the Mother?”

Monk (*with devotion*): “Kali is the supreme power.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Kali and Brahman are identical, are they not?”

Monk: “As long as the mind is outgoing one must accept Kali. As long as the mind goes out, one feels there is good and bad, and one has likes and dislikes.

“Certainly names and forms are illusory, but as long as the mind sees the outside world, one must renounce ‘lust.’ One has to distinguish between what is good and what is not in order to instruct others in the beginning. Otherwise, there would be corruption.”

Thakur returns to his room, talking with the sadhu on the way.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Did you see the sadhu bow before Kali?”

Mani: “Yes, sir.”

The next day, Monday, 31 December. The time is about four o’clock. Thakur is seated in his room in the company of devotees – Balaram, Mani, Rakhal, Latu, Harish, and others.

Mere words of knowledge – Thakur rebukes Haladhari

Thakur says to Mani and Balaram:

“Haladhari had the attitude of a jnani. He studied the Adhyatma Ramayana, the Upanishads, and similar scriptures day and night. And he would look with disdain when someone talked about the forms of God. Once when I took a little food from the leaf-plates of beggars, he said, ‘How will you be able to get your sons married?’ I said, ‘What do you mean, you rascal? Am I going to have children? To hell with your study of the Gita and the Vedanta.’

“Just see, on the one hand he says that the world is an illusion, and on the other, he meditates in the Vishnu temple with nose

[\[7\]](#)

turned up in disgust!”

It is dusk. Balaram and the other devotees have left for Calcutta. Thakur is meditating on the Divine Mother in his

room. After some time, the sweet sound of arati emanates from the temples.

It is about 8 p.m. Thakur is in an ecstatic mood and talking to the Divine Mother in a sweet voice. Mani is sitting on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna and Vedanta

Thakur is chanting the sweet sacred name, “Hari Om, Hari Om, Hari Om.” He says to the Divine Mother, “O Mother, don’t make me unconscious with the knowledge of Brahman. I don’t want knowledge of Brahman, Mother. I want to enjoy myself! I want to be merry!”

Then he says, “I don’t know Vedanta, Mother. And I don’t want to know it! Having attained You, the Veda and the Vedanta remain so far below.”

“O Krishna! I say to you, ‘Eat this, take this, my child.’ And I shall say, ‘Child, you have assumed a human body for my sake.’”

Chapter II

Path of knowledge and discrimination – path of devotion and knowledge of Brahman

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in his room. It is about 8 p.m., Wednesday, 2 January 1884, the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Pausha. Rakhal and Mani are in the room. It is the 21st day of Mani’s stay with Sri Ramakrishna.

Thakur has forbidden Mani to reason.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Rakhal*): “It is not good to reason too much. First God, then the world. Attain Him and then you will know about His world as well.

(*To Rakhal and Mani*) “When you talk to Jadu Mallick, you will know how many houses, how many gardens, and how many government securities he has.

“That is why the rishis asked Valmiki to repeat the word *mara*. It has a special meaning. ‘Ma’ means God and ‘ra’ means the world – first God, and then the world.”

The sacred word *marā* and Krishnakishore

“Krishnakishore said, ‘*Mara* is a sacred mantra since rishis gave it. ‘Ma’ means God and ‘ra’ means the world.’

“So, like Valmiki, in the beginning one should call on God secretly, in a solitary place, weeping with a mind full of yearning, renouncing everything else. A vision of God is the first thing that is necessary. Reasoning about the scriptures and the world come after that.”

Thakur weeps while on the road – Mother, strike a thunderbolt to

[8]

my tendency to reason, 1868

(*To Mani*) “So I say to you, don’t reason any more. I came from the pine grove just to say this to you. Reasoning too much causes harm in the end – ultimately you become a person like Hazra. I used to walk around alone at night, weeping and saying, ‘Mother, strike my tendency to reason with a thunderbolt!’”

“Say you won’t reason any more.”

Mani: “No, sir, I shall not.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Everything can be attained by love for God alone. Those who want the knowledge of Brahman will have it if they continue on the path of love.

“Can there be any dearth of spiritual knowledge if God grants His mercy? In Kamarpukur they weigh paddy by pushing forward more paddy as soon as the first heap is done. The Divine Mother pushes forward heaps of spiritual knowledge.”

Padmalochan’s devotion to Thakur – Thakur’s prayer in the panchavati during his days of spiritual practices

“When you have realized God, scholars and the learned appear like mere straw. Padmalochan said, ‘What does it matter if I go with you to the meeting in the fisherman’s house? With you I can even go and eat at the house of a person who cremates the

[9]

dead.’

“Everything can be achieved through love for God. When you can love Him, you feel no lack of anything at all. Karttika and Ganesha were sitting beside Bhagavati (their mother). She was wearing a necklace of jewels round her neck. The Mother said, ‘I will give this necklace to one who goes around the universe first.’ Immediately, without losing a second, Karttika set out on his peacock. Ganesha, on the other hand, went slowly round his mother and saluted Her. Ganesha knew that the Mother contained the whole universe within Herself. Pleased with Ganesha, She put the necklace around his neck. After a long time Karttika returned and saw his brother sitting there wearing the necklace.

“I wept and cried to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, please make me understand what the Vedas and the Vedanta contain. Please tell me what is in the Puranas and the Tantras.’ She made everything known to me, one by one.

“She made everything known. She has shown me so much!”

Thakur’s visions while practicing spiritual disciplines: Shiva and Shakti, heaps of human skulls, guru the pilot, the ocean of Sat-chit-ananda

“One day Shiva and Shakti were revealed to me everywhere, the union of Shiva and Shakti. Everything – human beings, birds and beasts, plants and creepers, everything – had Shiva and Shakti within! The union of Purusha and Prakriti!

“And one day I was shown a heap of human heads as high as a mountain. There was nothing else. I was seated alone in their midst.

“And another time I was shown a vast ocean. I went to measure it as a salt doll. As soon as I tried, through the grace of the guru, I became a stone. I saw a ship. Immediately I boarded it. The guru was the pilot. (*To Mani*) Do you call on Sat-chit-ananda, who is the guru, every morning?”

Mani: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The guru was the pilot. I saw then that ‘I’ was one thing and ‘you’ another. Then I jumped into the ocean and became a fish. I saw that I was swimming joyfully in the

ocean of Sat-chit-ananda.

“These are all very secret mysteries. How much can you understand by reasoning? You achieve everything when God Himself reveals them to you. Then you lack nothing.”

Chapter III

**Meditation under the bel tree during the days of spiritual practice,
1859-61 – renunciation of “lust and greed”**

**Sri Ramakrishna visits his birthplace – registration of Raghuvir’s
land, 1879-80**

Thakur has been served his midday meal. It is about one o’clock,
Saturday, 5 January. It is the 23rd day of Mani’s stay.

After eating, Mani is in the nahabat. He suddenly hears someone call his name three times. He comes out and sees Thakur calling him from the long verandah north of his room. Mani goes to him and salutes.

Thakur talks with Mani on the southern verandah.

Sri Ramakrishna: “How do you meditate? I used to have clear visions of different forms under the bel tree. One day I saw silver coins, a shawl, a plate full of sandesh, and two women. I asked my mind, ‘O mind! Do you want any of these?’ The sandesh looked to me like excrement. One of the women had a big nose ring. I could see both their insides and outsides – guts, urine, faeces, flesh, bones, and blood. My mind did not want any of these. It remained attached to the lotus feet of God alone.

“Think of a scale, with its lower and upper needles. The mind is the lower needle. I was always in fear that my mind would move away from the upper needle (God). But a person sat beside me with a trident in his hand. He threatened to attack me if the lower needle moved away from the upper one.

“You cannot succeed unless you renounce ‘lust and greed.’ I

[\[10\]](#)

renounced three things: land, wife, and money. I went to the village to get some land registered in the name of Raghuvir. I was asked to sign the deed. I did not. I didn’t think of the land

as mine. I was shown great respect as the guru of Keshab Sen. I was given mangoes – but I couldn't take them home. A sannyasin must not hoard.

“How can one expect to realize God without renouncing? If one thing is lying under another, how can you reach it without removing the one on top?

“One must call on God without expecting any reward. But when one worships God with the intention of fulfilling desires, it finally becomes selfless. Dhruva practiced austerities to get a kingdom, but he realized God. He said, ‘If one comes across gold while picking up glass, why leave it there?’”

**Sri Ramakrishna and compassion, charitable acts – Chaitanya
Deva's act of charity**

“God can be realized only when one has acquired sattva.

“Charitable acts of the worldly are generally motivated. This is not good. One should act without expectation of any reward – but it is very difficult to work selflessly.

“If God reveals Himself to you face to face, will you pray to Him to grant you a boon to build reservoirs, roads, bathing steps, dispensaries, hospitals, and so forth? When you are in the presence of God, such desires are left behind.

“Does that mean that an act of compassion or of charity is of no use?

“No, it is not that. If you have money and you see someone suffering, you should help him with it. A jnani, a man of knowledge, says, ‘Give. Give something to him.’ But he feels, ‘What can I do? God alone is the doer, everyone else is a non-doer.’

“Stricken by sorrow over the troubles of others, saintly people show the way to God. Shankaracharya retained the ego of knowledge to teach humanity.

“The gift of spiritual knowledge and love for God is higher than the gift of food. Therefore, Chaitanya Deva disseminated bhakti

[\[11\]](#)

even among outcastes. The body is prone to sorrow as well as happiness. You have come here to eat mangoes. Eat them and leave. Spiritual knowledge and love for God are what is needed. God alone is the substance, all else is nothing.”

Does free will exist? Sri Ramakrishna’s dictum

“Indeed, it is God who does everything. You may say that implies that people may commit sin. That is not true. A person who truly feels that God is the Doer and he a non-doer cannot take a false step.

“What the English (westerners) call free will is also given by God.

“If God had not given free will, sin would have increased. If God had not given the feeling that I am responsible for my own actions, there would be much more sin.

“But those who have realized God know that free will is only an appearance. In fact, He is the operator and I am an instrument. He is the driver and I am the car.”

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna, the guru – he cries and prays for devotees

It is four o’clock. Rakhal and a few other devotees are listening to Mani’s singing.

He sings:

Lying prostrate a hundred times outside the room, he then enters slowly.

Rakhal goes into an ecstatic mood when he hears the song.

After some time Sri Ramakrishna goes to the panchavati.

[\[12\]](#)

Baburam, Harish, and Rakhal are with him.

After a while Mani arrives.

Rakhal: “He has made us happy by singing such sweet songs

today.”

Sri Ramakrishna, passing into a divine mood, sings:

O friend! I am revived on hearing Krishna’s name.

(*To Mani*) “Sing songs like this: ‘All the friends sat together. O, Radha was quite well only a moment ago. Perhaps her ecstatic mood has suddenly disappeared.’”

Then he adds, “And what else? Just live with love for God and devotees.”

Conversation between Radha and Yashoda – Sri Ramakrishna’s relatives

“When Krishna went to Mathura, Yashoda came to Radha. Radha was absorbed in meditation. When it was over, she said to Yashoda, ‘I am the Primal Power. You may ask me for a boon.’ Yashoda said, ‘What other boon can I ask? Let me be able to serve Him with body, mind, and speech. Let me be able to see God’s devotees with these eyes, to meditate on Him with this mind, and to sing God’s name and glories with my tongue.’

“But those who are highly developed spiritually can even do without the company of devotees. At times they don’t have a liking for the company of devotees. The lime of whitewash won’t stick to a mother of pearl surface. In other words, this is the state of a person who sees God both within and without.”

Returning from the pine grove, Thakur says to Mani under the panchavati, “You have a feminine voice. Can you practice singing such songs as this: ‘Friend, how far is that wood where my Shyama Sundara is ...’?”

(*To Mani, looking at Baburam*) “See, those who are my own have become strangers – Ramlal and other relatives seem no longer to be my near and dear ones. And those who were strangers have become my relatives. Just see how I say to Baburam, ‘Go and answer the call of nature. Now go and wash your face.’ The devotees have indeed become my own.”

Mani: “True, sir.”

Thakur practiced spiritual disciplines in the panchavati in 1857-58,

before the state of madness for God – Consciousness as Power

[14]

and Consciousness as Self

Sri Ramakrishna (*glancing at the panchavati*): “I used to sit in the panchavati [and practice spiritual disciplines]. In course of time I became mad for God. That, too, passed away. Kala (time) indeed is Brahman. She who sports with Kala is Kali. She is the Primal Power. She even moves the immovable.”

Saying this, Thakur sings:

Wondering about Her mystery, my mind is overwhelmed at the thought of Her who removes the fear of death.

At Her feet lies Mahakala, Death Himself, and I wonder why She should be so black.

“Today is Saturday. Please visit Mother Kali’s temple.”

Approaching the bakul tree, Thakur says to Mani, “Chidatma and Chitshakti. Consciousness as Self is the male aspect of God

[15]

[16]

and Consciousness as Power the female aspect. Sri Krishna is Consciousness as Self, and Radha Consciousness as Power. Each one of the devotees is an individual form of that Consciousness as Power.

“The devotees should think of themselves as companions or as servants. This is the important thing.”

Thakur goes to the Kali temple when it is dusk. He is pleased to see Mani meditating on the Divine Mother there.

Thakur weeps before the Mother of the Universe for the devotees – blessing the devotees

The arati has been performed in all the temples. Thakur is seated on his wooden cot in his room, meditating on the Mother of the Universe. Only Mani is there, seated on the floor.

Thakur is in samadhi.

After some time, he returns to normal consciousness. He is now filled to the brim with divine feeling. He talks to the Divine

Mother lovingly, like a baby insisting demands on its mother. He says in a piteous tone of voice, “Oh Mother, why have You not revealed Your form to me, Your world-bewitching form! I have entreated You so many times, but You don’t listen to my entreaties! You only do as you want.”

The tone of voice he uses would melt even a stone.

Thakur again talks to the Divine Mother.

“Mother, I want faith. Let that rascal reason disappear. You reason seven times, but it disappears at once. I want faith – faith in the words of the guru, the faith of a child! A mother says to her child, ‘There is a ghost,’ and the child fully believes that there is indeed a ghost. The mother says, ‘There is a bugbear there,’ and the child fully believes it. The mother says, ‘He is your elder brother.’ He believes more than a hundred percent that he is indeed his brother. I want faith!

“But Mother, why should the devotees be blamed? What else can they do? It is necessary to reason once before you accept anything. See how much I implored him the other day, yet nothing happened. And today, so suddenly –”

Thakur weeps and prays to the Divine Mother in a sorrowful tone, his voice choked with emotion.

How amazing! He is crying before the Divine Mother for the sake of devotees!

“Mother, please fulfill the desires of those who come to you. Don’t make them renounce completely. Well, do what you like in the end.

“Mother, if you keep him [referring to M.] in the world, please reveal Yourself from time to time. Otherwise, how will he live? How will they be encouraged, Mother, if You don’t reveal Yourself every now and then? But after that, do what you like.”

Sri Ramakrishna is still absorbed in an ecstatic mood when he suddenly says to Mani, “Look here, you have already reasoned enough. No more of it. Promise that you will not reason any more.”

Mani folds his hands and says, “I will not.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You have done enough reasoning. When you came in the beginning, I told you your spiritual ideal. I know everything about you.”

Mani (*gratefully*): “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Hearing that you had children, I reprimanded you. Now go home and live with them. Show them that you are their very own. But know in your heart that you are not their own, nor are they yours.”

Mani keeps silent. Thakur continues to speak.

Sri Ramakrishna: “And love your father. Since you have now learned to fly, will you be able to salute before him?”

Mani (*folding his hands*): “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What more can I say to you? You know all this. Understand it?”

Mani keeps silent.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Do you understand all this?”

Mani: “Sir, I understand only partially.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You understand well enough. Rakhal is staying here, and his father is pleased.”

Mani folds his hands but does not say anything. Sri Ramakrishna adds, “What you are thinking will also happen.”

**With devotees in the joy of song – Divine Mother and earthly mother
– why does God play as a human being?**

Thakur has now returned to normal con-sciousness. Rakhal and Ramlal are in the room.

Thakur asks Ramlal to sing. Ramlal sings:

[\[17\]](#)

Who is this woman who lights up the battlefield?

He sings another song:

Dancing, deep-dark like the darkest storm-cloud over the field of battle,
She looks like a freshly bloomed lotus, floating on a blood- red sea.

Sri Ramakrishna: “The Divine Mother and the earthly mother. She who pervades everything, becoming the entire universe, is the Divine Mother. She from whom you are born is the earthly mother. I used to merge into samadhi repeating, ‘Mother, Mother.’ It is as though I would pull the Mother of the Universe toward myself, the way a fisherman throws a net and drags it for some time. Then many big fish are caught in the net.”

Gauri Pundit’s words – Kali and Gauranga are one and the same

“Gauri said, ‘One gains true spiritual knowledge when one realizes that Kali and Gauranga are one and the same.’ That which is Brahman is indeed Shakti (Mother Kali). In human form She is Gauranga.”

Is Thakur suggesting that the Primal Power has come in the human form as Sri Ramakrishna?

At Thakur’s behest, Ramlal sings of the divine sport of Sri Gauranga:

In Keshab Bharati’s hut what did I behold? The exquisite, bright form of [\[18\]](#)

Sri Gauranga, his eyes streaming with tears of love!

And again:

[\[19\]](#)
The wave of Gaur’s love has touched my body.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “He who is the Absolute is also the phenomenal world. His divine sport is for the sake of devotees. A devotee can love Him only when he can be seen in human form. Then alone is he able to love Him as a brother or sister, father or mother, or son or daughter.
“For the love of the devotee, He comes down as a human being to enact His play.”

[\[1\]](#)

. Amavasya.

[\[2\]](#)

. M. has been staying with Thakur for two weeks, since 14 December, and intends to stay longer. Sri Ramakrishna is not in favour of his breaking his retreat with a visit home.

[\[3\]](#)

The reference is to Shankara’s dictum “Brahma satyam jagat mithya....”

According to Shankara, what is real (satyam) is eternal and unchanging, and what is unreal or false is ephemeral and changing (mithya).

[4]

. Unstruck, a sound produced on its own without two objects being struck together; Om as the first movement of Shiva-Shakti heard in higher states of meditation.

[5]

. vācyavācakabhedenā tvameva parameṣvara: “O Supreme Lord, You are distinguished as vachaka, the signifier, and vachya, the object signified” – Adhyatma Ramayana.

[6]

. So ‘ham.

[7]

. He professes to be a Vedantist who has gone beyond duality, but his behavior shows otherwise.

[8]

. Referring to an incident that took place in 1868.

[9]

. Both fisherman and cremation men are low-caste Hindus.

[10]

. bhikṣuḥ sa vāraḍānā naiva parigrahet|
yasmād bhikṣurhiraḍyā rasena dāṇḍā ca sa brahmāḥ bhavet|
yasmād bhikṣurhiraḍyā rasena spāṇḍā ca sa paulkaso bhavet|
yasmād bhikṣurhiraḍyā rasena grāhya ca sa ātmahā bhavet|
tasbhād bhikṣurhiraḍyā rasena na dāṇḍā ca spāṇḍā na grāhya ca|
(paramahāṣopaniṣat)

[11]

. Chandalas.

[12]

. Later Swami Premananda.

[13]

. Chitsakti.

[14]

. Chidatma.

[15]

. Purusha.

[16]

. Prakriti.

[17]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section XX, Chapter II.

[18]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section XII.

[19]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section XVI, Chapter I.

Section X

With Rakhal, Latu, M., Mahima, and Others at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna injures his arm – while in samadhi he talks to the Mother of the Universe

Sri Ramakrishna is living in the same room at the Dakshineswar temple. It is three o'clock on Saturday, 2 February 1884, 20th of Magha, 1290 B.Y., the sixth day of the bright fortnight.

One day when Thakur was going alone to the pine grove, he fell near the railing in an ecstatic mood. A bone of his left arm was dislocated and caused him severe pain. M. has now brought him a splint, a pad, and bandages from the devotees in Calcutta.

Rakhal, Mahimacharan, Hazra, and some other devotees are in the room. M. comes in and prostrates before Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Hello. Have you been ill? Are you all right now?"

M.: "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mahima*): "Tell me, brother, why this happened when 'I am the instrument and you the Operator?'"

Thakur is seated on his wooden cot, listening to Mahimacharan talk about his visits to places of pilgrimage. The visits took place twelve years before.

Mahimacharan: "I saw a brahmachari in the Sikrol garden in Benares. He said he had been there for twenty years. But he didn't know whose garden it was. He asked me, 'Sir, do you work in an office?' I replied, 'No.' Then he asked, 'Then are you a wandering holy man?'"

"I saw a sadhu on the bank of the Narmada. He was chanting the Gayatri mentally. The hair on his body stood on end. Then he chanted the Gayatri and Om out loud in such a way that it thrilled everyone sitting near and made their hair stand on end."

Thakur has the nature of a child. Feeling hungry, he asks M., “Well, what have you brought?” He looks at Rakhal and goes into samadhi.

When the samadhi is over and he returns to normal consciousness, he says, “I shall eat jilibi. I want some water to drink.”

Weeping like a child, he says to the Mother of the Universe, “Brahmamayi, why have you done this to me? My arm hurts badly!” (*To Rakhal, Mahima, Hazra, and the others*) “Will my hand be cured?”

The devotees console him as they would a child, “Why not? It will surely get well.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Rakhal*): “It’s not your fault, even though you’re here to look after me. Even if you had gone with me, you wouldn’t have gone as far as the railing.”

Sri Ramakrishna in the mood of child – ‘a million salutations to the knowledge of Brahman’.

Thakur again becomes absorbed in a deep spiritual mood. He says, “Om, Om, Om, Mother! What am I saying? Please Mother, don’t make me unconscious by giving me the knowledge of Brahman. I am only a child – easily afraid. I want Mother! A thousand farewells to the knowledge of Brahman! Give it to those who want it. O, All-Blissful Mother! The All-Blissful

[\[1\]](#)

Mother!”

Thakur weeps as he says loudly, “The All-Blissful Mother, the All-Blissful Mother!” Then he says:

This is the grief that weighs on my heart: though You, my Mother, are

[\[2\]](#)

here and I am wide awake, thieves of passion rob my house.

Thakur then says to the Divine Mother, “What wrong have I done, Mother? Have I done anything wrong? It is You who do everything, Mother. I am an instrument, You are the Operator.”

(*To Rakhal, smiling*) “Take care that you also don’t fall. Don’t be full of pride and hurt yourself.”

Thakur again says to the Divine Mother: “Am I crying because of the hurt? No, it’s just that:

This is the grief that weighs on my heart: though You, my Mother, are here and I am wide awake, thieves of passion rob my house.

Chapter II

How to call upon God: yearn for Him

Sri Ramakrishna now laughs and talks like a child, just as a child sometimes laughs and plays even though seriously ill. He talks to Mahima and the other devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: “If you have not realized Sat-chit-ananda, you have done nothing – nothing at all, my dear sir.

“There is nothing like discrimination and non-attachment.

“The love of worldly people for God is only momentary, transient like a drop of water falling on a hot plate. Seeing a flower, he may say, ‘Ah, how wonderful is God’s creation!’

“Yearning for God is essential. When a son bothers his parents for his inheritance, the parents consult one another and give him his share in advance. When you are earnest, God is sure to listen. Since He has created us, we certainly have a share in His house. He is our Father and Mother. We can force Him. ‘Reveal Yourself to me or I will cut my throat with a knife!’”

Thakur is teaching the devotees how to call on the Divine Mother: “I used to pray to the Divine Mother this way, ‘O, All-Blissful Mother, reveal Yourself to me if You are indeed there.’

“And at times I would say, ‘Come, O Lord of the humble, Lord of

[\[3\]](#)

the Universe, I am not outside the universe. Lord, I am without knowledge, without spiritual discipline, without love and devotion. I know nothing. Be kind and reveal yourself to me.”

Speaking in the most touching tone of voice, Thakur teaches the devotees how to call on God. When they hear these touching words, their hearts melt. Tears fall from Mahimacharan's eyes. Noticing this, Thakur adds:

Cry out with yearning, O mind, and see how Mother Shyama can
[4]
withhold Herself from you!

Chapter III

Devotees from Shivapur and the power of attorney – Dr. Madhu

Devotees from Shivapur have arrived. Having made great effort to come such a distance, Sri Ramakrishna cannot remain silent. He talks to them about very important things.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the Shivapur devotees*): “God alone is the reality, all else is ephemeral. Take the case of the owner of a garden. God and His splendour. People only see the garden. How many want to find out who the owner is?”

A devotee: “Sir, what is the way?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Discriminate between what is real and what is unreal. Reflect constantly on this: God alone is the reality, all else is ephemeral. Call on Him with yearning.”

A devotee: “But, sir, where is the time?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Those who have time should practice meditation and chanting of God's name. Those who cannot do so should bow down to God very lovingly and with respect, both morning and evening. God is the ruler within the heart, He understands what people of the world have to do. You have no time to call on Him. Therefore, you must give Him the power of attorney. If you do not realize Him, if you do not see Him, you have not achieved anything.”

A devotee: “Sir, seeing you is the same as seeing God.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Never say that again. The waves belong to the Ganges, the Ganges doesn't belong to the waves. Unless you rid yourself of the idea, ‘I am a big man – I am so and so,’ you cannot realize God. Level the hill of your ‘I’ by drenching it with

the water of love for God.”

**Why family life? – when desire for enjoyment is over, one feels
yearning for God and realizes Him**

A devotee: “Why has He kept us in the world?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “To keep the creation going. That is His will. That is His maya. God has bewitched us with ‘lust and greed.’”

A devotee: “Why has He bewitched us? Why does He will this?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “If He granted the bliss of God even once, no one would live a householder’s life. And that would lead to the end of creation.

“Rice is stocked in big bags in a warehouse. So that rats don’t find the rice, the grain dealer keeps some puffed and sweetened rice in a husking pan. The rats like the sweetened rice and eat it through the night. They don’t look for the bagged rice.

“But look, you can make fourteen times the volume of one seer of rice with puffed sweetened rice. How great is the bliss of God compared to the joy of ‘lust and greed!’ Contemplating His

[\[5\]](#)

beauty, even the beauty of Rambha and Tilottama appears like ashes from a fire.”

A devotee: “Why don’t we develop that yearning to realize God?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “A person doesn’t feel yearning for God until the desire for enjoyment is over. Until the desire for ‘lust and greed’ is satisfied, a person doesn’t remember the Mother of the Universe. A child busy playing doesn’t look for his mother.

When his play is over, he says, ‘I want to go to my mother.’ Once Hriday’s son was playing with a pigeon. He was calling out to it, ‘Come here, tee tee!’ As soon as he had enough of playing, he began to cry. A stranger came by and said, ‘Come, I’ll take you to your mother.’ The boy even climbed on the man’s shoulders to be taken.

[\[6\]](#)

“Those who are born perfect don’t have to go through the householder’s life. They are already free from the desire for

enjoyments since their birth.”

Dr. Madhu arrives – Madhusudana and the importance of God’s name

It is five o’clock. Dr. Madhu has arrived. He is going to put Thakur’s hand in a splint and bandage it. Thakur laughs like a

[\[7\]](#)

child and says, “Here is the Madhusudana of this world and also of the next.”

Dr. Madhu (*smiling*): “I am burdened carrying the weight of my name.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Why? Is the name insignificant? There is no difference between God and his name. When Satyabhama was weighing the Lord against gold and jewels in a scale, it didn’t balance. But when Rukmini put the tulsi leaf with the name of Krishna written on it, lo, it balanced!”

The doctor is going to tie the splint on Thakur’s hand. A bed is made on the floor. Thakur, laughing, lies down on it. He chants, “Radha is in her last stage. Vrinda says, who knows what else is going to happen?”

The devotees sit around Sri Ramakrishna, who sings:

All the gopi friends of Radha sat together on the lake shore.

Thakur laughs. So do the devotees. When the splint has been tied, Thakur says: “I don’t have much faith in doctors from Calcutta. Sambhu was delirious, but the doctor (Dr. Sarbadhikari) said, ‘This is nothing – it is only the medicine

[\[8\]](#)

that makes you feel groggy.’ Just after that, Sambhu died.”

Chapter IV

Instruction to Mahimacharan

Evening arati has been performed in the temples. Soon after, Adhar arrives from Calcutta and prostrates before Thakur. Mahimacharan, Rakhal, and M. are in the room. Hazra comes

in and out of the room.

Adhar: “How are you?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*affectionately*): “Look how I have hurt my arm. (*Smiling*) How could I feel?”

Adhar sits on the floor with the devotees. Thakur says to him, “Please stroke my hand.”

Adhar, seated toward the north of the smaller cot, strokes Sri Ramakrishna’s feet instead. Thakur talks to Mahimacharan.

[\[9\]](#)

The important thing is spontaneous love for God – know your own real Self

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mahima*): “Love for God that wells up spontaneously from the depths of the soul – it would be very good if you could practice that.

“I want none of these – liberation, name and fame, wealth, or recovery from disease. I only want You. This is selfless love. Many people go to visit a rich gentleman and ask for things. If there is one who doesn’t want anything from him but has only come out of love, that person gets any amount of love from him.

“Prahlada had unselfish love. His love for God was pure and motiveless.”

Mahimacharan says nothing. Thakur adds, “Well, I’m going to tell you something that you will agree with. Just listen.

According to Vedanta, one has to know one’s own real Self. But this isn’t possible without first renouncing ‘I-ness.’ This ‘I’ is like a stick which appears to split water into two parts: I am one and You are another.

“On attaining samadhi, ‘I-ness’ disappears and one has the

[\[10\]](#)

inner consciousness of Brahman.

Perhaps some of the devotees are asking themselves, Has Thakur attained the knowledge of Brahman? If he has attained it, why is he using the word *I*?

Thakur continues, “You must renounce the ‘I’ which says, ‘I am

Mahima Chakravarty, a learned man.’ However, there is no harm in the ‘I of knowledge.’ Shankaracharya retained the ‘I of knowledge’ to teach mankind.

“Unless you are very cautious about ‘lust,’ you cannot attain the knowledge of Brahman. For this reason, it is difficult for one who leads a worldly life. However clever you may be, you will get a black stain on your body if you live in a room of lampblack. In the company of a young woman, even a man without desire develops a feeling of passion. “But there is no harm if a man of

[\[11\]](#)

knowledge cohabits with his wife occasionally. Discharge of semen is just like other eliminations – defecation, urine, and so on. After answering the call of nature, a person forgets all about it.

[\[12\]](#)

“It is like eating half a sweetmeat! (Mahima laughs). It is not so harmful for a householder.”

Difficult rules for sannyasin and Sri Ramakrishna

“But it is very wrong for a sannyasin. The sannyasin must not even look at a picture of a woman. For sannyasins, keeping the company of women is like swallowing spit already spat out.

“A sannyasin must not sit near women and talk with them, even if they are extremely devout. He should not talk with them even though he may have controlled his passions.

“A sannyasin must renounce both lust and gold. Just as he must not look at the picture of a woman, he must not touch gold – money. Having money near is bad in itself. With money comes keeping accounts, worry, pride of wealth, and anger at others. You are looking for the sun and, lo, it is covered by clouds!

“That’s why when a rich Marwari wanted to deposit money with Hriday for our use, I said, ‘No. Not even this. Clouds will arise wherever there is money.’

“Why such difficult rules of conduct for a sannyasin? They are there for the instruction of humanity as well as for his own good. Even if a sannyasin lives unattached, having controlled

his senses, he should renounce 'lust and greed' in order to teach mankind.

"People will muster the courage for renunciation only if they see the one hundred percent renunciation of a sannyasin. Then only will they endeavour to renounce 'lust and greed.'

"If a sannyasin doesn't impart this instruction of renunciation, who else will?"

**Janaka and others entered worldly life after realizing God – the
rishi and eating pork**

"One should lead a householder's life only after attaining God. It is like keeping butter in water after it has been churned.

Janaka led the life of a householder only after attaining the knowledge of Brahman.

"Janaka wielded two swords: one of spiritual knowledge and the other of action. A sannyasin renounces work. Thus he wields only one sword, that of knowledge. Householders who are men of knowledge, like Janaka, can eat both the fruit off a tree and fruit on the ground. They can serve holy men and entertain guests as well. I said to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, I don't want to be a dry sadhu.'

"After attaining the knowledge of Brahman, one doesn't discriminate about food. The rishis who had attained the knowledge of Brahman and experienced the bliss of Brahman could eat any food, even pork."

**Four stages of life [ashramas] – the essence of yoga and Sri
Ramakrishna**

(*To Mahima*) "Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of yoga: Karma Yoga and manoyoga – union with God through work and union through mind.

"There are four stages of life: brahmacharya (celibate student life), garhasthya (family life), vanaprastha (life of retirement, non-attachment, and contemplation of God) and sannyasa (complete renunciation). Work is necessary in the first three

stages of life. Although a sannyasin carries a staff, a water pot, [\[13\]](#)

and a begging bowl and may perform daily Vedic duties, his mind is not attached to them. He is not conscious of them; his mind is attached only to God. A few sannyasins attend to daily duties only to teach mankind. If a house-holder or a person of the other stages of life can perform work without expectation of any reward, he attains union with God through such work.

“In the case of a paramahansa like Sukadeva and others, all work falls off – such actions as worship, repetition of the name, [\[14\]](#)

offering of water to the deities, and daily evening prayer. [\[15\]](#)

In this state there is union with God in the mind alone. Such a person performs work outwardly at times for the instruction of mankind. But his mind remains always in remembrance and contemplation of God.”

Chapter V

Thakur hears Mahimacharan's reading of the scriptures and goes into samadhi

The conversation continues to about 8 p.m. Thakur asks Mahimacharan to chant some verses from the scriptures. Mahimacharan takes a book and chants the first verse of the Uttara Gita concerning the Supreme Brahman:

He, Brahman, is one – partless, stainless, and beyond the ether.

Without beginning or end, unknowable by mind or intelligence.

In due course, he chants the seventh verse from the third chapter.

Fire is the deity of brahmins;

the deity of sages is in the heart;

for people of average intelligence, the deity is the image;

and for the great yogi who perceives oneness, the deity is everywhere.

When Mahimacharan chants the phrase “for the great yogi who perceives oneness, the deity is everywhere,” Thakur suddenly rises from his seat and goes into samadhi. His arm is still bound with splints and bandages. The devotees are wonder-struck as they watch this great yogi of similar vision.

He stands in this way for quite some time before returning to normal consciousness and resuming his seat. He asks Mahimacharan to chant the verses about love for God. Mahima chants from the Narada Pancharatra:

If God is worshipped with devotion, what is the need for austerities?

If He is not so worshipped, what again is the use of austerities?

If Hari is both inside and outside, what need is there of austerities?

And if He is not there, what is the use of austerities?

If you worship Hari, what need is there of austerities?

And if you do not, what is the use of austerities?

So, O brahmin, detach yourself, dear boy.

What is the need of austerities?

Go at once to Shankara, the ocean of Knowledge.

Attain the deep devotion for Hari, of which the Vaishnavas speak.

From Him you’ll learn how to love the Lord. Such love has been spoken of by Vishnu’s worshipers,

A love that never fails, a love that like a sword cuts asunder the fetters of this world.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ah! Ah!”

**Vessel and the universe – You are Knowledge and Bliss Absolute –
not I, not I**

Hearing these verses, Thakur is again about to go into ecstasy and controls it only with difficulty. Now a passage from the Yatipanchaka is chanted:

I am She, the Divine Mother, the embodiment of consciousness, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, who is the Self of the universe, in whom this appearance of the moving and unmoving is seen, being the play of Her mind.

Hearing, “I am She, the embodiment of consciousness,” Thakur

[\[16\]](#) [\[17\]](#)

laughs, “What is in the vessel is also in the universe.”

Now he recites the Six Stanzas on Nirvana from the Nirvana Ashtakama.

Om, I am neither the mind, the intellect, the ego, nor the mind-stuff,

Nor I am the ears, the tongue, the nostrils, the eyes.

I am neither the sky nor earth nor fire nor air.

Neither am I ether, sky, nor the earth; neither heat nor air.

I am pure Knowledge and Bliss. I am Shiva, I am Shiva!

Whenever Mahimacharan repeats, “I am pure Knowledge and Bliss. I am Shiva, I am Shiva!” Thakur says with a smile:

“Not I, not I – You, You, You are pure Knowledge and Bliss!”

Mahimacharan reads the description of the six spiritual centers from the Jivanmukti Gita. He says that he himself had witnessed the death of a yogi in the state of yoga at Benares. He

[\[18\]](#)

describes the terrestrial and aerial mudras. He also talks about sambhavi, when one wanders about aimlessly.

His earlier story – Thakur hears narration of the Rama Gita from sadhus

Mahima: “The Rama Gita has many beautiful things to say.”

Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “You are a confirmed Vedantist to talk so much of the Rama Gita. How many books like it the sadhus used to read here!”

Mahima reads the description of Om:

It is like an unceasing flow of oil, like the long peal of a bell.

Then he reads about the characteristics of samadhi:

The man established in samadhi sees the upper region filled with Atman, the nether region filled with Atman, the middle region filled with Atman. He sees all filled with Atman.

Adhar and Mahimacharan salute Sri Ramakrishna and leave.

State of intoxication – guilelessness and telling the truth

The next day is Sunday, 3 February 1884, 21st day of Magha, 1290 B. Y., the seventh day of the bright fortnight of Magha. Thakur is seated on his cot after the midday meal. Worried when they heard of his injury, Ram, Surendra, and some other devotees have come from Calcutta. M. is seated near Sri Ramakrishna, who has his hand in a splint. He talks with the devotees.

His earlier story – state of divine inebriation, stay in Janbazar – guilelessness and telling the truth

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “The Divine Mother has kept me in such a state that I can’t hide anything. It is the state of a child.

“Rakhal doesn’t understand. Lest anybody should notice it and then talk ill of me, he covers my arm by wrapping a cloth around my body. He took Doctor Madhu aside and told him all about it. Then I shouted, ‘Where are you, Madhusudana? Come and see, I have broken my arm!’

“I used to sleep in the same bedroom with Mathur Babu and his [\[19\]](#)

wife. They loved me and looked after me as if as I were their child. I was in a state of divine inebriation at that time. Mathur Babu would say, ‘Father, do you hear what we say?’ I would say, ‘Yes, I do.’

“Suspecting her husband of something, Mathur’s wife said, ‘If you go anywhere, Bhattacharya Mahashay (Sri Ramakrishna) will accompany you.’ Once he went to a certain place and made me sit downstairs. Returning in half an hour, he said, ‘Come on, Father, let’s go to the carriage.’ When his wife questioned me, I told her exactly what had happened. I said to her, ‘Look, we went by carriage. He made me sit downstairs, and he went upstairs alone. Returning in half an hour, he said to me, “Come on, father! Let’s go.”’ She figured it out as well as she could.

“A partner of Mathur’s estate used to take cart- loads of cauliflower and fruits from the temple garden to his home. When the other partners asked me, I told them all this exactly.”

[1]

. Anandamayi.

[2]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section XX, Chapter V.

[3]

. Jagannath.

[4]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section I, Chapter V.

[5]

. Two beautiful celestial dancing girls.

[6]

. Nityasiddhas.

[7]

. A name of Krishna.

[8]

. Shambu Mallick died in 1877.

[9]

. Ahetuki bhakti.

[10]

. Bodhe bodha.

[11]

. Jnani.

[12]

. Sri Ramakrishna is referring to a sweetmeat made of cheese.

[13]

. Nityakarma.

[14]

. Tarpana.

[15]

. Sandhya.

[16]

. Bhandas.

[17]

. Brahmanda.

[18]

. Bhuchari and khechari mudras, expressions of particular states of consciousness or yogic awareness.

[19]

. Sejo Ginni.

Section XI

With Rakhal, M., Manilal, and Others at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

Why is Thakur impatient? He instructs Mani Mallick

Thakur is resting after the midday meal while Mani Mallick sits on the floor of the room. Thakur's arm is still in a splint. M. enters, salutes him, and then sits on the floor near Mani Mallick. It is Sunday, 24 February 1884, 13th of Phalgun, 1290 B.Y the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "How did you come?"

M.: "Sir, I came by carriage to Alambazar and then walked from there."

Manilal: "Oh, you are sweating!"

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "This makes me think that all my experiences are not fantasies. If that were so, why would

[\[1\]](#)

'Englishmen' take so much trouble to come here?"

The topic of conversation is now about Thakur's injured arm and how he is feeling.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Sometimes I get impatient because of my arm. I show it to one person after another and ask if it will heal. Rakhal gets angry. He doesn't understand my condition. Sometimes I say to myself, let him leave me if he likes. But then I ask the Divine Mother, 'Where will he go, Mother? Where will he go to be scorched and burnt in the fire of the world?'"

"I had this childlike impatience before. I used to show my pulse to Mathur Babu and ask him, 'Brother! What am I suffering from?'"

"Well, where is my faith in God if I did this? When I was going to Kamarpukur in a bullock cart, some men with long sticks

came up. They looked like dacoits. I began to chant the names of God. I chanted Rama, then I chanted Durga, then Om Tat Sat, hoping that one would be helpful.

(*To M.*) “Tell me, why am I so impatient?”

M.: “You’re always in samadhi. You have kept a little of your mind on the body for the sake of the devotees. That is why you sometimes become impatient to save it.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes. I only have a little of my mind on the body, and that for the sake of the devotees and to enjoy the love of God.”

Proposal to visit an exhibition – talk about Thakur’s visit to the zoo
Manilal Mallick is talking about an exhibition.

Thakur’s eyes are filled with tears to hear about a beautiful image of Yashoda with the baby Krishna in her arms. He is inspired by Yashoda’s embodiment of maternal love and thus weeps.

Manilal: “You are not well, or you could visit the exhibition in the maidan of the fort.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M. and others*): “I won’t be able to see everything even if I go. I might lose consciousness just seeing one thing that is special. I wouldn’t be able to see anything more than that. Once I was taken to the zoo. I went into samadhi when I saw a lion, the vehicle of the Mother Goddess. How could I see the other animals? I only saw the lion and then came back. That’s why Jadu Mallick’s mother first said that I should go to the exhibition and then, on second thought, said, ‘No, No.’”

Mani Mallick has been a member of the Brahmo Samaj for many years. He is about sixty-five years old. Thakur is teaching him according to his nature.

His earlier life story – visit to Jai Narayan Pundit – Gauri Pundit
Sri Ramakrishna: “Jaynarayan Pundit was a very liberal person. I visited him once and liked his attitude. His sons were

all wearing boots. But he said, 'I shall go to Kashi.' He finally [\[3\]](#) did so. He lived in Kashi and he died there.

"When you get old, it's good to leave the household and devote yourself to contemplating God. What do you think?"

Manilal: "Yes. I don't like the problems of the world."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Gauri used to worship his wife with offerings of flowers. All women are different manifestations of the Divine Mother.

(*To Manilal*) "Please tell that story of yours."

Manilal (*laughing*): "Several people were going across the Ganges in a boat. One among them, a pundit, talked very highly of his learning. 'I have studied various scriptures – the Vedas, the Vedanta, and the six systems of philosophy.' He asked someone, 'Do you know the Vedanta?' The man replied, 'No, sir.' 'Do you know Samkhya and Patanjali?' He said, 'No, sir.' 'Have you no philosophy at all?' 'No,' again.

"The pundit was talking proudly of himself, and the other man was sitting there silent. Just then a terrible storm arose. The boat was about to sink. The man asked the pundit, 'Revered sir, do you know how to swim?' The pundit said, 'No.' The man replied, 'I don't know Samkhya and Patanjali, but I do know how to swim.'"

God alone is the substance, all else is unsubstantial – hitting the target

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "What is the use of knowing many scriptures? All you need is to know how to cross the river of the world. God alone is the real substance, all else is unsubstantial.

"While Arjuna was aiming at the target, Drona asked him, 'What are you seeing? Do you see the kings?' Arjuna said, 'No.' 'Do you see me?' 'No.' 'Do you see the tree?' 'No.' 'Do you see the bird perched on the tree?' 'No.' 'Then what do you see?' 'Only the eye of the bird.'

"He who only sees the eye of the bird can hit the target.

“He alone is clever who sees that God alone is the real substance and all else is unsubstantial. What is the need for any other information? Hanuman said, ‘I don’t know much about the date or the position of the planets. I only contemplate Rama.’

(*To M.*) “Buy a few fans to use here.

(*To Manilal*) “Please visit his (M.’s) father. Inspiration comes from seeing a devotee.”

Chapter II

Advice to Manilal and others – God’s manifestation as a human being

Sri Ramakrishna is seated on his bed. Manilal and other devotees are sitting on the floor, listening to Thakur’s sweet words.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “A deep change is coming over me since I hurt my arm. Now I only like God’s manifestation as a human being.

[\[4\]](#)

“The Absolute and the phenomenal. The Absolute is the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

“The divine play, or the phenomenal, is play as God, play as deities, play as human beings, and play as the universe.”

You are Sat-chit-ananda – instruction by Vaishnavcharan – Thakur watches the *Ramlila*

“Vaishnavcharan used to say, ‘One attains the highest knowledge after having the faith that God sports as a human being.’ I didn’t listen to him then. Now I see that he was right. Vaishnavcharan liked pictures of men expressing tenderness and love.

(*To Manilal*) “It is God who manifests in the form of a human being. He Himself has become Mani Mallick. The Sikhs teach: You are Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

“Sometimes, seeing a glimpse of his real self, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, a man becomes speechless with

wonder. He begins to swim in joy. It is just like suddenly coming across a near and dear relative. (*To M.*) Just as it happened to me the other day in the carriage when I saw Baburam – and you were also in the carriage.

“When Shiva sees his own real self, he dances around exclaiming, ‘What am I! What am I!’

“The Adhyatma Ramayana also talks about this. Narada said, ‘O Rama! All men are your forms, and all women are Sita’s.’

“When I saw the actors in the *Ramlila*, I felt as if Narayana (the Lord) Himself was dwelling in their various forms. I felt that the real and the imitations were the same.

[5]

“Why do people worship young virgins? All women are different forms of the Divine Mother, but She manifests Herself more in pure, unmarried girls.”

Why is Thakur impatient with his injury? – his state as a child and a devotee

(*To M.*) “Why do I become impatient when I’m ill? The Mother has kept me in the state of a child. A child depends entirely on its mother.”

Sri Ramakrishna is photographed in the Radhabazar by Surendra – A.D. 1881

“I was taken to the Radhabazar for a photograph. I was supposed to go to Rajendra Mitra’s house that day and was told that Keshab Sen and others would be there. I had planned to talk about a few important things but forgot them all when I went to Radhabazar. I said, ‘Mother, You please speak. What can I say?’”

His earlier story – Koar Singh – Ramlal’s mother – worship of the unmarried girl

“I don’t have the disposition of a man of knowledge. A man of knowledge thinks very highly of himself. He says, ‘How can I be ill?’

“Koar Singh said, ‘You are still concerned with your body.’

“This is my nature: my Divine Mother knows everything. She would talk in Rajendra Mitra’s house. Only Her words are ‘real words.’ A thousand pundits are struck dumb before the

[\[6\]](#)

knowledge of Saraswati.

“The Divine Mother has kept me in the state of a devotee, in the state of a vijnani. That is why I make jokes with Rakhal and others. If I were in the state of a jnani, I couldn’t do this.

“I see in this state that the Divine Mother alone has become everything. I see Her everywhere.

“I saw in the Kali Temple that the Divine Mother had become everything – even the wicked, even the brother of the Bhagavata pundit.

“I was about to reprimand Ramlal’s mother but couldn’t do it. I saw her as a form of the Divine Mother. I see the Divine Mother in virgins. That is why I worship them.

“My wife strokes my feet. I salute her afterwards.

“You salute me by touching my feet. Who could touch my feet when Hriday was here? He wouldn’t let anyone touch them.

“The Divine Mother has kept me in the state of seeing God in everything. That is why I return your salutations.

“You see, I can’t exclude even a wicked person. A tulsi leaf may be dry or small, but it can still be used for the worship of God.”

[\[1\]](#)

. Anglicized men.

[\[2\]](#)

. Highwaymen.

[\[3\]](#)

. Sri Ramakrishna had met the pundit for the first time in 1869. Pundit Jai Narayan (1804-1873) visited Kashi in 1869.

[\[4\]](#)

. Nitya and lila.

[\[5\]](#)

. Kumari puja.

[\[6\]](#)

. The Goddess of knowledge and learning.

Section XII

Sri Ramakrishna with Rakhal, Ram, Nitya, Adhar, M., Mahima, and Other Devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

Why is Sri Ramakrishna restless in illness? – the state of a vijnani

After the midday meal Sri Ramakrishna is sitting with Rakhal, Ram, and some other devotees. He is not completely recovered; his arm is still in a splint. It is Sunday, 23 March 1884, the 11th day of Chaitra, 1290 B.Y.

Though Sri Ramakrishna himself is not well, he has created a mart of joy in his room. Groups of devotees visit him, delighted with his incessant talk about God. Sometimes there is devotional singing and other times they watch Thakur in wonder as he enjoys the bliss of Brahman in samadhi.

Narendra's marriage: Narendra, the leader

Ram: “Narendra is going to be engaged to R. Mitra’s daughter. Mr. Mitra says he will give a lot of money.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “He may become a leader in society, or something like that. Wherever his path leads, he will prove his worth.”

Thakur does not allow the topic of Narendra to continue.

(*To Ram*) “Well, why do I get so restless when I’m ill? First I ask one man how I can get well, then I ask another.

“Do you know what the fact is? One should either believe everyone or no one.

“God Himself has become the doctor or medic. That’s why you have to put your faith in all of them. If you simply think of doctors as humans, you won’t have faith in them.”

His earlier story – illness of Sambhu Mallick and Haladhari

“Sambhu was seriously ill. Dr. Sarbadhikari examined him and said, ‘It is due to the heat of the medicine.’

“Haladhari put out his hand so that the doctor could feel his pulse. The doctor said, ‘Let me see your eyes. Oh! You have an enlarged spleen.’ Haladhari said, ‘I have nothing of the sort!’ But Dr. Madhu’s medicine is good.”

Ram: “It’s not the medicine that heals, but it does help nature to cure.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “If medicine doesn’t do any good, why does opium stop diarrhea?”

About Keshab Sen – printing Thakur’s talks in the *Sulabh Samachar*

Ram is talking about Keshab’s death.

Ram: “You were right, ‘A gardener exposes the roots of a superior rose plant so that the roots can absorb the dew to make the plant grow rapidly.’ The words of perfected man have borne their fruit.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What do I know, my dear? I didn’t calculate when I said it. It is you who say so.”

Ram: “The Brahmos have gotten something printed about you

[\[1\]](#)

(in the *Sulabh Samachar*).”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Printed! What’s this? Why do they print now? I just eat, drink, and make merry. I don’t know anything else.

“I asked Keshab Sen, ‘Why do you print anything about me?’ He said, ‘So people will visit you.’”

Instruction to mankind by the power of God – the wrestling match of Hanuman Singh

(*To Ram and others*) “A man hasn’t the power to instruct mankind. One cannot subdue ignorance without the power of God.

“Two people wrestled – Hanuman Singh and a Punjabi Muslim. The Muslim was physically very strong. He ate a lot of meat

and ghee on the day of the match and for fifteen days before it. Everyone thought he'd win. Hanuman Singh, on the other hand, clad in a dirty cloth, had eaten sparingly but had chanted the

[\[2\]](#)

name of Mahavir. On the day of the wrestling match, he kept a complete fast. Everyone thought he'd surely lose. But he won. The one who had been eating heavily for fifteen days lost.

“What is the use of publishing in papers? Whoever teaches mankind derives strength from God. Besides, one cannot teach without having renounced.”

His childhood – Sri Ramakrishna listens to the scriptures recited by sadhus at the home of the Lahas in Kamarpukur

“I am a most stupid person.” (*All laugh.*)

A devotee: “Then how is it that so much of the Vedas and the Vedanta and other things come out of your mouth?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “During my child-hood I could understand what the sadhus read at the Lahas' in Kamarpukur, but I would miss a little. If a pundit comes and speaks to me in Sanskrit, I can understand him. But I can't speak Sanskrit myself.”

Is learning the goal of life? – the ignorant and God's grace

“The goal of life is to realize God. While aiming his arrow, Arjuna said, ‘I can see nothing but the eye of the bird. I don't see the kings or the trees, not even the bird.’

“It is enough to realize God. It doesn't matter if you know Sanskrit.

“God grants His grace not only to pundits, but also to the ignorant if they long for Him. A father has equal love for all his children.

“Say a father has five sons. One or two call him ‘baba’ while some call him ‘ba,’ and some ‘pa,’ those who can't pronounce the whole word. Does the father love those more who call him ‘baba’ than the ones who say ‘pa?’ The father knows that they are little

[3]

children and can't pronounce *baba* correctly."

Sri Ramakrishna's mind drawn to God's play as a human being

"My state of mind has been changing since I broke my arm. It is becoming drawn toward God's play as a human being. God Himself is playing as a human being.

"If God can be worshiped in a clay image, why can't He be worshiped as a man?

[4]

"The ship of a merchant sank near Ceylon. He swam to the shore and was brought to Bibhishana on his orders. 'Ah! He looks like my Ramachandra! The same human form.' Saying this, Bibhishana was filled with exuberant joy. Dressing him with fine clothes and jewels, Bibhishana worshiped him, waving holy lights before him.

"When I heard this story for the first time I felt such great joy, I could not express it."

His earlier story – Vaishnavcharan – about Kartabhaja in Phului Shyambazar

"When I asked Vaishnavcharan, he said, 'The mind goes quickly

[5]

to God when one accepts the beloved as one's chosen ideal.' If someone asks, 'Whom do you love?' 'A certain person.' 'Then take him as your chosen ideal.' I said to those at Shyambazar near Kamarpukur, 'I have a different way. I look upon all women as the Divine Mother.' I have seen that those who talk big lead immoral lives. When the women asked me if they could attain liberation, I said, 'Yes, you will if you have single-minded devotion to one man, taking him as God.'"

Ram: "Perhaps Kedar Babu visited the Karta-bhaja sect."

Sri Ramakrishna: "He collects honey from many different flowers."

Haladhari's father – my father – ecstasy in Vrindavan at seeing cows return home

(To Ram, Nityagopal and others) “When you have one hundred percent faith that so-and-so is your chosen ideal, you realize God – you have His vision.

“People used to have great faith. What faith Haladhari’s father had!

“He was going to his daughter’s house. Seeing beautiful flowers and bel leaves, he gathered them for offering to the family deity,

[6]

and he walked five or six miles back to his home.

[7]

“There was a performance of the *Ramlila*. Kaikeyi asked Rama to go into exile. Haladhari’s father had gone to see the play. He stood up immediately and went up to the person who was playing Kaikeyi, exclaiming, ‘You vile wretch!’ He wanted to burn the actress’s face with an oil lamp.

“After taking his bath, he would stand in the water and chant,

[8]

‘Raktavarëà caturmukham,’ then meditate, tears flowing down his cheeks.

“When my father walked on the road wearing wooden slippers, the shopkeepers would respect-fully rise from their seats. They would say, ‘See, there he comes.’

“When he would go to the Haldarpukur for his bath, other people would not have the courage to bathe at the same time. They would first find out if he had left after his bath.

“When he would repeat, ‘Raghuvir, Raghuvir,’ his chest would become very red.

“It was the same with me. When I saw the cows return from pasture in Vrindavan, my body would become red from ecstasy.

“People in those days had intense faith. I’ve heard people say that the Lord used to dance in the form of Kali when the devotees clapped!”

The hatha yogi of the panchavati

A yogi lives in the panchavati hut these days. Ramprasanna,

the son of Krishnakishore of Ariadaha, and many others are devotees of this hatha yogi. But his opium and milk cost twenty-five rupees a month. Ramprasanna came to Thakur and said, “So many devotees come to you. Perhaps you could ask them to give something for the hatha yogi.”

Thakur asks a number of devotees to go to the panchavati and see what kind of person the hatha yogi is.

Chapter II

Advice to Thakur Dada and Mahimacharan

Thakur Dada comes in with a couple of friends and salutes Thakur. He is about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old and lives in Baranagore. He is the son of a brahmin pundit and

[\[9\]](#)

practises the recital of scriptural and mythological stories. He is saddled with family responsibilities. He had disappeared for some days in a mood of dispassion. Even now he practices spiritual disciplines.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Have you come on foot? Where do you live?”

Thakur Dada: “Yes, sir. I live in Baranagore.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What has brought you here?”

Thakur Dada: “Sir, I have come to see you. I pray to God. Why then do I sometimes become restless? Three or four days pass joyfully. Why do I feel so restless later?”

The mechanic – faith in the mantra – a devotee of God – two signs of knowledge

Sri Ramakrishna: “I understand. There are teething problems. Things aren’t fitted right yet. A mechanic adjusts the machine so the cogs of the wheels fit together smoothly. Even so, it sometimes gets stuck a little somewhere.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Have you been initiated with a mantra?”

Thakur Dada: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Do you have faith in the mantra?”

A friend of Thakur Dada says that he can sing well. Thakur asks him, "Please do sing a song." Thakur Dada sings:

I shall live as a yogi in a cave of Love's mountain.

I shall sit absorbed in yoga beside the spring of bliss.

I shall gather the fruit of truth and satisfy my hunger for knowledge.

I shall worship the lotus feet of God with the flowers of dispassion.

I shall not go to the well for water to quench the thirst of separation,

But shall draw the water of peace to fill the vessel of my heart.

Climbing to the heights of ecstasy, I shall drink the holy water that has bathed Your feet. I shall laugh and weep and dance and sing!

Sri Ramakrishna: "Ah! What a beautiful song! 'The spring of bliss! The fruit of truth! I shall laugh and weep and dance and sing!'"

"You sing so beautifully. What more do you need? You have to face happiness and sorrow in worldly life. It is natural to feel restless once in a while. When you live in a room full of soot, you can't avoid its stain."

Thakur Dada: "Please tell me what I should do now."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Chant the name of Hari morning and evening, clapping your hands, 'Haribol, Haribol, Haribol.'"

"And come again when my arm is healed a little."

Mahimacharan comes in and salutes Thakur.

(*To Mahima*) "Oh, he sang a very special and beautiful song! Do please sing it again."

Thakur Dada again sings: "I shall live as a yogi in a cave of Love's mountain."

When the song ends, Thakur says to Mahimacharan, "Please recite that verse – the one about devotion to Hari."

Mahimacharan recites a verse from the *Narada Pancharatra*:

If God is worshipped with devotion, what is the need for austerities?

If He is not so worshipped, what again is the use of austerities?

If Hari is both inside and outside, what need is there of austerities?

[\[10\]](#)

And if He is not there, what is the use of austerities?

Sri Ramakrishna: “Chant that one, too: ‘From Him, learn how to love the Lord.’ Mahimacharan chants:

Desist, O my child, desist from further austerities.

Hasten at once to Shiva, the ocean of divine knowledge.

From Him, learn how to love with that pure love extolled by the lovers of God,

A love that, like a sword, cuts asunder the fetters of the world.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Shankara will grant love and devotion to God.”

[\[11\]](#)

Mahima: “The Eternal Shiva is free from all bondage.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Shame, hatred, fear and suspicion – all these are bonds. What do you say?”

Mahima: “Yes, sir. Also secrecy and feeling embarrassed when praised.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “There are two signs of spiritual knowledge. First, a firm understanding. One may have to face a thousand pains and sorrows, a number of catastrophes and obstacles, yet one remains steady, like the anvil in a blacksmith shop which receives so many hammer blows. Second is perseverance, inner strength: if lust and anger can hurt me, I shall immediately renounce them. When a tortoise pulls its limbs inside, it doesn’t put them out again, even if you cut it into four pieces.”

Deep dispassion, mild dispassion, and momentary dispassion

(To Thakur Dada and others) “There are two kinds of dispassion, deep and mild. Mild dispassion is slow, like a slow beat on the tabla. Deep dispassion, on the other hand, is like the sharp edge of a razor. It cuts the bondage of maya in two at once.

“A farmer was trying to cut a channel from the lake to his field for some days, but the water did not reach his field. He had no strength of mind. But another farmer resolves after three or four days that he will see to it that the water gets to his field

that day. He postpones his bath, even eating. The whole day he labours hard, and in the evening water comes gurgling into his field. Oh, what joy! Then he returns home and says to his wife, 'Now let me have some oil. I'm going to have my bath.' Having taken his bath and eaten his dinner, he sleeps peacefully.

"A wife said to her husband, 'So-and-so has developed great dispassion, but you have attained nothing at all.' The man who had attained dispassion had a number of wives. He was giving them up one by one.

"The husband of the woman was just then going to take his bath. He had a small towel on his shoulder. Her said to his wife, 'Silly woman! That man won't be able to renounce the world. It can't be done little by little. But I can renounce. Just see. Here I go!'

"Without making any arrangements for his family, he left home as he was, with the towel on his shoulder. This is known as intense dispassion.

"There is another kind of dispassion. It's called monkey renunciation. A householder burned by the fire of worldly life puts on gerua and goes to Kashi. For many days there is no news about him. At last a letter is received, 'Please don't worry. I have found work here.'

"There are always burning problems in family life: your wife may be stubborn, you may be earning only twenty rupees a month, you have no money to celebrate your son's rice-eating

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ceremony, you may have no means to send your boys to school, your home may be dilapidated, the roof may be leaking and you can't afford to get it repaired.

"That is why, when the boys visit me, I ask about their guardians or relatives.

(*To Mahima*) "Why do you need to give up family life? What troubles sadhus have to face! A wife said to her husband, 'Why do you want to renounce the family? You would have to beg alms from eight different houses. Instead, you get food from just one house. Isn't that better?'

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“A sadhu may have to go out of his way six miles to find a free meal. I’ve seen sadhus returning from Jagannath. They’ve had to leave the main road and take a detour to find an eating place.

“It’s nice if you can fight from a fort. There are great disadvantages to standing in the open field and fighting from there. And dangers! Bullets may hit you.

“But for spiritual knowledge you must retire to a solitary place for few days. Then you can return to worldly life. Janaka lived a worldly life after attaining knowledge. You can live anywhere after attaining knowledge. Then nothing matters.”

Mahimacharan: “Sir, why is man bewitched by things of the world?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Because he lives among them without having realized God. You don’t get bewitched after realizing Him. A moth doesn’t like darkness any more once it has seen light.”

[14]

**Unbroken continence, restricted continence and God-realization
– difficult rules for the sannyasin**

“One has to observe strict continence to attain God.

“Sukadeva and people like him were men of absolute and

[15]

unbroken continence. They never discharged semen.

“There are others who have discharged semen earlier but now

[16]

conserve it. A person conserving semen for twelve years builds up a special power. He develops a new nerve of mental

[17]

power. When this nerve develops, one remembers everything, can know everything.

“The discharge of semen dissipates a person’s strength. But there is no harm in nocturnal emission. That semen is from

food. After discharge, a man retains enough to succeed. But he must not have intercourse with a woman.

“What remains after nocturnal discharge is very refined. The
[18]

Lahas stored pots of molasses with holes in the bottom. After a year it was found that the molasses had turned into crystals, like sugar candy. Whatever liquid there was had come out through the holes.

“A sannyasin must completely renounce woman. However, there is no harm in your already having been involved.

“A sannyasin mustn’t even see the picture of a woman. An ordinary person can’t do this. Do re me fa so la ti. One can’t stay long on ti.

“It is very harmful for a sannyasin to discharge semen. He has to be very careful not to even look at a woman. Even if she is a devotee, he must leave that place. Even to see the picture of a woman might cause the discharge of semen in a dream, if not in his waking hours.

“Even if a sannyasin has mastered his senses, he should not talk with a woman, as an example to mankind. Even if she is a devotee, he must not talk with her very long.

“A sannyasin is like one observing a waterless fast on the
[19]

eleventh day of the lunar month. There are two other kinds of fasts on the eleventh day: One, when one may eat fruits; and the other, when one eats fried luchi. (*All laugh.*) With the fried luchi, maybe you also have two chapattis soaked in milk. (*All laugh.*)

(*Smiling*) “You can’t keep an absolutely waterless fast of the eleventh day of lunar month.”

His earlier life – Krishnakishore’s ekadashi – Rajendra Mitra

“I saw Krishnakishore eating luchis and vegetable curry on an ekadashi day. I said to Hriday, ‘Hridu, I’d like to observe

Krishnakishore's ekadashi!' (*All laugh.*) I did it for a day. I ate till my stomach was full. The next day I couldn't eat a thing." (*All laugh.*)

The devotees who went to see the hatha yogi have returned. Sri Ramakrishna says to them, "Well, how did you find him? You measured him with your own yardstick, didn't you?"

Thakur noticed that hardly any of the devotees was willing to offer a rupee to the hatha yogi.

Sri Ramakrishna: "One doesn't like a sadhu he has to give money to.

"Rajendra Mitra earns eight hundred rupees a month. He had been to the kumbhamela in Prayag. I asked him, 'What kind of sadhus did you see at the mela?' Rajendra replied, 'I didn't come across one real sadhu. I noticed one, but even he accepted money.'

"I say to myself that if sadhus are not given any money how will they eat? You don't have to make any offering here; that's why people come here. I say to myself, 'Oh, how they love their money! So let them keep it.'"

Thakur rests for a while. One of the devotees is sitting on the north end of the smaller cot, gently stroking his feet. Thakur whispers to him, "He who is formless also has form. You must also accept God's forms. When an aspirant meditates on the form of Kali, he has the vision of Kali. But later he finds that the form has merged into the Indivisible. He who is indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute is also Kali."

Chapter III

Mahima's scholarship – Mani Sen, Adhar, and the meeting

Thakur is on the western circular verandah talking about the hatha yogi with Mahima and others. Ramprasanna is the son of Krishnakishore, the devotee. That is why Thakur is fond of him.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Ramprasanna just goes around doing nothing, like a vagabond. The other day he came here and sat down but didn't say a word. He just pressed his nostrils doing

pranayama. He was given some refreshments, but he didn't eat them. Another day I called him and made him sit here. He sat with one leg over the other and a foot toward the Captain. I weep at his mother's sorrow.

(*To Mahima*) "He [meaning Ramprasanna] asked me to tell you about the hatha yogi. His expenses are six annas and two pice a day. But he wouldn't ask for it himself."

Mahima: "But who would listen if he himself asked?" (*Thakur and others laugh.*)

Going into his room, Thakur sits down. Mani Sen, whose home is in Panihati, has come with a couple of friends. He asks about Thakur's fractured arm. One of his companions is a doctor.

Thakur is under the care of Dr. Pratap Majumdar. Mani's doctor friend does not approve of his treatment. Thakur says to him, "But Pratap is not a fool. Why do you talk about him this way?"

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Just then, Latu exclaims that the medicine bottle has broken.

Hearing about the hatha yogi, Mani (Sen) says, "What is a hatha yogi? 'Hath' [hot] means that it is warm."

Thakur later talks to the devotees about Mani Sen's doctor, "I know him. I told Jadu Mallick that this doctor of his was absolutely useless. He is even less intelligent than the other doctor."

Sri Ramakrishna talks with M. privately

It is not yet evening. Seated on his cot, Thakur is talking with M., who sits facing west on the foot rug near the cot. In the meantime, Mahimacharan is on the semi-circular verandah, facing west and discussing the scriptures loudly with Mani Sen's doctor. Thakur hears this from his seat and says to M. with a little smile, "He is delivering himself. This is rajas. A rajasic person wants to show off his learning and lecture to others. But sattva makes a person introverted, wanting to hide himself. But Mahima is an excellent person. He shows so much

enthusiasm and takes such delight in talking about God.”

Adhar comes in, salutes Sri Ramakrishna, and sits near M.

Adhar Sen, about thirty years old, is a deputy magistrate. His home is in Banetola of Sobhabazar in Calcutta. He has been coming to see Thakur almost daily for quite some time, in the evening after working hard in his office the whole day. However, he hasn’t visited Thakur for a few days.

Sri Ramakrishna: ”Hello! Why haven’t you been here for such a long time?”

Adhar: “I got involved in so much work! I had to attend conferences and school meetings.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “So you forgot everything because of school meetings.”

Adhar (*humbly*): “Sir, it was all hidden away inside. How is your arm?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Just look, it is not yet healed. I’m taking Pratap’s medicine.”

After a while, Thakur suddenly says to Adhar, “Look, all this is impermanent – all these meetings, schools, and offices. God is the only reality, and all else is unreal. You must worship Him alone with your whole mind.”

Adhar is silent.

“Everything else is transitory – the body now is and then is no

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more. You mustn’t hesitate to call upon Him.

“You don’t have to renounce everything. Live in the world like a tortoise. A tortoise moves around, feeding itself in the water, but it keeps its eggs on the dry bank. Its whole mind is where its eggs are.

“Captain has developed a beautiful disposition. When he sits down for worship, he looks like a rishi. Besides, he performs the arati with lighted camphor and the hymns and holy text beautifully. When he rises after the worship, his eyes are swollen with emotion, as if ants have been biting them. And he

devotes himself to studying sacred texts such as the Gita and the Bhagavata. Once I spoke a couple of English words and he was cross with me. He said, “English-educated people are irreverent.”

After a while Adhar says very humbly, “You haven’t visited our house for a long time now. It’s as if the sitting room smells and there is darkness everywhere.”

Hearing these words of the devotee, Thakur’s affection rises like a wave in the sea. He stands up suddenly and, full of emotion, blesses Adhar and M., touching their foreheads and hearts. Full of affection, he says, “I look upon you as Narayana. You are indeed my own.”

Mahimacharan comes into the room and sits down.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mahima*): “What you were saying about men of continence is correct. One cannot hold these spiritual teachings without conserving semen.

“Someone said to Chaitanya Deva, ‘You give the devotees so much instruction. Why aren’t they able to make much progress?’ He replied, ‘They squander it all by intercourse with their wives. That’s why they’re not able to hold on to spiritual instruction.’ If you fill a leaky pail with water, the water trickles out little by little.”

Mahima and the other devotees remain silent. After a while Mahimacharan says, “Please pray to God for us, that we may develop that power.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Be careful even now. It is difficult to dam water in the rainy season,

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and a lot of it has already flowed out. But you can stop it now by raising a dam.”

[\[1\]](#)

. Brahmo magazine.

[\[2\]](#)

. A name for Hanuman, the patron deity of wrestlers.

[\[3\]](#)

. See Max Muller's Hibbert Lectures [regarding the origin and growth of the conception of God historically and anthropologically].

[\[4\]](#)

. Sri Lanka.

[\[5\]](#)

. Ishta.

[\[6\]](#)

. Two or three kosas.

[\[7\]](#)

. A theatrical performance about the life of Rama.

[\[8\]](#)

. Invocation of the Deity as red-hued with four faces.

[\[9\]](#)

. Kathakhatta.

[\[10\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Section X, Chapter V.

[\[11\]](#)

. Sadashiva.

[\[12\]](#)

. Annaprasana.

[\[13\]](#)

. Three kosas.

[\[14\]](#)

. Udharva reta and dhairya reta

[\[15\]](#)

. Udharva reta.

[\[16\]](#)

. Dhairya reta.

[\[17\]](#)

. Medha nadi.

[\[18\]](#)

. Gur.

[\[19\]](#)

. Nirjala ekadeshi.

[\[20\]](#)

. Later Swami Adbhutananda.

[\[21\]](#)

. Adhar died just a few months later.

[\[22\]](#)

Month of Ashada.

Section XIII

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Temple with Vijay, Kedar, Rakhal, Surendra, and Other Devotees on His Birthday

Chapter I

With Vijay and other devotees in the panchavati on his birthday

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on the platform around the old banyan tree in the panchavati with Vijay, Kedar, Surendra, Bhavanath, Rakhal, and many other devotees. He is facing south. Some of the devotees are sitting on the platform; most of them are standing around below it. It is about one o'clock on Sunday, 25 May 1884; 13th of Jaishtha 1291 B. Y., the first day of the bright lunar fortnight.

Thakur's birthday falls on the second day of the bright fortnight in the month of Phalgun but has not yet been celebrated because of the injury to his arm. Now that he is much better, the devotees will celebrate it today. Sahchari, an elderly, well-known kirtan singer, will sing.

Not finding Thakur in his room, M. goes to the panchavati and finds the devotees smiling and enjoying themselves. He does not see Thakur sitting under the tree on the platform though he is standing in front of him. He asks, "Where is he?" Hearing this, everybody laughs loudly. Suddenly seeing Thakur, he awkwardly bows down to pay his respects. He finds Kedar Chatterji and Vijay Goswami sitting on Thakur's left on the platform. Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling, to M.*): "See how I have united them?"

Thakur had brought a madhavi creeper from Vrindavan and planted it in the panchavati in 1868. Since then it has grown quite large. Young boys are climbing on it and swinging from it. Thakur looks at them happily and says, "They are like young monkeys. They don't give up even when they fall." Surendra is standing below the platform. Thakur asks him affectionately, "Why don't you come up here? You can dangle your feet from here."

Surendra climbs up and sits down. Seeing Bhavanath dressed in a shirt, Surendra says, “Tell me, are you going to a foreign land?”

Thakur laughs and says, “Our ‘foreign land’ is God.” He talks to the devotees about various things.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Sometimes I used to throw away my dhoti and roam around naked. One day Sambhu said to me, ‘I see why you go around naked. It’s comfortable. I tried it once myself.’”

Surendra: “When I return from the office and take off my shirt

[\[1\]](#)
and the long coat I say, ‘Divine Mother, how many bonds you have tied me with!’”

Surendra’s office – worldly life, the eight bonds, and the three gunas

Sri Ramakrishna: “Eight bonds bind man: shame, hatred, fear,

[\[2\]](#)
pride of caste, suspicion, and secretiveness are all bonds.

Thakur sings:

This is the grief that weighs on my heart: though You, my Mother, are

[\[3\]](#)
here and I am wide awake, thieves of passion rob my house.

Then he sings:

In the world’s bustling marketplace, O Shyama, You fly kites that soar on

[\[4\]](#)
the wind of hope, held fast by maya’s string.

“‘Maya’s string’ means wife and son. By rubbing the string with the paste of sensuousness, the string has become hard.

Sensuousness means ‘lust and greed.’

There follows another song:

One comes to this world to play dice. I came with great hopes.

But hope is in itself only a broken state.

First I got the piece marked five, and age after age the twelve, the eighteen, and the sixteen.

Divine Mother, last of all I got the unripe twelve piece, and I got ensnared by the five and six-mark pieces.

Six and two equal eight, six and four make ten. O Divine Mother, I have no control over these.

I won neither honour nor fame in this game, which I have been playing all through the night until dawn.

“The piece marked ‘five,’ that is the five elements. To get ensnared in the ‘fives’ and ‘sixes’ means to fall under the control of the five elements and the six passions. To play tricks with the six piece means not to fall under the control of the six enemies. To deceive the ‘three’ piece means to be beyond the three gunas.

“Sattva, rajas, and tamas, the three qualities of nature, have brought mankind under their control. They are like three brothers: if there is sattva, it can call on rajas; and if there is rajas, it can call on tamas. All three gunas are thieves. Tamas destroys, while rajas binds. Sattva, though it frees from the bonds, cannot take one to God.”

Vijay (*smiling*): “Sattva is also a thief, isn’t it?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It can’t take one to God, but it does show the way to Him.”

Bhavanath: “Oh, what wonderful words!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, it is a very lofty thought.”

The devotees are very happy hearing these words.

Chapter II

Thakur advises Vijay, Kedar, and others about ‘lust and greed’

Sri Ramakrishna: “‘Lust and greed’ are the cause of bondage. ‘Lust and greed’ mean worldliness. In fact it is ‘lust and greed’ that keep one from seeing God.”

Saying this, Thakur covers his face with a hand towel and says, “Can you see me now? This is a veil. When the veil of ‘lust and

[\[5\]](#)

greed’ is removed, one attains consciousness-bliss.

“Just see. Whoever has given up the joy of a wife has renounced the joy of the world. God is very near to this person.”

Some of the devotees are standing, others are sitting, as they

silently listen to these words.

(*To Kedar, Vijay, and others*) “He who has given up the pleasure of women has given up the pleasures of the world. This ‘lust and greed’ is truly the veil. You show off such big moustaches, and you are still immersed in it. Tell me truly. Search your mind and see if it isn’t so.”

Vijay: “Sir, it is true.”

Kedar remains silent. Thakur continues.

“I see everybody under the control of women. I went to Captain’s house. After visiting him, I was to go to Ram’s house. So I said to Captain, ‘Please give me the carriage fare.’ Captain asked his wife. She is like him. She just said, ‘What’s the matter, what’s the matter?’ At last Captain said, ‘They (Ram and others) will pay for it.’ And he has the Gita, the Bhagavata and the Vedanta within him! (*All laugh.*)

“A man puts all his money in the hands of his wife to manage and then says, ‘I have such a simple nature that I can’t keep two rupees with me.’

“A manager has a number of positions open in his office, but he doesn’t appoint a candidate. Someone said to the applicant, ‘Contact Golapi and you will get a job. Golapi is the manager’s mistress.’”

His earlier story – visit to the fort – women and the ‘sloping path’

“Men don’t understand how far down they have gone.

“When I went to the fort in a carriage, I thought we’d come by an ordinary path. Later I found out we’d come down four storeys. It was a sloping path. A person possessed by a ghost doesn’t know that he is possessed. He thinks he’s quite all right.”

Vijay (*smiling*): “If you bring an exorcist, he can get rid of the ghost.”

Sri Ramakrishna does not respond to this. He only says, “It is the Lord’s will.”

He continues to talk about women.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Whoever I ask says that his wife is good. No man has a bad wife. (*All laugh.*)

“Those who live amidst ‘lust and greed’ aren’t able to understand because of their inebriation. Chess players often don’t know if a move is right until the game has continued for some time. But onlookers from a distance can see and understand the game better.

“Woman is the embodiment of maya. In his hymn in praise of Rama, Narada said, ‘O Rama, all men that are, are parts of you; and all women are parts of Sita, the embodiment of maya. I ask for no other boon: only grant that I may have pure love for Your lotus feet and that I may not be enchanted by Your world-bewitching maya.’”

Advice to Girindra, Nagendra, and others

Surendra’s younger brother, Girindra, and his nephew, Nagendra, and others have arrived. Girindra works in an office; Nagendra is studying law.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Girindra*): “I say to you not to get attached to worldly life. You see, Rakhal understands what is knowledge and what is ignorance. He can discriminate between the eternal and the transitory. Now I say to him, ‘Go home. You can come here off and on and stay a day or two.’

“Live amicably with one another. Only then will you feel good [\[6\]](#)

and be happy. A religious theatrical performance is good and brings joy to the audience when the musicians sing with one voice.

“Keeping most of your mind in God, attend to worldly work with the rest of it.

“A sadhu keeps seventy-five percent of his mind in God and twenty-five percent in worldly work. A sadhu is very alert about words of God. If you step on the tail of a snake, it reacts furiously. It feels more hurt in the tail.”

Sahchari sings in the panchavati – suddenly it is cloudy and stormy

Going to the jhautala, Thakur talks about the umbrella to Gopal [7]

of Sinthi. Gopal says to M., “He has asked me to put the umbrella in his room.” A kirtan has been arranged in the panchavati. When Thakur has come and taken his seat, Sahchari sings. Devotees are gathered, some sitting and others standing.

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Yesterday was Saturday, the new moon day of the month of Jaishtha.

Now and then clouds cover the sky. Suddenly a storm arises. Thakur returns to his room with the devotees. It is decided that the kirtan will continue there.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Gopal of Sinthi*): “Tell me, have you brought the umbrella?”

Gopal: “No, sir. I forgot it listening to the music.”

The umbrella is lying in the panchavati. Gopal hurriedly goes out to get it.

Sri Ramakrishna: “I am not as absent-minded as that.

“Rakhal gave the date of an invitation as the eleventh, though the actual date was the thirteenth.

“And Gopal – he belongs to a herd of cows. (*All laugh.*)

“You know the story about the goldsmiths. One of them says Keshab, another says Gopal, the third says Hari, and another Hara. The meaning of Gopal is a ‘herd of cows.’ (*All laugh.*)

(*Referring to Gopal, Surendra says merrily*) “Where is Krishna?”

Chapter III

**Thakur enjoys devotional singing with Vijay and other devotees –
Sahchari sings of Gauranga’s sannyasa**

A woman kirtan singer sings of Gauranga’s sannyasa, adding improvisations now and then:

A sannyasin will not look at a woman, for it is against the sannyasin’s

rule.

The sannyasi, come to remove the sorrows of all created beings, will not look at a woman.

Otherwise, the coming of Gauranga as God's incarnation would be in vain.

Listening to these words of Gauranga's renunciation, Thakur stands up and goes into samadhi. The devotees immediately put garlands around his neck. Bhavanath and Rakhal hold Thakur to keep him from falling. Thakur faces north. Vijay, Kedar, Ram, M., Manomohan, Latu, and other devotees stand in a circle around him.

Is Gauranga himself celebrating a festival of singing the Lord's name with devotees?

Sri Krishna is indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; He is also the universe and all its creatures; He is finite as well as the all-

[\[9\]](#)

pervading Spirit in the form of the universe

Thakur is slowly coming out of samadhi. He now talks with Sat-chit-ananda Krishna. Now and then he says the word Krishna, but sometimes is unable to pronounce it. He says, "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. Sat-chit-ananda." I can't see Your form these days. Now I see You both within and without. You are the living beings, the universe, the twenty-four cosmic principles. You are everything. You are the mind, the intellect, everything. The salutation hymn to the Guru says:

Salutations to the Guru who makes it possible to realize Him who

[\[10\]](#)

pervades this entire universe of the moving and the unmoving.

"You are indivisible. Yet You pervade this entire universe of the moving and the unmoving. You are the container and also the contained. Krishna is life, Krishna is mind, Krishna is intellect, and Krishna is the Self. O Govinda, my life breath, my life."

Vijay is also in an ecstatic mood. Thakur says to him, "What, dear sir, have you too become unconscious?"

Vijay (*humbly*): "No, sir."

The singer continues, singing "The intense love for God that

makes one blind!” As soon as she adds an improvised line, “O friend of my life, I keep You within my heart,” Thakur again goes into samadhi. His injured arm rests on Bhavanath’s shoulder.

When Sri Ramakrishna returns a little to normal consciousness, the singer adds another improvised line, “Why so much pain for one who has renounced everything for You?”

Thakur salutes her. He is seated while he listens to the music and occasionally goes into ecstasy. Now the musician stops singing, and Thakur speaks.

Forgetting the body and the world in ecstatic love – Thakur dances with the devotees and goes into samadhi

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Vijay and other devotees*): “What is ecstatic [\[11\]](#)

love? He who has developed intense love for God, like Chaitanya, forgets the world. He also forgets the body, which is so dear to all.”

What happens when one has ecstatic love for God is explained by Thakur through a song:

When will dawn that day when tears stream from my eyes as I repeat
Lord Hari’s name?

When will dawn that day when worldly desires disappear from my heart?

When will dawn that day when my body thrills and my hair stands on
end?

When will dawn that day?

Thakur now stands up and begins to dance. The devotees dance with him. Thakur pulls M. by the arm and makes him join the dancing group.

Sri Ramakrishna again goes into samadhi, while dancing. He then stands motionless like a picture. Kedar sings a hymn to break his samadhi:

I bow to Brahman-Consciousness, the primal seed of the universe, abiding
in the lotus of the heart,

Who, without attributes, rests in undifferentiated repose, known only to
Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh,

Who is attained only by yogis in the depth of meditation,

Who removes the fear of life and death and is the essence of Knowledge and Truth.

Gradually the samadhi breaks. Thakur sits down and chants:
“Om Sat-chit-ananda! Govinda! Govinda! Govinda! Yogamaya!

[\[12\]](#)

Scripture, devotee, and God in one.”

Thakur takes the dust of the place where the kirtan was sung and the devotees danced.

Chapter IV

The difficult vow of the sannyasin – sannyasins and instruction to mankind

Thakur is sitting on the semicircular verandah overlooking the Ganges. Vijay, Bhavanath, M., Kedar, and other devotees are with him. Now and then he repeats, “Ah, Krishna Chaitanya.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Vijay and other devotees*): “The Lord’s name has been chanted so much in this room; devotional songs have been sung with so much zest.”

Bhavanath: “And there have been talks on renunciation.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ah, what feeling!” He begins to sing: [\[ET1\]](#)

Gaur is dispensing the nectar of love, pouring out pitcher after pitcher of divine ecstasy, love never ceasing.

The sweet Nitai summons them all; the beloved Gaur, too, bids them come.

[\[13\]](#)

Shantipur is near drowning, flooded with love!

(*To Vijay and others*): “The song says this beautifully: the sannyasin must not look at a woman, for this is his rule. What a high ideal!”

Vijay: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Others learn from a sannyasin’s example. That’s why there is such a strict rule of conduct. A sannyasin should not even look at a picture of a woman. Such a strict rule!

“A black goat is sacrificed as an offering to the Divine Mother.

But if it has the slightest blemish, it is rejected. The sannyasin, of course, must not have intercourse with women, but he must not even talk to them.”

Vijay: “The younger Haridas spoke to a woman devotee. Chaitanya Deva gave him up.”

His earlier story – Marwari’s offering of money to Sri Ramakrishna and Mathur’s offering him a piece of land

Sri Ramakrishna: “‘Lust and greed’ for a sannyasin is like the odour of a goat in the body of a beautiful woman. Her beauty is useless if she smells like that.

“A Marwari wanted to put some money in my name. Mathur also wanted to transfer some land to my name. I could accept neither.

“The rules of conduct for a sannyasin are very difficult indeed. When one puts on the guise of a sannyasin or sadhu, one has to conduct himself exactly like a sadhu or a sannyasin. It’s like in the theatre: the person who plays the king acts like a king, and the one who takes the role of his minister acts just like a minister.

“Once an impersonator was acting like a sannyasin who had renounced. Gentlemen offered him a small bag of money, but he said no and went away. He didn’t even touch the money. But a little later, he came back, washed and dressed in his own clothes. Then he said, ‘Let me have what you were offering me.’ When he dressed like a sadhu, he couldn’t touch money. Now he would accept even four annas.

“But in the state of a paramahansa one becomes like a child. A five-year-old does not distinguish between a man and a woman. Even so, the paramahansa has to be careful to set a good example.”

Why was Keshab Sen not able to teach people?

Keshab Sen was associated with ‘lust and greed.’ It hindered his teaching of humanity. That is what Thakur is saying.

Sri Ramakrishna: “He (Keshab) – do you understand?”

Vijay: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He (Keshab Sen) tried to take care of both the worldly and the spiritual. So he couldn’t achieve very much.”

Why did Chaitanya Deva renounce the world?

Vijay: “Chaitanya Deva said to Nityananda, ‘Nitai, if I hadn’t renounced the world, people would not be helped. They would all want to live a worldly life. Nobody would try to give his whole mind to the lotus feet of God by renouncing ‘lust and greed.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Chaitanya Deva renounced the world to set an example.

“A sadhu renounces ‘lust and greed’ for his own good. And then even when he has become detached, he must not allow a woman or gold near him, to set an example. A man of renunciation, the sannyasin, is a world teacher. Just seeing him gives spiritual awakening.”

It is almost evening. The devotees are gradually leaving, after offering their salutations. Vijay says to Kedar, “This morning while I was meditating, I saw you. I wanted to touch your body but I found no body there.”

[1]

Official dress of the time.

[2]

. The Tantric scriptures list eight bonds or fetters: shame (lajja), hatred or contempt (ghrana), fear (bhaya), pride of caste, rank or race (jati), hesitation or suspicion (shanka), secretiveness (jugupsa), pride of family, ancestry, or lineage (kula), and pride of good conduct, character or piety (shila).

[3]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section II, Chapter V.

[4]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section II, Chapter V.

[5]

. Chidananda.

[6]

. Yatra.

[7]

. Later Swami Advaitananda.

[\[8\]](#)

. Amavasya.

[\[9\]](#)

. Virat.

[\[10\]](#)

. Vishveshvara Tantra 2.

[\[11\]](#)

. Prema, intense love for God.

[\[12\]](#)

. Bhagavata-Bhakta-Bhagavan.

[\[13\]](#)

. A town in Nadia District.

[\[ET1\]](#)

Section XIV

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Temple with Surendra, Bhavanath, Rakhal, Latu, M., Adhar, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Character of Baburam, Rakhal, Latu, Niranjan, Narendra, and others

It is evening. Sri Ramakrishna is seated in his room with the devotees at the Dakshineswar temple, chanting the name of the Mother of the Universe and meditating on Her. Rakhal, Adhar, M., and couple of other devotees are there.

It is Friday, 20 June 1884, the twelfth day of the dark fortnight of Jaishtha. The Car Festival will begin in five days.

After some time the arati begins in the various temples and Adhar goes to watch. For Mani's education, Thakur is talking happily with him about the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well, does Baburam want to continue his studies? I said to him, 'Continue your studies to set an example.' After Sita was set free, Bibhishana refused to accept the throne. Rama said, 'You must become king for the benefit of the ignorant. Otherwise, they will say, "Bibhishana served Rama, but what did he gain?" They will be happy to see that you have gained the kingdom.'

"The other day I saw that Baburam, Bhavanath, and Harish have a feminine nature.

"I saw Baburam as a goddess, with a necklace around his neck and female companions with him. He has received something in a dream. His body is pure. He'll have to do only a little, and he will succeed.

"You know what's happening? I'm finding it difficult to take care of my body. It would be good if he would come and live here. The nature of these boys is changing. Noto (Latu) remains on a high plane of spiritual emotion. Gradually he's going to

merge with God.

“Rakhal is developing such a nature that I myself have to serve him. He isn’t of much service to me.

“Where are any other youngsters like Baburam and Niranjan?

[\[1\]](#)

I feel that if others come, they’ll just get instruction and leave.

“But I don’t force Baburam to come here; it could create problems at home. (*Smiling*) When I say, ‘Why don’t you come,’ he has a nice reply, ‘Why don’t you make me come?’ When he sees Rakhal, he weeps, saying he is so happy here.

“Rakhal lives here now like a son of the house. I know he won’t be attached to the world now. He says, ‘All those things appear so tasteless to me.’ His wife came here. She’s fourteen years old. From here she went to Konnagar. They asked him to go too, but he didn’t. He said, ‘I don’t enjoy such fun and frolic.’

“How does Niranjan appear to you?”

M.: “He is handsome.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, not just his face. He’s also simple and guileless. One can easily realize God if he is guileless. Spiritual instructions work faster in a guileless heart. It is like a well-tilled field without stones or pebbles. The moment a seed falls on the ground, it germinates. And it quickly bears fruit.

“Niranjan won’t marry. Don’t you think it is ‘lust and greed’ that bind a person?”

M.: “Sir, they do.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What use is it to give up tobacco and betel leaf? Giving up ‘lust and greed’ is the real renunciation.

“I saw in a vision that, though he worked in an office, he would not be touched by it. He works for his mother’s sake. There’s no harm in that.

“A clerk is jailed. He is bound, chained, and later set free. Will he dance with gusto after being released? No, he again takes to clerkship. You don’t wish to have a paid job, but you have to

provide for your family. If you didn't, what would happen to them?"

Mani: "I can leave if someone takes responsibility for them."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Yes, that's true. But for now do both this and that, the worldly and also the spiritual."

Mani: "It takes great luck to be able to renounce everything."

Sri Ramakrishna: "That is certainly true. But it depends on

[\[2\]](#)

inborn tendencies. A little work still remains in your case. When you have completed that, you will feel peace. You will be released. A patient is not easily discharged once he has entered a hospital – only when he is cured.

"Two classes of devotees come here. One class says, 'O Lord, please save me!' The other class, who belong to the inner circle, don't say this. They will succeed by only knowing two things,

[\[3\]](#)

'One, who I am, and then who they are – that is, what their relationship with me is.'

"You belong to the latter class. Otherwise, how could you do so much –"

[\[4\]](#)

Narendra, Rakhal, and Niranjana have masculine natures –

[\[5\]](#)

Baburam and Bhavanath have feminine natures

"Bhavanath and Baburam have feminine natures. Harish wears a woman's cloth when he goes to bed. Baburam says, 'I like that attitude.' That is why they've met each other. Bhavanath also has that attitude. On the other hand, Narendra, Rakhal, and Niranjana have masculine natures.

Significance of the broken arm – Sri Ramakrishna and occult powers

"Well, what does breaking my arm mean? Once before I broke a tooth in a state of ecstasy. This time it was my arm."

Seeing that Mani is silent, Thakur himself answers.

“My arm broke to rid me completely of my I-ness. I can no longer find ‘I’ within me. Looking for I, I find only Him. Until one is completely rid of I-ness, it is not possible to attain Him.

“Look at the chatak bird. It lives on land, but see how high it flies!

“Captain says I haven’t gained occult powers because I eat fish.

“Sometimes I tremble at the thought that I might attain such powers. If I had them, this place would have turned into a hospital. People would be coming here begging, ‘Please cure us.’ Are occult powers good?”

M.: “No, sir. You yourself have said that if one possesses even one of the eight occult powers, it is impossible to realize God.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You are right. Only people of low intelligence want occult powers.

“If you ask a favour of a rich man, he no longer respects you. He doesn’t allow you to ride in the same carriage with him. And even if he does, he doesn’t let you sit near him. So the best is

[6]

selfless love for God that rises unbidden out of the depths of

[7]

the soul. ”

God without form is true, and so is God with form – the home of a devotee is Thakur’s meeting place

“Well, what do you say, are God without form and God with form both true? One can’t fix the mind on the formless God for long. So God assumes form for the devotee.

“Captain said something beautiful, ‘A bird flies very high. But when it gets tired, it comes to the branch of a tree to rest. God with form after God without form.’

“I’ll have to visit your home once. I saw in a vision that Adhar’s house, Surendra’s house, and Balaram’s house are all meeting places for the devotees.

“But I’m neither happy nor sad if they don’t come here.”

Merriment with devotees is the magic of magician – Chandi – grace of God

M.: “Sir, why should that not happen? Whoever feels happiness also feels sorrow. You are beyond both happiness and sorrow.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes. And I see it all as a magician and his magic. Only the magician is real; all his magic is ephemeral, like a dream.

“I realized this when I listened to a recitation of the Chandi. First I heard that the demons Shumbha and Nishumbha were born, and shortly after I heard that they were dead.”

M.: “Sir, once I was going with Gangadhar to Kalna, by steamboat. The steamboat collided with another boat carrying twenty or twenty-five passengers. It sank, along with all the people. It all disappeared like the foam churned up by a steamer’s waves.

“Tell me, does a person watching a play have compassion for others? Does he feel any responsibility? Without some feeling of doership, compassion is not possible, is it?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He sees all these things at the same time:

[\[8\]](#)

God, maya, living beings, and the universe.

“He sees that maya (vidyamaya and avidyamaya), living beings, and the universe exist, and yet do not exist. As long as one is conscious of ‘I,’ he is conscious of others. But once it is cut through with the sword of spiritual knowledge, nothing at all exists. Then even the ‘I’ becomes the magic of the magician.”

Mani contemplates this. Sri Ramakrishna says, “You know what it’s like? It’s like cutting through a flower’s twenty-five layers of petals in one stroke.”

[\[9\]](#)

“Feeling you are the doer! Rama! Rama! Sukadeva and Shankaracharya kept their ego of knowledge. It is not man’s compassion; that belongs to God. Compassion is the ego of knowledge – and He Himself has become the ‘I of knowledge.’”

Very secret talk – Kali and Brahman – jurisdiction of Primal Power,

Kalki avatar

“You may watch a thousand tricks of magic, yet everything is under God. You cannot escape. You are not independent. Indeed, you have to do what He makes you do. One attains the knowledge of Brahman only when His Primal Power dispenses it. Then you can witness the play of the magician. Otherwise not.

“As long as you have even a little consciousness of ‘I,’ you are under the jurisdiction of the Primal Power – and unable to set yourself free.

“The play of an incarnation of God is the play of the Primal Power. It is by Her power that the avatar incarnates as a human being. Thus alone does an incarnation work; it is all by the power of the Divine Mother.

“Whenever someone would ask for money from the former treasurer of the Kali Temple, he would say, ‘Come back in two or three days. Let me ask the proprietor.’

“At the end of the Kaliyuga, God will incarnate Himself as Kalki [\[10\]](#) – a brahmin’s son who knows nothing. But suddenly he will be given a horse and a sword.”

Keshab Sen’s mother and sister – Bhuvanmohini, the wet-nurse

Adhar returns from the arati. Bhuvanmohini, a wet-nurse, sometimes comes to see Thakur. He cannot eat the food brought by everyone.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Adhar and others*): “Bhuvan came to see me. She brought twenty-five Bombay mangoes, sandesh, and rasagollas. She asked me if I would eat a mango. I said, ‘My stomach is heavy today.’ And truly today my stomach is uncomfortable after eating only a little kichuri and sandesh.

“Keshab Sen’s mother and sister came here. So I danced a little. What else could I do? I had to entertain them. They have suffered great bereavement.”

[\[1\]](#)

. Later Swami Niranjanananda.

[\[2\]](#)

. Samskaras.

[\[3\]](#)

. Referring to himself.

[\[4\]](#)

. Purusha bhava.

[\[5\]](#)

. Prakriti bhava.

[\[6\]](#)

. Nishkama bhakti.

[\[7\]](#)

. Ahetuki bhakti.

[\[8\]](#)

. Ishvara, maya, jiva, and jagat.

[\[9\]](#)

. *Rama! Rama!* means “good heavens!”

[\[10\]](#)

. The tenth and last incarnation of Vishnu, who is yet to come.

Section XV

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees at Balaram's House on the Day of the Return Car Festival

[\[1\]](#)

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna and the harmony of religions

Sri Ramakrishna is a picture of bliss, sitting with an assembly of devotees in Balaram's parlour, talking with them.

Today is the day of the Return Car Festival, Thursday, 3 July 1884, the tenth day of the bright fortnight of Ashada. Balaram maintains a shrine for Sri Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, in his home, where he performs daily worship. He also has a small cart. That is why he has invited Thakur on the occasion of the Return Car Festival. The small cart will be drawn on the second storey quadrangular verandah of the outer house. On 25 June, last Wednesday, the day of the Car Festival, Sri Ramakrishna had been invited to the home of Ishan

[\[2\]](#)

Mukherji in Thanthania. That same evening, at the home of Bhudhar on College Street, he had met pundit Shashadhar for the first time. Three days ago, last Monday, Shashadhar had met him for a

[\[3\]](#)

second time at the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar.

At Thakur's behest, Balaram has invited Shashadhar to his house today. The pundit explains Hindu religious ideas to people. Is this why Sri Ramakrishna is so eager to transmit power to him?

Thakur is talking with the devotees. Sitting close to him are Ram, M., Balaram, Manomohan, some young devotees, and Balaram's father. Balaram's father is an extremely devout Vaishnava who lives most of the time alone in Vrindavan in a garden house he built himself. There

[\[4\]](#)

he supervises the worship of Krishna. He spends all his time in Vrindavan in the service of the deity. Sometimes he studies devotional literature like *Chaitanya Charitamrita*. Other times he takes a devotional book and copies it. Yet at other times he sits and makes

garlands of roses or invites Vaishnavas and serves them. Balaram has written his father a number of letters, inviting him to Calcutta to visit Thakur. The topic of conversation that Thakur is having with the devotees is that all religions have something sectarian in them, particularly the Vaishnavas – people of different sects fight among themselves and don't know how to harmonize.

Thakur talks about religious harmony with Balaram – the Bhaktamala, the Bhagavata – his earlier story – fanaticism of Vaishnavcharan and denouncing Shaktas before Mathur

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Balaram's father and other devotees*): “One holy book of the Vaishnavas is the Bhaktamala. It is a beautiful book. It contains nothing but stories about devotees. But it is one-sided. It goes so far in one place as to make the Divine

[5]

Mother adopt a Vishnu mantra.

“Once I praised Vaishnavcharan a lot and asked Mathur Babu to invite him to his house. Mathur was very hospitable to him – silver plates for the refreshments. And what did Vaishnavcharan say to Mathur Babu but that without a Krishna mantra nothing would help! Now Mathur Babu is a devout worshiper of the Divine Mother of the Universe. His face reddened. I nudged Vaishnavcharan.

“I think you can find such things in the Srimad Bhagavata also. Such as that without a Krishna mantra it is as difficult to cross the ocean of the world as it is to try to cross a mighty ocean by holding a dog's tail. All sects talk highly of their own sects alone.

“Shaktas also try to disparage Vaishnavas when they say, ‘Sri Krishna is the pilot of the river of the world; he alone can take one across.’ To this Shaktas reply, ‘Of course this is true. Will

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the supreme Mother, empress of the universe, row one across Herself? She has engaged this Krishna to do the job.” (*All laugh.*)

[7]

His earlier story – Thakur's visit to his birthplace in 1880 – arrogance of Vaishnava weavers of Phului Shyambazar – Thakur's advice on harmony

“What arrogance people show because of their beliefs! There are weavers in my village and in Shyambazar and other places, most of them Vaishnavas. They talk very big. They say, ‘Which Vishnu do they worship? The Vishnu who preserves! We don’t touch him.’ Or ‘Which Shiva? We accept Atmarama Shiva, the Atmarameshwar Shiva.’ One of them says, ‘Tell me which Hari you worship.’ Thereupon another says, ‘No, why should we? Let someone else answer.’ They work at weaving and talk so big.”

Dogmatism of Rati’s mother, the attendant of Rani Katyayani

“Rati’s mother – the attendant of Rani Katyayani, a member of Vaishnavcharan’s group – was a bigoted Vaishnava. She used to visit here frequently. Her devotion for God was unusual. But as soon as she saw me eating Mother Kali’s prasada she ran away.

“He alone is a real person who has harmonized. Most people are single-minded. But I see all these as one. Shaktas, Vaishnavas, and Vedantists worship the same one Reality. He who is formless also has forms. All are only His different forms.

Brahman without attributes is my father, and God with form is my mother.

Whom shall I blame? Whom shall I worship? The pans of the scale are of equal weight.

“The Tantra also speaks of the same Being as the Vedas. The Puranas also speak of the same Being – Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. The Absolute belongs to the same as the phenomenal belongs.

“The Veda says, ‘Om Sat-chit-ananda Brahman.’ The Tantra says, ‘Om Sat-chit-ananda Shiva – Shiva only, only Shiva.’ The Purana says, ‘Om Sat-chit-ananda Krishna.’ The Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantras talk of the same Sat-chit-ananda. And the Vaishnava scriptures also say that Krishna Himself has become Kali.”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna in the state of a paramahansa – like a child and like a madman

Thakur goes to the verandah for a while and then returns to his room. As he was going out, he was saluted by Vishwambar's daughter, who is six or seven years old. When he returns to his room, she talks to him. She is with some boys and girls her own age.

Vishwambar's daughter (*to Sri Ramakrishna*): "I saluted you, but you didn't pay any attention."

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "What? I didn't notice."

The girl: "Then wait. Let me salute you again. Please stop. I want to salute your other foot too."

Thakur sits down laughing and, bending his head to the ground, salutes the girl. He asks her to sing a song, but she replies, "I swear, I do not know how to sing." When Thakur insists again, she says, "Should one be pressed after swearing?" Thakur enjoys the little girl's company and sings a song to her. First he sings a light song, and then he sings:

Come, let me braid your hair. What will your husband say when he visits you?

The children and the devotees laugh when they hear the song.

Thakur's earlier story – visit to his birth place – character of the
[8]

child Shivaram – Durga Puja at Hriday's house in Sihore – Thakur worships his own phallus in a state of divine intoxication

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): "The nature of a paramahansa is just like that of a five year old child. He sees everything full of consciousness.

"Once when I was in the countryside (in Kamarpukur), Ramlal's brother, Shivaram, was four or five years old. He was chasing a grasshopper on the bank of a pond. The leaves were moving. Lest they rustle, he said to them, 'Hush! I want to catch a grasshopper.' One day during a windstorm with torrential rain and flashes of lighting, he would try to open the door and go out. When I scolded him he didn't go out, but he kept peeping out at the flashes of lighting and saying, 'Uncle, they're striking flints

again!’

“A paramahansa is like a child. He doesn’t see the difference between a relative and a stranger. He doesn’t have ties of

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worldly relationships. One day he asked me, ‘Are you my

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father’s younger brother, or the husband of my father’s

[11]

sister?’

“Like a child, a paramahansa isn’t aware of his whereabouts. He sees everything as Brahman. He doesn’t know where he is going or on what path he is proceeding. Ramlal’s brother (Shivaram) went to Hriday’s house to see the Durga Puja. From Hriday’s house he wandered away all by himself. Seeing a four-year old child, a passer-by asked him, ‘Where have you come from?’ He couldn’t say. He only said, ‘Hut.’ That is to say, from a house where the worship of the image was being performed. When he was questioned further, ‘From which home did you come?’ he could only say, ‘Elder brother.’

“And then sometimes a paramahansa gets into a state of divine madness. When I was in that state, I would worship my own phallus as the Shiva lingam. It was worship of the living lingam. I would fasten a pearl around it! I can’t do that now.”

Sri Ramakrishna meets a madman of perfect knowledge after the dedication of Dakshineswar temple in 1855

“A little while after the dedication of the Dakshineswar Temple

[12]

a mad fellow came. He was a man of perfect knowledge. His shoes were torn and he was holding a potted mango sapling. After a dip in the Ganges, he performed no worship or devotions but ate whatever he had tied in the corner of his cloth. Next he went to the Kali Temple and began to chant holy verses of praise. The temple reverberated with them. Haladhari was in the shrine at the time. The madman wasn’t given food to eat at the guest-house, but it didn’t upset him. He gathered up the discarded leaf plates and ate the remnants of food on them. This

was where the dogs came to eat. He pushed away the dogs and helped himself to the food. The dogs didn't seem to mind. Haladhari followed him and asked who he was and if he was a man of perfect knowledge. His reply was, 'Yes, I am a perfect jnani. Now keep quiet!'

"When I heard all this from Haladhari my heart trembled in my chest. I held tightly to Hriday. I said to the Divine Mother, 'Mother! Will I also be put in this state?' We went to see him. He spoke words of wisdom, but when others came, he acted crazy. When he left, Haladhari accompanied him for quite some distance. When they passed the gate, he said to Haladhari, 'What more can I tell you? When you see no difference between the water in this gutter and the water in the Ganges, know that you have reached perfect knowledge.' Saying this, he walked away quickly."

Chapter III

Practicing spiritual disciplines is more essential than learning

With the devotees seated close by, Sri Ramakrishna is talking with M.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "What do you think of Shashadhar?"

M.: "Sir, he is a good man."

Sri Ramakrishna: "He's intelligent, isn't he?"

M.: "Yes, Sir. He's a real scholar."

Sri Ramakrishna: "According to the Gita, one who is respected and accepted by many has the power of God within. But there's a little work he has yet to do.

"What use is mere scholarship? Some austerity is necessary. One has to practice some spiritual disciplines."

His earlier story – spiritual practices of Pundit Gauri and Narayan Shastri – meeting with Keshab at the Belgharia garden in 1875 – arrival of Captain in 1876-77

"Gauri Pundit practiced spiritual disciplines. When he chanted

a hymn to the Divine Mother, scholars would seem to be no more than earthworms.

“Narayan Shastri also was not just a pundit; he also practiced spiritual disciplines.

“Narayan Shastri studied continuously for twenty-five years. For seven years he studied the Nyaya system of philosophy. Even then he would go into ecstasy repeating, ‘Hara, Hara.’ The king of Jaipur wanted to make him his court pundit, but he didn’t accept the position. He often came and stayed at Dakshineswar. He had a great desire to go to the Vasishta Ashrama to practice austerities. He would often tell me about wanting to go there. I forbade him. He said, ‘Who knows when I may die? When will I perform spiritual practices? The pot may crack at any time.’ When he persisted, I let him go.

“I hear from some that Narayan Shastri has quit his body. Perhaps he received a slap from Bhairava while practicing austerities. And there are others who say, ‘He is alive. We have just seen him off in a train.’

“Before meeting Keshab Sen, I asked Narayan Shastri, ‘Please go once and see what kind of person he is.’ After visiting Keshab, he returned and said, ‘That fellow is perfect in japa.’ He knew astrology and said, ‘Keshab Sen has a good destiny. I spoke to him in Sanskrit and he talked in Bengali.’

“Then I went with Hriday and met him in the Belgharia garden house. As soon I saw him, I said, ‘He has cast off his tail. He can now live in water as well as on dry land.’

“Keshab sent three Brahmos to the temple to examine me. Prasanna was one of them. They were to watch me day and night and then report to Keshab. They were with me at night in my room. They constantly repeated, ‘Compassionate One’ and said to me, ‘You should follow Keshab Babu. It will benefit you.’ I told them, ‘I believe in God with form.’ Even then they kept on repeating, ‘Compassionate One, Compassionate One!’ Then a mood came over me. I said, ‘Leave this place.’ I didn’t let them stay in my room at all. They went out and slept on the verandah.

“When Captain saw me for the first time, he also stayed the night.”

[\[14\]](#)

Michael Madhusudana and conversation with Narayan Shastri

“Michael visited here when Narayan Shastri was present. Dwarika Babu, Mathur’s eldest son, had brought him. A lawsuit

[\[15\]](#)

was in the offing with the owners of the magazine next door so the proprietors of the temple had brought Michael to the garden to seek his advice.

“There is a big room next to the [temple] office. I saw Michael there. I asked Narayan Shastri to talk to him. Michael couldn’t speak well in Sanskrit and kept making mistakes. So they talked in the vernacular (Bengali).

“Narayan Shastri asked, ‘Why did you give up your religion?’ Pointing to his belly, Michael said, ‘I had to give up because of this.’

“Narayan Shastri said, ‘What conversation can I have with one who gives up his faith for the sake of the stomach?’ Madhusudana then said to me, ‘Please tell me something.’

“I said, ‘I don’t know why, but I don’t feel like saying anything. It is like somebody is shutting my mouth.’”

‘Lust and greed’ can deprive a pundit of his intelligence – worship and rituals of a worldly person

Choudhury Babu was expected to pay a visit to Thakur.

Manomohan: “Choudhury won’t be coming. He said he was expecting a Bengali (Shashadhar) from Faridpur, so had dropped the idea of coming.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “How mean! He has the arrogance of learning. On top of that, he has married a second time. He considers the world an insignificant earthen bowl.”

Choudhury holds an M.A. He developed great dispassion on the death of his first wife, when he would visit Thakur often at Dakshineswar. He has married a second time and is now earning three to four hundred rupees a month.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “Attachment to ‘lust and greed’ robs a person of understanding. When Haramohan came to see me for the first time, he had good signs. I would long to see him. He must have been seventeen or eighteen then. These days when I invite him, he doesn’t turn up. He is living in a separate house now with his wife. He used to live with his maternal uncle and was fine. He had no problems of running a household then. Now, having established a new home, he has to go daily to the market for his wife. (*All laugh.*) The other day he came to Dakshineswar. I said to him, ‘Go away. Leave this place. I don’t feel like touching you.’”

Kartabhaja Chandra (Chatterji) has arrived. He is sixty or sixty-five years old. He recites verses of the Kartabhaja sect quite fluently. He goes to gently stroke Thakur’s feet, but Thakur doesn’t let him touch his feet. He says laughingly, “Now you are acting prudently.”

Sri Ramakrishna goes to Balaram’s inner apartments to see Lord Jagannath. The women of the family are anxious to see him in their quarters.

Now Thakur returns to the parlour, smiling. He says, “I changed my clothes that I used in the toilet and then went for the darshan of Jagannath. I offered some flowers.

“The worship, japa, and austerities of worldly people are only for the moment. Those who know nothing but God repeat His name with every breath. Some unceasingly chant the name of Rama, or Om Rama mentally. People who follow the path of knowledge also repeat ‘So ’ham’ (I am He). The tongues of some people are always moving.

“Indeed there must be constant remembrance and contemplation of God.”

Chapter IV

**Balaram's house – Shashadhar and other devotees – Thakur in
samadhi**

Shashadhar enters the room with one or two friends. They salute Thakur and sit down.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Like friends of the bride, after arranging the bridal bed, we are awake and awaiting the bridegroom's arrival.”

The pundit laughs. The devotees have gathered together. Balaram's father is there, as well as Dr. Pratap. Thakur talks about various things.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Shashadhar*): “There are signs of spiritual knowledge. The first is a serene nature. The second is absence of pride. You have both these signs.

“There are other signs in a man of knowledge, too. In the company of a sadhu, he is a man of renunciation; when at work, he's like a lion – for example, while lecturing. He's full of humour in the company of his wife, witty as a pundit. (*The pundit and others laugh.*)

“The vijnani has a different disposition. For example, Chaitanya Deva acted like a child, or like a madman, or an inert object, or a ghoul.

“There are, again, in the state of a child, adolescent as well as youthful moods. In the state of an adolescent, he is full of fun, but when he teaches others, he has the strength of a young man.”

Pundit: “What kind of love is necessary to realize God?”

**Shashadhar and talk on the principles of love and devotion –
burning faith is needed – humility of the Vaishnavas**

Sri Ramakrishna: “There are three kinds of bhakti, depending on one's nature: the sattva of bhakti, the rajas of bhakti and the tamas of bhakti.

“In sattvic bhakti, only God knows about it. Such a devotee loves God secretly, perhaps meditating under his mosquito net without anyone knowing about it. When one develops the purest

sattva, – sattva of sattva – the vision of God is very near, just as at dawn one knows that there will be no more delay for the sun to rise.

“Those who have rajasic bhakti have a desire for people to see that they are devotees. They perform the worship with sixteen items. They go into the temple wearing pure silk. They wear a rudraksha rosary round their necks. The rosary has pearls and here and there gold rudrakshas.

“The tamas of bhakti is devotion like an attack of dacoits. Dacoits are armed with weapons while committing dacoity and have no fear even of eight police officers. They shout, ‘Kill, rob!’ Like mad people they shout, ‘Hara, Hara, Hara; Vyom, Vyom! Victory to Kali!’ They have immense strength of mind, and burning faith.

“Shaktas have this kind of faith. ‘Why, I have once chanted the name of Kali, the name of Durga. I have once chanted the name of Rama. How can I be touched by sin?’

“Vaishnavas have a very meek and humble disposition. They only tell the rosary (*Thakur looks at Balaram’s father*) and weep and sob, ‘O Krishna, Be merciful to me! I am pitiable, I am a sinner.’

“One should have such burning faith as to be able to say, ‘I have taken God’s name, how can there be any sin in me?’ Imagine a person repeating the name of God day and night, yet calling himself a sinner!

“While talking, Thakur becomes intoxicated with ecstatic love and sings:

Mother, can I but die with Durga’s name upon my lips,

I shall see, O Shankari, how in the end you cannot refuse to rescue me.

Should I have killed a brahmin or a cow, or destroyed a child in the womb, or indulged in drink, or slain a woman,

For all those heinous deeds I care not in the least; still may I aspire to Brahman.

Shashadhar begins to weep listening to the song. Thakur sings

another song:

In Shiva's company the Mother is ever lost in ecstasy;

[17]

Though drunk with the wine of bliss, She reels but does not fall.

Now Vaishnavcharan, Adhar's professional musician, sings:

O my tongue, always repeat the name of Durga.

Who else can save you from danger but She?

O Mother, You are the heaven, the earth, and the nether world.

From You have sprung Hari, Brahma, and the twelve Gopalas.

[18]

[19]

You are the ten great Powers, and the ten Incarnations.

This time You must take me across!

You are the moving and the unmoving, the gross and the subtle.

You are creation, preservation, and dissolution;

You are the source of the universe.

You are the Mother of the three worlds and their saviour.

[20]

You are the Power of all and You are Your own Power too.

Hearing these few lines of song, Thakur goes into ecstasy. When the song ends, he himself begins to sing:

O Mother Shyama! Yashoda would make You dance when she called You her precious blue jewel!

Where have You hidden that form, O terrible Shyama?

Vaishnavcharan now sings devotional songs about the meeting

[21]

with Subol.

When the musician adds his own line, 'I say, one cannot

[22]

pronounce Dha without Ra,' Thakur goes into samadhi.

Shashadhar sheds tears of love.

Chapter V

The Return Car Festival – Thakur and the devotees sing devotional

songs and dance in front of the chariot

Thakur comes out of samadhi. The song is over. Shashadhar, Pratap, Ramdayal, Ram, Manomohan, some young boy devotees, and others are also present. Sri Ramakrishna says to M., “Please poke him.” That is, he wants someone to ask something of Shashadhar.

Ramdayal (*to Shashadhar*): “The scriptures speak of the form of Brahman as an imagination. Who does the imagining?”

Pundit: “Brahman Himself. It is not the imaginings of a human being.”

Dr. Pratap: “But why? Why does Brahman imagine?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why not? He doesn’t consult anybody before [\[23\]](#)

He does anything. It is His pleasure. He is self-willed. Why should we care to know the reason why God does it? You’ve come to the orchard to eat mangoes, so eat them. If you begin to count the trees, how many thousands of branches and how many hundreds of thousands of leaves – what use are all these calculations? Futile reasoning and discussions do not yield the truth.”

Dr. Pratap: “So should we not reason anymore?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You must not argue or reason for no purpose. However, you must reason about what is Real and what is unreal, what is permanent and what is impermanent. You must reason in times of passion, anger, or grief.”

Pundit: “That’s different. It’s called reasoning by discrimination.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, discriminating between what is Real and what is unreal.” (*All are silent.*)

(*To the Pundit*) “Formerly, great men used to visit.”

Pundit: “Do you mean rich people?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, great scholars.”

Meanwhile the little chariot is brought to the outer verandah of the second storey. Lord Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balaram are

adorned with flowers and garlands of different kinds. They are also bedecked with jewelry and clad in new yellow apparel. Balaram worships in the sattvic way, without any pomp or show. People outside don't even know that the Car Festival is being celebrated in the house.

Thakur and the devotees go to the front of the cart. It will be pulled down this very verandah. Holding the string of the cart, Thakur pulls it for a while and then begins to sing:

Behold, the whole of Nadia trembles under the waves of Gauranga's love!

Again he sings:

Behold, the brothers have come! The two who shed tears while chanting

[24]

Hari's name.

Sri Ramakrishna dances, and the devotees dance with him, singing. Vaishnavcharan, the musician, joins the group in dance and music.

In no time the verandah is filled with people. The women view this ecstatic celebration from a nearby room. It looks as if Sri Gauranga Himself, intoxicated with the love of Hari, is dancing in Srivas's home with his devotees. The pundit and his friends also watch the song and dance in front of the chariot.

It is not yet evening. Thakur returns to the sitting room and sits down with the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the pundit*): "This is called the joy of

[25]

devotional song. Worldly people are engrossed in the joy of

[26]

the senses, the joy of 'lust and greed.' Through worship, His grace descends. One attains God's vision and then enjoys the

[27]

bliss of Brahman."

Shashadhar and the devotees listen to Thakur without uttering a word.

Pundit (*humbly*): "Sir, what kind of yearning for God is needed for such a blissful state of mind?"

Sri Ramakrishna: “When your heart pants for His vision. The guru said to the disciple, ‘Come here. Let me show you what kind of yearning is needed to attain God.’ Saying this, the guru took him to a pond. He pushed his head under water and held him there. When he let him up, he asked the disciple, ‘How did your heart feel?’ The disciple said, ‘My heart was panting for breath.’”

Pundit: “Yes, yes. That’s it! Now I understand!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Love of God – that is the essence. Love and devotion for God. Narada said to Rama, ‘May I have pure love for Your lotus feet. And may I never be enchanted by Your world-bewitching maya.’ Ramachandra said, ‘Ask for another boon.’ Narada said, ‘I want nothing else. I only want to have love and devotion for Your lotus feet.’”

The pundit is about to leave, and Thakur asks a devotee, “Please bring a carriage for him.”

Pundit: “No, sir. I’ll just walk.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing*): “How can that be? You, even Brahma fails to find in meditation.”

Pundit: “I had no particular reason to leave. But I have to perform my evening devotions.”

Sri Ramakrishna in the state of a paramahansa – renunciation of duties – sweet chanting of God’s name

Sri Ramakrishna: “The Divine Mother has taken away from me sandhya and such ritualistic worship. They purify the body and the mind. I am not in that state now.”

Saying this, Thakur hums the lines of a song:

When will you lie down happily between your wives, Purity and
Defilement? When you see no difference between these two, then shall

[\[28\]](#)

you see the Divine Mother Kali.

Shashadhar salutes Thakur and departs.

Ram: “I went to see Shashadhar yesterday, as you asked me to.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “When did I ask you to do that? But it’s good

that you went.”

Ram: “The editor of a newspaper (*The Indian Empire*) has run you down.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What does it matter?”

Ram: “Listen what else. After hearing me, he wouldn’t let me go. He wanted to hear more about you.”

Dr. Pratap is still sitting there. Thakur says to him, “Come to Dakshineswar. Bhuvan (the wet-nurse) says she’ll pay the carriage fare.”

It is evening. Thakur is chanting the name of the Mother of the Universe. And he repeats the names of Rama, Krishna, and Hari. The devotees listen without uttering a word. His chanting of the name is sweet, as if raining honey. Today Balaram’s house seems to have become Navadvip – Navadvip outside and Vrindavan inside.

Thakur will go back to Dakshineswar tonight. Balaram takes him to the inner apartments to serve him refreshments. This gives the ladies an opportunity to see him.

Seated in the sitting room, the devotees await him as they sing devotional songs together. Thakur returns and joins in the singing. The singing goes on:

My Gaur is dancing,

Dancing with the devotees to the kirtan in Srivas’s courtyard.

His lips repeating “Haribol,”

He glances at Gadadhar.

From reddened eyes, Gaur’s tears stream incessantly onto his golden body.

Thakur adds his own lines:

Brother, the darling of Shachi is dancing to the kirtan.

My Gaur is dancing;

This Gaur, my life-breath, is dancing.

[1]

. Ratha yatra.

[2]

. See *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Volume I, Section XI.

[3]

. See *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Volume III, Section IX.

[4]

. Shyamasundara.

[5]

. Bhagavati.

[6]

. Rajarajeshvari.

[7]

. Sri Ramakrishna visited his birthplace for the last time in 1880. During this journey he, together with Hriday, paid a gracious visit to Phului Shyambazar and performed kirtan there with the devotees Natwar Goswami, Ishan Mallick, Saday Babaji, and others.

[8]

. Ramakrishna's nephew, Ramlal's younger brother. He was born on 30 March 1866, 18th Chaitra, 1272 (B.Y.), the full moon day of Holi. Thakur visited his birthplace when he was three or four years old, in 1869-70.

[9]

. Referring to Shivaram, Ramlal's younger brother.

[10]

. Chacha.

[11]

. Phupha.

[12]

. Purna jnani.

[13]

. Ho re re niralamba lambodara.

[14]

. Madhusudan 1824-1873: A poet born at Sagardari who lived in England from 1862 to 1867 and was a convert to Christianity. He met Thakur sometime after 1868.

[15]

. Ordnance storehouse.

[16]

. Vishuddha sattva.

[17]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section XIV, Chapter III.

[18]

. The ten Mahavidyas, or aspects of Shakti, personified as Kali, Tara, Tripurasundari, Bhuvanesvari, Chinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi, and Kamala.

[19]

. The ten incarnations of Vishnu.

[\[20\]](#)

. For complete song refer to Volume II, Section XVIII, Chapter II.

[\[21\]](#)

. Subol Milan, one of Krishna's companions.

2. *Dha* and *Ra* are the reversal of *Radha*, to whom the songs of Subol relate.

[\[23\]](#)

. Icchamaya.

[\[24\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Section VI, Chapter I.

[\[25\]](#)

. Bhajanananda.

[\[26\]](#)

. Vishyananda.

[\[27\]](#)

. Brahmananda.

[\[28\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section II, Chapter VI.

Section XVI

Thakur at the Dakshineswar Temple with M., Rakhal, Latu, Balaram, Adhar, Devotees from Shivapur, and Others

Chapter I

Conversation on the essence of yoga with the Shivapur devotees – kundalini and piercing of the six centres

Sri Ramakrishna is seated with the devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple after the midday meal. It is about two o'clock.

A group of bauls from Shivapur and devotees from Bhawanipur have arrived. Rakhal, Latu, and Harish are now living with Thakur. Balaram and M. are also in the room.

It is Sunday, 3 August 1884, the twelfth day of the bright fortnight,

[\[1\]](#)

the second day of the Swing Festival. The previous day Thakur had visited Surendra's house. Shashadhar and other devotees had met him there.

Thakur addresses the devotees of Shivapur

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): "You cannot achieve union with God when the mind dwells on 'lust and greed.' The mind of an ordinary person remains in the centres of awareness located

[\[2\]](#)

at the genital, anal, and naval regions. It takes a lot of effort in spiritual discipline for the kundalini to awaken. There are three nerves – ida, pingala, and sushumna. And in the sushumna are six lotuses, the lowest being the muladhara. Then there are svadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddha, and ajna. These are the six spiritual centres.

"When the kundalini awakens, after it has crossed the lotuses of muladhara, svadhisthana, and manipura, it reaches the anahata lotus located at the heart. It stays there. The mind is then withdrawn from the three lower centres of anus, sex organ, and navel; it attains a spiritual consciousness and sees a light.

The aspirant is speechless with wonder and exclaims, 'What is this! What is this!'

"Having pierced six centres, the kundalini reaches the lotus of sahasrara and unites with it. When the kundalini reaches there, the aspirant passes into samadhi.

"According to the Vedas, these centres are called bhumis or planes. There are seven planes. The heart is the fourth, and the lotus at anahata is twelve-petalled.

"The vishuddha centre is the fifth plane. When the mind reaches there, the heart yearns only to talk of God and to hear about Him. This centre is located in the throat. It has a sixteen-petalled lotus. The person whose mind has reached this centre feels great pain to hear any worldly talk, such as talk of 'lust and greed.' When he hears such talk, he gets up and leaves the place.

"After this comes the sixth plane, the ajna centre of two petals. When the kundalini reaches there, one has the vision of God's form. But there is still a thin screen of separation. Like a lantern, the light can't be touched because of a glass barrier.

"Then one reaches the seventh plane, the thousand-petalled lotus. When the kundalini reaches there, samadhi comes about. The Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute Shiva resides at the sahasrara. Here He unites with Shakti – it is the union of Shiva and Shakti.

"When the mind reaches the sahasrara, one becomes absorbed in samadhi. In this state all awareness of the external disappears, and the person cannot preserve his body. If milk is poured into his mouth, it runs out. If one remains in this state, one dies in twenty-one days. A ship cannot return after it has entered the 'black waters.'

[\[3\]](#)

"But ishvarakotis, such as incarnations of God, can come down from this state of samadhi. Since they like to live with devotees and enjoy love for God, they can descend from this state. God keeps the 'I of knowledge,' the 'I of devotion' in them to teach mankind. Their state of mind is like the swift

movement of a boat, racing up and down between the sixth and the seventh planes.

“Some people, of their own will, retain the ‘I of knowledge’ after attaining samadhi. But this ego is a mere appearance. It is just like a line drawn on the surface of water.

“Hanuman, having realized God both with form and without, retained the ‘I of a servant.’ Narada and others – Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanatkumara – also retained the ‘I of a servant’ or the ‘I of a devotee’ after attaining the knowledge of Brahman. They are like big steamships which not only cross the ocean but also carry others to the opposite shore.”

Is Thakur thus describing his own state?

**A paramahansa – believers in the formless God and God with form –
Thakur’s love for God after attaining knowledge of Brahman – union
of the Absolute and the phenomenal**

He says:

“A paramahansa may believe either in God with form or the formless God. Trailanga Swami is an example of one who believed in the formless God. They care for their own good alone; they’re satisfied with their own realization.

“Those who believe in God with form, even after attaining the knowledge of Brahman, live with love for God in order to teach mankind. It is like pouring water from a full pitcher into others.

“All the spiritual practices they have performed to realize God, they tell others about to help them. People dig wells for water with great effort, using spades and baskets. Some of them throw the spades and other tools into the well itself after it is dug, thinking, What use are they now? But some put the tools on the edge of the well so they may be of benefit to others.

“There are some who eat mangoes and then secretly wipe their mouths. There are others who eat and also share the mangoes with others. They work for the benefit of mankind and to enjoy the bliss of God. ‘I want to eat sugar.’

“The gopis attained the knowledge of Brahman, but they didn’t want the knowledge. They preferred to enjoy themselves with

God – as mother and child, ^[4] as His beloved, ^[5] or as a ^[6] handmaid of God.”

**Thakur in the joy of devotional song – chanting the name of
Gauranga and of the Mother of the Universe**

The devotees from Shivapur are singing to the accompaniment

^[7] of a gopi yantra. In the first song was the line, “We are sinners, pray save us.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “It is the beginner’s attitude to repeat God’s name out of fear. Please sing songs about the realization of God, songs of joy. (*To Rakhal*) What a beautiful song they were singing the other day in Nabin Niyogi’s house, ‘Be intoxicated with the wine of Hari’s name.’

“It is not good to talk only of restlessness and worries. Rather, one should be happy and become intoxicated chanting His Name.”

The devotees from Shivapur: “Won’t you sing a song, sir?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What shall I sing? All right, I will when I feel like it.”

After a while Thakur begins to sing. His gaze turns upward.

O Bharati, give me a loincloth. I wish to go to Vraja disguised as a beggar.
He sings another song:

^[8]
The wave of Gaur’s love has touched my body.

And another:

Come, O friend, and behold the fair one’s beauty!

See Gauranga, anointed with precious ornaments, glowing red!

At the very sight, one is overwhelmed with ecstasy.

Vrishabhanunandini is indeed a great mason and Bhangada a great artisan.

And still another:

[\[9\]](#)

Dive deep, dive deep, O my mind, into the ocean of beauty.

After chanting the name of Gauranga, he chants the name of the Divine Mother.

Thakur sings again:

Can everybody gain the treasure of Mother Shyama?

This foolish mind does not know how priceless this inherited treasure is.

Even with all his penance, indeed rare is Shiva's vision of Her.

Only when the mind is intoxicated, can one attain the crimson feet of the Divine Mother.

And again:

The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight to the blue lotus

[\[10\]](#)

flower of Mother Shyama's feet.

And yet again:

What a machine Mother Shyama has built!

What a machine Mother Kali has made!

In this machine, three and a half cubits high, what pranks She plays!

She Herself residing within pulls the cord and makes it move.

The machine thinks it moves by itself, knowing not who its operator is.

But the machine who knows it is She will be a machine no more.

And Mother Shyama will Herself be tied with the cord of love.

Chapter II

Thakur in samadhi and his conversation with the Mother of the Universe – essence of ecstatic love

While singing this song, Thakur goes into samadhi. The devotees gaze at him in silence. After a while, coming down to a semi-conscious state, Sri Ramakrishna talks to the Divine Mother.

“Mother, please come down here from above (from the sahasrara). You torment me! Please sit quietly!

“Mother, as are one's tendencies acquired in past births, so is

one fated in this one. What can I say to them? Nothing is achieved without discrimination and dispassion.

“There are different kinds of dispassion. What is called ‘monkey renunciation’ is one of them. It is the dispassion a person feels after being tormented by the fire of the world. It doesn’t last long. Real dispassion is when a person possesses everything, lacks nothing, but it all appears to be unreal.

“This non-attachment doesn’t happen all of a sudden. It comes in its own time. It’s good to hear spiritual talk, because when the right time comes, then one will remember and think, ‘Oh, I heard about that.’

“And there is something else. When a person hears about spiritual matters, desire for worldly enjoyment slowly decreases. To get rid of intoxication, rice-water has to be taken little by little. One gradually overcomes the state of intoxication. There are very few people who are fit for spiritual knowledge. The Gita says, ‘Scarcely one out of thousands strives for perfection; of those who strive, even among the perfected, scarcely anyone truly knows Me.’

A Tantrik devotee: “Manuñyääà sahasreñu kaçcid yatati

[\[11\]](#)

siddhaye.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The more the attachment to the world disappears, the more knowledge one will gain. *Attachment* means attachment to ‘lust and greed.’”

[\[12\]](#)

[\[13\]](#)

Company of holy men, faith, single-minded devotion, love for

[\[14\]](#)

God, bhava, mahabhava, and prema

“Not everyone experiences ecstatic love. Gauranga did. An ordinary human being can experience ecstasy – this far and no farther. Only ishvarakotis – for example, incarnations of God – attain ecstatic love. When one attains this intense love for God, not only does he feel that the world is an illusion, but he forgets the body, which is so dear to everyone.

“A Persian book (by Hafiz) says: Under the skin there is flesh; under the flesh there is bone; within the bone there is marrow; and within that there are many other things – but underlying

[15]

all these is ecstatic love.

“A person becomes soft and tender-hearted through ecstatic love. In this intense love for God, Krishna’s body is bent three

[16]

times.

“Such intense love acts as a cord to bind Existence-Knowledge-

[17]

Bliss Absolute. Then when-ever you want to see Him, you only have to pull the cord. Whenever He is called, He appears.

“When love for God matures, one experiences ecstasy. In the state of ecstasy, one becomes speechless contemplating Sat-chit-ananda. An ordinary human being can only go that far. But when ecstasy matures, one experiences maha-bhava, prema. It is like the difference between an unripe mango and a ripe one.

“Pure love of God alone is the essential thing. Everything else is illusion.

“When Narada recited a hymn of praise, Rama told him to ask for a boon. Narada asked for pure love for God. And he added, ‘Rama, may I never be enchanted by your world-bewitching maya.’ Rama said, ‘That’s all right. Ask for another boon.’ Narada replied, ‘I want nothing else, only love and devotion.’

“How can you develop such love for God? Initially, you have to associate with the holy. By keeping their company, faith in God comes. With faith, single-minded devotion develops. Then you don’t want to hear anything but talk about God. And you’ll wish to work for Him alone.

“Single-minded devotion is followed by love for God. Then ecstasy, mahabhava, and prema – and then one attains the goal.

“Only incarnations of God and the like attain mahabhava and prema. The knowledge of worldly people and devotees is not like the knowledge of an incarnation of God. The knowledge of the

worldly can be likened to the light of a lamp; it only lights the inside of the room. This knowledge only helps a person in eating and drinking and running household affairs – looking after the body, bringing up children, and so forth.

“The knowledge of a devotee is like the light of the moon. He can see both the inside and the outside of a room with its light – but not a very small object lying at a distance. On the other hand, the knowledge of incarnations is like the light of the sun. They can see inside, outside, the small, and the large, everything.

“The mind of worldly people is like turbid water; it can only be

[\[18\]](#)

cleaned by pouring a cleansing agent in it. Discrimination and non-attachment are cleansing agents.”

Now Thakur talks to the devotees of Shivapur.

The need for hearing about God – ‘the proper time’ – normal state of Thakur

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ask if you have any questions.”

A devotee: “Sir, we have listened to everything.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It’s good to hear – but nothing happens before the proper time.

“How can quinine help a patient who is running a high fever? It should be administered after the fever mixture has been given and the bowels have moved – when the fever has subsided. But, of course, some people are cured naturally; they get well even without taking quinine.

“When going to bed, a child said, ‘Mother, please wake me up when I need to go to the bathroom.’ His mother said, ‘Child, I won’t have to wake you. The urge itself will wake you up.’

“I see some people coming here with devotees in a boat. They don’t like to hear about God. They poke their friend, asking, ‘When are you leaving? When are you going?’ When the friend doesn’t rise, however much pressed, they say, ‘All right, I’ll go and wait for you in the boat.’

“Those who are born as human beings for the first time need to enjoy the things of the world. Spiritual awakening does not come until a lot of work has been done.”

Thakur is going to the jhautala. He speaks to M. on the semicircular verandah.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Well, what do you think of my state of mind?”

M. (*smiling*): “Sir, outwardly you are very simple, but within you are deep. It is very difficult to understand you.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Yes. Just as people see only the surface of a floor. They don’t know what lies below its surface.”

At the bathing landing of the chandni, Balaram and other devotees are getting on a boat bound for Calcutta. It is four o’clock. It is ebb tide, and a southern breeze decorates the surface of the Ganges with a necklace of ripples.

Balaram’s boat sails toward Baghbazar. M. watches it for a long time, until it disappears from view. Then he returns to Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna comes down from the western verandah, on his way to the jhautala. There are beautiful clouds in the northwest. Thakur says, “Is it going to rain? Please bring the umbrella.” M. brings it. Latu accompanies him.

Thakur has reached the panchavati. He says to Latu, “Why are you looking so unwell?”

Latu: “I can hardly eat anything.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Is that the only reason? The weather isn’t good. And maybe you meditate too much.”

Thakur now talks to M.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “You must do this. Please ask Baburam to come and stay here for a day or two when Rakhal goes away. Otherwise, I shall feel unhappy.”

M.: “As you wish. I’ll tell him.”

One can realize God when one is simple and guileless at heart. Thakur asks if Baburam is simple at heart.

**Sri Ramakrishna beholds a beautiful sight in the jhautala and
panchavati**

Thakur is returning from the jhautala, passing along its southern side. M. and Latu stand under the panchavati to the north and watch him.

Behind Thakur, newly arisen clouds beautify the sky, their reflection darkening the water of the Ganges.

Thakur approaches, as if the Lord Himself had assumed a human form and come to the mortal world for the welfare of the devotees. He strolls on the bank of the Ganges, the destroyer of all sins, having emerged from Lord Hari's lotus feet. It is as if the Lord Himself is present. Is that why the trees, creepers, bushes, garden paths, shrines, images of the gods, attendants, door-keepers, and every particle of dust feel so sweet?

Chapter III

**Nabai Chaitanya, Narendra, Baburam, Latu, Mani, Rakhal, Niranjan,
and Adhar**

Thakur comes into his room and sits down. Balaram has brought some mangoes, and Thakur says to Ram Chatterji, "Please take some mangoes for your son." Nabai Chaitanya is also in the room, dressed in a red dhoti.

Thakur is speaking with Hazra on the long northern verandah.

[\[19\]](#)

The topic of their conversation is the harital ash that a brahmachari has given to Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna: "The medicine the brah-machari gave me suits me very much. The man is correct."

Hazra: "But the poor fellow has gotten caught up in worldly life. What can he do? Nabai Chaitanya has come from Konnagar. But even though he's a householder, he's dressed himself in a

[\[20\]](#)

red dhoti."

Sri Ramakrishna: "What can I say? I see that God Himself has taken the forms of everyone. So, I'm not able to say anything critical to anyone."

Thakur comes back into his room and then talks with Hazra about Narendra.

Hazra: “Narendra has gotten entangled in a lawsuit again.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He doesn’t believe in Shakti. When a person has taken a human body, he must accept Shakti.”

Hazra: “He says, ‘If I accept it, everyone will accept it. So how can I?’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It’s not good to go that far. He has now come under the jurisdiction of Shakti. Even a judge has to stand in the witness box if he gives evidence.

(*To M.*) “Have you seen Narendra?”

M.: “Not recently, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Do meet him and bring him here in a carriage.”

(*To Hazra*) “Well, what is his relation with this place [meaning himself]?”

Hazra: “He will receive help from you.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “And Bhavanath? Would he come here so [\[21\]](#)

often if he didn’t have good tendencies?

“And Harish and Latu – they’re always meditating. What do you think about that?”

Hazra: “What is the sense in only meditating? It would be better if they rendered you personal service.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That will come about. Perhaps some others will come to take their place.”

Different instructions to Mani – Sri Ramakrishna’s simple and [\[22\]](#)

natural state

Hazra goes back to his room. There is still time before evening worship, and Thakur sits in his room, talking privately with Mani.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Tell me, are people attracted by what I say in ecstasy?”

Mani: “Yes sir, a lot.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What do they think of it? Do they feel anything when they see the state of ecstasy?”

Mani: “We feel that there is knowledge, intense love for God, and dispassion all in the same person. And on top of that, simplicity and guilelessness. So many ships have sailed through the depths of your consciousness, but you are natural and so simple! Not many people can understand it, but a few are attracted by that state alone.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “According to the Ghoshpara sect, God is called ‘sahaja,’ or ‘simple.’ They say you can’t recognize the Simple without being simple yourself.”

**Sri Ramakrishna and pride and egoism – “I am an instrument and
You are the operator”**

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Well, do I have any ego?”

Mani: “Yes, you have a little. To preserve your body and to enjoy love for God – and for the devotees, to impart spiritual knowledge to them. You have kept it by praying for it.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I haven’t kept it. It is God who has kept it in me. Tell me, what happens when I’m in the state of ecstasy?”

Mani: “You said earlier that when the mind rises to the sixth plane, you see forms of god. Later, when you speak, your mind comes down to the fifth plane.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is God who does all this. I know nothing.”

Mani: “That is why you attract people so much.”

**Why so many scriptures? – all religions are true – Sri Ramakrishna
and the reconciliation of contradictory scriptures**

Mani: “Sir, there are different opinions in the scriptures. According to one Purana, Krishna is considered pure

consciousness and Radha the power of consciousness. According to another Purana, Krishna is said to be Kali, the Primordial Energy.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The Devi Purana says this. According to it, Kali Herself has become Krishna.

“That might be true! God is infinite, and so are the paths to reach Him.”

Mani sits silently for a while after hearing this.

Mani: “Now I understand. It’s like what you say about climbing to the roof. The aim is to reach the roof by any way we can – by rope, bamboo, or any other means.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is God’s grace that you have understood this much. It’s not possible to become free from doubt without His grace.

“The important thing is somehow to develop love for God. What is the use of knowing different paths? If you can gain love for Him by treading one particular path, you have achieved everything. It is only by developing love for Him that you can attain Him. Later, if there is a need, God will make you understand everything. He will show the other paths. It’s enough just to develop love for God. What is the need to reason and discuss various ideas? You have come to eat mangoes. Eat them. What need is there to count how many branches and leaves there are? Hanuman’s attitude is, ‘I don’t know the date, the day of the week, or the position of the stars. I only contemplate Rama.’”

Renunciation of the world and God-realization – should the devotee save, or be ‘satisfied with whatever comes of its own accord’?

Mani: “I now desire for my work and duties to be reduced to a large extent so I can give a lot of my mind to God.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ah! What else can be needed! But a man of knowledge can live unattached in the household.”

Mani: “But sir, a special power is needed to live unattached.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, that’s true. But perhaps you wanted a worldly life. Krishna dwelt in Radha’s heart, but when she wanted, his divine sport was enacted in human form.

“Now pray that all this work and duties may be reduced.

“Besides, renunciation from the heart is enough.”

Mani: “Mental renunciation is for those who can’t renounce outwardly. For people of a high class, there is complete renunciation – renunciation in the heart as well as external renunciation.”

Thakur is silent. Then he continues the discussion.

Sri Ramakrishna: “How did you like what I said about
[\[25\]](#)
renunciation?”

Mani: “Yes, I did like it, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What does dispassion mean? Let me hear it from you.”

Mani: “It not only means renunciation of worldly life. It means love for God together with dispassion for the world.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, you are right.

“You do need money in worldly life, but you mustn’t be anxious and worry too much about it. You must be content with

[\[26\]](#)
whatever comes of its own accord – this is very good. Don’t worry too much about saving for the future. Those who surrender their mind and soul to God, those who are His devotees and have taken refuge in Him, don’t worry too much about saving. As they earn, so they spend – from one side it comes, and out the other it’s spent. This is what is called accepting what comes of its own accord. It is mentioned in the Gita.”

Conversation about Haripada, Rakhal, Baburam, Adhar, and others

Thakur is talking about Haripada, who had visited him the

other day.

Mani (*smiling*): “Haripada knows how to relate stories of the gods. He chants the life of Prahlada and the story of Sri Krishna’s birth very melodiously.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Really! The other day, I looked into his eyes. They were unsettled. I asked him if he practiced a lot of meditation, but he sat with his head down. I said to him, ‘You mustn’t practice to extremes.’”

It is evening. Thakur chants the name of the Divine Mother and meditates upon Her.

After some time, evening worship with the waving of lights starts in the shrines. It is the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of Shravana and the second day of the Cradle Festival. The moon is shining, bathing the temple, the surrounding courtyard, and the garden in its light. It is eight in the evening. Thakur is seated in his room with Rakhal and M.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Baburam says, ‘Worldly life – it’s dreadful!’”

M.: “What is he saying? What does Baburam know of household life?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, undoubtedly that’s true. Have you seen Niranjan? He is completely guileless.”

M.: “Yes, sir. He is very attractive. And how expressive his eyes are!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Not only his eyes – every-thing. He told me that they were going to get him married. To that, he said, ‘Why do you want to drown me?’ (*Laughing*) But people say what pleasure they have, sitting in the company of their wives after a hard day’s work.”

M.: “Certainly they do, those who are so inclined. (*Smiling, to Rakhal*) We are being examined with a leading question.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing*): “A mother says, ‘I will feel great

[\[27\]](#)

relief if I can find a shade tree for my son. He will rest in its shade after being burnt by the fire of this world.”

M.: “Sir, there are different kinds of parents. A spiritually illumined father doesn’t give his sons in marriage. If he does, he must be well liberated indeed!” (*Thakur laughs.*)

Adhar and M. visit the Kali temple – Adhar talks about the sacred Chandranath and visit to Sitakunda

Adhar Sen arrives from Calcutta and salutes Thakur by prostrating. After sitting for a short time, he goes to the Kali Temple for Kali’s darshan. M. visits Kali with him. Then he

[\[28\]](#)

comes to the portico of the temple and then goes and sits on the bank of the Ganges. The river sparkles in the moonlight as the flood tide has just begun to rise.

Seated alone, M. meditates on the wonderful life of Thakur, his amazing state of samadhi and repeated ecstasies, and his intense love for God; his unceasing talk about God, his genuine love for the devotees, his childlike nature – he thinks of all these things. He says to himself, Who is he? Has God Himself come down in a human body for the sake of His devotees?

Adhar and M. return to Thakur’s room. Adhar had been in Chattigram on a business trip. He is talking now about his visit to sacred Chandranath and the Sitakunda.

Adhar: “I saw tongues of fire burning in the water of Sitakunda.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “How does that happen?”

Adhar: “There is phosphorous in the water.”

Ram Chatterji comes into the room. Thakur praises him to Adhar, saying, “As Ram is here, we don’t have to worry. He finds Harish, Latu, and others at mealtime. Sometimes they are sitting alone in different places meditating. It is Ram who finds them and takes them to eat.”

[\[1\]](#)

. Jhulan Yatra.

[\[2\]](#)

. Svadhishtana, muladhara, and manipura chakras.

[\[3\]](#)

. Eternally free and perfect souls.

[\[4\]](#)

. Vatsalya bhava.

[5]

. Madhura bhava.

[6]

. Dasi bhava.

[7]

. A single-stringed musical instrument.

[8]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section XVI, Chapter I.

[9]

. For the complete song refer to Section XXI, Chapter VI.

[10]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section II, Chapter VII.

[11]

. The devotee quotes in Sanskrit the first half of a verse from the Bhagavad Gita, 7:3, which states that out of many thousands of men, perhaps only one endeavours for perfection.

[12]

. Shraddha.

[13]

. Nishtha.

[14]

. Bhakti.

[15]

. Prema.

[16]

. Tribhanga: Krishna playing the flute, bent at neck, waist, and knees.

[17]

. Sat-chit-ananda.

[18]

. Nirmali: a rare kind of nut that precipitates dirt in water.

[19]

. Yellow orpiment, a compound of sulfur and arsenic.

[20]

. A householder traditionally wears white.

[21]

. Samskaras.

[22]

. Sahajavastha.

[23]

. Chidatma.

[24]

. Chitshakti.

[25]

. Vairagya.

[26]

. Yadācchālābha, Bhagavad Gita 4:22.

[27]

. A wife.

[28]

. Chandni.

Section XVII

Thakur with Narendra and Other Devotees at Adhar's House

Chapter I

Thakur in the joy of devotional singing with Narendra and other devotees – in samadhi

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting with devotees in the parlour on the second storey of Adhar's home. Narendra, the two Mukherji brothers, Bhavanath, M., Chunilal, Hazra, and other devotees are seated near Thakur. It is about three o'clock, Saturday, 6 September 1884, 22nd day of Bhadra, 1291 B.Y., the first day of the dark fortnight.

The devotees salute Sri Ramakrishna. After M. has saluted him, Thakur says to Adhar, "Isn't Doctor Nitai coming?"

Preparations are being made for Narendra to sing. A tanpura string snaps as it is being tuned, and Thakur says, "My, what you have done!" Now Narendra tunes the banyas. Thakur says, "Your banya tuning is like a slap on the cheek."

They talk about different kirtans. Narendra says, "There is no regular beat or rhythm in kirtan songs. That's why they're so popular. People love them."

Sri Ramakrishna: "What are you saying! There is such feeling of compassion in them – that's why people like them."

Narendra sings:

[1]

Sweet is Your name, O refuge of the lowly.

He sings another song:

[2]

Will my days just pass in vain, O Lord?

Day and night my eyes are on the path of hope.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling, to Hazra*): "He sang the same song when he visited me for the first time."

After Narendra sings a couple of songs more, Vaishnavcharan sings:

O Hari, how shall I know You now?

O Bankura, living in Mathura, clad in royal splendour and riding elephants,

Have you forgotten the grazing of cows? Have you forgotten us?

Do you remember how you stole butter in Vraja?

Sri Ramakrishna: “Sing this song: ‘O my vina, play Hari, Hari.’”

Vaishnavcharan sings:

[\[3\]](#)

O my vina , sing Hari, Hari!

Without Hari’s holy feet, you will not gain the Supreme Truth.

The name of Hari destroys all sorrows. Chant ‘Hare Krishna, Hare.’

By Hari’s grace, I shall have no worldly distress.

O Vina, sing but once the name of Hari. There is no haven but His name.

The servant, Govinda, says, ‘In vain my days have passed. May I no longer drift on the world’s shoreless ocean.’

Thakur occasionally goes into samadhi – he dances

Listening to the song, Sri Ramakrishna becomes absorbed in ecstasy and exclaims, “Ah, ah! Chant Hari, Hari.”

While saying this, he passes into samadhi, surrounded by devotees who watch him. The room is full of people.

The kirtan singer stops this song and begins a new one.

The beautiful and youthful Gauranga of golden hue dances best.

When he sings the line, “Drifting away in the flood of intense love for Hari,” Thakur stands up and begins to dance. Then he sits down and, stretching his arms out, improvises: “O, utter the name of Hari once.”

Thakur becomes overwhelmed with emotion as he improvises. Bending his head, he goes into samadhi. In front of him is a bolster on which he rests his head. The musician sings another song:

What other wealth is there in the world except the name of Hari?

Sweetly sing, “Madhai.”

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Another song follows:

My Gaur dances singing Hari’s name,

My Gauranga dances amid a mountain of gold.

Gold anklets sweetly jingle on his red feet.

Dear Narahari, remain beside Gauranga.

His body made of Radha’s love lies in dust.

To his left Advaitananda, to his right Nityananda,

And in the middle dances my Lord Chaitanya.

Thakur rises and dances while he improvises: “Oh, let us become intoxicated with intense love for God.”

Watching the wonderful dance, Narendra and the other devotees cannot remain still. They all join Thakur in the dance.

Thakur now and then goes into samadhi while dancing. Then he becomes completely withdrawn and does not utter a word; his whole body is still. The devotees dance in a circle around him.

After a while, Thakur regains partial con-sciousness, like Chaitanya Deva used to do. And then he dances with the strength of a lion. But even then there is no word on his tongue – he is nearly mad with love for God!

Whenever he returns to partial consciousness, he continues to improvise lines for the song.

[\[4\]](#)

Today Adhar’s parlour has become Srivasa’s courtyard. Many people gather on the road when they hear the chant of Hari’s names.

After dancing with the devotees for a long time, Thakur again sits down. Still in an ecstatic mood, he asks Narendra, “Please sing that song: ‘O Mother, make me mad with Your love.’”

At Thakur’s behest, Narendra sings:

[5]

O Mother, make me mad with Your love.

Sri Ramakrishna: “And also: ‘In the sea of the bliss of consciousness.’”

Narendra sings:

The waves of ecstatic love for God rise on the sea of the bliss of consciousness.

[6]

The sweet play of intense bliss has overwhelmed me.

[7]

All has become one in the great union.

All divides and distinctions of time and space have disappeared.

Now raising your arms in the inebriation of bliss, with the mind sing Hari’s name.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Narendra*): “And that song: ‘In the firmament of my soul.’ No, it’s too long, isn’t it? Well, please sing a little slowly.”

Narendra sings:

[8]

In the firmament of wisdom, the moon of divine love rises full.

Sri Ramakrishna: “And that one: ‘The wine of the name of Hari.’”

Narendra sings:

O my mind, be drunk with the wine of divine love;

Rolling on the ground, weep and chant the name of Hari...

Thakur improvises, adding lines to the song:

Be drunk O my mind, with intense love for God, and weep, chanting, ‘Hari, Hari.’

Drunk with ecstasy, weep and chant Hari’s name.

Thakur and the devotees rest for a while. Narendra whispers to Thakur, “Will you please sing that song once?”

Sri Ramakrishna says, “My throat is a little sore.”

After a while, he asks Narendra, “Which one?”

Thakur slowly sings:

He sings another song:

[\[11\]](#)

I would carefully braid my Keshava-hair.
Shyama is black, and black is my hair; black would be one with black.
Could Shyama but be my nose ring, He would ever grace my face,
And know the tender touch of my lips.
But why, O friend, should I dream of what never can be?
Why should Shyama be away from me?
Could Shyama be my bracelets, He would ever adorn my arms.
I would walk shaking my arms and jingling my bracelets.
Wearing the bracelets of Shyama, O friend, I would walk down the royal
road.

Chapter II

Insight in the state of ecstasy – invitation to Narendra and others

The singing has ended. Thakur talks with Narendra, Bhavanath, and other devotees. Smiling, he says, “Hazra danced.”

Narendra (*smiling*): “Yes, sir. A little.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “A little?”

Narendra (*smiling*): “His paunch danced and also another thing.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “It dances by itself. You don’t have to move it; it moves on its own.” (*All laugh.*)

The conversation now turns to the invitation to Thakur by the man in whose home Shashadhar now resides.

Narendra: “Will the master of the house provide food?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I hear he doesn’t have a good character, that he’s a scoundrel.”

Narendra: “That’s why, when you met Shashadhar for the first time, you didn’t drink water from the glass touched by his host. How did you know he had a bad character?”

His earlier story – at Sihore in Hriday’s house with Hazra and a Vaishnava

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Hazra knows of another instance. It was at Hriday’s house in Sihore.”

Hazra: “He was a Vaishnava. He went with me to visit him [Sri Ramakrishna]. As soon as he came in and sat down, he [Sri Ramakrishna] turned his back on him.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “We heard afterwards that he acted lewdly toward his maternal aunt. (*To Narendra*) At first you used to say that my states were only hallucinations.”

Narendra: “What can I say? Now I have seen so much. It all tallies.”

Narendra means to say that when Thakur is in ecstasy, he can see the inside and outside of a person. He has confirmed this a number of times.

Sri Ramakrishna on caste of devotees

Adhar has made great preparations for serving Thakur and the devotees. He now invites them to eat.

Thakur says to Mahendra and Priyanath, the two Mukherji brothers, “Aren’t you coming to eat?”

They humbly ask to be excused.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “They are doing everything else. But now hesitating about eating?”

“A woman’s father-in-law was named Hari and her husband’s elder brother, Krishna. Now the name of Hari had to be chanted, but she wouldn’t say Hare Krishna. Instead, she repeated:

Phare Phrishta phare Phrishta, Phrishta, Phrishta Phare Phare.

Phare Rama, Phare Rama, Rama Rama Phare Phare.

Adhar is a goldsmith by caste. That is why some brahmin devotees are initially hesitant to eat in his house. But later, when they see that Sri Ramakrishna himself eats there, they give up this wrong notion.

It is about 9 p.m. Thakur has joyfully eaten his meal with Narendra, Bhavanath, and other devotees.

Now he comes to the parlour to rest. Preparations are being made for his return to Dakshineswar.

The Mukherji brothers have arranged for a kirtan at Dakshineswar tomorrow, Sunday, for Thakur’s enjoyment. Shyamdas, a professional musician, will sing. Ram studies devotional music from him at his home.

Thakur asks Narendra to come to Dakshineswar the next day.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Narendra*): “Will you come tomorrow?”

Narendra: “I’ll try.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You can eat there if you like.

“M. can also eat there. (*To M.*) Are you over your illness? Are you on a diet?”

M.: “No, sir. I shall be there.”

Nityagopal is in Vrindavan. Some days ago Chunilal returned from there. Thakur gets news of Nityagopal from him.

Thakur is ready to return to Dakshineswar. M. salutes him, touching Thakur’s feet with his forehead.

Thakur says to him affectionately, “Do come.”

(*To Narendra and others, affectionately*): “Narendra, Bhavanath – please come.”

Narendra, Bhavanath, and other devotees salute him by prostrating. They all return home, their minds recalling Thakur’s wonderful singing and dancing with the devotees during the kirtan.

It is the first day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadra. The moon shines brightly in the night, as if laughing. Sri Ramakrishna proceeds towards Dakshineswar in a carriage with Bhavanath, Hazra, and other devotees.

[1]

. For the complete song refer to Section XIX, Chapter III.

[2]

. For the complete song refer to Volume III, Appendix, Chapter I.

[3]

. A stringed instrument.

[4]

. Srivasa Pundit was a close companion of Sri Chaitanya Deva. It was at his house that Sri Chaitanya and his associates used to have sankirtan all night long.

[5]

. For the complete song refer to Section XIX, Chapter III.

[6]

. Mahabhava.

[7]

. Mahayoga.

[8]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section I, Chapter II.

[9]

. Sakhi.

[10]

“The Dark One,” a name of Krishna.

[11]

Keshava: a name of Krishna.

Section XVIII

Sri Ramakrishna with Ram, Baburam, M., Chuni, Adhar, Bhavanath, Niranjana, and Other Devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

Life of Thakur in his own words – beliefs of the Ghoshpara and Kartabhaja sects

Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the smaller cot in his room at the Dakshineswar temple with devotees. It is about eleven o'clock. He has not yet been served the noon meal.

Yesterday, on Saturday, Thakur paid a visit to Adhar Sen's house with the devotees. He made everyone happy by celebrating the Lord Hari's name through devotional singing. Today Shyamdas will perform kirtan. Many devotees are assembling to witness Thakur's joy in devotional singing.

The first to arrive are Baburam, M., the brahmin from Srirampur, Manomohan, Bhavanath, and Kishori. Then Chunilal, Haripada, and others come, followed by the Mukherji brothers, Ram, Surendra, Tarak, Adhar, and Niranjana. Lata, Harish, and Hazra are now staying at Dakshineswar. Ramlal is the priest in Mother Kali's temple, and he looks after Thakur. Ram Chakravarty is the priest in the Vishnu temple. Today is Sunday, 7 September 1884 ; 23rd Bhadra, 1291 B.Y., the second day of the dark fortnight of Bhadra.

After M. has saluted Thakur, Sri Ramakrishna says to him, "Hasn't Narendra come?"

Narendra could not come that day. The brahmin from Srirampur has brought a book of songs by Ramprasad. Now and then he reads some of the songs to Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the brahmin*): "My dear, do continue reading."

Brahmin: "Put on clothes, Mother – -"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Stop! Songs like this are absolutely useless. Read only those songs that inspire love and devotion for God."

Brahmin: “Who can know what Kali is? Even the six philosophies cannot reveal Her.”

Thakur’s sympathetic friend – the paramahamsa, the baul, and the sai

Yesterday at Adhar’s house I felt a pain in one of my legs when I was in ecstasy. That’s why I take Baburam with me. He is a sympathetic soul.

Saying this, Thakur sings:

How can I tell you, O friend, what is in my heart?

I am forbidden to speak.

I cannot live without a kindred soul.

Such a one can be recognized from the look of his eyes.

Rare indeed is such a soul who swims in bliss on a tide of intense love.

The man of the heart trades in love.

Where can one find a man of the heart,

Who carries under his arm only a tattered rag?

He says not a word, but travels on the high road.

A man of the heart only walks along the higher path.

“The bauls sing songs like this. And they also sing songs like this one:

[\[1\]](#)

Wait, O wandering monk, with your water-pot!

Stand and let me behold your beauty.

[\[2\]](#)

“According to Shaktas, a perfected soul is called a kaul. In the Vedanta, he is called a paramahamsa. The Vaishnava bauls call him a sai. ‘There is none greater than a sai.’

“When a baul attains perfection, he is known as a sai. For him there is no distinction – half of his necklace is made of cow-bones and the other half of the sacred tulsi plant.

“Hindus call him Nir and Muslims call him Pir.”

Alekh (the incomprehensible) – about the spiritual current –

spiritual centre – the function of syrup – taking the pot off

“A sai calls the Ultimate Reality ‘Alekh.’ In the Vedas it is called Brahman; the sais call Him Alekh, the incomprehensible. They say of the individual soul that Alekh comes and Alekh departs. That is to say, the individual soul comes from the unmanifest and then merges back into it.

“The Bauls ask, ‘Do you know about the wind?’

[3]

That is, about the rising of the spiritual current within the ida, pingala, and sushumna, when the kundalini is awakened.

[4]

“They ask, ‘In which centre are you?’ The sixth centre is the sixth centre of consciousness.

“If he says that he is in the fifth, it means that his mind has risen to the vishuddha spiritual centre.

(*To M.*) “There is the vision of the formless God then. As the song says.”

Saying this, Thakur chants: “Within the petals of this lotus lies hidden a secret, subtle space. Passing beyond it, one beholds the world dissolve.”

His earlier story – arrival of the Bauls and followers of the Kartabhaja and Ghoshpara

“A baul once came here. I asked him, ‘Has your syrup been refined? Is the pot down from the fire?’ The more you boil syrup, the more refined it becomes. First you have sugarcane juice.

[5]

Then it turns into molasses, then into jaggery, and then sugar, then sugar candy; last of all are sugar balls. It becomes refined more and more only gradually.

“When should the pot be taken down? In other words, when will spiritual practices end? They will end when the senses are conquered. Senses are loosened the same way a leech drops off when lime is applied to it. Though one might live with a woman, one does not engage in intercourse with her.

“Many of these people conduct themselves according to the Radha Tantra. They practise spiritual disciplines with the five basic elements – earth, water, fire, air, and ether – through the use of excrement, urine, menstrual flow, and semen. It is a very dirty practice, like entering a home through the toilet.

“One day when I was eating in the courtyard, a man of the Ghoshpara sect came. He asked, ‘Are you eating, or are you feeding someone else?’ The meaning was that the person who attains spiritual perfection sees that God dwells within.

“Those who perfect themselves in this sect call people of other

[6]

sects ‘bound souls.’ They don’t talk in the presence of people of different views, saying, “There are strangers here.”

His earlier story – visit to his birthplace. In Shari Pathar's house with Hriday

“I saw a woman of this belief in my native village – Shari (Saraswati) Pathar. People of this sect eat in each other’s houses, but they won’t take a meal in the homes of people of other sects. The Mallicks ate at Shari Pathar’s house, but they didn’t eat at Hriday’s. They say that these people are ‘bound souls.’ (*Laughter.*)

“One day when I was taking a stroll, I went to her house with Hriday. She had a beautiful tulsi garden. She offered parched rice with urad lentils. I ate some. Hriday ate a lot – then he felt sick.

[7]

“They call the state of perfection natural (sahaja). There is a class of people who go around saying, ‘sahaja, sahaja.’ They mention two characteristics of this state of sahaja: one, the body no longer has the ‘smell of Krishna’; two, a bee will sit on a lotus but will not sip its honey. That there is no ‘smell of Krishna’ means that all divine feelings are within and there are no outward signs, not even the name of Hari on his lips. And the meaning of the second is that there is no attachment to women – one has acquired mastery over the senses.

“They don’t like worship of the deity in an image or the like.

They want a living person. That is why they are known as Kartabhaja, that is, those who adore and worship [bhaja] the spiritual preceptor [karta] – the guru – as God Himself.”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna and the harmony of religions – why all scriptures and all religions are true

Sri Ramakrishna: “You see how many doctrines there are? Every belief is a way to reach God. Innumerable are the beliefs and paths.”

Bhavanath: “Then, what is the way for us?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “You have to hold on to one of the paths tightly. To reach the roof, you can climb brick steps. You can also climb a bamboo ladder or a ladder made of rope. Also a piece of rope or a piece of bamboo will take you up. But if you place your foot first on one path and then on another, your effort will be in vain. You have to hold tightly to one. If you want to attain God, you have to take one path resolutely.

“And you should think of all religions as so many paths. You must never entertain the idea that your path is correct and all others are false. You must have no feeling of malice toward other beliefs.”

To which path do I belong? The beliefs of Keshab, Shashadhar and Vijay

“So, to which path do ‘I’ belong? Keshab used to say, ‘You have the same path as we do – you are gradually accepting the formless God.’ Shashadhar used to say, ‘You belong to us.’ Vijay (Goswami) also used to say that I belonged to his path.”

Is Thakur saying that since he has reached God by treading all the paths, he knows all of them? And that people of all religions will come to him and find peace?

Thakur goes toward the panchavati with M. and one or two other devotees. He wants to wash his face. It is twelve o’clock. The flood tide is about to begin. Hearing about it, Thakur waits for a while on the path to the panchavati.

Essence of bhava and mahabhava – Thakur watches the tides on the Ganges

Thakur says to the devotees, “What a wonderful thing the flood and ebb tides are!

“But notice this – they only occur in the river when it is near the sea. Away from the sea, the current flows only in the one direction. What does this mean? Dwell on that fact. Only those who are very near to God experience divine emotions and love for God. One or two (ishvarakotis) may have mahabhava, intense love for God, and so on.

(*To M.*) “Well, why are there flood and ebb tides?”

M.: “Western astronomy says that they are caused by the pull of the sun and the moon.”

M. draws figures on the ground to show the movements of the earth, the moon, and the sun. Looking at them for a moment, Thakur says, “Oh, stop! It makes my head reel.”

As they are talking, the flood tide rises. Soon the sound of the rising waters begins to be heard. Striking the bank near the temples, the flood flows toward the north.

Thakur watches the tide fixedly. Noticing a boat in the distance, he suddenly exclaims like a child, “Look, look! What’s going to happen to that boat?”

While they are talking, Sri Ramakrishna and M. come to the foot of the panchavati. Thakur places his umbrella on the platform. He now talks about Narayan, whom he looks upon as the very manifestation of Narayana (the Lord Himself). He is very fond of him. Narayan is a student.

Instructions to M. – right use of money – his concern for Narayan

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Have you noticed Narayan’s nature? He can associate with everybody – with the old as well as the young. This isn’t possible without some special power. Besides,

everybody loves him. Is he really so simple and guileless?"

M.: "Yes, sir. He appears to be very guileless."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Does he visit you?"

M.: "Yes, sir, he did come once or twice."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Would you give him a rupee, or should I ask Kali about it?"

M.: "Very well, sir. I'll give him one myself."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Very good. It's good to give to those who love God. That's the right use of money. What good is spending everything in worldly pursuits?"

[\[8\]](#)

Kishori has children, but he doesn't earn much – not enough to meet his needs. Thakur says to M., "Narayan was telling me that he would find work for Kishori. Do remind him of it."

M. is standing in the panchavati. Thakur returns from the jhautala after a while. He says to M., "Please ask someone to spread a mat outside my room. I'll be back soon. I'd like to lie down for a while."

Reaching his room, Thakur says, "None of you remembered to bring the umbrella back. (*All laugh.*) A scattered mind doesn't notice something even if it is nearby. A fellow went to a friend's house to light some charcoal for his tobacco. And he was holding a lantern in his own hand!

"Another fellow, looking everywhere for his hand towel, found it on his own shoulder!"

Thakur's midday meal – Baburam and other intimate companions

The prasad of Mother Kali is brought for Thakur. It is about one o'clock. After eating he wants to rest for a while, but the devotees remain sitting in the room. When they are told, they go outside. Harish, Niranjana, and Haripada will go to the dining room to have their midday meal. Thakur says to Harish, "Please take some amsattva (a thin cake made of mango juice) for yourself."

Thakur rests for a while. He says to Baburam, “Baburam, please come sit near me.” Baburam answers, “I am preparing betel leaf.”

Sri Ramakrishna says, “Leave it. Don’t make the betel leaf.”

While Thakur rests, a number of devotees sit under the bakul tree in the panchavati – the Mukherji brothers, Chunilal, Haripada, Bhavanath, and Tarak. Tarak has just returned from Vrindavan. The devotees listen to him talk about Vrindavan. He was there with Nityagopal.

Chapter III

Thakur in the joy of devotional singing – dancing with devotees

Thakur has rested for a while. Shyamdas begins singing songs relating to episodes in Mathura.

First he sings:

Lord, the joy of seeing You...

And then:

[9]

The lake of happiness seemed to them as dry as the desert.

The chatak bird dying of thirst gazes at the clouds.

Thakur goes into an ecstatic mood, hearing about Radha’s state of separation from Krishna. He is sitting on the smaller cot while Baburam, Niranjana, Ram, Manomohan, M., Surendra, Bhavanath, and other devotees sit on the floor. But the music has not yet picked up rhythm.

He asks Nabai Chaitanya of Konnagar to sing. Nabai is

[10]

Manomohan’s uncle. Having retired with a pension, he

[11]

practices spiritual disciplines and devotional singing on the

bank of the Ganges at Konnagar. He often visits Thakur.

Nabai sings in a loud voice. Leaving his seat, Thakur begins to dance. Immediately Nabai and the devotees begin to dance and sing the kirtan in a circle around him. The kirtan atmosphere becomes intense with spiritual fervour. Even Mahimacharan begins to dance with Thakur.

Thakur returns to his seat when the kirtan ends. After repeating Hari's name, he repeats the name of the All-Blissful Mother. He is absorbed in divine emotion and repeats the name of the Divine Mother. He begins to sing of Her, his eyes turned upward.

He sings:

O Mother, who are Bliss itself, do not deprive me of Your bliss...

Again he sings:

As is one's meditation, so is his heart moved by love.

As one feels, so does he gain. The root of all is faith.

If the mind can dip into the reservoir of nectar that is Mother Kali's feet,

Then worship and oblations, [\[12\]](#) sacrifices and rituals are of no avail.

And again:

O Mother Tara, this world is Your madhouse!

What shall I say of Your virtues?

Giving up Your elephant you ride on a bull like one depraved. Willfully you cast aside Your jewels and pearls and put on a garland of skulls.

Unmindful of others, You roam the cremation grounds.

Says Ramprasad, You must lead me beyond my wanderings in this maze of the world.

And again:

Why go to Gaya, Ganga, Prabhas, Kashi, or Kanchi, if I can breathe my last chanting Kali's name?

Of what use are rituals for one who utters Kali's name at dawn and noon and dusk? Worship itself will follow in his footsteps, never catching up.

Charity, vows, and almsgiving no longer appeal to Madan's mind. His worship alone is surrender at the Mother's blessed feet.

Lord Shiva Himself, the God of Gods, with all His powers, sings Her praises. Who, then, can conceive of the power of Her holy name?

Then he sings:

Dwell, O my mind, within yourself,

And enter no one else's house.

If you search within yourself,

You will find there all you seek. [\[13\]](#)

He sings:

The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight to the blue lotus

flower of Mother Shyama's feet. [\[14\]](#)

And once more he sings:

Cherish the beloved Mother Shyama in your heart.

O mind, may you and I alone behold Her, and let no one else intrude. [\[15\]](#)

Thakur stands up while singing this song. He is nearly intoxicated with intense love for the Divine Mother. He repeats again and again the words 'the revered Mother Shyama,' as though for the benefit of the devotees.

He appears intoxicated, as though he has drunk too much wine. He dances now as he sings:

Is my Mother really black? The Naked One, in her blackness, lights up the lotus of my heart.

Noticing that Thakur is staggering while he is singing, Niranjan goes up to him to hold him. In a sweet voice, Thakur stops him, saying, "Don't touch me, you rascal." Seeing Thakur dancing, the devotees rise to their feet. He grasps M.'s hand and says, "Dance, you rascal!"

Mahima, the Vedantist, in the company of Thakur –dancing during the kirtan, and Thakur's joy

Thakur sits on his bed. He is filled with divine intoxication.

When the ecstasy subsides a little, he says, "Om, Om, Om, Om, Om, Om, Kali." And then he says, "I want a smoke." Most of the devotees are standing. Mahimacharan fans Thakur as he stands.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Please sit down, all of you. (*To Mahima*) Please recite something from the Vedas.”

Mahimacharan recites “Victory to Jajjman” and so forth. And then he recites a verse from the Mahanirvana Tantra.

Om, I bow to You, the true origin of the universe.

I bow to You, the support of all the universe, whose essence is pure Consciousness.

I bow to You who are non-dual, the One, the liberating truth.

I bow to the eternal Brahman, all-pervading and beyond all qualities.

You alone are the refuge; You alone are worthy of adoration.

You are truly the cause of the universe, the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer.

You are whole and beyond all thought,

Most frightening of all that is frightening, most terrible of all that is terrible,

The purifier of the pure, the goal of all creatures.

You are the Ruler of those in high places,

The Chief of chiefs, the Protector of protectors.

We meditate on You and sing hymns in Your praise.

We bow to You, the witness of the universe.

You are the vessel that takes one across the sea of life, the self-existent divinity, the refuge of all. We take shelter in You.

Thakur listens to the verse with folded hands. When it is over, he salutes devotedly. The devotees also salute.

Adhar arrives from Calcutta and salutes Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “We had fun today!

Mahima Chakravarty is beginning to agree with us. Didn’t you see his joy in the recitation of Hari’s name?”

M.: “Yes, sir.”

Mahimacharan is interested in the path of knowledge. Today he has chanted the name of Hari and even danced during the kirtan. Thakur is very happy about it.

It is almost evening. Most of the devotees bow to Thakur and

take their leave, one by one.

Chapter IV

[16]

Worldliness or non-worldliness – Adhar's job – admiration of the worldly and taking a job under them

[17]

It is evening. The lamplighter has lit the lamps in the long southern verandah and the western semi-circular verandah. In Thakur's room the lamp has already been lit and incense burnt. Soon the moon rises. The temple courtyard, the garden path, the bank of the Ganges, the panchavati, and the tops of trees are all flooded with moonlight.

Thakur is sitting on his bed, repeating the name of the Divine Mother and meditating upon Her.

Adhar comes in and sits down. M. and Niranjan are also in the room. Thakur talks with Adhar.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well, my dear, you have come now. How much kirtan and dancing we had! The kirtan was by Shyamdas, Ram's music teacher. But I didn't like it very much. I felt no desire to rise from my seat and dance. Later I came to know about him. Gopidas' substitute told me, 'He has as many mistresses as I have hair on my head.' (*All laugh.*) Did you get the job?"

Adhar is a deputy magistrate with a salary of three hundred rupees a month. He had applied for the vice chairmanship of the municipality of Calcutta, which paid a salary of one thousand rupees a month. Adhar had met many prominent people of Calcutta to get this job.

Non-worldliness is better – to adore worldly people of poor understanding to get a job

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M. and Niranjan*): "Hazra said, 'Please pray to the Divine Mother a little so Adhar can get the job.' Adhar also asked me. I prayed to the Mother a little: 'Mother, he comes to see You very often. If it's all right, let him get the job.' But I also said: 'Mother, what poor understanding he has!"

Instead of asking for knowledge and devotion, he asks You for things like this.’

(*To Adhar*) “Why do you associate so much with people of poor understanding? You have seen so much and heard so much! To

[\[18\]](#)

read the seven sections of the Ramayana and yet ask whose wife Sita was! Such-and-such Mallick is a man of low intelligence. He arranged for a service boat when I planned to go to Mahesh. And when we reached his home, he asked Hriday, ‘Hriday, have you arranged for the carriage?’”

Adhar: “One has to do all this to run a household. You haven’t forbidden me from doing that.”

About the temple treasurer asking Thakur to sign a receipt for his monthly salary when his state of madness for God was over

Sri Ramakrishna: “Indeed, desirelessness is good, not worldliness. After that state of mine, I was called by the treasurer to sign a receipt for my salary, like all the others. I told him, ‘I can’t do that. I’m not asking for any salary. Give it to someone else if you want.’

“I’m only the servant of the Lord. How can I be the servant of anyone else?”

“Noticing that I would be late for my meals, Mallick engaged a brahmin cook for me – for only one rupee a month. I was embarrassed. I had to run to the kitchen as soon as he called for me. It would have been different if I could have gone there of my own will.

“Worshipping people of mean intelligence! Such things do happen in household life – and much more.”

His earlier story – Thakur’s prayer after his state of divine intoxication – contentment

“When I attained that state and saw how the affairs of the world are run, I said to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, please change the direction of my mind right now.’ No more food from the beautiful lady. I cry after taking it. No more, no more of

[19]

it.” (All laugh.)

Childhood story – about seeing the deputy magistrate, Ishwar Goshal, in Kamarpukur

“Go on with the job that you are doing now. People hanker after a salary of fifty or a hundred rupees. You are receiving three hundred. I saw a deputy magistrate in the village of Kamarpukur, Ishwar Goshal. He wore a turban on his head. People trembled at his sight. I saw him when I was a child. Is being a deputy such a small thing, my dear?”

“Go on serving him whom you are serving now. Service to one person soils the mind and you are seeking service under so many!”

Condemns service – Sambhu and Mathur’s love and regard for money – Narendra as headmaster

“Once a woman felt attracted to a Muslim. She invited him to talk to her. The Muslim was a holy person. He said that he wanted to urinate and would go and get his piss pot. The woman said, ‘You can do it here. I can give you a piss pot.’ He said, ‘That won’t do. I will use the same piss pot to which I have already been exposed. I don’t want to be immodest before a new piss pot.’ Saying this, he left. The woman came to her senses. She under-stood that the piss pot meant a paramour.”

Narendra has fallen on very difficult days after his father’s death. He is looking for a job to feed and support his mother and brothers. For a few days he had worked as headmaster in Vidyasagar’s Bow-bazar school.

Adhar: “Well, would he accept a job?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, he would. He has his mother and brothers.”

Adhar: “Well, Narendra can manage with fifty rupees. He can manage with a hundred, too. Will Narendra not try for a hundred?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Worldly people have great regard for wealth.

They think there's nothing like money. Sambhu said, 'This is my desire – to place all this wealth at His feet when I depart.' Does God need worldly wealth? He wants spiritual know-ledge,

[\[20\]](#)

love, discrimination and dispassion.

“When the jewelry was stolen from the temple, Mathur Babu said, ‘O Bhagavan, could You not guard Your own jewelry? Goddess Hamseshwari protected hers so well!’

Difficult rules of conduct for sannyasins – Mathur's suggestion of gifting some land

“Mathur Babu said that he would transfer a piece of land to my name. I overheard it when I was in the Kali temple. Mathur Babu and Hriday were in consultation. I came out and said to Mathur Babu, ‘Look, give up this idea. It would be very harmful to me.’”

Adhar: “There may not have been more than six or seven people like you since the beginning of creation!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why do you say that? There have surely

[\[21\]](#)

been men of renunciation. People come to know of them only when they have renounced their wealth. And there are others whom the world does not know. Are there not such people in western India (Punjab and United Provinces)?”

Adhar: “I know one such person in Calcutta, Devendra Tagore.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What are you saying! Who else has enjoyed pleasures of life the way he has? When I went to his house with Mathur Babu, I saw many small children. A physician had come and was writing out prescriptions. If the one who is a father of eight sons and some daughters will not meditate on God, who else will? The world condemns people who have enjoyed so much wealth but don't meditate on God.”

Niranjan: “He repaid all the debts of Dwarkanath Tagore [his father].”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Stop this. Don't bother me anymore about it. Is he a real man who has the wherewithal and yet does not pay

off the debts of his own father?

“But worldly people remain completely im-mersed in worldliness. Compared to them, he is a great deal better. They can learn from him.

“There is a tremendous difference between a householder devotee and a genuine all-renouncing devotee. A true sannyasin, a devotee of real renunciation, is like a bee. A bee sits nowhere else but on a flower. It drinks nothing but honey. The other – the householder devotee – is like a fly. It sits on sandesh as well as on a festering wound. He is sometimes in a fine spiritual mood and other times he is busy with ‘lust and greed.’

“A real all-renouncing devotee is like a chatak bird. A chatak bird won’t drink any water but rainwater when the star Svati is ascendant. The seven seas and the rivers are full of water, but it doesn’t drink from them. A person of real renunciation will not touch ‘lust and greed,’ nor will he keep them near him lest he become attached.”

Chapter V

Chaitanya Deva, Sri Ramakrishna and name and fame

Adhar: “Chaitanya also enjoyed worldly plea-sures.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*surprised*): “What did he enjoy?”

Adhar: “Such a big pundit! What name and fame he enjoyed!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It may have been name and fame according to others – for him it was nothing.

“You have respect for me and so has Niranjan. It’s just the same for me. I tell you the truth. It’s not my desire to have a wealthy man under my control. Manomohan told me that Surendra said, ‘It isn’t correct that Rakhal should live with him. His family complained about it.’ I said to him, ‘Who is this Surendra? He has kept this carpet and pillow here and gives some money.’”

Adhar: “He gives ten rupees a month, doesn’t he?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Ten rupees meet expenses for two months.

Some devotees live here. He gives for their support, the virtue accrues to him. What is it to me? I love Rakhal and Narendra. Do I derive any benefit from it?"

M.: "It is like a mother's love."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Even a mother does so much for her child, hoping that he will provide for her after getting a job. I love them because I see them as living Narayana – I don't just say this."

God takes on the burden of an all-renouncing devotee – 'who,
[22]

precluding all else, meditates on Me'

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Adhar*): "Listen. When you light a lamp, there is no scarcity of moths. When you realize God, He provides everything. There is no dearth of anything. When He resides in the heart, many people arrive to serve.

"A young sannyasin went to beg alms at a householder's home. He was a sannyasin from birth. He knew nothing about the world. A young woman came to the door to offer him alms. The sannyasin asked, 'Mother, does this girl have an abscess on her chest?' The mother of the girl said, 'No, my child. She will bear an infant. God has given her breasts, so that the baby can drink milk from them.' The sannyasin then said, 'Why do I need to worry then? Why should I beg for alms? He who has created me will provide me with food.'

"Listen, she who has given up her all for the sake of her paramour can say, 'O rascal, I'll sit on your chest and eat.'"

Story of Totapuri – king's service to sadhus – Thakur meets the leader of Nanak's followers in their math near the Durga Temple in Kashi, in 1868

"The Naked One (Totapuri) told me that a king served food to sadhus using gold plates and tumblers. I saw in Kashi what reverence the head of the math was given. A number of very rich and wealthy Hindustani men stood there with folded hands, saying, 'At your command.'

"The right kind of sadhu, a true holy man, does not want gold

plates, nor reverence. But God does not let him lack anything. He provides for everything that is necessary for realizing Him. (*Everybody keeps silent.*)

“You are a magistrate. What can I tell you? Do what you think is right. I am a fool.”

Adhar (*laughing, to the devotees*): “He is examining me.”

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Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling, to the devotees*): “Dispassion is better. Just see, I didn’t sign [for receiving a salary]. God indeed is the Reality, everything else is unreal.”

Hazra comes in and sits on the floor near the devotees. Hazra sometimes repeats, “So ’ham, so ’ham (I am He).” He says to Latu and other devotees, “What is the use in making offerings to God in worship – giving His own thing back to Him? One day he said the same to Narendra.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hazra*): “I explained to Latu. Who is it the devotee worships?”

Hazra: “The devotee calls upon his own self.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That is a very elevated idea. Vrindavalli said to King Bali, ‘What wealth can you give to Brahman?’

“All spiritual practices, all chanting of His name and glories are done to realize what you are saying.

“When you see your Self within yourself you have attained the goal. It is to attain this that all spiritual practices are undertaken. The body is also to carry out spiritual practice. As long as a gold image is not cast, one needs a clay mould. When the image is made, the clay mould is thrown away. One can give up the body after God-realization.

“He is not only within – He is both within and without. The Divine Mother showed me in the Kali Temple that everything is filled with divine consciousness. The Divine Mother Herself has

[24]

become everything – the deity, myself, the worship vessels, the door sill, the marble floor. All is consciousness.

“It is to experience this that one calls upon Him, carries out spiritual practices – chanting His name and glories, and so on. It is for this that one practices devotion to God. These people (Latu and others) are like this – they have not yet reached such a high state. They practice love of God. Don’t say ‘I am He’ (So ’ham) and such things to them.”

The compassionate Gurudeva, Sri Ramakrishna, is protecting the devotees like a mother bird sheltering its young ones under its wings.

Adhar and Niranjan go to the verandah for refreshments, then they return. M. is sitting on the floor near Thakur.

A Brahmo boy with four university degrees – discussing and reasoning with him

Adhar (*smiling*): “We talked so much, but he (M.) didn’t say even one word.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “A boy of Keshab’s group with four university degrees (named Varda?) laughed when he saw people arguing with me. ‘What?’ he said, ‘To reason even with him!’ I saw him again at one of Keshab’s gatherings. Somehow his appearance had changed.”

Ram Chakravarty, the priest of Vishnu temple, enters the room. Thakur says, “Look here, Ram. Did you talk about sugar candy with Dayal? No, there is no need for it. There have already been many discussions.”

Thakur’s evening meal – ‘I can’t eat food offered by everybody’

Thakur’s evening meal is the prasad from Mother Kali – one or two luchis and a little farina pudding. He is seated on the floor to eat. M. is sitting near him. Latu is also in the room. The devotees have brought some sandesh and other sweets.

Touching one piece of sandesh with his hand, Thakur says to Latu, “What rascal has brought this sandesh?” He drops it from the plate of pudding. (*To M. and Latu*) I know about it all. It was brought by one of the boys of the Anand Chatterji family, the one who visits the Ghoshpara woman.”

[\[25\]](#)

Latu: “Shall I give you this sweet?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Did Kishori bring it?”

Latu: “Will it be agreeable to you?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Yes.”

M. is an English-educated man. Thakur says to him, “I can’t eat food offered by everybody. Do you believe this?”

M.: “Sir, I shall gradually have to believe in everything.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes.”

Thakur goes to the western verandah to wash his hands. M. pours water on them.

It is winter. As the moon rises, the clear sky and the water of the Ganges begin to sparkle. It is ebb tide and the Ganges is flowing south. Washing his face, Thakur says to M., “So will you give a rupee to Narayan?”

M.: “Yes, of course. Would I not?”

[1]

. Kamandalu, or water pot of a wandering ascetic, a symbol of renunciation and purification.

[2]

. Siddha.

[3]

. Mahavayu.

[4]

. Pitha.

[5]

. Gur, the stage in the refinement of sugar in which it is moist and dark brown.

[6]

. Jiva.

[7]

. Siddha.

[8]

. M.’s brother.

[9]

. The gopis of Vrindavan.

[10]

. Nabai is the younger brother of Manomohan’s father.

[11]

. Sadhan and bhajan.

[\[12\]](#)

. Homa.

[\[13\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Section XII, Chapter IX of Volume I

[\[14\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section II, Chapter VII.

[\[15\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Section IX, Chapter I.

[\[16\]](#)

Pravritti: inclination to outer enjoyment.

[\[17\]](#)

. Nivritti: inwardness of the mind.

[\[18\]](#)

. Kanda.

[\[19\]](#)

. A Bengali remark about distasteful cooking by a sweet lady. Sri Ramakrishna was referring to not having to flatter rich people.

[\[20\]](#)

. Jnana, bhakti, viveka, vairagya.

[\[21\]](#)

. Tyagis.

[\[22\]](#)

. ananyācintayanto, Bhagavad Gita 9:22.

[\[23\]](#)

. Nivritti.

[\[24\]](#)

. Kosha, kushi, etc.

[\[25\]](#)

. Gaja.

Section XIX

Thakur at Dakshineswar Temple with Narendra and Other Devotees

Chapter I

**Go beyond both knowledge and ignorance – dry knowledge of
Shashadhar**

Sri Ramakrishna is resting in his room at the Dakshineswar temple after his midday meal. Devotees are with him. Narendra, Bhavanath, and other devotees have come today from Calcutta. The two Mukherji brothers, Jnan Babu, the younger Gopal, the elder Kali, and others have also arrived. Three devotees from Konnagar have come. There is news that Rakhal, who is with Balaram in holy Vrindavan, has suffered a bout of fever. Today is Sunday, 14 September 1884, 30th Bhadra, 1291 (B.Y.), the tenth day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month..

Narendra is very worried about his mother and brothers after the death of his father. He is preparing for a law examination.

Jnan Babu has received four university degrees and is a government official. He arrives between ten and eleven o'clock.

Sri Ramakrishna (*seeing Jnan Babu*): “Well, knowledge [a play on Jnan’s name] has suddenly appeared!”

Jnan (*smiling*): “Sir, knowledge appears only with great good fortune.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Why, you are jnana. Why then are you in ajnana [ignorance]? Oh, I understand, where there is knowledge, there is also ignorance. Rishi Vasishtha, though endowed with such knowledge, wept at the death of his sons. So go beyond knowledge and ignorance. The thorn of ignorance has pierced your foot. To take it out, you need the thorn of knowledge. After you have pulled it out, throw away both thorns.”

**The unattached householder – Thakur observes the work of the
women carpenter women in his native village**

“A man of knowledge says that worldly life is a veil of deception. He who is beyond both knowledge and ignorance calls it a mart of joy. He sees that God Himself has become the world and its living beings, and that He has become the twenty-four cosmic principles.

“One can live in the world after attaining God. Then one can live unattached. I have seen the carpenter women in my native village. They pound flattened rice with a pestle connected to a treadle. They push the paddy with one hand and hold a suckling child with the other. At the same time they bargain with a buyer, ‘You owe me two annas. You must pay before you leave.’ But seventy-five percent of their mind is on their hand, lest it should be crushed by the falling pestle.

“You should fix seventy-five percent of your mind on God and work with twenty-five percent.”

Sri Ramakrishna now talks to the devotees about Pundit Shashadhar: “I saw him as one- tracked – he’s only interested in dry knowledge and reasoning.

“Only that person who has matured in knowledge and has ripened his love for God, having reached the Absolute, can also dwell in the relative and then again ascend from the relative to the Absolute.

“Narada and other saints lived with love for God after attaining the knowledge of Brahman. This is called vijnana.

“Just dry reasoning! It’s like a firework’s rocket which shoots up into the air with a noise but falls down with a thud after sparkling momentarily. But the knowledge of Narada and Sukadeva is like a superior rocket that sparkles for some time, then goes out, but again sparkles with a new spray. Narada,

[\[1\]](#)

Sukadeva, and others like them have intense love for God. Ecstatic love is the rope for getting hold of Sat-chit-ananda.”

Sri Ramakrishna at the foot of the bakul tree – becomes absorbed in ecstasy in the jhautala

After his midday meal, Sri Ramakrishna rests a while.

A few devotees are sitting on a bench under the bakul tree and talking – Bhavanath, the two Mukherji brothers, M., the younger Gopal, Hazra, and some others. Thakur is going to the jhautala. On his way there, he sits with the devotees for some time.

Hazra (*to the younger Gopal*): “Prepare a smoke for him.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “You want it. That’s why you ask for it.” (*They all laugh.*)

Mukherji (*to Hazra*): “You have learnt a lot living with him.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “No, he has been like this since childhood!” (*All laugh.*)

The devotees watch Thakur return from the jhautala. He is in ecstasy, walking like he’s drunk. When he enters his room, he returns to normal consciousness.

Chapter II

Thakur is worried about Narayan – devotees from Konnagar – Thakur in samadhi – Narendra sings

Many devotees have assembled in Thakur’s room. Among the devotees from Konnagar there is a newcomer, a sadhaka who looks over fifty years old. He seems to be very proud of his scholarship. When he talks, he says, “Was there no moon before the churning of the ocean? Who will explain this?”

M. (*laughing*): “When there was no universe, where did the Mother get Her garland of skulls?”

The Sadhaka (*irritated*): “That’s different.”

Standing in the middle of the room, Thakur suddenly says to M., “Did he come – Narayan?” Narendra is talking with Hazra and some others on the verandah. A murmur from their discussion can be heard in Thakur’s room.

Sri Ramakrishna: “He (Narendra) can talk a lot! But now he’s very worried about his family at home.”

M.: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Wasn’t he saying a while ago that he’d consider the trials of life as good for him? Didn’t he?”

M.: “Sir, he has great strength of mind.”

The elder Kali: “In what respect is he less strong?” Thakur is sitting.

A devotee from Konnagar says to him, “Sir, he (the sadhaka) has come to see you. He has something to ask.”

The sadhaka is sitting with his body and head erect.

Sadhaka: “Sir, what is the way?”

Way to see God – faith in the words of the guru – when does one internalize the scriptures?

Sri Ramakrishna: “Have faith in the words of the guru. One attains God by following his words step by step. The way to reach one object is by holding the end of a thread.”

Sadhaka: “Can one see God?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He is beyond the worldly intellect. You cannot attain Him if there is the least trace of attachment for ‘lust and greed.’ But He is visible to the pure intellect and pure mind – that intellect and mind which do not have the least trace of attachment. Pure mind, pure intellect, pure Atman are one and the same.”

Sadhaka: “But the scripture says, ‘From where words turn back along with the mind, unable to comprehend.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Leave the scriptures out of it. Without practicing spiritual disciplines, you cannot understand the true meaning of the scriptures. What use is it to shout, ‘Hemp, hemp?’ Scholars quote verses from the scriptures, but what use is that? You feel no intoxication by just rubbing hemp on your body. You have to swallow it.

“What use is it to just repeat that there is butter in milk? You have to curdle the milk and then churn it. Only then do you get butter.”

Sadhaka: “Churning the butter – these words are in the

scriptures.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What good will it do you just to speak or listen to the words of the scriptures? You have to internalize them. The almanac says it’s going to rain a certain amount, but you don’t get even a drop by squeezing the almanac.”

Sadhaka: “Churning butter – have you done it?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Don’t bother about what I have and haven’t done. It’s very difficult to make a person understand these things. If someone asks, ‘What does ghee taste like?’ the only reply is, ‘Sir, ghee tastes just like ghee.’

“You have to keep the company of the holy to understand these

[\[2\]](#)

things. You have to live with an Ayurvedic physician to know which pulse beat indicates phlegm, which bile, and which wind.

[\[3\]](#)

”

Sadhaka: “Some people become irritated living with others.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That comes after gaining knowledge, after realizing God. Doesn’t a beginner need the company of the holy?”

The sadhaka keeps silent.

Sadhaka (*after a while, excitedly*): “Please tell me if you have known Him, whether you have gained His direct vision or experienced Him. Please tell me if you’d like to, but don’t if you don’t want to.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling a little*): “What can I say? One can only give a hint of what one feels.”

Sadhaka: “Please tell us about that.”

Narendra is going to sing. He says, “No one has brought a pakhavaj.”

The younger Gopal: “Mahima (Mahimacharan) has one.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, there is no need to bring anything of his.”

A devotee from Konnagar first sings a song in Dhrupada style.

[4]

While the singing goes on, Thakur from time to time notes the sadhaka's different moods. The singer is having an intense argument with Narendra about singing and music.

Sadhaka (*to the singer*): "You are no less strong in argumentation! What is the use of such a discussion?"

Another person has joined in the discussion. Referring to him, Thakur says to the sadhaka, "But you haven't scolded him, too."

Sri Ramakrishna says to the devotees of Konnagar, "It appears that even you are not on good terms with him."

Narendra sings:

Will my days just pass in vain, O Lord?

[5]

Day and night my eyes are on the path of hope.

The sadhaka closes his eyes in meditation as he listens to the song. Thakur is seated on his cot facing south. It is between three and four o'clock. From the west the sun falls on the sadhaka's body. Thakur quickly takes an umbrella and positions it to shade him.

Narendra sings:

How can I call on You with this stained and soiled mind?

Can a straw survive a flaming fire?

You are like that flaming fire, the source of all good,

And I, the sinner, am like a straw. How can I worship You?

I hear that by the glory of Your name the worst of sinners have been saved.

But, alas, my heart trembles when I recite Your holy Name.

My life passes by in the pursuit of habitual wrong-doing.

How can I find shelter in Your holy way?

Pray save this wretch with Your compassionate name,

Pull me up by the hair of my head; give me shelter at Your feet.

Chapter III

Instruction to Narendra and others – Vedas and Vedanta give only a faint idea

Narendra sings:

Sweet is Your name, O refuge of the lowly, raining like nectar in our ears and comforting us, O beloved of our souls!

The treasure of Your name is the abode of immortality.
He who chants Your name becomes immortal.

When the nectar of Your name touches our ears, it erases in that instant the deep anguish of our hearts.

The sweet music of Your name fills the heart with sweetness. O Master of our hearts, and Soul of our souls!

As Narendra sings, “The sweet music of Your name fills the heart with sweetness,” Thakur goes into samadhi. Immediately his fingers, and particularly his thumbs, become stiff. The devotees of Konnagar have never witnessed samadhi. Noticing that Thakur is silent, they prepare to leave.

Bhavanath: “Please sit down. He is in the state of samadhi.”

The devotees from Konnagar sit again. Narendra sings:

I have made a seat for You in my heart, striving day and night.

O Lord of the Universe, in your mercy will you not enter there?

In ecstasy, Thakur comes down and sits on the floor beside Narendra.

In the firmament of wisdom, the moon of divine love rises full.

What a joyous sea of love has swelled up!

Victory to the Compassionate One! Victory to Him, the Compassionate

[\[6\]](#)

One.

When he hears the words, “Victory to the Compassionate One,” he stands and again goes into samadhi.

After a fairly long time, Sri Ramakrishna returns somewhat to his normal state and sits down again on a mat on the floor.

Narendra has finished the song. He has put the tanpura away.

Still in ecstasy, Thakur says, “What is this, Mother? Please tell

me. Churn the butter and place it at their mouths. They won't throw bait into the pond. Nor will they sit with a fishing rod. Someone has to catch the fish for them and give it to them. What a situation! I won't listen to any more reasoning. The rascals are forcing reason on me! What a situation! I will shake it off."

"God is beyond the Vedas and their rituals. Can you realize God by studying the Vedas and the Vedanta? (*To Narendra*) Do you understand? The Vedas only give a faint idea of God."

Narendra again asks for the tanpura. Thakur says, "I will sing now." He is still in an ecstatic mood. He sings:

This is the grief that weighs on my heart: though You, my Mother, are

[7]

here and I am wide awake, thieves of passion rob my house.

"Mother, why do You make me reason?" Again Thakur sings :

Once for all, this time, I have thoroughly understood.

From one who knows it well, I have learned the secret of contemplation, from one who came from a realm where there is no night.

And now I can distinguish day from night no longer; rituals and devotions have all grown profitless for me.

I've shaken off my sleep; how can I fall into slumber again? For I am wide awake in the sleeplessness of union.

O Divine Mother, made one with you at last, my slumber I have lulled asleep forevermore.

Thakur says, "I am conscious." But he is still in an ecstatic mood. He sings again:

I drink no ordinary wine, but the nectar of everlasting bliss, as I repeat "Jai Kali – to Kali, victory!"

Seeing me drunk on this wine of the mind, by drunkards am I taken for a

[8]

drunk.

Thakur says, "Mother, I won't listen to discussions anymore."

Narendra sings:

O Mother, make me mad with Your love.

What need have I for knowledge or reason?

With the wine of Your love make me drunk,
You who steal the hearts of Your devotees!
Drown me in the ocean of Your love.

Thakur smiles a little when he says, “O Mother, make me mad with Your love. You cannot attain Her by Your knowledge or reason, by discussing scripture.”

He is happy to hear the Dhrupada musical airs by the singer from Konnagar. He says to him humbly, “Brother, please sing a song about the All-Blissful Mother.”

Musician: “Sir, please excuse me from doing that.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*folding his hands and bowing*): “No, my dear. Just one song. I can compel you.”

Saying this, he sings a song referring to [gopi] Vrinda’s speech from Govinda Adhikari’s musical play:

Radha can surely speak out!
She has kept awake for Krishna.
She has kept awake throughout the night,
And has good reason to be piqued.

“My dear sir, you are the son of the All-Blissful Mother. She resides in every being. I shall certainly enforce my demand. A peasant said to his guru, ‘I will get the mantra from you by beating if necessary.’”

Singer (*smiling*): “Beating with a shoe!”

Sri Ramakrishna (*bowing as to the revered guru, and smiling*): “Not that far.”

Then he adds, again abstracted in ecstasy, “The beginner, the aspirant, the perfect, and the perfect among the perfect! Are you perfect, or perfect of the perfect? Well, do sing.”

The singer plays the notes of the melody, “Manvaran.”

**Enjoying the bliss of Shabda Brahman (the word as Brahman) –
‘Mother, is it You or me?’**

Sri Ramakrishna (*listening to the notes of melody*): “My dear sir, even this gives me joy.”

The song has ended. The devotees from Konnagar salute Sri Ramakrishna and leave. The sadhaka salutes and then says

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with folded hands, “Holy sir, may I leave?” Thakur is still absorbed in ecstasy and talking to the Divine Mother, “Mother, You or I? Do I do anything? No, no. You.

“You heard the discussion – or was it I who heard it? No, not me. It was You who heard it.”

His earlier story – a sadhu teaches Thakur – a sadhu with the quality of tamas

Thakur has returned to the normal state of consciousness. He is talking to Narendra, Bhavanath, the two Mukherji brothers, and some other devotees. The conversation turns to the sadhaka.

Bhavanath (*smiling*): “What kind of a man is he?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He is a tamasic devotee.”

Bhavanath: “He can quote any number of Sanskrit verses.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Once I said to someone, ‘So and so is a rajasic sadhu. Why give him food and other provisions?’ Another sadhu taught me not to say such things. He said, ‘There are three kinds of sadhus: sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic.’ Since that day, I respect sadhus of all kinds.”

Narendra (*smiling*): “What? Like the elephant is Narayana, all are Narayana?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “God Himself is playing the game as

[10]

both knowledge and ignorance. I bow to both of them. The Chandi says, ‘She is Lakshmi [good fortune] in the house of the

[11]

blessed, and misfortune personified in the house of the unfortunate.’ (To Bhavanath) Is this in the Vishnu Purana?”

Bhavanath (*smiling*): “I don’t know about that, sir. The devotees from Konnagar didn’t understand your samadhi and got up to leave.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Then who said, ‘Please stay seated’?”

Bhavanath (*smiling*): “I did.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Child, you are as good in gathering people as in making them leave.”

Narendra’s argument with the singer is now the topic of conversation.

Doctrine of non-resistance and Sri Ramakrishna – Thakur teaches Narendra – the tamas of sattva – the great importance of God’s name

Mukherji: “Narendra didn’t leave him alone.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, he didn’t. One must have such grit. It is called the tamas of sattva. Should you listen to everything that people say? Should you let a prostitute do what she likes? Should you have to listen to what the prostitute says? One time Radha became sullen. A gopi friend said, ‘Radha has become proud.’ Brinda replied, ‘Whose pride is it? It is His pride – she is proud with Krishna’s pride.’”

Now the conversation turns to the great importance of chanting God’s name.

Bhavanath: “I feel such relief by chanting the name of Hari.”

[\[12\]](#)

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is Hari indeed who rids us of sins.

[\[13\]](#)

Hari removes the three afflictions of the world.

“And Chaitanya Deva propagated the name of Hari, so it must be good. Look, what a scholar Chaitanya Deva was! Besides, he was an incarnation of God. Since he preached the name, it must certainly be good. (*Laughing*) Once some peasants were invited to a feast. They were asked, ‘Would you like some hog plum pickles?’ They replied, ‘If the gentlemen have eaten it, give it to us too.’ If they ate it, it most certainly must be good.” (*Everybody laughs.*)

Thakur’s desire to meet Shivanath – Mahendra’s proposal to go on pilgrimage

Thakur feels a desire to see Shivanath (Shastri). He says to the

Mukherji brothers: “I would like to go to see Shivanath. If I go in your carriage, there won’t be the need to hire one.”

Mukherji: “As you please. Let’s decide on a date.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “Well, would he like for me to visit? Brahmos criticize those who believe in God with form.”

Mahendra Mukherji tells Thakur about wanting to go on pilgrimage.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “What do you mean, my dear? The plant of love has not yet sprouted and you are leaving? Let the plant grow and develop into a tree and bear fruit. We were having a nice conversation.”

Mahendra: “I feel that I should visit holy places. I’ll return soon.”

Chapter IV

Narendra’s love and devotion for God – Thakur in the mood of Gauranga at Jadu Mallick’s garden – with devotees

It is afternoon, about five o’clock. Thakur gets up from his seat. Devotees are strolling in the garden. Many of them will soon take their leave.

Thakur talks with Hazra on the northern verandah. These days Narendra often visits Annada, the eldest son of the Guhas.

Hazra: “I hear that Annada, Guha’s son, is practicing difficult austerities. He lives on very little food, eating rice only once every four days.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Oh, really? Who knows through what practice one may meet the Lord.”

[\[14\]](#)

Hazra: “Narendra sang an agamani song.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*eagerly*): “How was it?”

Kishori is standing nearby. Thakur says, “Are you all right?”

Thakur is on the western circular verandah. It is winter. He is putting on a flannel shirt dyed ochre. At the same time he asks

Narendra, “Did you sing the agamani?” Going down from the semi-circular verandah, he walks to the embankment of the Ganges with Narendra. M. is with them.

Narendra sings:

Tell me, my daughter Uma, how you fared in the stranger’s house.

The stories people tell! My heart is rent by grief.

His body smeared with ashes from the funeral pyre,

My son-in-law roams about, filled with delight!

Do you, like him, also rub your golden skin with ash?

How can a mother bear her son-in-law to beg from door to door?

This time when he comes to fetch you again, I shall say, “Uma is not here.”

Thakur stands and listens to the song. He goes into an ecstatic mood standing there.

There is still a little daylight. The sun is low on the western horizon. Thakur is absorbed in ecstasy. On one side of him is the Ganges flowing north; the flood tide came some time ago. Behind him is a flower garden. And to the right the nahabat and the panchavati can be seen. Narendra stands close to him as he sings.

Now twilight has come. Narendra and other devotees salute Thakur and leave. Thakur returns to his room, recites the name of the Divine Mother, and meditates on Her.

Today Jadu Mallick has come to the adjoining garden house. He often sends word to Thakur to visit him when he is there. Today a messenger from him has come. Thakur will go. Adhar Sen, having come from Calcutta, salutes Thakur.

Thakur in Jadu Mallick’s garden with devotees –in Gauranga’s feelings

Thakur is about to go visit Jadu Mallick’s garden. He says to Latu, “Light the lantern. Let’s go.”

He is going alone with Latu, but M. is present.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Why haven’t you brought Narayan with you?”

M.: “May I accompany you?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Do you want to go? Adhar and some others are there. All right, come along.”

The Mukherji brothers were standing on the path. Thakur says to M., “Do they want to accompany us?” (*To the Mukherji brothers*) “That’s nice. Come on. Then we can return quickly.”

Conversation with Jadu about Chaitanya’s life – about Adhar’s work

Thakur goes to Jadu Mallick’s parlour, a well furnished room. Lamps are shedding light in the room and on the verandah. Jadu is sitting with a couple of friends playing with some little boys. One of the kitchen help is awaiting orders. Another is fanning the company. Smiling, Jadu greets Thakur, still sitting. He acts with Thakur as if he is an old acquaintance.

Jadu is a devotee of Gauranga. He has already seen the performance about Chaitanya’s life at the Star Theatre. He tells Thakur, “A new play of Chaitanya’s life is being enacted. It is wonderful.”

Thakur listens to the account of the play with joy and plays with one of Jadu’s little sons, holding his hand. M. and the Mukherji brothers are sitting beside him.

Adhar Sen was trying to get the job of Vice Chairman of the municipal committee of Calcutta. This post carried a salary of a thousand rupees a month. Adhar is a deputy magistrate, with a salary of three hundred rupees a month. He is thirty years old.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Jadu*): “Well, Adhar hasn’t been successful in getting that job.”

Jadu and his friends say, “He is still young.”

After a short time Jadu says, “Please chant His name a little.”

Thakur begins singing, depicting Gauranga’s mood.

He sings:

My Gaur is dancing,

[15]

Dancing with the devotees to the kirtan in Srivas’s courtyard.

He sings:

My Gaur is a jewel of a man.

And he sings again:

Gauranga Deva casts a glance toward Vrindavan,

And from his eyes flow tears of ecstasy.

What is this, if not divine rapture?

Gauranga is an ocean of bliss.

In ecstasy he laughs, weeps, dances, and sings.

Every wooded grove he sees as Vrindavan, and the ocean as the Jamuna.

He places his head on his own feet,

For he is Gaur without, but Sri Krishna within.

And then he sings:

Why has my body become fair of complexion? Tell me, what has happened?

O friend, it is not the hour of dawn. Why has it taken on this hue before its time,

Before the time of the day's brightening?

[\[16\]](#)

The play of the Lord of the Dwaparayuga has not yet come to a close.

Tell me, why has all this happened?

Wherever I cast my glance, the cuckoo and the peacock brightly gleam.

What has happened? Why do I see everything filled with golden light?

Perhaps Radha has reached Mathura, and that is why this body shines golden.

[\[17\]](#)

Radha was like a weevil, so she has given her complexion to it. The limb that was dark has suddenly become golden.

Have I become Radha by thinking of her? What has happened?

Does Radharani bestow her radiant complexion on him who does not recite the Radha mantra?

I cannot tell, brother, whether I am in Mathura or Navadvip.

Mahadeva has not yet become advaita.

Why has my body turned fair-complexioned?

Balaram, the elder brother, has not yet become Nitai nor Vishakha

Ramananda.

Brahma has also not become Haridas, nor Narada Srivasa, or Mother Yashoda Shachi.

Why have I alone taken on this fair complexion, when Balai, the elder brother, has not become Nitai?

I think I have come to Mathura and that is why my body has become golden-hued.

I have become golden-hued though father Nanda has not yet become Jagannath, nor has Radhika become Gadadhar.

Why has my body become golden-hued?

Chapter V

Thakur's worry for Rakhal – Jadu Mallick – Bholanath testifies

As the song ends, the Mukherji brothers rise. Thakur also rises, though he is absorbed in an ecstatic mood. He comes to the verandah of the room and goes into deep samadhi as he stands there. A number of lamps have been lit on the verandah. The gate keeper of the garden is a devotee who sometimes invites Thakur to his house for a meal. While Thakur is still standing in samadhi, the gate keeper comes and fans him with a big fan.

Ratan, the garden manager, comes and bows to Thakur.

Thakur returns to a normal state. He says, "Narayana, Narayana," and then talks to him.

Thakur goes to the main gate of the temple accompanied by the devotees. The Mukherji brothers have been waiting there for him.

In the meantime Adhar has been looking for Thakur.

Mukherji (*laughing*): "Mahendra Babu [M.] has played truant to come here."

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing, to Mukherji*): "Please keep regular contact with him and talk with him."

Priya Mukherji (*smiling*): "He is going to be our teacher now."

Sri Ramakrishna: "The nature of a hemp smoker is that he is filled with joy to see another hemp smoker. He does not even

talk to a good gentleman, but if a wandering hemp smoker comes, he may embrace him.” (*All laugh.*)

Thakur proceeds west to his room by the garden path. On the way, he says, “Jadu is a great Hindu. He quotes many tales from the Bhagavata.”

Mani comes to the Kali Temple, salutes, and takes some holy [\[18\]](#)

water. Thakur arrives. They will both visit the Divine Mother.

It is around 9 p.m. The Mukherji brothers salute Thakur and leave. Adhar and M. are sitting on the floor. Thakur talks to Adhar about Rakhal.

Rakhal is in Vrindavan with Balaram. News about him had come by letter, saying that he was sick. Two or three days ago Thakur had become so worried to hear of his illness that he had cried like a child at the time of his midday meal, asking Hazra, “What is going to happen?” Adhar had written a registered letter to Rakhal but even the receipt of the letter has not yet been acknowledged.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Narayan got a letter but you have not received any reply to yours.”

Adhar: “No sir, I haven’t received a reply yet.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “And he has written to M. as well.”

They begin to talk about Thakur’s seeing the *Chaitanya Lila*.

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing, to the devotees*): “Jadu said, ‘You can see it nicely from a one-rupee seat. That’s cheap!’

“Once there was talk about taking us to Panihati. Jadu said that we might take a country boat that carries a crowd of passengers. (*All laugh.*)

“He used to listen a little to spiritual talk. One devotee used to visit him quite frequently. But he is no longer seen. He always seems to have so many flatterers with him – they have misled him.

“He is very calculating. As soon as I arrive at his house, he asks,

‘How much is the carriage fare?’ I tell him, ‘You don’t have to bother about it. Just pay two and a half rupees.’ Then he is silent and pays exactly two and a half rupees.” (*All laugh.*)

A latrine has been built to the south of the temple. Because of it, a dispute with Jadu Mallick and the Temple authorities arose. Jadu’s garden is close to it.

Bholanath, the garden clerk, has given a deposition before a judge. Perhaps because of it, he has become fearful, and he told Thakur about it. Thakur had replied, “Adhar is a deputy magistrate. I’ll ask him when he comes.” Ram Chakravarty had brought Bholanath to Thakur and explained the whole matter to him, “Bholanath is afraid after giving deposition to the judge.”

Thakur is worried and sits up. He asks for the whole case to be explained to Adhar. After Adhar has heard everything, he says, “There is nothing to it – just a little inconvenience.” It helped rid Thakur of a deep worry.

It is dark. Adhar is about to leave. He offers his salutations.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Bring Narayan with you.”

[1]

. Prema.

[2]

. Vaidya.

[3]

. Kapha, pitta and vayu.

[4]

. A style of North Indian classical music.

[5]

. For the complete song refer to Volume III, Appendix, Chapter 1.

[6]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section I, Chapter II.

[7]

. For the complete song refer to Volume I, Section XX, Chapter V.

[8]

. For the complete song refer to Section XXX, Chapter II.

[9]

. Gosain.

[\[10\]](#)

. Vidya and avidya.

[\[11\]](#)

. Alakshmi.

[\[12\]](#)

. A name of Vishnu or His incarnation, Krishna, applied to God in personal form.

[\[13\]](#)

. The three afflictions are *adhidaivika*, misfortunes caused by natural disasters or the forces of nature; *adhibhautika*, misfortunes caused by other living beings, i.e. war, physical or verbal assault, attacks of animals, snake bites, and so on; *adhyatmika*, misfortunes arising from the harm we do ourselves by mental anguish, addictions, and self-destructive behavior.

[\[14\]](#)

. A class of songs welcoming the Divine Mother, Uma, Shiva's wife, to her father's house.

[\[15\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Section XV, Chapter V.

[\[16\]](#)

. Dwaparayuga: the second of the four cosmic ages (yugas).

[\[17\]](#)

. Kumro poka, an insect that bores.

[\[18\]](#)

. Charanamrita.

Section XX

Thakur at Dakshineswar with Mahendra, Rakhal, Radhika Goswami, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Advice to Mahendra and others – Captain’s devotion to God and service to his parents

Sri Ramakrishna is in his room at the Kali temple in Dakshineswar with the devotees. It is autumn, Friday, 19 September 1884, the 4th of

[1]

Ashwin, 1291 B.Y. The time is two o’clock. It is the amavasya of the

[2]

month of Bhadra, mahalaya. Mahendra Mukherji and his brother Priya Mukherji, M., Baburam, Harish, Kishori, and Latu are there. Some are seated on the floor and the others either stand or move about the room. Hazra is sitting in the verandah. Rakhal is in Vrindavan with Balaram.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mahendra and other devotees*): “I went to Captain’s house in Calcutta. It was late at night when I returned.

“What a good nature Captain has! What love for God! He wears

[3]

a short cloth when he performs the arati – once with an earthen lamp with three wicks and then with a lamp with one light. Finally he performs arati with camphor.

“He doesn’t speak when he performs worship. He motioned for me to take a seat.

“While he worships, his eyes show great emotion, red and swollen as if a wasp has stung them.

“He can’t sing, but he chants beautifully.

“In the presence of his mother, he sits below her, on the floor.

[4]

“His father was an officer in the British army. On the battlefield, he would hold a gun in one hand and worship Shiva with the other. His servant made clay images of Shiva for him. He wouldn’t even drink water before worshiping. He was paid six thousand rupees a year.

“Captain sends his mother to Kashi now and then. Twelve or thirteen people serve her there. It is a big expense. Captain knows Vedanta, the Gita, and the Bhagavata by heart.

“He says, ‘The gentlemen in Calcutta conduct themselves like

[5]

malechhas.’

“In his early years, he practiced Hatha Yoga. That’s why he strokes my head when I’m in samadhi or ecstasy.

“His wife has another deity – Gopala. This time I didn’t find her so miserly. She also knows the Gita and other scriptures. What devotion they have! Whenever I sit for meals, they pour water on my hands to wash them. They even give me a wooden toothpick.

“They made a goat curry. Captain said, ‘It stays good for fifteen days.’ But his wife said, ‘No, no. It’s only good for seven days.’ It was tasty. She served a little of some other dishes. Since I eat more than they do these days, she served me more.

“After eating, Captain or his wife fan me.”

**Jung Bahadur’s sons accompany Captain to see Thakur in 1875-76 –
an unmarried Nepali girl sings the *Gita Govinda* – ‘I am a handmaid
of God’**

“They have great love for God. They show great reverence for sadhus. The people of western India (Punjab and Uttar Pradesh) have great devotion for sadhus. Jung Bahadur’s sons and a nephew came here. They didn’t wear their English trousers. They were somewhat in awe.

“Once a girl from his country came with Captain. She was a great devotee and hadn’t married. She could sing the *Gita*

[6]

Govinda from memory. Dwarika Babu and his family came to hear her sing. I said, 'They want to hear you. They are good people.' While she was singing the *Gita Govinda*, Dwarika Babu began to wipe tears from his eyes. When asked why she had not married, she said, 'I am a handmaid of God. Whom else can I serve now?' Everybody respects her very much as a goddess, as the scriptures direct.

(*To Mahendra and others*) "Do you feel benefited by coming here? I would be quite pleased to hear that it helps. (*To M.*) Why do people come here? I am not much of a scholar."

M.: "Sir, when Krishna himself became cows and cowherd boys (after the original ones were abducted by Brahma), their mothers stopped going to Yashoda after they found the new cowherd boys. Even the cows followed the calves, bellowing when they heard them."

Sri Ramakrishna: "What does that mean?"

M.: "That the Lord Himself had become every-thing – such an attraction was generated. The mind is attracted by the presence of God."

Explanation of Krishna's sport – love of the gopis –significance of stealing their clothes

Sri Ramakrishna: "This is the attraction of Yogamaya. She

[7]

casts a spell. Radhika disguised herself as Subol with a calf in her arms, she was so afraid of Jatila (her sister-in-law). Jatila blessed her. When one takes refuge in Yogamaya, then even a Jatila blesses.

"The whole sport of Lord Hari is played out with the help of Yogamaya.

"The gopis, though married, felt great love for Krishna. They were madly in love with him – a woman doesn't feel so much love for her husband. If someone says to her, 'Look, your husband has come,' she replies, 'Let him. He can help himself to something to eat.' But if she hears that it is another man who is

handsome and a master of wit, she will run to see him and peep at him from behind a screen.

“If the gopis had not seen him, how could their minds feel such attraction for him? This attraction is possible even by hearing about him. ‘My mind is absorbed with him just by hearing his name, even without knowing him.’”

A devotee: “Sir, what is the meaning of the theft of the gopis’ clothes?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The eight fetters – the gopis were rid of all the fetters except the feeling of shame. So he snapped even that bondage. All bondages are removed when one realizes God.”

He who has fallen from yoga attains God after his desire for sense enjoyments is over

(*To Mahendra Mukherji and other devotees*) “Not everybody is attracted to God. There has to be a special receptivity. You have to have the right samskaras to feel such attraction. If that were not so, why should you be the only one to come here out of so many residents of Baghbazar? The ones without good tendencies don’t come. The Malaya breeze turns every tree into sandalwood. But the shimul, the ashwattha, the banyan, and some others are not transformed.

“You don’t lack money. When a person falls from yoga, he takes birth in a prosperous family. This enables him to renew his spiritual practices for the realization of God.”

Mahendra Mukherji: “Why does a person fall from yoga?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Perhaps while contemplating God, he suddenly develops a desire for enjoyment. This craving makes him fall from yoga. In the next life he will have the same spiritual tendencies.”

Mahendra: “Then what is the way out?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “There is no liberation as long as you nurse some desire for enjoyment. That is why you should fulfill all desires. Eat, dress, enjoy sex, and so on in time. (*Smiling*) What do you think? Should it be with your own wife or another woman?” (*M. and Mukherji laugh.*)

Chapter II

Life of Thakur told by himself – various desires of Thakur

His earlier story – first visit to the Nath's garden in Calcutta – bath in the Ganges

Sri Ramakrishna: "It's not good to have a desire for enjoyment. That's why I used to fulfill any desire which arose in my mind right away.

"When I saw some colourful sandesh at Burrabazar, I wanted to eat them. They brought them to me and I ate a lot of them, but then I got sick.

"One day in my childhood, when I was taking a dip in the Ganges, I saw a boy with a golden band around his waist. I was in the garden of the Nath's. During a state of ecstasy, I felt I should also wear a band of gold. But I couldn't wear it long. When I put it on, a creeping sensation rose up inside me, a rapid, slithering movement. You see, my body had touched gold. I had to take it off right away. If I hadn't, I would have had to tear it off.

[8]

"I also felt a craving for the parched rice-balls of Dhanekhali [9] and the fried milk sweetmeat of Krishnanagar." (*All laugh.*)

His earlier story – listening to chanting of Chandi by Sambhu and Raj Narayana – Thakur serves the sadhus

"I wanted to hear the recitation of the Chandi by Sambhu. After hearing it, I wanted to hear the chanting again by Raj Narayana. I heard it, too.

"Many sadhus used to visit at that time. I felt the desire to have a separate bhandara (free kitchen) for their service. Mathur Babu complied with my wish. The sadhus were given food, fuel, and so on from that bhandara.

"Once a wish arose in my mind to wear an expensive robe made of gold thread and to smoke a silver hubble-bubble. Mathur

Babu sent the new robe, hubble-bubble, everything. I put the robe on and puffed at the hubble-bubble in different ways, first this way and then another, once from above and then from below. Then I said to myself, ‘O mind, this is what is known as smoking a silver hubble-bubble.’ And I gave it up. I wore the robe for a little while and then took it off. I stamped on it, spat on it, and said, ‘So this is an expensive robe. This robe brings rajas.’”

Rakhal and Balaram in Vrindavan – Thakur’s earlier story – Rakhal experiences his first ecstasy in 1881

Rakhal is in Vrindavan with Balaram. In the beginning he used to write letters praising Vrindavan. He wrote to M., “It is really a very nice place. You must come. Peacocks and peahens dance together. And there is music and dance – there is perpetual joy.” After that Rakhal fell ill with a fever common to Vrindavan. Thakur was very worried when he heard about it. He took a vow to worship the Chandi for his sake. Talking about Rakhal, he said, “It was here that Rakhal first experienced ecstasy, while he was massaging my feet. A Bhagavata pundit was in the room speaking about the Bhagavata. Listening to what he was saying, Rakhal first began to tremble every now and then, and then he became perfectly still.

“He experienced ecstasy a second time in Balaram’s house. He lay down in that state.

“Rakhal’s spiritual ideal is God with form. He will leave a place where the formless God is mentioned.

[\[10\]](#)

“I made a vow to worship Chandika for his sake. He has renounced his home and family and depends on me. I used to send him to his wife – he had a little desire for enjoyment left.

“He wrote to him (*pointing to M.*) from Vrindavan, ‘It is a good place. Peacocks and peahens dance together. These birds have put me in a difficult situation.’

“He’s there with Balaram. Ah, what a sweet nature Balaram

has! He doesn't go to Kathar in Orissa for my sake. His brother has stopped sending him a monthly allowance saying, 'Come live here. Why are you wasting so much money there?' He didn't listen, just because he wants to see me.

"What a fine nature he has! Day and night he is busy with worship. His gardeners make garlands for the Deity. He will stay in Vrindavan for four months just to save money. He gets a monthly allowance of two hundred rupees."

His earlier story – he weeps for Narendra – Narendra's first visit to him in 1881

"Why am I so fond of these young men? The idea of 'lust and greed' has not entered their minds yet. I see them as ever-perfect.

"When Narendra came the first time, he was dressed in a dirty cloth. But looking at his face and eyes, I felt that he had mettle within. He didn't know many songs then. He sang one or two: 'O mind, return to thy abode' and 'Will my days just pass in vain, O Lord?'

"When he came, the room would be full of people, but I would talk looking only at him. He'd say, 'Please talk to them.' Then I would.

"I used to weep for him in Jadu Mallick's garden house. I was mad with longing to see him. I would hold Bholanath's hand and weep. Bholanath said, 'Sir, it's not right for you to do this

[\[11\]](#)

[\[12\]](#)

for the sake of a kayastha boy.' The fat brahmin one day folded his hands and said, 'Sir, he's only moderately educated. Why do you get so restless for him?'

"Bhavanath and Narendra are a twosome, they're a couple like husband and wife. That's why I asked Bhavanath to associate closely with Narendra. The spiritual ideal of both of them is the formless One."

**Strict rules for sannyasins – renunciation for teaching others –
Ghoshpara spiritual practices**

"I forbid the youngsters from visiting with women frequently or

staying long with them.

“Haripada fell into the snare of a Ghoshpara woman. She exhibits motherly affection, and Haripada is a child. He doesn’t understand anything. These women act like this when they see youngsters. I hear that Haripada lies in her lap, and she feeds him with her own hands. I shall tell him that all this is not good. This motherly affection may later turn to lower conduct.

“These women carry out spiritual disciplines with men, taking them to be Sri Krishna. They say, ‘He is Raja Krishna.’ Their guru asks, ‘Have you found your Raja Krishna?’ They say, ‘Yes, I have.’

“The other day that woman came here. I saw her furtive glances. Not good! Gauging her sentiments I said, ‘Treat Haripada as you are doing now – and don’t change your feelings.’

“The young men are in the stage of practicing spiritual disciplines. Their only practice now must be renunciation. A sannyasin must not even see a picture of a woman. I tell them, ‘Even if a woman is a devotee, do not sit beside her and talk. Speak very briefly, while standing.’ Even after attaining perfection, you have to do this. It is both for your own protection and for setting an example. When women come here, I also say to them after a while, ‘Now go and visit the temples.’ If they don’t leave when I say this, I myself leave. Seeing me do this, others will learn.”

His earlier story – visit to Phului Shyambazar in 1880 – attraction of an incarnation

“Well, you see, all these youngsters are coming here, and so are you. What does it mean? There certainly must be something here (within me). Why else would you feel attracted, why would I draw people here?

“When I was in Hriday’s home in the countryside (in Sihore, near Kamarpukur), they took me to Shyambazar. I could see that they were devotees of Gauranga. It was revealed to me before I entered the village. I saw Gauranga. There was such an attraction that crowds of people came for seven days and nights. And there was only kirtan and dance. People sat on walls and

some in the trees.

“I stayed at Natabar Goswami’s house. There were crowds of people there day and night. I’d run away to a weaver’s house in the morning, but people would gather there in no time. They’d bring drums and cymbals. The drums would play ‘takuti, takuti.’ We’d have our meal at three in the afternoon.

“News went around that a man had died and come to life again seven times. Lest I should fall ill from the heat, Hriday would pull me out into the fields. But there, too, crowds gathered like rows of ants. Again the same playing of drums and cymbals: ‘Takuti, takuti!’ Hriday would say to them angrily, ‘Have we never heard kirtan before?’

[\[13\]](#)

“The Vaishnava priests came to create a row, thinking that we were there to take away their fees. But then they saw that I didn’t touch a piece of cloth or even a thread. One of them said, ‘He is a knower of Brahman.’ So the gosais wanted to test me. One of them asked, ‘Why doesn’t he have a rosary or a holy mark on his forehead?’ Another of them answered, ‘The dry branch of the coconut tree has dropped off on its own.’ I learned about the ‘coconut branches’ from there – that after one has attained knowledge of Brahman, all adjuncts fall off by themselves.

“People from distant villages would come and spend the night there. A number of women slept in the courtyard of the house where I was staying. Hriday was going out to urinate one night. They said, ‘You might do it here (in the courtyard) itself.’

“I came to understand there in Shyambazar the attraction of the Divine Incarnation. When God descends to play His part, attraction is generated by Yogamaya. A spell is cast.”

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna and Radhika Goswami

It is almost three o’clock. Thakur has been talking to the two Mukherji brothers and other devotees. Radhika Goswami, who

is about thirty years old, arrives and salutes Thakur. This is his first visit. He takes a seat.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Do you belong to the Advaita family?”

The Goswami: “Yes, sir.”

Hearing that the goswami is a descendent of Advaita Goswami, Thakur salutes him with folded hands.

Reverence for the family of goswamis and brahmins – birth in the family of a saint

Sri Ramakrishna: “Born into the family of Advaita Goswami! Surely one inherits the qualities of one’s ancestors.

“A high quality mango tree yields only high quality mangoes. (*The devotees laugh.*) No bad fruit, though there is some difference in size. Some small, others large, because of the quality of the soil. Isn’t that right?”

The goswami (*humbly*): “Sir, what do I know?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Whatever you may say, people won’t let you off so easily.

“A brahmin may have a thousand faults but he is revered if he

[\[14\]](#)

belongs to the lineage of Bharadvaja or Shandilya. Please narrate the tale of the falcon with conch-like markings on its

[\[15\]](#)

wings.”

M. remains silent. Thakur continues.

Sri Ramakrishna: “If you have a saintly person as a predecessor, he will certainly pull you up, even if you have a thousand faults. When the Gandharvas captured the Kauravas, Yudhisthira had them liberated. He set free even Duryodhana, who had shown him so much enmity and was the cause of his exile.

“Besides, one should respect the holy garb. It reminds one of the real thing. Chaitanya Deva put religious robes on a donkey and then bowed to it.

“Why do people salute the shankhachila? When Kamsa tried to
[16]
kill the Divine Mother, she flew away as a falcon with
conchlike markings on her wings. That’s why, everyone bows to
see this kind of bird.”

**His earlier story – Koar Singh worships Thakur at Chanak –
Thakur’s loyalty to the king**

“Soldiers saluted an Englishman who came to the cantonment
of Chanak. Koar Singh explained to me that the country is
under English rule, so one must salute an Englishman.”

**Thakur condemns sectarianism before the goswami –Shaktas and
Vaishnavas**

“Shaktas follow the Tantra while Vaishnavas follow the
Puranas. It is not wrong for Vaishnavas to speak about their
spiritual practices. But the followers of Tantra keep their
practices secret. That’s why you can’t completely understand a
Shakta.

(*To the goswami*) “You are good people. You do so much
japa and chant the name of the Lord so much.”

The goswami (*humbly*): “We do nothing great. I am worthless.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing*): “Humility is good, but there’s
another attitude: ‘I repeat the name of Lord Hari. How can sin
touch me?’ People who say every day, ‘I am a sinner, sinner I
am; I am worthless, worthless I am,’ indeed become so. What
lack of faith! A person who has chanted His name so much and
yet says, ‘Sin, sin!’”

The goswami is amazed to hear this.

**His earlier story – Thakur dresses as a Vaishnava in Vrindavan –
1868**

Sri Ramakrishna: “I dressed myself in the garb of a Vaishnava
in Vrindavan and wore it for fifteen days. (*To the devotees*) I

used to practice the disciplines of all the different paths of religion for a few days. Only then would I feel at peace.

(Laughing) “I practiced them all. And I accept all paths. I accept the Shaktas as well as the Vaishnavas. And also the Vedantists. That’s why people of all faiths come here. They all think I belong to their faith. I also respect the modern Brahmos.

“Somebody had a large tub with a single dye in it. But it had this wonderful quality: it would dye cloth any colour someone desired.

“One clever fellow said, ‘You have to give me the dye which you used to dye their clothes.’ *(Thakur and all others laugh.)*

“Why should I be one-sided? I’m not worried that people of a certain faith won’t visit. It doesn’t matter to me if someone comes or not. I also have no thought that a certain person should be in my control. Adhar Sen wanted me to pray to the Divine Mother so that he’d get a high position. He didn’t get it. As a consequence, if he thinks in a different way about me, let him. I don’t care.”

**His earlier story – feeling of the formless One in Keshab Sen’s house
– with Vijay Goswami in the school of Gadadhar from Ariadaha –
Vijay’s character**

“And then when I went to Keshab Sen’s house my attitude changed. They are always talking there of the formless One. So I said to the Divine Mother in an ecstatic mood, ‘Mother, don’t come here. These people don’t believe in Your forms.’”

The goswami is quiet when he hears all these words against sectarianism.

Sri Ramakrishna *(smiling)*: “Vijay is in a very good state of mind.

“He falls on the ground when he chants, ‘Hari, Hari.’

“He spends his time until four in the morning in devotional singing and meditation. He wears ochre cloth now. When he sees an image of God, he prostrates to offer his salutations.

“He went to Gadadhar’s schoolhouse with me. I said, ‘Here, he

[Chaitanya Deva] used to practice meditation.’ Immediately Vijay prostrated there.

“He again prostrated himself before Sri Chaitanya’s picture.”

The goswami: “And before the image of Radha-Krishna?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He fell prostrate there too. All his actions are orthodox.”

The goswami: “He can now be taken into Vaishnava society.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He doesn’t care much what people say.”

The goswami: “But Vaishnava society would be benefited by having such a person.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He has great respect for me.

“It is difficult to find him. Today he is invited to Dacca, tomorrow to another place. He is always so busy.

“There are lots of problems in the (Sadharan Brahmo) Samaj.”

The goswami: “Why, sir?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “They say to him, ‘You associate yourself with believers in God with form. You’ve become an idolater.’

“He is broad-minded and straightforward. Unless one is simple at heart, one doesn’t receive the grace of God.”

**Instructions to the Mukherjis – household life – go forward – yoga of
[\[17\]](#)
practice**

Now Thakur is talking with the Mukherji brothers. The elder brother, Mahendra, is in business. He has not taken service under anyone. The younger, Priyanath, used to be an engineer. He has now made some provision and no longer works. The elder Mukherji is thirty-five or thirty-six. His home is in the village of Kedati. He also has a house at Baghbazar in Calcutta.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “If you feel a little inspiration, don’t rest content. You must go forward. There is more after the sandalwood trees – there are silver mines and gold mines.”

Priya (*smiling*): “Sir, our legs are shackled. We can’t move

forward.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What can shackles on the feet do? It is the mind that matters.

“You are bound or freed by the mind. There were two friends. One of them went to visit a prostitute and the other to listen to a recital of the Bhagavata. The former said, ‘I am damned. My friend is listening to a recital of the story of Lord Hari and I am here in such a dirty place!’ The one listening to the Bhagavata said to himself, ‘I am cursed. See how my friend is enjoying himself and having fun. What a fool I am!’ Just see, the first one was taken after death by the messengers of Vishnu to

[\[18\]](#)

Vaikuntha. The latter was taken to the nether world of

[\[19\]](#)

Yama.”

Priya: “But the mind is not under my control.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What do you mean? There is the yoga of

[\[20\]](#)

practice. Practice it. You will see that your mind will go wherever you take it.

“The mind is like a freshly laundered cloth. It will get dyed red if you put it in red dye, and you can dye it blue by putting it in blue dye. Whatever colour you dye it in, it will take that colour.

(*To the goswami*) “Have you anything to ask?”

The goswami (*very humbly*): “No, sir. I’ve been able to see you and have been listening to all you are saying.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Now go and visit the deities in the temples.

The goswami (*very humbly*): “Could you sing a little on the

[\[21\]](#)

greatness of Sri Chaitanya?

Thakur sings for the goswami:

Why has my body turned fair-complexioned?

Then:

Gauranga Deva casts a glance toward Vrindavan,

And from his eyes flow tears of ecstasy.

And again:

What is this, if not divine rapture?

Gauranga is an ocean of bliss.

In ecstasy he laughs, weeps, dances, and sings.

Every wooded grove he sees as Vrindavan, and the ocean as the Jamuna.

He places his head on his own feet,

[22]

For he is Gaur without, but Sri Krishna within.

Advice to Radhika Goswami about harmony of religions

Thakur speaks again after the song is over.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the goswami*): “All these songs suit you (Vaishnavas). But if a Shakta or someone from the Ghoshpara sect comes, what shall I sing?

“You will find all kinds of attitudes here, for different kinds of people – Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Kartabhajas, Vedantists, as well as Brahmos.

“It is by His will that so many different religions, so many beliefs, have come into existence.

“God has given to everyone what agrees with his stomach. A

[23]

mother doesn't serve rice and fish to all her children. It doesn't suit everyone. So for some, she prepares fish soup.

“A person clings to the attitude which is agreeable to his nature and feelings.

“In a community festival where different kinds of people visit, images of various kinds are made. There are images of Radha-Krishna, Hara-Parvati and Sita-Rama – different images placed in different places. And you see people crowding before each one. Vaishnavas are seen standing for a long time to view Radha-Krishna, Shaktas near Hara-Parvati, and those who are devotees of Rama crowd around Sita-Rama.

“But those whose minds are not inclined toward any deity at all

belong to a different class. At a community festival, they also prepare images such as a prostitute beating her paramour with a broom. People who have no deity in mind stand there with mouths agape, and the people look at them and call out loudly to their friends, ‘Tell me, what are you looking at there? Come here, come here.’” (*Everyone laughs.*)

The goswami salutes and takes his leave.

Chapter IV

Thakur makes merry with the young devotees – he watches the arati of Mother Kali and fans Her with a chamara

The Mother and son talk. Why do you make me reason?

It is five o’clock. Thakur is on the western verandah. Baburam, Latu, the two Mukherji brothers, M., and some others are with him.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M. and the others*): “Why should my mind run in a single track? These people are Vaishnavas and bigoted. They think that only their belief is correct and that all others are wrong. What I have said has gone deep into him [meaning Radhika Goswami]. (*Smiling*) An elephant needs to be goaded on the head because that’s where it is sensitive.”

Now Thakur begins to have fun with the youngsters.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “I don’t serve them [the youngsters] only vegetarian food. I also give them a little water smelling of fish. Otherwise, why would they come?”

The Mukherjis leave the verandah to stroll for a while in the garden.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “I used to practice japa – and go into samadhi. What does that mean?”

M. (*very seriously*): “That is very good, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Good! Good! But what would they (the Mukherjis) think about it?”

M.: “Why? Didn’t Captain say that you are like a child? After realizing God, one becomes like a child.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That person at times acts like a child, a boy, and sometimes like an adult. In boyhood he talks nonsense. Sometimes he even uses foul language. But when he is in the state of adulthood, he teaches forcefully like a lion.

“You’d better talk to the Mukherjis and explain.”

M.: “I don’t have to explain. Don’t they know already?”

After a few jokes with the youngsters, Sri Ramakrishna says to

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a devotee, “It is new moon today. Please go to the Divine Mother’s temple.’

The sound of arati can be heard after dusk. Thakur says to Baburam, “Come, let’s go to the Kali temple.” Then he and Baburam and M. go. Seeing Harish sitting on the verandah, Thakur says, “Is he again in ecstasy?”

Crossing the courtyard, they watch the arati of Sri Radhakanta for a while. Then they continue toward Mother Kali’s temple. Thakur raises his arms and calls out to the Mother of the Universe, “Mother, O Mother. O, Brahmamayi!” Coming to the raised platform in front of the temple, he prostrates in salutation to the Divine Mother. The arati is being performed before the Mother. Thakur enters the shrine and begins to fan Her with a chamara.

The worship ends. The people who had been watching the arati all prostrate together. Sri Ramakrishna comes out of the shrine and salutes Her. Mahendra Mukherji and the other devotees also salute.

Today is new moon day, the darkest day of the fortnight. Thakur becomes fully absorbed in ecstasy, in divine intoxication. He holds Baburam’s hand and returns to his room staggering like a drunkard.

The lamp-lighter has lit a lamp on the western verandah of his room. Thakur comes and sits there for some time. He chants, “Hari Om, Hari Om,” and several other mantras from the Tantras.

In a little while Thakur goes and sits on his small bed, facing east. Even now he is fully absorbed in a divine mood.

The Mukherji brothers, Baburam, and others sit on the floor.

Origin of language – the philosophy of prayer

Absorbed in ecstasy, Thakur talks with the Divine Mother. He says, “Mother, that You will only do it when I speak to You – that cannot be true.

“What does talking really mean? It is just giving a hint. Someone says, ‘I shall eat.’ Another person says, ‘Go on, I won’t listen to you.’

“Well, Mother, if someone says, ‘I want to eat,’ doesn’t he still feel hungry? It cannot be that You will listen only when I pray to You, that You will not listen when I long within. This cannot be true.

“You are what You are. Then why do I speak? Why do I pray?

“Oh, I do what You make me do.

“Oh, it is all confusion. Why do You make me reason?”

Thakur is talking to God. The devotees listen to him, speechless with wonder.

Samskaras and necessity of austerities – instruction to the devotees – service to sadhus

Now Thakur glances at the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “Good tendencies of past birth [\[25\]](#)

are essential to realize God. You have to have done something, practiced some austerities. Whether it is done in this life or in a past one.

“When Draupadi was being disrobed, the Lord appeared before her when he heard her earnest cry. He said, ‘Try to remember if

you have ever given a piece of cloth in charity. If you have, your modesty will be saved.' Draupadi said, 'I remember a rishi bathing in a river and his loin cloth floated away with the current. I tore off half of my cloth and gave it to him.' The Lord said, 'Then you have nothing to fear now.'"

M. is sitting on a foot rug east of Thakur's bed.

(*To M.*) "Have you understood this?"

M.: "Yes sir, about tendencies."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Please repeat what I have said. Let me hear."

M.: "Draupadi had gone for a bath —" (*Hazra enters.*)

Chapter V

Hazra Mahashay

Hazra has been living here for the last two years. He first met Thakur in 1880 in the village of Sihore near Kamarpukur. Thakur's nephew, [\[26\]](#)

Hriday Mukhopadhyaya, the son of his cousin Himangani Devi, lived there. At the time Thakur was staying at Hriday's house.

Hazra's native village is Madagod near Sihore. He has some land there. He is married and has children and other relatives. They get by somehow, though he has a debt of about a thousand rupees.

Hazra has felt dispassion since youth. He has a habit of seeking out sadhus and devotees. When he first came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and wanted to stay there, Thakur, already having met him in the village and seeing his devotional nature, asked him to stay [\[27\]](#)

and look after him.

Hazra's attitude is that of a man of knowledge. He doesn't like Thakur's devotional nature and his interest in the youngsters. Now and then he thinks of Sri Ramakrishna as a great soul, but at other times, he looks upon him as an ordinary individual.

He has taken a seat in the southeastern verandah of Thakur's room. There he repeats God's name on a rosary. Rakhal and other devotees do not spend as much time practicing japa, and Hazra criticizes them because of it.

He is a stickler for religious rules of conduct, which have become a sort of mania with him. He is about thirty-eight years old.

Hazra enters the room. Thakur enters a somewhat ecstatic mood and begins to talk.

Does God listen to prayers? – weep for Him, He will listen

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hazra*): “What you are doing is all right. But somehow it doesn’t come together right.

“Don’t find fault with anyone. Not even an insect. You yourself tell the tale of the sage Lomasha. Just as you pray for love of God, you must also pray that you may not find fault with others.”

Hazra: “Does He listen if you pray for divine love?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “A hundred times – if it is genuine and sincere. Does a worldly man weep for God as he does for his wife or son?”

His earlier life – the trembling of a resident of Kamarpukur over his wife’s illness

“The wife of a person fell ill. Thinking that her illness was incurable, this fellow began to shake with fear and was about to fall down unconscious!

“Who does that for God?”

Hazra takes the dust of Thakur’s feet.

Sri Ramakrishna (*hesitating*): “What are you doing?”

Hazra: “Shall I not take the dust of the feet of the man I live with?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Satisfy God and everyone will be satisfied! The whole world is pleased when God is pleased. When the Lord felt satisfied after eating the greens in Draupadi’s pot and said, ‘I am full,’ all the beings of the whole world were satisfied. Indeed, they felt they had eaten more than their fill. But when

the sages ate, was the whole world satisfied? Did it feel that it had eaten more than its fill?”

Thakur is saying that some work is necessary for the teaching of mankind.

His earlier story – a sadhu under the banyan tree worships his guru’s sandals and a shalagram

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hazra*): “Even after attaining spiritual knowledge, one performs worship and other rituals in order to set an example.

“I visit the Kali temple and also bow before all these pictures in my room. That’s why others do it. If a habit is formed, the mind feels uncomfortable if it is not done.

“I saw a sannyasin under the banyan tree. He had placed his guru’s sandals on a small carpet. And he placed a shalagram on the same carpet! He was worshipping them! I asked, ‘If you have attained so much spiritual knowledge, what is the need of ritualistic worship?’ The sannyasin said, ‘I’m doing everything else, why not this too? I can place a flower on the guru’s foot, and also on the emblem.’

“As long as one has a body, one cannot give up work. As long as there is mud at the bottom of the lake, there are bound to be

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some bubbles.”

The three stages: the scripture, the word of the guru, and spiritual practice; then one achieves the Goal

(*To Hazra*) “If there is knowledge of one, there is also knowledge of many. What help is there in mere reading of the scriptures?

“Scriptures contain sugar mixed with sand. It is very difficult to take out only the sugar. Therefore, one should hear the essence of a scripture from a sadhu or guru. After that, what is the need for scripture anymore?

“Say you’ve received a letter requesting five seers of sandesh and a piece of wearing cloth. If the letter is lost, you look for it anxiously. Finding it after a long search, you read it: ‘Send five

seers of sandesh and a piece of cloth.’ Then, you can throw the letter away. What use is it now? Your work now is to procure the sandesh and cloth.

(*To Mukherji, Baburam, M., and other devotees*) “After getting all the information, dive in. Having made sure where the pot is lying on the bottom of the pond, dive only there.

“You have to hear the essence of the scriptures from the lips of the guru and then take to spiritual practices. When you are absolutely sure what the right spiritual practice is for you, you begin to perceive God directly.

“And you can be sure of the right spiritual practice only when you dive. What use is it to sit down and reason about what you have read in the scriptures? Fools just reason about the way and then perish, because they don’t dive. Let them go!

“If you say that in diving there is the fear of sharks and crocodiles – the fear of desires and anger – then rub your body with turmeric powder before you dive. They won’t come near you. Turmeric powder is discrimination and non-attachment.”

Chapter VI

His earlier story: Sri Ramakrishna’s practice of spiritual disciplines according to the Purana, the Tantra, and the Vedanta – spiritual practices in the panchavati, under the bel tree and in the chandni – initiation into sannyasa from Totapuri in 1866

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “God made me practice various kinds of spiritual disciplines, first according to the Puranas, then according to the Tantras and also the disciplines of the Vedas. At first I practiced them in the panchavati. I

planted a grove of tulsi plants, and I used to sit inside it and meditate. Sometimes I would call out with great longing, ‘Mother, Mother,’ or at times repeat, ‘Rama, Rama.’

“When I repeated the name of Rama, I would sometimes tie a tail on my body in the spirit of Hanuman. It was a state of deep intoxication. During that time, I’d put on a silk cloth to worship. What joy was in that worship!

“The spiritual practices according to the Tantra were performed under the bel tree. At that time I could see no difference

[\[29\]](#)

between a tulsi plant and the fruit of a sajina.

“In that state, I used to eat the leftovers from the previous

[\[30\]](#)

night’s offering to Mother Durga; they could have been defiled by a snake or something.

“Sometimes I would ride a dog and push fried bread into its mouth and then eat it myself. The whole world is Vishnu. I

[\[31\]](#)

would rinse my mouth with water fallen in puddles on the ground; I brought water from the pond and put it in the puddles to rinse my mouth with.

“One cannot have spiritual realization without destroying ignorance. So I used to assume the attitude of a tiger and eat it up.

“When I performed disciplines according to the Vedas, I became a sannyasin. I used to lie down in the chandni and say to Hriday, ‘I have become a sannyasin. I shall eat in the chandni.’”

Thakur sees various divine forms during his practice of spiritual disciplines – Mother of the Universe instructs him on the Vedanta and the Gita

(To the devotee) “I remained on my seat resolutely and said to the Divine Mother, ‘I am a fool. Pray, let me know what is in the various scriptures – in the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantras.’

“The Divine Mother said, ‘The essence of the Vedanta is that Brahman alone is real, that the world is illusory. He who is

mentioned as Sat-chit-ananda Brahman in the Vedas is called Sat-chit-ananda Shiva in the Tantra. It is He who is known as Sat-chit-ananda Krishna in the Puranas.’

“What you hear when the word *gita* is repeated ten times is the essence of the Gita; that is, ‘tagi, tagi’ [renounce, renounce].

“When a person realizes God, the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Purana, and the Tantra all become insignificant.

(*To Hazra*) “He is no longer able to pronounce Om. Why does this happen? I cannot utter the word Om unless I come down very far from samadhi.

“The scriptures describe various states one has after a direct vision of God. I had them all – the state of a child, of a ghoul, and of lifeless matter.

“I also used to have visions the way they are described in the scriptures. At times I would see the whole universe filled with sparks of fire. Sometimes, I saw lakes of mercury all around me, shining brightly. And sometimes I would see it as molten silver. At times, I saw, as it were, torches giving out many-coloured lights.

“All these conform to what is said in the scriptures. That was reassuring.”

Sri Ramakrishna’s state – union of the phenomenal and the Absolute

“And then it was revealed to me that God Himself had become the living beings, the universe, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. Climbing up to the rooftop and then coming down the stairs. It’s the process of involution and evolution.

“Oh, what states I was kept in! One state would follow another like the movement of a husking machine. When one goes down, the other goes up.

“When I am in meditation, in samadhi, I see God. I also see Him when my mind comes back to the external world. I see Him on this side of the mirror, and I also see Him on the back of the mirror.”

Both the Mukherji brothers, Baburam, and other devotees

listen to Thakur, amazed.

Chapter VII

His earlier story – detachment of Sambhu Mallick – takes shelter with a saintly person

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mukherji and others*): “Captain now is in the state of a spiritual aspirant.

“It isn’t necessarily true that one remains attached (to the world) just by being rich. Sambhu (Mallick) used to say, ‘Hridu, I sit here ready with my bundle packed.’ I would say, ‘What an ominous thing you are saying!’ Then Sambhu would say, ‘No, please say that I may go to Him, having renounced everything.’

“Devotees of God have no fear. They are near and dear to Him. He will draw them. When Duryodhana and his companions were made prisoners by the Gandharvas, it was Yudhisthira who had them released. He said, ‘It would be a disgrace if our relatives remain in such difficulty.’”

Brahmins of the temple – Sri Ramakrishna preaches devotion to them

It is about 9 p.m. Both the Mukherji brothers are getting ready to return to Calcutta. Thakur gets up and strolls for a while through the room and the verandah. He hears loud singing in the Vishnu temple. Asking about it, a devotee tells him, “Latu and Harish have joined them.” Thakur says, “That’s it.”

Thakur goes to the Vishnu temple with the devotees. They prostrate before Sri Radhakanta.

Thakur notices that the brahmin servants of the temple, those who cook and prepare offerings for the deities and who serve it to the guests, have gathered together in a large number to sing the kirtan. Thakur stands there for a while and encourages them.

Returning to his room through the courtyard, he says to the devotees, “Look, some of these fellows wash the pots and pans, and some of them visit houses of prostitution.”

Reaching his room, Thakur sits down on his cot. Those who were engaged in singing kirtan come and salute him.

Thakur says to them, “As you sweat to earn money, so you should perspire chanting Lord Hari’s name, dancing and singing.”

“I thought of dancing with you. But then I saw that the vegetable was seasoned perfectly – even fenugreek had been put in. (*All laugh.*) What seasoning could I add to it?

“Please come here now and then to sing Lord Hari’s name.”

Mukherji and others bow to Thakur and take their leave.

Their carriage comes right up to the smaller verandah north of Thakur’s room. Its lights are lit.

Departure of devotees – Thakur’s affection for them

Thakur is standing on the northeastern side of the verandah facing north. A devotee brings a light to show the devotees the way to the carriage.

Today is the dark new moon night, the night of Amavasya. The Ganges flows to the west of Thakur and in front is the nahabat, the flower garden, and the kuthi. The path to the main gate is to the right of Thakur.

The devotees bow their heads at Thakur’s feet and then get into the carriage one after the other. Thakur says to a certain devotee, “Why don’t you tell Ishan to find some work for him?”

Seeing that there are too many people riding in the carriage, creating a hardship for the horse, Thakur asks, “Aren’t there too many people for one carriage?”

He remains standing. The devotees leave for Calcutta, watching Thakur’s image full of

[\[32\]](#)

love and grace for the devotees.

[\[1\]](#)

. New moon day.

[\[2\]](#)

. The sacred day of invocation of Mother Durga prior to Her worship.

[3]

. Short dhoti.

[4]

. Subadar; officer in a company of native Indian soldiers.

[5]

. Non-Hindus; a term of deprecation.

[6]

. Dwarika Babu, Mathur's eldest son, died in 1877 (Pausha, 1284 B.Y.) at the age of 40. Captain first came in 1875-76, so this performance of *Gita Govinda* probably took place between 1875 and 1877.

[7]

. Krishna's cowherd companion.

[8]

. Khaichur, a round sweetmeat prepared by boiling coarsely powdered parched rice in sugar malt.

[9]

. Sarbhaja, a sweetmeat prepared by frying milk-film.

[10]

. A form of Durga.

[11]

. The Kayasthas were a community noted for their adaptability to secular society. Under British rule many Kayasthas learned English and gave their children a British education.

[12]

. A nickname for Prankrishna.

[13]

. Gosais.

[14]

. Gotra, one of forty-nine subdivisions of the brahmin caste, each the lineage of a celebrated teacher.

[15]

. Shankhachila.

[16]

. When the evil King Kamsa learned that a son of his sister Devaki would slay him, he imprisoned her and her husband Vasudeva. At birth Krishna was switched with the Divine Mother, who had taken the form of an infant. When Kamsa came to kill the baby, the Divine Mother transformed herself into a bird (the shankhachila) and flew away.

[17]

. Abhyasa yoga.

[18]

. Heaven.

[19]

. God of death.

[20]

. Abhyasa yoga.

[21]

. Mahaprabhu.

[22]

. For the complete song refer to Section XIX, Chapter IV.

[23]

. Pulao.

[24]

Amavasya.

[25]

. Samskaras.

[26]

. Daughter of Thakur's father's sister.

[27]

. Hazra (Pratap Chandra Hazra): When he was about thirty-eight years old, Pratap left his wife and children to lead a spiritual life at Dakshineswar. Argumentative and critical of others, he nevertheless had extraordinary faith and devotion to Ramakrishna, who joked that he was there to "thicken the plot." He returned to his native village of Madagod, near Kamarpukur, where he died at the age of sixty-three or sixty-four, in the month of Chaitra, 1306 B.Y. (A.D 1900).

[28]

. It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to renounce action entirely. But he who renounces the fruit is regarded as one who has renounced (Gita 18:11).

[29]

. Sajina: A vegetable of the genus Moringa, appearing as sticks growing on trees, and known in English as "drumstick leaves."

[30]

. Shivani.

[31]

. Perform achamana, a preliminary purification rite of ritualistic worship, sipping and sprinkling water.

[32]

. Bhakta vatsala.

Section XXI

Thakur with Latu, M., Manilal, Mukherji, and Other Devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

Instruction to Manilal, the Brahmo, to give up dogmatism

Sri Ramakrishna is at the Dakshineswar temple with devotees.

It is Thursday, 2 October 1884, 17th of Ashwin, 1291 B.Y. – the twelfth and thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of Ashwin, two days after the Vijay Dashami day. The previous day Thakur had graced Adhar's house in Calcutta with a visit. A number of people were there – Narayan, Baburam, M., Kedar, Vijay, and others. During the kirtan Thakur danced with the devotees. [See Volume II of the Kathamrita.]

Latu, Ramlal, and Harish are living with Thakur these days. Ramlal is the priest of Mother Bhavatarini. Baburam stays there at times, and Hazra also lives there.

Manilal Mallick, Priya Mukherji, his relative Hari, a Brahmo devotee from Shivapur (Dari), and some Marwari devotees from 12 Mallick Street in Burrabazar are present. Gradually, some youngsters from Dakshineswar, Mahendra Kaviraj from Sinthi, and other devotees arrive. Manilal is an old member of the Brahmo Samaj.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Manilal and the others*): “It's better to salute mentally. What is the need to touch the feet with your hand? Besides, mental salutation won't embarrass anybody.

“It isn't good to feel that only your religion is true and all others are false.

“I see that God Himself has become all – human beings, images

[\[1\]](#)

of the deity, Shalagram. In everything, I see only one. I see none else.

“Many people think that only their belief is correct and that all others are wrong, that only we have won and all others have

lost. Those who have advanced a little may perhaps have been stopped for a while. But those who had lagged behind might have advanced in the meantime. In the game of golakdham, the piece may advance a great deal – but it may fail to reach the goal because one fails to throw the right dice.

“Victory and defeat are in God’s hands. A person can’t understand God’s ways. You see, a green coconut grows high in the tree so it gets a lot of sun, yet its fruit is cool. On the other

[\[2\]](#)

hand, a water-chestnut grows in water, but its nature is to heat the body.

“Just consider the human body. The head, which is the foundation (the root), is at the top.”

Sri Ramakrishna, the four ashramas and the essence of yoga –

[\[3\]](#)

Brahmo Samaj and concentration on God with the mind

Manilal: “What is our duty now?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “To remain united with God no matter what work you do. There are two paths: the path of karma yoga, or work, and the path of manoyoga, or mental effort.

“Householders unite themselves with God through work. There

[\[4\]](#)

[\[5\]](#)

are four stages of life: brahmacharya, garhasthya,

[\[6\]](#)

[\[7\]](#)

vanaprastha and sannyasa. A sannyasin has to give up

[\[8\]](#)

working with desire (i.e. hankering after health, wealth, long life, progeny, name, fame, title, and social status) but must

[\[9\]](#)

perform his daily duties without any desire for reward.

Carrying a staff, begging for food, pilgrimage, worship, and japa – this work unites one with God.

“Whatever work you do, if you renounce the desire for its fruit, without craving anything, you will be united with Him.

“The other way is union with God through the mind. Such a

yogi shows no outward sign. It is all within. For example, Jada Bharata and Sukadeva. There are so many others, but these two are well known. Such people don't cut their hair or beard; they let them grow naturally.

“Work falls off in the stage of a paramahansa. Such people remember God and meditate upon Him always. Their minds ever remain united with Him. If a paramahansa ever performs work, it is to teach others.

“Whether union with God is achieved by work or through concentration, a person knows everything when love of God is developed.

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“Through love of God suspension of breath comes about by itself. When the mind is concentrated, the breathing becomes

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regular. Only when the mind is concentrated is the breath steadied, and when the breath is steady, the mind becomes one-pointed – the intellect becomes steady. The person who experiences this isn't even aware of it.”

His earlier story – prays to the Mother of the Universe during the period of spiritual disciplines – bhakti yoga

“You can achieve everything through bhakti yoga. I said to the Divine Mother, weeping, ‘Mother, let me know what yogis came to know by practicing yoga, what men of knowledge have known by discrimination. Please reveal it to me.’ The Divine Mother showed it all to me. When one weeps before Her with yearning, She conveys all knowledge. She has revealed to me everything that is in the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Puranas, the Tantra – all these scriptures.”

Manilal: “What about hatha yoga?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Hatha yogis are sadhus who are concerned

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with their bodies. They practice neti, and dhauti – they take care of the body only. Their aim is to add years to their life. Day and night they serve the body – this is not good.”

**Mani Mallick, the worldly man, and mental renunciation – about
Keshab Sen**

“What is your duty? You should mentally renounce ‘lust and greed.’ You can’t look on the world as nothing but the droppings of a crow.

“The goswamis are householders. So I said to them, ‘You have the duties of worship and service to the deity. How can you renounce the world? You can’t brush family life aside by calling it maya.’

“Chaitanya Deva listed the duties of house-holders as: compassion for living beings, service to Vaishnavas, and chanting God’s holy name.

“Keshab Sen once said, ‘Now he [Sri Rama-krishna] asks us to attend to both, but one day he will sting us.’ But that’s not true. How can I sting?”

Mani Mallick: “So please sting us.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Why? You are quite all right as a householder. Why should you renounce?”

Chapter II

**A religious teacher’s renunciation of ‘lust and greed’ - only then is
he able to teach – difficult rules for the sannyasin – advice to
Brahmani Lal**

Sri Ramakrishna: “Those through whom God will teach mankind must renounce the world. It is essential for religious teachers to renounce ‘lust and greed.’ Without it, their teachings are not accepted. It is not enough for them to renounce inwardly. They must also renounce outwardly. Only then can they teach mankind. If they don’t, people will think that they are being asked to renounce ‘lust and greed,’ while they secretly enjoy them.

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“An Ayurvedic physician prescribed some medicine to a patient and said, ‘Please come again another day and I will tell you about diet.’ That day, there were a number of jars of

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molasses in his room. The patient lived quite far away. He came another day. The physician said to him, 'Be careful about your diet. Molasses is not good for you.' When the patient had left, somebody asked the physician, 'Why did you cause him the trouble of coming here again, all that way? You could have said this to him the first day.' The physician laughed and said, 'There is a reason. I had some jars of molasses in my room that day. If I had asked him to give up molasses, he wouldn't have trusted me. He would have thought, He has so many jars of molasses in his room, he must surely be eating some of it. In that case it can't be so bad. Today I have hidden the jars; he will now believe me.'

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"I have seen the religious teacher of the Adi [Brahmo] Samaj. I hear that he has married two or three times. And that he has grown sons. Such are religious teachers! If these people say that only the Lord is real and all else is an illusion, who will believe them? You can guess very well what kind of disciples they will have.

"If a guru goes to relieve himself, his disciple must at least emit gas.' If a sannyasin has renounced mentally but lives with 'lust and greed,' he can't teach. People will say that he secretly eats molasses."

Sri Ramakrishna's renunciation of gold – he returns five rupees to the physician

"Mahendra of Sinti (a physician) gave five rupees to Ramlal, but I didn't know about it.

"When Ramlal told me, I asked him, 'For whom was that money given?' He replied, 'For you.' At first I thought I should use it to pay what I owed for milk. But, my mother! I woke up in the night very disturbed. It felt like a cat was scratching my chest. I went to Ramlal again and asked if the money was for his aunt.

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He said no. So I said to him, 'Please go right now and return it.' He returned the money the next day.

“Do you know what it’s like for a sannyasin to accept money, or to be greedy? Like a brahmin widow who has lived for a long time on vegetarian food and observed celibacy taking a man of low caste as her paramour. (*Everybody is stunned.*)

“In my native village, the low caste oil woman, Bhagi Teli, had many devotees and disciples. Noticing that so many people paid

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respect to a shudra, the landlord sent a wicked man to tempt her. He corrupted her and all her spiritual practices and strivings ended in dust. A fallen sannyasin meets such a fate.”

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**Faith in God result of association with the holy – Keshab Sen and
Vijaykrishna Goswami**

“You are householders. It is essential that you keep the company of holy men. Association with them brings faith in God. How can people gain faith and love for God if holy men do not chant the name and glories of God? People respect a person when they know him to be rich; then they seek his company.

(*To M.*) “You must practice disciplines even after you attain

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spiritual knowledge. The Naked One used to say, ‘What is the use of cleaning a brass pot only once? It will get tarnished if you don’t polish it.’

“I’ll go to your house one day. If I know where your residence is, I can meet other devotees there. Please go see Ishan some time.

(*To Manilal*) “Keshab Sen’s mother came here. The boys of her family chanted the name of the Lord. She circumambulated them clapping her hands. I saw that she was not overcome with sorrow. She came here and observed [the fast of] Ekadashi; she repeated the name of God on a rosary. I was impressed by her great devotion to God.”

Manilal: “Keshab’s grandfather, Ramkamal Sen, was a devotee of God. He used to sit in a tulsi grove and repeat the name of God. Keshab’s father, Pyarimohan, was also a devoted Vaishnava.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Unless the father is so devoted, the son could not be a devotee. Just see what a state Vijay is in. His father would lose consciousness in ecstasy when he read the Bhagavata. Vijay often stands up chanting the name of God.

“The visions (of divine forms) that Vijay has these days are all real. About God with form or the formless God, Vijay said, ‘It is like a chameleon – sometimes red, sometimes blue, and then at other times green. And it may even be colourless. God is sometimes with attributes and sometimes without them.’”

Vijay is guileless – ‘when one is simple and guileless at heart, one realizes God’

“Vijay is very simple at heart. You cannot realize God if you’re not large-hearted and guileless.

“Vijay went to Adhar Sen’s house yesterday. He felt like it was his own house and everybody who lived there was his own.

“Unless your mind is free from calculating this and that, you cannot be simple or large-hearted.”

Saying this, Thakur begins to sing:

O mind, you will gain precious wealth when you become pure.

“Unless the clay is properly prepared, you cannot make a pot. If there is grit or sand in the clay, the pot will crack. That’s why a potter prepares the clay carefully.

“If a mirror is dirty, you cannot see your face in it. Unless your [\[20\]](#) mind is pure, your real Self cannot be seen.

“Look, where there is an incarnation of God, there is guilelessness – Nandaghosh, Dasharatha, and Vasudeva were all simple at heart.

“Vedanta tells us that unless you have a pure mind, you don’t feel the desire to know God. Only in one’s last birth or after practicing long austerities, does one become broad-minded and guileless.”

Chapter III

Childlike state of Sri Ramakrishna

Noticing some puffiness in his legs, Thakur becomes anxious, like a child.

The physician, Mahendra of Sinti, comes in and bows to him.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Priya Mukherji and the other devotees*):

“Yesterday, I said to Narayan, ‘Please press your leg to see if it makes a dimple.’ He pressed and there was one. I was saved! (*To Mukherji*) Please press your leg. See if it forms a dimple.”

Mukherji: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Oh, what a relief.”

Mani Mallick: “Please bathe in the running water of the river. Why take medicine?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, my dear sir! You have stronger blood. Your case is different. God has kept me in the state of a child.

“One day in a grassy meadow I was bitten. I had heard that if a snake bites a second time, it sucks out its poison. So I sat there putting my hand in a hole. Someone came by and asked, ‘What are you doing? If the snake bites in the same place as before, it can happen, but if it bites anywhere else, it doesn’t help.’

“I had heard from someone that autumn dew was beneficial. Coming from Calcutta by carriage, I stuck my head out so the mist would touch it. (*Everyone laughs.*)

(*To Mahendra of Sinthi*) “Your pundit from Sinthi is good. He is well-versed in Vedanta. He has respect for me. When I said to him, ‘You have certainly studied a lot, but do give up the pride that ‘I am such-and-such a pundit,’ he was delighted.

“I discussed Vedanta with him.”

Instructions to M., pure Self and spiritual ignorance – Mahamaya and discussion on Vedanta

(*To M.*) “The pure Atman is unattached to things of the world. Maya, or ignorance, is in it. This very maya has three qualities: sattva, rajas, and tamas. That which is pure Atman has in it these three qualities, yet it is unattached. If you throw a blue

tablet into a fire, you see a blue flame. If you throw a red tablet in it, the flame is red. But the fire has no colour of its own.

“Put a blue pill in water and the water will become blue. Then you put alum in it and it will recover its own colour.

“A butcher was carrying a load of meat when he touched Shankaracharya by chance. As soon as Shankaracharya remarked, ‘Hey, you touched me!’ the butcher replied, ‘My lord, neither have I touched you, nor have you touched me. You are pure Self, unattached to anything.’

“Jada Bharata also said the same thing to King Rahugana.

“The pure Self is unattached, and it cannot be seen. When common salt is dissolved in water, it becomes invisible to the eye.

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“That which is pure Atman is Mahakarana, the cause of causes. There are the gross, the subtle, the cause, and the Great Cause (Mahakarana). The five material elements are gross. Mind, intellect and ego are subtle. Nature or the Primal Power is the cause of everything. Brahman or the Atman, the pure Self, is the cause of the cause.

“This pure Atman is our true Self. What is spiritual knowledge? Knowledge of one’s real Self, and keeping the mind in it. This is knowledge of the pure Atman.”

How long does one have to work?

“How long does a person have to work? As long as there is body-consciousness. That is, as long as one clings to the idea of the

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body being one’s self. The Gita says this. To cling to the idea that the body is one’s own self is ignorance.

(To the Brahmo devotee from Shivapur) “Are you a Brahmo?”

The Brahmo devotee: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “I can recognize an aspirant of the formless God by looking at his eyes and face. Please dive a little. You don’t get jewels by swimming on the surface. I accept both,

God with form and God without form.”

Sri Ramakrishna and Marwari devotee – individual self – mind-stuff
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The Marwari devotees from the Burrabazar arrive and salute Thakur. Thakur praises them.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “Ah, these are great devotees. They all go to the temple, sing hymns, and have prasad. The priest they have engaged this time is well versed in the Bhagavata.”

Marwari devotee: “When a person says, ‘I am Your servant,’ who is this ‘I’?”

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Sri Ramakrishna: “The subtle body or indi-vidual soul. The subtle body is made up of these four: mind, intellect, mind-stuff, and ego.”

Marwari devotee: “Then what is the individual self?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is the Atman bound by the eight fetters. And what is the chitta? That which exclaims: ‘Oh!’”

The Marwari – what happens after death? What is maya? – the view of the Gita

Marwari devotee: “Sir, what happens after death?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “According to the Gita, you become what you think of at the time of death. King Bharata became a deer because he thought of a deer. That is why spiritual practice is essential to realize God. If you contemplate God day and night, the same thought will come to you at the time of your death.”

Marwari devotee: “Well, sir, why can’t we give up attachment to things of the world?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “This is what is called maya. It is maya that makes you perceive the real as unreal and the unreal as real. The real, in other words, is the eternal, the Supreme Brahman. The unreal is the world, the ephemeral.”

Marwari devotee: “We read holy books. Why don’t we assimilate them?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What does reading do? You need to practice spiritual disciplines, austerities. Call upon God. What can repeating, ‘Hemp, hemp,’ do? You have to eat it.

“This world is like a thorny bush. Touch it and your hand will bleed. If you take a thorny bush and just sit before it saying, ‘This bush is burning,’ will it burn up? You have to light the fire of knowledge and set fire to that bush. Only then will it burn up.

“You have to work hard in the stage of practicing spiritual disciplines. Later on, the path is easy. Detach the boat from the bank and let it sail with a favourable wind.”

Renounce the world of maya first – then gain spiritual knowledge – realization of God

“As long as you live inside the house of maya, as long as clouds of maya exist, the sun of knowledge does not help. When you leave the house of maya and stand outside (when you have renounced ‘lust and greed’), the sun of knowledge destroys ignorance. A lens doesn’t burn paper if you bring it inside the house. If you come outside with it and the rays of the sun fall on it, the paper burns. Again, if it is cloudy, the lens can’t burn the paper. Only when the clouds disappear does it burn.

“Only when you stand a little away from ‘lust and greed’ and practice spiritual disciplines and austerities is the darkness of the mind dispelled. The cloud of ignorance and egotism is burned away. And you gain spiritual knowledge.

“Again, ‘lust and greed’ is the cloud.”

Chapter IV

His earlier story – Sri Ramakrishna faints hearing that Lakshmi Narayan wants him to accept ten thousand rupees – difficult rules of sannyasin

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the Marwari devotee*): “The rules that [\[25\]](#) govern the conduct of one who has renounced completely are

very difficult. He must not have the least association with ‘lust and greed.’ He must not touch money with his hands, and he must not allow it to be kept near him.

“Lakshmi Narayan, a Marwari and a Vedantist used to visit me often. Seeing my dirty bed sheet, he said, ‘I’ll invest ten thousand rupees in your name. The interest from it can be used to pay your expenses.’

“As soon as he said this, it was like I had been struck with a stick and knocked out.

“When I regained consciousness, I said, ‘If you say such a thing again, please don’t come here anymore. I can’t touch money – or keep it with me.’

“He had a very sharp intellect. He said to me, ‘You still have the idea of accepting and rejecting. In that case, you haven’t yet attained perfect know-ledge.’

“I replied, ‘My dear, I haven’t attained to that extent.’ (*All laugh.*)

“Then Lakshmi Narayan tried to give the money to Hriday. I said, ‘I will not let that happen. If you do that, I’ll have to tell him, “Give some to this man and some to that one.” And if he doesn’t, I’ll feel angry. Possession of money is basically bad. If you place something near a mirror, won’t it be reflected in it?’

Sri Ramakrishna and the essence of liberation – Puranic path, not the Vedic, enjoined for the Kaliyuga

The Marwari devotee: “Revered sir, does one attain liberation only when he quits the body on the bank of the Ganges?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Liberation comes when one has attained spiritual knowledge. Wherever one may be, whether one dies in the cremation ground or on the bank of the Ganges, a person of spiritual knowledge will attain liberation. But the bank of the Ganges is best for a person who has not attained knowledge.”

The Marwari devotee: “Revered sir, why is a person liberated if he dies in Kashi (Benares)?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “When one dies in Kashi, Shiva appears before him and says, ‘This form of mine is not real. I assume it for the sake of the devotee. Now look, I am dissolving into the Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.’ After saying this, the form disappears.

“According to the Puranas, even a pariah will attain liberation if he develops loving devotion to God. According to this belief, only chanting His name brings salvation; there is no need for sacrifices, oblations, tantric disciplines, or mantras.

“The teachings of the Vedas are different. According to them, only brahmins can gain liberation. And if the mantra is not recited properly, the worship is not accepted. One has to perform sacrifices, oblations, mantras, and tantric disciplines as prescribed.”

Karma yoga is a very difficult path – bhakti yoga is enjoined for the Kaliyuga

“In the Kaliyuga where is the time to perform rituals as prescribed in the Vedas? So love for God according to Narada is enjoined for this age.

“Karma yoga is a very difficult path. Karma leads to bondage unless you can work without expectation of any reward. Besides, life depends on food. There is no time to perform all the rituals according to regulations. You can die by the time an

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ancient herbal medicine is ready. You need to take a modern fever mixture.

“The path of devotion according to Narada is chanting His name and glories. Karma yoga is not suited to the Kaliyuga. The path of love for God is the right path.”

Brahman is the very nature of existence – longing for God comes with right tendencies

Several young men from Dakshineswar village come in and pay their respects. They sit down and ask Thakur questions. It is about four o'clock.

Young man from Dakshineswar: “Sir, what is knowledge?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The Lord is real and all else is unreal; knowing this is knowledge. That which is real is called Brahman. His other name is Kala (Time). That is why they say, ‘O brother, how many have departed and how many have come into being in time!’

“Kali, She who sports with Kala, is the Primal Power. Kala and Kali, Brahman and Shakti, are not different.

“That Brahman, the real nature of existence, is eternal. It exists in the present, it existed in the past, and it will exist in the future. It is without beginning or end. It cannot be described in words. The most you can say is that It is of the very nature of Consciousness and Bliss.

“The world is impermanent, Brahman is eternal. The world is like magic. The magician is real, but the magic of the magician is transitory.”

Young man: “If the world is maya – is magic – why doesn’t it vanish?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Because of inborn tendencies. Living in the world of maya for several births, one begins to think of it as real.

“Just listen to how powerful tendencies are. The son of a king was born into a washerman’s family in his previous birth. As a prince, when he played with his companions, he would say, ‘No more of these games. I’ll lie down on my stomach and you beat

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clothes on my back and make a splashing sound.”

Men with good tendencies: Govinda Pal, Gopal Sen, Niranjana, Hirananda – earlier story: arrival of Govinda, Gopal and the Tagore boys, 1863-64

“A number of young men visit this place, but only a few yearn

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for God. They are ones who are born with good tendencies. When the topic of marriage is brought up, they wince. They don’t ever think about marriage. Niranjana has been saying since childhood that he won’t marry.

“A long time ago (more than twenty years), two young men used

to visit from Baranagore. One of them was Govinda Pal, the other Gopal Sen. Since their childhood, their minds were on God. They would get frightened at the very mention of marriage. Gopal used to go into bhava samadhi. He would shy away from meeting a worldly person – the way a mouse feels frightened to see a cat. When the Tagore boys came to walk in the garden here, he shut the door of his room in the kuthi, lest he would have to talk to them.

“Gopal went into ecstasy in the panchavati. In that state, he touched my feet and said, ‘I must leave. I can no longer live in this world. You still have a long time to live. But I must go.’ I said to him, also in a state of ecstasy, ‘You must come again.’ He replied, ‘Yes, I will come again.’

“In a few days, Govinda came. I asked him, ‘Where is Gopal?’ He said, ‘Gopal has passed away.’

“What are the other boys involved with? How to have money, a house, a carriage, dress, and then marriage. These are their only concerns. To get married, they first look for a girl and then go to see her to make sure she’s pretty.

“There’s a person who criticizes me a lot. He complains that I love the young men. I certainly love those who have good tendencies, who are pure-souled, who yearn for God, whose minds are not attracted by money, pleasures of life, and so on.

“If a person is married but has love for God, he won’t get attached to the world.”

Hirananda, a resident of Sindh, is a Brahmo devotee. He has a B.A. degree.

Manilal, the Brahmo devotee from Shivapur, the Marwari devotees, and the young men salute Sri Ramakrishna and take their leave.

Chapter V

When does one renounce work? Thakur’s promise to a devotee

It is evening. The lamplighter brings light to the southern and western circular verandahs. Thakur’s room has also been lighted and incense

has been burnt.

Thakur, having taken his seat, is chanting the name of the Divine Mother and meditating on Her. M., Priya Mukherji, and his relative are sitting on the floor in the room.

After meditating for some time, Thakur resumes his conversation with the devotees. There is still time before the arati service in the shrines.

Sri Ramakrishna and Vedanta – Om and samadhi – Tat tvam asi – Om Tat Sat

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Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Of what use are rituals for one who contemplates God day and night?”

He sings:

Of what use are rituals for one who utters Kali’s name at dawn and noon and dusk? Worship itself will follow in his footsteps, never catching up.

Charity, vows, and almsgiving no longer appeal to Madan’s mind. His worship alone is surrender at the Mother’s blessed feet.

“Sandhya merges in Gayatri, and Gayatri in Om.

“When just by pronouncing Om once one goes into samadhi, one has perfected himself.

“A sadhu in Rishikesh rises early in the morning and goes to stand near a big waterfall. The whole day he watches the fall and says to God, ‘Oh, how beautiful you have made it! How beautiful it is! How wonderful!’ He does not practice chanting of the name and other austerities. At nightfall he returns to his hut.

“What need is there to think about whether God has form or not? It is enough to weep with longing in solitude, ‘O God, please show Yourself to me as You are!’

“He dwells within. That is why the Vedas say, ‘Tat tvam asi (That thou art).’ And He is also outside. Because of maya He appears as various forms, but in reality it is God alone who exists.

“That is why you should say ‘Om Tat Sat’ before you describe His forms or names.

“It is one thing to have His vision and another to read about Him in the scriptures. The scriptures only give hints about Him, so there’s no need to read many of them. It’s better to pray to Him in a solitary place.

“It’s all right if you don’t read the entire Gita. You get its essence by just repeating the word *gita* ten times – that is, *tyagi* (man of renunciation). ‘O man, renounce everything and worship God.’ That is the essence of the Gita.”

Sri Ramakrishna watches the arati of Mother Bhavatarini and goes into ecstasy

While watching Mother Kali’s arati with the devotees, Thakur goes into ecstasy. He is not able to salute Her by prostrating before Her. With great care he returns to his room with the devotees and sits down. He is still in ecstasy and talks to them in that state.

Hari, Mukherji’s relative, must be eighteen to twenty years old. He is already married. For the time being he is living with the Mukherjis while he looks for work. He has great love for Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna and initiation into mantra – Sri Ramakrishna’s promise to a devotee

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hari, in the same ecstatic mood*): “You must take initiation after you’ve gotten your mother’s permission. (*To Priya*) I couldn’t initiate him (Hari), though I told him I would – I don’t give initiation. You continue with japa and meditation just as you have been doing.”

Priya: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “And I am telling you in this state of mind – you must believe me. You see, there is no pretense here. I said to the Divine Mother in this state, ‘Mother, make perfect those who come here by sincere attraction.’”

Mahendra Kaviraj of Sinthi is sitting on the verandah with Ramlal, Hazra, and others. Thakur calls to him from his room, “Mahendra, Mahendra.”

M. goes out quickly and brings the Kaviraj to him.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the Kaviraj*): “Please sit down and listen for a while.”

The Kaviraj sits down, somewhat embarrassed, and then he starts listening to Thakur’s sweet words.

Various approaches to God – Balaram’s attitude – three states of Gauranga

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “God can be approached many ways.

“A loving devotee can enjoy His presence in different ways. Sometimes he thinks of Him as a lotus and himself a bee; at other times he sees Him as Sat-chit-ananda and himself as a fish.

“He may also say to Him, ‘I am your dancing girl,’ and then sing and dance before Him. Sometimes he assumes the attitude of a gopi friend and sometimes that of a handmaid. Sometimes he feels a mother’s love for Him like Yashoda’s. And then sometimes he has the attitude of a husband or a lover like the gopis.

“Balaram would sometimes think of Him as a friend and at other times he would say, ‘I am Krishna’s sunshade or a seat for Him to sit upon.’ He served Him all different ways.”

Is Thakur talking about his own state by describing that of a loving devotee? And again, when he describes the three states of Chaitanya Deva, perhaps he is giving us a hint of his own.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Chaitanya Deva experienced three states. In the innermost state, he was absorbed in samadhi, with no outer consciousness. In the semiconscious state, he would dance in ecstasy but would not speak. When in outward consciousness, he would sing songs of devotion.

(*To the devotees*) “You people listen to all these things – but try to put them into practice. When a worldly-minded man goes to see a sadhu, he hides all worldly thoughts and worries. After leaving, he takes them out again. A pigeon eats dried peas. It seems that he has digested them but actually he retains them in his crop. You can feel them there.”

Evening worship – Sri Ramakrishna and Islam – japa and meditation

“Leaving all work aside, you should call on God at dusk. The feeling of God comes to mind in darkness. Only a little while ago you could see everything. You think, Who has done all this? You know, Muslims stop all work at appointed times and offer

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prayers.”

Mukherji: “Sir, is it good to practice japa?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, by repeating God’s name, you can realize Him. When you secretly repeat His name in solitude, God’s grace dawns on you, and it is followed by His vision.

“Imagine a thick log of wood lying under water. It is tied to the bank with a chain. If you proceed from one link to the next, you will at last reach the log and touch it.

“Japa is higher than worship, and meditation is higher than repetition of the name. Higher than meditation is ecstasy. Chaitanya Deva experienced prema. When you attain prema, you have the cord to tie God with.”

Hazra comes in and sits down.

Passionate love for God, Sri Ramakrishna and repetition of the name on a rosary – Narayan

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(*To Hazra*) “Real love for God is passionate. Ritualistic

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devotion leaves the devotee as fast as it comes. Passionate love for God is like the self-created stone lingam rising out of the earth. It’s impossible to find its source. The root of the self-born lingam goes as far as Kashi. Only incarnations of God and their apostles experience such passionate love.”

Hazra: “Ah!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “One day you were doing japa. Returning from answering the call of nature, I said, ‘Mother, what a small mind. He’s counting beads on a rosary even after coming here.’ Whoever comes here will gain enlightenment at once. He

doesn't have to do much counting of beads and performing other practices like it. When you go to Calcutta, you see thousands of people counting beads, even prostitutes."

Sri Ramakrishna now says to M.: "Please bring Narayan here in a carriage. I have told him (Mukherji) about Narayan. When he comes, I want to give him some refreshments. Feeding has great meaning."

Chapter VI

Sri Ramakrishna with Brahmo devotees at Nabin Sen's house in Calootola – in the joy of devotional singing

[\[33\]](#)

It is Saturday today, Kojagar Purnima. Thakur has come to Calootola, to the house of the late Nabin Sen, the eldest brother of Keshab Sen. It is 4 October 1884, the 19th of Ashwin, 1291 B.Y.

The previous Thursday, Keshab's mother had come to invite Thakur and pressed him to come.

Thakur goes to the outer room upstairs and takes his seat. Nandalal and other nephews of Keshab, Keshab's mother, and their relatives and friends serve Thakur with great reverence. Kirtan was to be held in the room. Many ladies of the Sen families of Calootola have arrived.

Thakur is accompanied by Baburam, Kishori, and a few other devotees. M. has arrived. Sitting in a room downstairs, he is listening to the sweet kirtan of Thakur.

Thakur says to the Brahmo devotees, "The world is transitory; one must always remember death."

Now he sings:

Consider this, O mind: no one is your own. In this world you roam about in vain.

Do not forget the beneficent Mother or be ensnared in maya's net,

Think of those over whom you fret almost unto death: in death would they accompany you?

Even your beloved wife would deny you and shun your corpse as something impure.

Just for a day or two do people call you lord and master; they will cease to call you so when the master called Death arrives for you.

Thakur says, “Dive deep. What use is swimming on the surface? Giving up everything else, go to a solitary place for few days and call upon Him with one hundred percent of your mind.”

Thakur sings again:

Dive deep, dive deep, O my mind, into the ocean of beauty, and to the
[34]
deepest depths descend: there you will find the gem of Love.

Go seek, go seek, O mind, the blessed Vrindavan within your heart, the abode of the Lord of Love. Then in your heart the unceasing light of knowledge will ever shine.

Who is it that steers your boat over solid ground? It is your guru, says Kabir. Listen, and meditate on his holy feet.

He asks the Brahmo devotees to sing the song, “You are my all in all.”

O Lord, the source of my life-breath, the essence of all essences, You are my all in all.

Besides You, there is none in the three worlds whom I can call my own.

Thakur himself sings:

Where have You hidden the form that Yashoda, making you dance, called
[35]
her precious blue jewel? Where have You, O Mother of gaping mouth,
[36]
hidden that form?

As the sun would sink in the sky, Yashoda, growing restless, would entreat You, Gopala, to come and partake of milk, cream, and butter.

She would tie Your disheveled hair into a bun,

[37]
And You would dance, bent thrice, with Sridama.

The sweet jingle of Your anklets could be heard sounding to the beat of a drum, ‘Ta thaiya, ta thaiya,’

Whereupon the women of Vraja would come running.

O Mother, play that sweet melody upon Your flute,

That music which caused the gopis to forget themselves and drew the cows home from pasture,

That music which turned upstream the Jamuna's flow.

Having cast off Your garland of skulls, You danced in Vraja with wild flowers adorned,

And having transformed Shiva into Balaram, you danced, relinquishing the sword and taking to the flute.

Pray dance, O Mother, in the same way, in the same form, once again.

Hearing this song, Keshab has new words composed. The Brahmo devotees sing the melody of that same song in accompaniment with the drum and cymbals:

O Mother, how great is Your love for Your children!

At the very thought of it, tears of joy stream from my eyes.

They sing again of the Divine Mother:

O Mother, as the Inner Controller! ^[38] You are awake within, day and night.

Day and night You hold me in Your lap.

Next they sing:

O my mind! Why do you worry so, like a lowly beggar?

My Mother is Ishwari, the ruler of the universe, the all-protecting giver of spiritual perfection

Thakur now chants the names of Hari and Gauranga and dances with the Brahmo devotees. The kirtan continues with six songs:

O man, if you wish to live happily, love the sweet name of Hari ...

^[39]
The wave of Gaur's love has touched my body;
By its thunder all heretics are crushed and the universe is submerged.
O Bharati, give me a loin cloth. I wish to go to Vraja disguised as a beggar
...

Gaur and Nitai, you two brothers, are so full of compassion, O Lord!

^[40]
My Gaur dances singing Hari's name.

And finally:

Go, Madhai, and find out who goes there singing, 'Haribol, Haribol.'

Is it my Gaur who is going? Or is it Nitai?
They who wear gold anklets on their feet?
They with shaven heads and tattered cloths?
They who behave like madmen?

The Brahmo devotees sing again:

When will love enter me?

And then:

When will dawn that day when tears stream from my eyes as I repeat

[\[41\]](#)

Lord Hari's name?

Thakur sings in a loud voice and dances:

Behold, the brothers have come! The two who shed tears while chanting
Hari's name.

They, who weeping, make others weep;

They, who in ecstasy dancing, make the world dance;

They, who receiving the world's blows, offer Hari's love.

Then he sings:

Behold, the whole of Nadia trembles under the waves of Gauranga's love!

Thakur chants the Divine Mother's name.

Don't steal away my joy, O Mother, You who are the source of all joy.

The Brahmos sing two of their own songs, first:

[\[42\]](#)

O Mother, make me mad with Your love.

And then:

[\[43\]](#)

In the firmament of wisdom, the moon of divine love rises full.

[\[1\]](#)

. An abstract image of Vishnu in the form of an oval stone bearing certain markings.

[\[2\]](#)

. Singhara.

[\[3\]](#)

. Mano yoga.

[\[4\]](#)

. The first stage in the four stages of life according to the Vedas, that of a celibate student.

[\[5\]](#)

. Married household life.

[\[6\]](#)

. Detaching from family affairs and concentrating on God.

[\[7\]](#)

. Renunciation of the world.

[\[8\]](#)

. Kamya karma.

[\[9\]](#)

. Refer to Bhagavad Gita 18:2-3.

[\[10\]](#)

. Kumbhaka.

[\[11\]](#)

. Vayu.

[\[12\]](#)

. Internal washing.

[\[13\]](#)

. Kaviraj.

[\[14\]](#)

. Gur.

[\[15\]](#)

. Acharya.

[\[16\]](#)

. Meaning Holy Mother.

[\[17\]](#)

. Caste of laborers and servants.

[\[18\]](#)

. Shraddha.

[\[19\]](#)

. Totapuri.

[\[20\]](#)

. Chitta, a) The mind or inner organ of consciousness in general. b) In Vedanta, the storehouse of memory.

[\[21\]](#)

. Karana.

[\[22\]](#)

. Bhagavad Gita 18:11.

[\[23\]](#)

. Chitta.

[24]

. Linga sarira.

[25]

. Tyagi.

[26]

. Dashmul pachan.

[27]

. Indian washermen wash clothes by beating them on a stone.

[28]

. Samskaras.

1. Sandhya, or worship and meditation in the morning, noon, and evening performed daily by orthodox Hindus.

[30]

. Namaz.

[31]

. Raga bhakti.

[32]

. Vaidhi bhakti.

[33]

. The night of the full moon of Ashwin in which Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped. It falls in the bright fortnight of the lunar month.

[34]

. Prema.

[35]

. Nilmani.

[36]

Karalavadini, an epithet of Kali.

[37]

. Tribhangi, referring to a posture of Krishna.

[38]

. Antaryamin.

[39]

. For the complete song, refer to Volume II, Section XVI, Chapter I.

[40]

. For the complete song refer to Section XVII, Chapter I.

[41]

. For the complete song refer to Section XIII, Chapter III.

[42]

. For the complete song refer to Section XIX, Chapter III.

[43]

. For the complete song refer to Volume II, Section I, Chapter II.

Section XXII

Sri Ramakrishna with Baburam, Nilkantha, M., Manomohan, and Other Devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

Hazra Mahashay – spontaneous love for God

Sri Ramakrishna is seated in his room at the Dakshineswar Temple with devotees after the midday meal. Near him are M., Hazra, the elder Kali, Baburam, Ramlal, and Hari, who is related to the Mukherjis. Some devotees are seated on the floor, others are standing. In response to the invitation of Keshab's mother, Thakur visited the Sen's Calcutta house the previous day and made everyone happy with

[1]

his devotional songs.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hazra*): “Yesterday I had a very good meal at Nabin Sen's house. It was served with great devotion.”

[2]

Hazra and the knowledge of Ultimate Reality – Hazra and his tendency to reason

Hazra has been living with Thakur for quite some time. He has a streak of pride, thinking that he is a jnani. He even criticizes Thakur in the presence of other people. On the other hand, he sits on an asana in the verandah and tells his beads with full concentration. He thinks of Chaitanya Deva as a modern incarnation of God, but not one of great significance. He says, “It is not that God only grants pure love and devotion. He has no dearth of riches. He also grants wealth. When one attains Him, one also gets the eight occult powers.” Hazra has incurred a debt on his house, about a thousand rupees, and is worried about paying it.

The elder Kali works in an office and receives a small salary. He has a family with children. He is greatly devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and often visits him, sometimes absenting himself from the office.

The elder Kali (*to Hazra*): “You go about testing people, like a touchstone, to find out which is pure gold and which is impure.

Why do you run others down?"

[3]

Hazra: "Whatever remarks I make, I say in front of him."

Sri Ramakrishna: "That's true."

Hazra explains the meaning of the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality.

Hazra: "Knowledge of the Ultimate Reality means the knowledge of the twenty-four cosmic principles."

A devotee: "What are the twenty-four cosmic principles?"

Hazra: "The five gross elements, the six enemies [or passions], the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, and so on."

[4]

M. (*to Thakur, smiling*): "He says that the six enemies are included in the twenty-four cosmic principles."

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "Just see what he says about the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, or *tattvajnana*. Notice that. Knowledge of the Ultimate Reality means knowledge of the Self. *Tat* means the Supreme self, *tvam* means the individual self. The embodied soul and the Supreme Self are one and the same. Knowing this is the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, or *tattvajnana*."

After a while, Hazra rises and goes out of the room to sit on the verandah.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "He only argues. For a moment he understands it very well, but in no time he becomes as ignorant as before."

"When I see a big fish pulling the line hard, I release it. If I didn't do that, the fish would break it. And the person holding the cord would fall into the water. That's why I don't say anything more."

[5]

Hazra, salvation, and the six divine glories – selfish devotion

versus motiveless love for God

(To M.) “Hazra says that you can attain liberation only if you are born a brahmin. I said, ‘What do you mean? Liberation can be achieved by love for God alone.’ Shavari was the daughter of a hunter. She, Ruhidas, and others, at whose meal time bells rang, were shudras. They attained liberation through love for God alone. Hazra says, ‘But still...’

“He recognizes Dhruva. But not as much as Prahlada. When Latu said, ‘How great a love for God Dhruva had during his childhood!’ he remained silent.

“I say there is nothing higher than love for God untainted by desire. He contradicts this. A rich man is annoyed when a person comes to him asking for things. Irritated, he says, ‘Here he comes!’ When he comes in, the rich man says to him with irritation, ‘Sit down.’ He shows his annoyance. He doesn’t take anybody in his carriage who demands anything of him.

“Hazra says, ‘God isn’t a rich person like that. Does He lack wealth that He would suffer any hardship to give it away?’

“Hazra says something else, ‘When it rains, the Ganges and all the other big rivers and lakes swell with water; even pits and ponds are filled. When God’s grace dawns, He grants not only love and devotion, but also wealth.’

“But this is tainted devotion. There is no desire in pure love. You want nothing from here [me], you only like to hear my talk when you meet me. My mind is also drawn to you: How is he, why hasn’t he come? I have such anxiety about you.

“You want nothing, but still you love God. This is called motiveless love for God. This is pure love. Prahlada had it. He didn’t want the kingdom, he didn’t care for riches. He only wanted the Lord.”

M.: “Hazra chats away incessantly. He isn’t going to achieve anything unless he keeps his mouth shut.”

Hazra’s pride and fault-finding

Sri Ramakrishna: “Now and again he becomes very humble when he comes near me. But such are his stars that he soon

begins to argue again. It is very difficult to get rid of pride. Cut down an ashwattha tree, and tomorrow you will see a shoot sprouting from it. As long as it has roots, the tree will sprout again and again.

“I say to Hazra, ‘Don’t find fault with people.’

“It is Narayana (God) who dwells in all these different forms. Even evil-doers can be worshiped.

“Just consider the worship of the Divine Mother in the form of a

[6]

young unmarried girl. Why worship a girl who has physical limitations and a runny nose? You do so because she also is a form of the Mother of the Universe.

“God dwells in His devotee in a special way. A devotee is the living room of God.

“The bigger the gourd, the better the tanpura you can make. It sounds better. (*Smiling, to Ramlal*) Oh, Ramlal, how did Hazra

[7]

say that in Sanskrit, ‘Antis bahis yadi Haris!’ It is like

[8]

someone saying, ‘Matram khatram. (The mother is eating).’ (*Everyone laughs.*)

Ramlal (*smiling*): “What is the use of austerity if God is seen

[9]

inside as well as out?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Practice this, and repeat it to me often.”

Thakur’s plate is missing from his room. Ramlal and Brinde, the maid, are asking about it, “Do you know anything about the plate?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Where? I don’t see it anywhere. It was here before. I saw it.”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna with two sadhus – Thakur’s paramahansa state

Two sadhu guests arrived today at the panchavati. They are studying the Gita, Vedanta, and some other scriptures. After their midday meal, they have come to see Thakur. He is sitting on his smaller cot. Bowing to him, the sadhus sit on a mat on the floor. M. and other devotees are also there. Thakur talks to them in Hindi.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Have you eaten?”

Sadhu: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What did you eat?”

Sadhu: “Chapattis and lentils. Would you like some?”

The sadhu and work without expectation of reward – desire for love of God – Vedanta – So 'ham and the householder

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, I only eat a little rice. So, you repeat God’s name and meditate. You do it without expecting any reward, don’t you?”

Sadhu: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That’s good. Besides that, you should offer the results to God. Don’t you agree?”

Sadhu (*to the other sadhu*) –

yat karoṇi yad aṇāsi yaj juhoṇi dadāsi yat |

yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṇva madarpaṇam ||

[Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever austerity you practice, O son of Kunti, do it as an offering to Me.]

– Bhagavad Gita 9:27

Sri Ramakrishna: “If you offer God something, you receive it back a thousandfold. So after performing all your duties, offer them to Him with water in your cupped palm, surrendering the

[\[10\]](#)

fruit of the actions to Krishna.

“When Yudhisthira was about to offer all his sins to Krishna, someone (Bhima) warned him, ‘Please don’t do such a thing.

What you offer to Krishna, you will receive back a thousand times.' Well, one should work without expectation of any reward – renouncing all desires. Isn't it so?"

Sadhu: "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well, I have the desire to love God. That's not bad – actually it's good. Eating sweets isn't good – they bring indigestion – but sugar candy is beneficial."

Sadhu: "Yes, sir!"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well my dear, what is Vedanta?"

Sadhu: "The six systems of philosophy comprise Vedanta."

Sri Ramakrishna: "But the essence of Vedanta is that Brahman is real and the world an illusion. I am not separate from anything, I am that same Brahman. What do you think?"

Sadhu: "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna: "But for those who live a worldly life and think they are the body, the attitude of So 'ham – I am That – is not right. The Vedanta or the Yogavasishtha is not for householders. They can indeed be harmful. The householder should live in the attitude of the master and the servant: 'O God! You are the Lord, the Master; I am Your slave, Your servant.' It's not good for those who consider themselves the body to cherish the attitude 'I am He.'"

Everyone remains silent. Thakur smiles a little, as though to

[\[11\]](#)

himself – he rejoices in the Self.

One sadhu whispers to the other, "Look, look at this. This is called the state of a paramahansa."

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M., looking at him*): "I feel like laughing."

Thakur laughs a little to himself, like a child.

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna and women – hard rules for sannyasins

**His earlier story – desire to visit his father-in-law’s house – meeting
with Vamandas of Ulo**

The sadhus leave.

Thakur, Baburam, M., Hari of the Mukherjis, and other devotees are strolling in the room and on the verandah outside.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Did you go to Nabin Sen’s house?”

M.: “Yes, sir. I did go. I sat downstairs and heard the songs.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Good that you went. Your wife went too.

[\[12\]](#)

Wasn’t Keshab Sen her uncle’s son?”

M.: “A distant relative.”

Nabin Sen and his family are related to the in-laws of a devotee.

Thakur talks to Mani privately as they stroll around.

Sri Ramakrishna: “People visit their father-in-law’s house. I thought so often: I shall also marry, fulfill my desire [of going to father-in-law’s home], and enjoy myself. But what has happened?”

Mani: “Sir, ‘If the son holds his father’s hand, he can fall down. But if the father holds his hand, he cannot fall.’ You yourself said so. This is exactly your state: the Divine Mother is holding your hand.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I met Vamandas of Ulo at Vishwas’s house. I said, ‘I have come to see you.’ When I left, I heard him say, ‘Good gracious, the Lord is holding him the way a tiger seizes his prey.’ I was young then, rather stout, and always in divine ecstasy.

“I am very afraid of women. I feel as if a tigress is coming to devour me. I see their bodies, limbs, and even pores are very big, like those of an ogress.

“Earlier I was very frightened. I wouldn’t let anybody come near me. But now, having assured myself in various ways, I see each one of them as different forms of the All-Blissful Mother.

“They are the parts of the Mother of the Universe. But they

have to be renounced by a man who is a sadhu or a devotee.

“However great a devotee a woman may be, I don’t let her sit near me for long. I say to her after a while, ‘Go see the deity.’ If she doesn’t rise even after this, I go out of the room on the pretext of having a smoke.

“I find that some people don’t have the least interest in women. Niranjan says, ‘My mind isn’t drawn to a woman in the least.’”

Hari Babu, Niranjan, Pande, a brahmin from western India, and Jaynarayan

“I asked Hari (the brother of Doctor Upen) about women. He also said, ‘No, I don’t feel drawn to them.’

“The mind which should have been given to the Lord – seventy-five percent of it is taken away by women. And after a son is born, almost the whole of the mind goes to the family. Then what can you give to God?

“And some get thoroughly exhausted in guarding their wives. There is an aged gate-keeper brahmin from western India, Pande. He had a fourteen year old wife. She had to live with this old man. They lived in a thatched house. People made holes in the dry leaves to peep inside. Now she has run away.

“Another man couldn’t decide where to keep his wife. There was a lot of trouble at home. He was so worried. It is better not to talk about it.

“If you live with a woman, you come under her control. Worldly people stand up when asked by their wives and sit down at their bidding. They speak highly of the wife.

“I wanted to go to a certain place. When I asked Ramlal’s aunt, [\[13\]](#)

she forbade me and I couldn’t go. In a little while, I said to myself, ‘Oh, I don’t live a householder’s life. I have renounced “lust and greed,” and yet this happens.’ How very much worldly people must be under the control of their wives.”

Mani: “If you live amidst ‘lust and greed,’ you can’t escape being scorched a little by them. You told us about a big pundit named Jaynarayan. You went to see him when he was old. Even he was

putting pillows and other things out to dry in the sun.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But he had no pride of his scholarship. And, just as he had said he would, he lived his last days in Kashi, following the injunctions of the scriptures.

“I saw his sons. They were English-educated and wore English boots on their feet.”

Different states of Thakur in divine intoxication

Thakur is explaining to Mani about his own state by means of putting questions to him.

Sri Ramakrishna: “I used to have a great madness for God. Why is it diminished now? But I get in that state now at times.”

Mani: “You are not always in the same mood. As you said, sometimes you are childlike, sometimes like a mad man, sometimes like an inanimate object, and sometimes like a ghoul. You have all these states at times. And now and then you are in a natural state.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, like a child. And sometimes I have moods of boyhood and also of youth – I have all these states. When I give instruction, I feel like a young man.

“And in a boyish mood, I feel like playing and having fun like a boy of twelve or thirteen. That’s why I joke and banter with the youngsters.”

Qualities of Narayan – renunciation of ‘lust and greed’ is the difficult austerity of the sannyasin

“Well, what do you think of Narayan?”

Mani: “He has good signs, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “A good gourd shell makes a good tanpura.

“He says to me, ‘You are everything (that is, an incarnation of God).’ He says that from his own comprehension. Others say, ‘He is just a sadhu, a devotee of God.’

“He grasps very well what I forbid him to do. But when I told him to roll up the curtain, he didn’t do it. I forbade him to do these: tie a knot, sew, roll up curtains, lock a door or a box with

a key. He understood them well. All such disciplines are necessary for one who wishes to renounce. All these disciplines are for sannyasins.

“In the stage of spiritual practices, one should think of a woman as a forest fire! Or a black cobra! In the state of perfection, after God-realization, one sees woman as the All-Blissful Mother. One then looks at each as a different aspect of the Divine Mother.”

Many days ago, Thakur had warned Narayan very seriously about women. He said, “Do not let the breeze from a woman’s body touch you. Cover yourself with a thick sheet so the air will not touch you. And except for your mother, keep a distance of eight cubits, or two cubits, or at least one cubit away from women.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Narayan’s mother said to him about me, ‘We are so charmed by the sight of him, not to speak of you, just a child.’ You cannot realize God without being guileless. How guileless Niranjan is!”

Mani: “Yes, sir.”

Are Niranjan and Narendra guileless?

Sri Ramakrishna: “Didn’t you notice him that day in the carriage going to Calcutta? He is always the same – guileless. Usually people show one side of themselves at home and quite another outside. Narendra is worried about his family (since the death of his father). He has a somewhat calculating mind. Are all youngsters like them?”

Sri Ramakrishna in Nabin Niyogi’s house – musical performance of Nilkantha

“I went today to Dakshineswar to see the musical performance of Nilkantha in Nabin Niyogi’s house. The boys there are very bad. Always finding fault. First with this person, then another. At such a place, one’s spiritual moods are checked.

“That day I saw Doctor Madhu shedding tears during the play. I couldn’t turn my eyes away from him.”

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna, Keshab and the Brahmo Samaj – instructions on harmony – universal, catholic church of Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Well, so many people are attracted here. What does it mean?”

Mani: “I am reminded of Sri Krishna’s divine sport in Vraja. When he turned himself into the cowherd boys and the calves, the gopis were drawn more strongly to the cowherd boys, the cows felt more attracted to the calves.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is the attraction of God. You know how? The Divine Mother casts a spell that attracts people.

“You see, many people used to visit Keshab Sen. Not so many come here. What great respect people have for Keshab! He is known even in the West. The queen [Victoria] talked to him. The Gita also says that there is more divine power in a person who is respected by many. That many people do not visit here.”

Mani: “Worldly people visited Keshab Sen.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, that is true. The worldly-minded went to him.”

Mani: “Will the work done by Keshab Sen last?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why, he has written a *samhita*. It contains many rules of conduct.”

Mani: “It is quite different from the work of an incarnation of God – for example, Chaitanya Deva.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, yes. Right.”

Mani: “You have told us that Chaitanya Deva said, ‘The seed I have broadcast will one day bear fruit.’ A seed was placed on the cornice of a house. The house fell and that seed produced a tree.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Shivanath and his friends have also founded

a samaj. Many people go there too.”

Mani: “Sir, that sort of man goes there.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*laughing*): “Yes, yes. Only worldly people go there. But not many of those who yearn for God and are trying to renounce ‘lust and greed.’”

Mani: “It will really be nice if a current flows from here. Everyone will be liberated by the force of that current. What comes from here will never be one-sided.”

Sri Ramakrishna and Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Vaishnavas, and Brahmos

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “I accept the ideal that anyone may have. I ask Vaishnavas to preserve Vaishnava inclinations; I ask Shaktas to preserve theirs. But I tell them, ‘Don’t think that only your faith is true and all else are false or wrong.’ Hindus, Muslims, Christians – they are all going to the same goal by different paths. Preserving your own inclination and calling upon God earnestly, you will realize Him.

“Vijay’s mother-in-law said, ‘Why don’t you tell Balaram and the others that it is not necessary to worship God with form, that you can succeed by calling on the formless Sat-chit-ananda only?’

“I said, ‘Why should I say such a thing to them? Besides why would they listen to me?’

“A mother has cooked fish. For one of the sons, she has made pulao. For one who can’t digest well, she has prepared fish curry. One should make different forms of the same thing according to the tastes and capabilities of others.”

Mani: “Yes, sir. There are different paths for different times, places, and people. But whatever path one may chose, He can be reached by calling upon Him sincerely with a pure mind. This is what you have been saying.”

Hari of the Mukherji family – Sri Ramakrishna on meditation and charity

Thakur is sitting in his room. Hari, the Mukherjis’ relative, M.,

and others are seated on the floor. An unknown person comes in and bows to Thakur, then takes a seat. Talking of him later, Thakur said, “His eyes were not good. They were yellow, like a cat’s.”

Hari prepares a smoke for Thakur and brings it to him.

Sri Ramakrishna (*holding the hubble-bubble in his hand, to Hari*): “Let me see your palm. All these lines are very good signs.

“Now relax your hand and let me examine it. (*He holds Hari’s hand in his own, as if he is weighing it*). You are still childlike. Nothing has gone wrong yet. (*To the devotees*) By seeing a person’s hand, I can tell whether he is crooked or guileless. (*To Hari*) Why, go to your in-laws’ house and talk to your wife. Have a little fun with her if you like.

(*To M.*) “What do you say to that, my dear?” (*M. and others laugh.*)

M.: “Sir, if a new pot goes bad, you can’t keep milk in it.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “How do you know that it has not already gone bad?”

Mahendra and Priyanath are the two Mukherji brothers. They do not work in an office; they have their own flour mill.

Priyanath had been an engineer. Thakur talks to Hari about the Mukherji brothers.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hari*): “The elder brother [Mahendra] is nice, isn’t he? He’s guileless.”

Hari: “Yes, sir.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the devotees*): “The younger one [Priyanath] is very miserly. He has, though, improved a lot since coming here. Once he said to me, ‘I didn’t know anything before.’ (*To Hari*) Do they give in charity?”

Hari: “I don’t see them doing anything like that. They had an elder brother – he’s dead now – who was a very good man. He

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was engaged in charity as well as meditation.”

**Sri Ramakrishna and signs of the body – the student of Mahesh
Nyaya Rattan**

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M. and others*): “You can know a lot by signs on the body – whether a person will succeed or not. Crooked people have heavy hands.

“A snub nose is not good. Sambhu had a snub nose. That’s why he was not totally guileless in spite of his great knowledge.

“A weak rib cage, hard bones, thick elbow joints, thin hands, and yellowish eyes like a cat’s – these are not good signs.

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“Thick lips like those of a dome indicate low intelligence. A brahmin was here acting as priest for the Vishnu Temple. I couldn’t eat the food he had touched. One day I exclaimed, ‘Oh, a dome!’ Later he told me, ‘I live in the dome quarters. I know how to weave baskets and utensils just like the domes.’

“And there are other bad signs – a man with one eye or with a squint. But it’s better to be one-eyed than to have a squint. Squint-eyed people are cruel and deceitful.

“A student of Mahesh (the late Mahesh Nyaya Rattan) said, ‘I am an atheist.’ He said to Hriday, ‘Let’s have a discussion. I am an atheist and you consider yourself a theist.’ I had a good look at him then. He had eyes like a cat.

“Whether someone is good or bad is shown by the way he walks.

“If a man’s foreskin has been cut, as Muslims do, it is a particularly bad sign. (*M. and others laugh.*) (*To M., smiling*) You must see that it is a bad sign.” (*All laugh.*)

Thakur is pacing the verandah. M. and Baburam are with him. (*To Hazra*) “A person came here. I noticed that he had eyes like a cat. He asked me, ‘Do you know astrology? I am in some trouble.’ I replied, ‘No. Go to Baranagore. You will find an astrologer there.’”

Baburam and M. are talking about Nilkantha’s theatrical performance. Baburam had returned from Nabin Sen’s house to Dakshineswar and spent last night here. In the morning he had seen the Nilkantha play at Nabin Niyogi’s house in

Dakshineswar.

**Sri Ramakrishna, Mani, and contemplation in solitude – God’s will –
longing for Narayan**

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M. and Baburam*): “What are you talking about?”

M. and Baburam: “Sir, we are talking about Nilkantha’s musical and the song: ‘Living on the bank of the river with hope at the feet of Mother Shyama.’”

While pacing the verandah, Thakur suddenly takes Mani aside and says to him, “The less people know about your meditation on God the better for you.” Saying this, Thakur suddenly leaves.

He is now talking to Hazra.

Hazra: “Nilkantha told you that he would come visit you. We should send for him.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No. He didn’t sleep last night. It would be different if he came by God’s will.”

Thakur is proceeding toward the jhautala, accompanied by M. and Baburam. He asks Baburam to go and visit Narayan in his house. He thinks of Narayan as the very manifestation of God, so he is yearning to see him. He says to Baburam, “When you go, take an English textbook with you.”

Chapter V

**Dakshineswar – Thakur with Nilkantha and other devotees,
enjoying devotional singing**

Sri Ramakrishna is seated in his room. At about three o’clock Nilkantha arrives with six or seven companions. Thakur, who is facing east, gets up and goes toward the door to welcome them. They enter through the eastern door and salute him by prostrating.

Thakur goes into samadhi. Baburam is behind him; M., Nilkantha, Haran, and others belonging to the theatrical performance are in front of him. Dinanath, the treasurer of the

temple, looks at Thakur from the north side of the bed. Soon the room is filled with employees of the temple garden. After some time Thakur's ecstatic mood diminishes and he sits on a mat spread on the floor. Nilkantha sits in front of him and the other devotees around.

Sri Ramakrishna (*in an ecstatic mood*): "I'm all right."

Nilkantha (*with folded hands*): "Please make me all right also."

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "But you are already all right. If you add a to k it becomes ka . What use is there in adding another a to it – it will still remain ka . (*Everybody laughs.*)

Nilkantha: "I am entangled in worldly life."

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "You have been kept in the world for the sake of others.

"There are the eight bonds. You can't get rid of them all. God keeps you bound by one or two for teaching others. You are performing this musical play. How many people benefit by seeing your love and devotion for God! If you were to give up all this, what would happen to the other performers?

"He is getting His work done through you. When you have finished it, you will not return. A housewife finishes all her domestic chores – feeds everybody, even the maids and servants – and then goes for her bath. Then even if you shout for her, she doesn't return."

Nilkantha: "Please bless me."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Going mad at separation from Krishna, Yashoda went to see Radha, who was meditating. In ecstasy, she said to Yashoda, 'I am that Primeval Power, the fundamental Prakriti. Ask me for a boon.' Yashoda said, 'What boon shall I ask? Just grant that I be able to serve Him and meditate on Him in body, mind, and speech. That my ears may hear of His name and glories, that my hands may serve Him and His devotees, and that my eyes may see His form and His devotees.'

"Your eyes fill with tears when you recite His name. What remains for you to worry about? You have already developed

love for Him.

“Knowing many things is ignorance. Knowing only One is knowledge. In other words, God alone is real and dwells in all. Talking to Him is vijnana – attaining Him and loving Him in various ways is vijnana.

“Besides, He is beyond one or two – beyond speech and mind. To go from the phenomenal to the Absolute and then return to the relative from the Absolute is called mature love for God.

“That song of yours is beautiful: ‘Living on the bank of the river with hope at the feet of Mother Shyama.’

“You succeed if this happens. It all depends on God’s grace.

“So you have to pray to Him. Simply sitting quietly will not do. After pleading the whole case, the lawyer says to the judge, ‘This is all I have to say.’ It is now all in your hands.”

After a while Thakur says, “You sang so much in the morning and now you have taken the trouble of coming here. But it is all honorary – free – here.”

Nilkantha: “Why?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “I understand what you mean.”

Nilkantha: “I shall carry away a priceless jewel from here!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That precious jewel is already with you. What is the use of adding another a to k ? If you didn’t already have it, why should I have liked your songs so much?

Ramprasad was a realized soul.

“An ordinary being is called manushya, or man. One whose consciousness is awakened is called manhosha, or an awakened

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mind. You are manhosha.

“I had already planned to go to the play when I heard that you were going to sing. Just then Niyogi came to invite me.”

Thakur goes to the smaller cot and sits down. He says to Nilkantha, “I would like to hear a song or two about the Divine Mother.”

Nilkantha sings with his companions:

Living on the bank of the river with hope at the feet of Mother Shyama.

Next they sing:

Mahishamardini...

Listening to this song, Thakur stands up and goes into samadhi.

Nilkantha says, "He from whose locks the Ganges is flowing has Rajarajeshvari (the Supreme Goddess) residing in his heart."

Thakur dances in ecstatic love. Nilkantha and the devotees sing, encircling him, and also dance.

They sing:

Shiva, Shiva.

Thakur dances with devotees during this song as well.

The song ends. Thakur says to Nilkantha, "I want to hear the song I heard you sing in Calcutta."

M.: "Like Krishna's, the complexion of the handsome Sri Gauranga, the dancing lover of God, is of golden hue."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Yes, yes."

Nilkantha sings:

Like Krishna's, the complexion of the handsome Sri Gauranga, the
[17]
dancing lover of God, is of golden hue.

When he sings, 'Drowning in the flood of ecstatic love,' Thakur again dances with the devotees. Whoever sees this superb dance will never forget it. The room is full of people, all filled with

[18]
divine emotion. It has become like Srivasa's own courtyard.

Manomohan goes into an ecstatic mood. A devotee of Thakur, he is related to Rakhal. A number of ladies of Manomohan's family have come with him and are watching the wonderful dance and kirtan from the northern verandah. One of the ladies there also goes into ecstasy.

Thakur sings another song:

Behold, the brothers have come! The two who shed tears while chanting

Hari's name.

Thakur dances with Nilkantha and other devotees. He improvises the following line:

The two brothers have come intoxicated with Radha's love.

Hearing the loud music, people gather. They stand all around – on the south, on the north, and on the western semi-circular verandah. People in boats going by are also attracted by the sound of the sweet kirtan.

The singing ends. Thakur chants the name of the Mother of the Universe and says, “Bhagavata Bhakta Bhagavan [His word, His devotee, and the Lord are one]. My salutations to jnanis, salutations to yogis, and salutations to devotees.”

Now Thakur goes to the western semi-circular verandah with Nilkantha and some other devotees. He sits there. It is evening, the day after the full moon of Kojagar. All quarters are lit up by the light of the moon. Thakur talks happily with Nilkantha.

What Sri Ramakrishna is – ‘I’ cannot be found by searching – I shall bring Chandi home

Nilkantha: “You yourself are indeed Gauranga.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What is all this? I am the servant of the servant of all. The wave belongs to the Ganges. Does the Ganges ever belong to the wave?”

Nilkantha: “Whatever you may say, we see you as that [Gauranga].”

Sri Ramakrishna (*going into an ecstatic mood, sweetly*):

“Brother, I search for my ‘I,’ but I cannot find it.

“Hanuman said to Rama, ‘O Rama, sometimes I say to myself that You are the whole and I a part of you, sometimes that you are the Lord and I your servant. But when I have the knowledge of Reality I see that You are I and I am You.’”

Nilkantha: “What shall I say? Please grant us your grace.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “So many people are being taken across by you! How many people feel inspired by hearing your

music!”

Nilkantha: “You are saying that I am taking them across. But please bless me that I myself may not be drowned.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “If you must drown yourself, do so in the lake of nectar.”

Thakur is delighted to be in Nilkantha’s company. He says to him again, “For you to come here! A person can meet you only after practicing great spiritual disciplines. But please listen to this song.”

O Giriraja, King of Mountains, my dear Ganesha is the harbinger of all blessedness.

[20]

By worshiping him, Ganapati, I have attained Your daughter,

[21]

Haimavati.

[22]

O King of Mountains, please bring the brightly shining Parvati to me.

In worship I shall invoke her under the vilva tree. And Gauri will descend here for the welfare of Ganesha.

[23]

[24]

As soon as Chandi graces my house, so many songs of the Chandi will be sung,

And saints and hermits and ascetics with matted locks will gather there.

“As soon as Chandi [the Divine Mother] graces the house, saints, ascetics with matted hair, and hermits will flock there.”

Thakur laughs. After a while he says to M., Baburam and other devotees, “I feel like laughing and laughing. Just imagine that I should be singing for them (the musicians of the theater)!”

Nilkantha: “We have received today our reward for touring about singing.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “When a shopkeeper sells something, he sometimes offers a little extra. You sang at Nabin’s and have given the little extra here.” (*All laugh.*)

[1]

. Accordingly, today is 5 October 1884.

[2]

. Tattvajnana.

[3]

. Meaning Sri Ramakrishna.

[4]

. Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy.

[5]

. Wisdom (jnana), power (shakti), strength (bala), lordship (aishvarya), valor (virya), and splendour (tejas).

[6]

. Kumari puja.

[7]

. He quoted ungrammatically.

[8]

. Ramakrishna made fun of the quote with his own outrageous Sanskrit composition.

[9]

. antarbahiryadi haris tapasā tataù kim.

[10]

Reference to ritualistic worship.

[11]

. Atmarama.

[12]

. The son of her father's younger brother.

[13]

. Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna's wife.

[14]

. In Bengali, *dan* (giving) and *dhyan* (meditation).

[15]

. People of a specific low caste.

[16]

. There is pun on the word manhosha and manushya.

[17]

. For the complete song refer to Section VIII, Chapter I.

[18]

. Srivasa Pundit was a close companion of Sri Chaitanya. It was at his house that Chaitanya and his associates would have sankirtan all night long.

[19]

. For the complete song refer to Section VI, Chapter I.

[20]

. Ganesha.

[21]

. The goddess Parvati.

[\[22\]](#)

. Gauri.

[\[23\]](#)

. A name of the Divine Mother.

[\[24\]](#)

. The Devimahatmya or Sri Durga Saptasati.

Section XXIII

Car Festival at Balaram's House

Chapter I

Purna, the younger Naren, and Gopal's Mother

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in Balaram's drawing room with the devotees. It is Monday, 13 July 1885, the first day of the bright fortnight of Ashada. It is nine o'clock.

Tomorrow the Car Festival will be celebrated. Balaram has invited Thakur for the celebration and brought him to his house. The image of Jagannath is worshiped there daily, and he has a small car which will be pulled on the verandah outside during the festival.

Thakur is talking with M. Close to them are Narayan, Tejchandra, Balaram, and many other devotees. They are talking about Purna. Purna is about fifteen years old. Thakur longs to see him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.): "Well, by what road will he come to see me? Please arrange that Dwija and Purna meet.

"I bring together two people of the same nature and same age. It has a special meaning. They both make progress. Do you see what love Purna has?"

M.: "Yes, sir. I was going by tram when he saw me from the roof of his house. He came running to see me and greeted me so eagerly!"

Sri Ramakrishna (*his eyes filled with tears*): "Ah! Ah! Because he has found me to be the contact for spiritual illumination. Unless one has yearning for God, such conduct is not seen."

Purna's masculine nature – divine inclination – Narayana born as one's son because of austerities

"These three have a masculine nature: Narendra, the younger Naren, and Purna. But not Bhavanath. He has a feminine nature.

"Because of his high state, Purna may quit his body soon. Why retain the body after God-realization? Or the spiritual feelings

within him may surge up in a few days.

“He has a divine inclination, the nature of a god. Such people don’t have much fear of society. If a garland is put around his neck, sandal paste on his body, and incense burnt before him, he will go into samadhi. He will then know that God is within him, that Narayana Himself has come down in a human body. I’ve found this out.”

**His earlier story – samadhi of a brahmin girl with good signs –
Mother Goddess as daughter of Ranjit**

“When this state of divine intoxication came to me the first time in Dakshineswar, a brahmin lady belonging to a respectable family came. She had very good signs. As soon as a garland was put around her neck and incense burnt before her, she went into samadhi. Soon she was all joy. Tears began to stream from her eyes. I bowed to her and said, ‘Mother, will I succeed?’ She replied, ‘Yes.’

“I want to see Purna again. But where is the opportunity? It

[\[1\]](#)

seems that he is a part of the Divine. What a wonder! Not just a tiny part, but a full sixteenth! How intelligent he is! He is so good in studies. Therefore I have hit it right.

“Narayana (the Lord) takes birth as a person’s son by the power of spiritual practices. On the way to Kamarpukur, there is Ranjit Rai’s big lake. The Divine Mother took birth as Ranjit Rai’s daughter. Even now a fair is held there in the month of Chaitra. I’ve had a desire to go there – but not now.

“Ranjit Rai was a landlord there. By the power of his austerities, he obtained the Divine Mother as his daughter. He loved his daughter very much. She became so attached to him that she would almost never leave her father’s company. One day, he was attending to the affairs of his estate and was very busy. The girl, in her childlike nature, continually asked him, ‘Father, what is this and what is that?’ The father very sweetly replied, ‘Daughter, please leave me alone. I have lot of work to do.’ But the girl would not leave. At last he said absent-mindedly, ‘Please, get out of here.’ On this pretext the girl left

home. A peddler of conch-shell wares was just then passing by. She called out for him and took a pair of conch bangles. When he demanded to be paid for them, she said, 'There is money in a box in that room. Go and take it from there.' Then she left, never to be seen again. The bangle peddler went to the house and began to shout for money. Seeing that she was not at home, the inmates of the house came running. Ranjit Rai sent people in all directions to find her. The money owed the peddler was found in the box. Ranjit Rai was going around weeping when someone came and said, 'There is something in the lake.' They all went to the lake and saw a hand with a conch bangle raised out of the water. A moment later they could see it no more. Even now worship of the Divine Mother is performed during the festival on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of Chaitra.

(To M.) "All this is true."

M.: "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Narendra now believes this."

"Purna was born with an element of Vishnu. I worshiped him

[2]

mentally with vilwa leaves but it wasn't successful. Then I

[3]

offered him tulsi leaves and sandal paste and it was accepted.

"God appears in many ways, sometimes as a man and sometimes in other divine forms of consciousness. One must believe in divine forms. What do you say?"

M.: "Yes, sir."

Gopal's Mother has a motherly nature – she sees divine forms

Sri Ramakrishna: "The brahmin woman of Kamarhati (Gopal's Mother) sees so many visions! She lives by herself in a lone house in a garden on the bank of the Ganges and repeats God's

[4]

name. Gopala sleeps close to her. (*Saying this, Thakur gives a start.*) Not in imagination but in fact. She saw that Gopala's hands were red; he goes everywhere with her. She suckles him

at her breast and talks to him. Narendra wept when he heard this!

“I also used to see many things. Now in ecstasy I don’t see that many visions. My feminine nature is decreasing. Instead I am imbibing a manly attitude. That’s why my spiritual feelings don’t show so much outwardly. They remain within.

“The younger Naren has a masculine nature. That’s why he becomes merged in meditation while repeating the name of God. He doesn’t show ecstasy. Nityagopal has a feminine nature. That’s why his body gets contorted in bhava. His body turns red with emotion.”

Chapter II

Renunciation of “lust and greed” – Purna and others

Binode, Dwija, Tarak, Mohit, Tejchandra, Narayan, Balaram, and Atul

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Well, people renounce bit by bit. What about them?”

“Binode said, ‘I have to sleep with my wife. That makes me feel very bad.’ You see, it is bad to sleep together whether you have intercourse or not. There is touching of the bodies and the physical warmth.

“What a state Dwija is in! He only sways his body and keeps his eyes focused on my face. Is that a small thing? If his whole mind becomes fixed on me, he will have achieved everything.”

Is Sri Ramakrishna an incarnation of God?

“So what am I? It is He. I am the machine but He is the operator. It is God’s power alone in this [within himself]. That’s why so many people are increasingly attracted here. Just a touch is enough to awaken them. This attraction, this pull, is the attraction of God alone.

“Tarak (of Belgharia) was returning to his home after staying there (Dakshineswar). I noticed something shining like a flame coming out of this – and following him.

“A few days after that, Tarak returned (to Dakshineswar). Then He who is in this body put a foot on his chest in the state of samadhi.

“Well, are there any more boys like these youngsters?”

M.: “That boy Mohit is quite nice. He’s gone to see you once or twice. He’s preparing for two university examinations. And he has great attraction for God.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Maybe so. But he doesn’t have a high spiritual ideal. His physical signs aren’t so good. He has a puggish face. These other youngsters are of a different class.

“Taking up a body puts one in great trouble. And if one is cursed, he will have to be born another seven times. You have to live very cautiously! A person has to take up a new body if only one desire remains.”

Devotee: “And incarnations of God, when they come in a human body – do they have any desire?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “I’ve noticed that I haven’t been able to completely rid myself of desire. When I saw a sadhu’s shawl, I wanted to wear one like it. Even now I have this desire. Maybe I’ll have to come again.”

Balaram (*smiling*): “Will you take up a human body just for a shawl?” (*Everyone laughs.*)

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “A person should nourish a spiritual desire. They say that when you die, you will think only of it.

[\[5\]](#)

Sadhus keep one of the four centers of pilgrimage unvisited. Many keep the Jagannath region unvisited so that at the time of death, their thoughts will be in Jagannath.”

A person dressed in monastic robes enters the room and salutes. Privately he runs Thakur down, so Balaram laughs. Thakur knows the inner thoughts of people, so he says to Balaram, “Let him be. Let him say that I am a fraud.”

Tejchandra’s proposal to renounce the world

Thakur is talking to Tejchandra.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Tejchandra*): “I have sent for you so many times! Why don’t you come? All right, so just practice meditation. If you do that, I’ll be happy. I look on you as my own. That’s why I send for you.”

Tejchandra: “Sir, I have to go to the office. There is a lot of work to do.”

M. (*smiling*): “There was a marriage in the family and he took ten days off from the office.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “So! And you say you don’t have time. And you say you want to renounce the world.”

Narayan: “One day Master Mahashay (M.) said that the world is a wilderness.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Please tell them that story. They will benefit from it. About the disciple becoming unconscious after he takes some medicine. The guru comes and says, ‘His life can be saved if someone takes this pill. He will live but the person who takes the pill will die.’

“And tell that other one, too – about the hatha yogi with a crooked body who thought his wife and other members of the

[\[6\]](#)

family were his very own.”

Thakur partakes of the prasad of Sri Jagannath at noon. Service to Jagannath is performed regularly at Balaram’s house. That’s why Thakur says, “Balaram’s food is pure.” Thakur takes a little rest after the meal.

It is late afternoon. Thakur is sitting with the devotees in the same room. Chandra Babu of the Kartabhaja sect and the witty brahmin are also there. This brahmin is a joker – whatever he says makes people laugh.

Thakur talks for a long time about the Kartabhajas and their

[\[7\]](#)

outlook on life and religion.

Thakur’s ecstasy – Atul and Tejchandra’s brother

It is six o’clock. Girish’s brother, Atul, and Tejchandra’s brother

have come. Thakur is in an ecstatic state. After sometime he says, “Can one be unconscious by meditating on Consciousness? Can one go mad by meditating on God? He is the very nature of all knowledge. He is eternal, pure, knowledge itself.”

Are some of the visitors thinking that Thakur’s brain may have been deranged by excessive meditation on God?

Go forward – Krishnadhan’s humour

Thakur says to Krishnadhan, the witty brahmin, “You waste your time joking day and night about ordinary worldly things. Turn your mind towards God. A person who can keep account of salt can also account for sugar candy.”

Krishnadhan (*smiling*): “Please pull me that way.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What can I do? It all depends on your own effort. It is up to your own mind to do it.

“Giving up ordinary humour, go forward to God. You can go farther and farther. The brahmachari counseled the woodcutter to go forward. When he did, he found sandalwood, then a mine of silver, and then a gold mine. Going even farther, he found diamonds and jewels.”

Krishnadhan: “There is no end to this road.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Stop where you find peace.”

Thakur now talks about a newcomer.

“I didn’t find any substance in him. He seemed worthless, like a rotten apple.”

It is evening. A light has been brought in the room. Thakur meditates on the Mother of the Universe and chants Her name in a sweet voice. The devotees are sitting all around him.

The Car Festival is to be held tomorrow. Thakur will spend tonight in this house. Taking some refreshments in the inner apartments, he returns again to the large room. It is about 10 p. m. He says to M., “Please bring the hand towel from the other room.”

Thakur’s bed has been made in the small room. It is ten-thirty

when he goes to bed.

It is summer. He says to M., “Please bring a fan.” He asks him to fan him. At twelve o’clock at night, Thakur wakes up. He says, “I feel chilly. I don’t need the fan anymore.”

Chapter III

Thakur with devotees in Balaram’s house on the day of the Car Festival

Today is the day of the Car Festival – Tuesday [14 July 1885]. Rising very early in the morning, Thakur dances by himself repeating the name of God in a sweet voice.

M. comes in and salutes him. The devotees arrive one by one, salute Thakur, and then sit near him. Thakur is very eager to see Purna. He talks to M. about Purna.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Did you give Purna any instructions when you saw him?”

M.: “Sir, I asked him to read the *Chaitanya Charitamrita*. He is familiar with it. And I told him that you had said, ‘Always hold on to the truth.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Well, what did he say when you told him about me, saying, ‘He is God incarnate?’”

M.: “I asked him to come with me if he wanted to see a man like Chaitanya Deva.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What else?”

M.: “That you said that when an elephant goes into a small pond, the water is splashed around – that if a receptacle is shallow, his emotions overflow.

“About his giving up of fish, I asked, ‘Why this? It will cause a great uproar.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That’s good. A person must contain emotions within.”

Sri Ramakrishna and the earthquake

It is half past six in the morning. M. is going for a dip in the

Ganges from Balaram's house when he feels an earthquake. He immediately returns to Thakur's room. Thakur is standing in the drawing room with the devotees talking about it. It was rather severe. Most of the devotees are frightened.

M.: "We should have gone downstairs."

**His earlier story – Sri Ramakrishna and the storm of Ashwin – 5
October 1864**

Sri Ramakrishna: "This is the pitiable state of the house [body] one lives in. And yet people are so arrogant! (*To M.*) Do you remember the storm in the month of Ashwin?"

M.: "Yes, sir. I was very young then, nine or ten years old. I was alone in a room, and I called on God."

Surprised, M. asks himself, Why has Thakur suddenly asked about the storm of Ashwin? Sitting alone in a room, I wept profusely and prayed to God. Does Thakur know everything about it? Is he reminding me of it? Has he been protecting me as my guru since my birth?

Sri Ramakrishna: "It was very late at Dakshineswar when the storm broke. Afterward some food was cooked, but it was very late. All the trees had been uprooted. You see, this is the fate of the house one lives in!

"But after gaining perfect knowledge, one feels that dying and killing are the same. When one dies nobody dies, and when one

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kills nobody is killed. The phenomenal belongs to the same reality as the Absolute. It is He Himself who is the Absolute in one form and the phenomenal in another. Even if the relative is destroyed, the Absolute exists. Water is water, whether it is moving or still."

Thakur sits again in the drawing room with the devotees. Mahendra Mukherji, Hari, the younger Naren, and several

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other young devotees are there. Hari lives alone and studies Vedanta. He is twenty-three or twenty-four years old. He is not married. Thakur is very fond of him and often asks him to visit but since he likes solitude, he doesn't come very often.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Hari*): “Well, my dear, you have not been here for a long time.”

[\[10\]](#) **Advice to Hari– non-dualism** [\[11\]](#) **and qualified non-dualism** –
vijnana

“In one form God is the Absolute and in another He is the phenomenal. What does Vedanta say? That Brahman is real [\[12\]](#)

[\[13\]](#)

and the world illusory. But as long as God keeps the feeling of I-ness in a devotee, the relative is real. When He takes it away, then whatever is remains. This cannot be explained in words. As long as He has kept I-ness in you, you have to accept everything. When the sheathes of the banana tree are peeled off, there is pulp inside. When there are sheathes, there is pulp – the pulp belongs to the sheathes and the sheathes belong to the pulp. When you speak of the existence of the Absolute, you comprehend that the phenomenal exists. And when you speak of the phenomenal, you understand that the Absolute also exists.

“God has become the world, its living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. When He is inactive, He is called Brahman. When He creates, preserves, and dissolves, He is known as Shakti, or Power. Brahman and Shakti are not different from each other. Water is water whether it is still or in motion.

“You cannot get rid of the sense of ‘I.’ You can’t say that the world and its living beings are an illusion as long as you are conscious of your ‘I.’ When you throw away the rind and the seeds of a bel fruit, you can’t arrive at the full weight of the bel fruit.

“The bricks, lime, and brick-dust with which the roof is made also make the stairs. It is only because of the reality of what is known as Brahman that this universe and its creatures have come into existence.

“The devotee, the vijnani, accepts both God with form and the formless God. He accepts both form and formlessness. It is by

the cooling effect of love for God that some of the water turns into ice. But when the sun of spiritual knowledge rises, that ice melts into the same water as it was before.”

When reasoning stops, the mind is annihilated and there is the knowledge of Brahman

“As long as a person reasons with the mind, the Absolute cannot be reached. As long as you reason with the mind, the world cannot be done away with. None of the senses of sight, taste, smell, touch, and speech can be got rid off. When reasoning stops, you attain the knowledge of Brahman. You cannot know the Atman through this mind – Atman is known only through Atman. Pure mind, pure intellect, and pure Atman are one and the same.

“Just see how much you need to be able to see an object. You need eyes, light, and also the mind – all these are needed. If one of these three is missing, you can’t see an object. As long as the mind is working, how can you say there is no world, that there is no ‘I’?

“When the mind is destroyed, when there is no intention and

[\[14\]](#)

conceptualization one attains samadhi, one gains the knowledge of Brahman. But in do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti – the seven notes of the scale – one cannot remain for long at ti, the highest musical note.”

Advice to the younger Naren – conversation with God after attaining His vision

Glancing at the younger Naren, Thakur says, “What use is it to only know that God exists? You have not reached the end when you have seen God. You have to bring Him to your house. You have to talk to Him.

“Some have heard of milk, some have seen it, and some have drunk it. Only a few have seen the king. Only one or two can bring him to their house and entertain him.”

Thakur goes for a dip in the Ganges.

Chapter IV

His earlier story – Thakur has a vision of Shiva and the golden Annapurna in the holy pilgrim city of Kashi – sees the universe in the form of a shalagram

It is ten o'clock. Thakur is talking with the devotees when M. returns from bathing in the Ganges. He salutes Thakur, and then sits beside him.

Thakur, full of divine emotion, talks about many things. During the conversation, he discusses some of his most secret visions.

Sri Ramakrishna: "When I went to Kashi with Mathur Babu, our boat passed close to the Manikarnika Ghat. Suddenly I had a vision of Shiva. I went to the edge of the boat and stood there and went into samadhi. In fear that I would fall into the river, the boatman shouted to Hriday, 'Hold him, hold him.' I saw Shiva standing at that ghat in the most profound mood. At first I saw Him standing at a distance, then I saw Him approaching me. After that, He merged into me.

"In a state of ecstasy I saw a sannyasin leading me by the hand. We entered a temple, and I had a vision of the golden Annapurna.

"God Himself has become everything. He is more manifest in some forms, however.

(*To M. and others*) "Perhaps you don't recognize the spiritual meaning of a shalagram. Englishmen don't. It doesn't matter if you believe in it or not. A shalagram with good signs – the mark of a disc in the shape of a cow's face, and some other signs."

M.: "Sir, like a man with good physical signs has a greater manifestation of God in him."

Sri Ramakrishna: "At first Narendra called them [Ramakrishna's visions] hallucinations of the mind. Now, he accepts everything."

While talking about visions of God, Thakur passes into bhava samadhi. The devotees watch him silently. After a long time, he regains consciousness and begins to talk.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “What did I see? That the universe is a shalagram. I saw your two eyes in it.”

M. and the other devotees listen in amazement to this wonderful and unheard of vision. Just then another young devotee, Sarada, enters the room, salutes Thakur, and sits down.

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Sri Ramakrishna (*to Sarada*): “Why don’t you come to Dakshineswar? When I go to Calcutta, why don’t you come to see me?”

Sarada: “I don’t hear about your visits.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I’ll let you know the next time. (*Laughing, to M.*) Make a list of these boys.” (*M. and other devotees laugh.*)

News of Purna – Thakur is very happy to see Narendra

Sarada: “My family wants me to marry. He (M.) has reprimanded us so many times about marriage.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why marry now? (*To M.*) Sarada is now in a very good state of mind. He used to seem hesitant, like a fish pulling the float of a fishing line. Now his face looks happy.”

Thakur says to a devotee, “Will you please fetch Purna?”

Narendra enters. Thakur asks that refresh-ments be served him. He is very happy to see Narendra. He seemed to feel that he was serving the Lord Himself by feeding Narendra. Thakur is stroking his body affectionately, gently massaging his hands and feet. Gopal’s Mother (the brahmin woman of Kamarhati) enters the room. Thakur had asked Balaram to send a man to Kamarhati to bring her. That is why she has come. As she enters the room, she says, “I am shedding tears of joy.” Then she prostrates before Thakur in salutation.

Sri Ramakrishna: “What are you doing? You call me Gopala and then you salute me.

“Please go inside and cook a dish. Put a lot of ghee and spices in it so we can smell it from here.” (*All laugh.*)

Gopal’s Mother: “What will these people [the members of the family] say?”

Is Gopal’s Mother thinking to herself that she was a newcomer and the family members could take offense?

Before going in, she says to Narendra in a touching tone of voice, “Child, have I achieved or does something remain to achieve?”

It is the Car Festival day. The offering of food and worship of Lord Jagannath had been somewhat delayed. Now, after the worship, Thakur is to be served. He goes to the inner apartments, where the women devotees are eagerly awaiting him – to see him and pay their obeisance.

Thakur had many women devotees, but he did not talk much about them to the men devotees. If someone went to visit women devotees, he would say, “Don’t go to her very often. You may have a fall.” Sometimes he would say, “Even if a woman rolls on the ground with love for God, you shouldn’t visit her frequently.” Let men and women devotees live separately. This will be good for both of them. And he would say further, “It isn’t

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good for women devotees to practice motherly feelings for men. Such an attitude could change and bring about a downfall.”

Chapter V

Car Festival at Balaram’s house – in the joy of devotional songs, with Narendra and other devotees

It is one o’clock. After the midday meal, Thakur comes in and sits with the devotees in the drawing room. One of them has brought Purna. Thakur says to M. joyfully, “Here he is! Purna has arrived!” Narendra, the younger Naren, Narayan, Haripada, and others sit near Thakur and talk with him.

Free will and the younger Naren – Narendra sings

The younger Naren: “Sir, do we have free will?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Just try to find your ‘I.’ When you are searching for ‘I,’ you find Him. ‘I am the instrument, You are the operator.’ You know, a puppet goes into a shop with a letter

[17]

in its hand. God alone is the doer. Work as though you are a doer, but know that you are not.

[18]

“As long as there is any adjunct, or a limiting quality to your identity, you are in ignorance. To think that you are learned, or a jnani, or wealthy, or respectable, or father, or guru – all these come from ignorance. ‘I am the instrument and You are the operator,’ is knowledge. Then all marks of identity are obliterated. When firewood has been fully burnt, it produces no sound. It gives no heat. Then it is all cool. Peace, peace, peace.’

(*To Narendra*) “Please sing a little.”

Narendra: “I have to go home. I have lot of work to do.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, child. Why should you listen to us? One listens carefully to those who have gold in their ears. Who listens to one who only has a torn cloth? (*All laugh.*)

“You can go to the garden house of the Guhas. When I ask where you are, I often hear that you are at the garden house of the Guhas. I wouldn’t have mentioned this, but you forced it out of me.”

Narendra is silent for a few minutes. Then he says, “There are no instruments. Shall I just sing?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “My child, this is the situation here. Sing if you’d like to. This is how Balaram has arranged it.

“Balaram says, ‘Please come in a boat. But if that’s not possible, you may hire a carriage.’ (*All laugh.*) He has given us a feast, so he will make us dance in the afternoon. (*Laughter.*) One day he hired a carriage for me for twelve annas. I asked, ‘Will he take me to Dakshineswar for twelve annas?’ He said, ‘That’s enough.’ On the way one side of the carriage fell apart and dropped off. (*All laugh.*) And the horse would suddenly stop just anywhere

and it wasn't possible to make it move. A number of times the coachman whipped it and it ran a little. (*Loud laughter.*) So now this evening Ram will play the drum and we will dance. But Ram has no sense of rhythm! (*All laugh.*) Balaram's attitude is: sing, dance, and make yourself happy." (*All laugh.*)

Other devotees are gradually coming back from their homes, having eaten and rested.

Seeing Mahendra Mukherji saluting him from a distance,

[19]

Thakur bows to him and also offers him a salaam. He says to a young devotee sitting near him, "Tell him that I salaamed.

[20]

He harps on Olcott, Olcott all the time." Many of the householder devotees have brought their wives and other women relatives with them. They wanted to have the darshan of Thakur and watch the kirtan singing in front of the chariot. Ram, Girish, and other devotees arrive one by one. A number of youngster devotees have also come.

Now Narendra sings:

When will dawn that day when tears stream from my eyes as I repeat

[21]

Lord Hari's name?

He sings again:

In dense darkness, O Mother, Your formless beauty sparkles. And so the yogi meditates in a dark mountain cave.

[22]

In the lap of infinite darkness, on the waves of the great silence, eternal peace and joy float without end.

Putting on the form of the Formless One, in darkness draped, O Mother, who are You seated alone in boundless bliss?

At the lotus of Your fear-dispelling feet flashes the lightning of love, while loud and earth-shaking laughter issues from Your dazzling face.

Balaram has arranged for a kirtan by Vaishnav-charan and Banwari. Now Vaishnavcharan sings.

O my tongue, always repeat the name of Durga.

[23]

Who else can save you from danger but She?

After listening to the song for some time, Thakur passes into samadhi. He is standing, held by the younger Naren. His face is lit with a smile. Gradually he becomes absolutely still. The roomful of devotees watches him silently, while the women observe him from behind a bamboo screen. It is as if Lord Narayana Himself has come down in human form for the devotees – come down to teach them how to love God.

After a long time chanting God's name, his samadhi ends. When he sits down, Vaishnavcharan again begins to sing:

[24]

O my vina, sing Hari, Hari!

And then:

O my vina, the day passes in vain without worshiping Lord Hari.

Banwari, another singer, sings of God's form and beauty. During the song, he repeats, "Ah! Ah!" and prostrates. Some listeners laugh, others feel irritated.

It is afternoon. In the meantime, the small car of Sri Jagannath, decorated with flags and bunting, has been brought to the verandah. Lord Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balaram have been adorned with sandal paste and decorated with jewelry and garlands of flowers. Leaving Banwari's kirtan, Thakur comes to the front of the car on the verandah. Devotees accompany him. Holding the rope, he pulls the car a little and then sings and dances ahead of it with the devotees. Improvising, he sings:

Behold, the brothers have come! The two who shed tears while chanting

[25]

Hari's name,

They, who receiving the world's blows, offer Hari's love.

The song concludes:

Behold, the whole of Nadia trembles under the waves of Gauranga's love!

There is singing and dancing on the verandah as the car is drawn. Hearing the loud music of the kirtan and the sound of the drums, a number of neighbors come to the verandah.

Thakur is intoxicated with the name of the Lord. The devotees dance with him in an ecstasy of love.

Chapter VI

Narendra's song – Thakur's ecstatic dance

After the kirtan and dancing before the car, Sri Ramakrishna returns to the room and sits down. Mani and other devotees stroke his feet.

Full of divine feeling, Narendra sings again accompanied by a tanpura:

Come, come, O Mother, my heart's delight and doll of my soul;

So that I can constantly see You, come sit in the lotus of my heart.

Again he sings:

[\[26\]](#)

Mother! You are Tara, though You have assumed the three gunas,
You are even beyond the Limitless.

I know You are merciful to the lowly, the one who frees from all distress.

You are sandhya, You are Gayatri, You are the support of the Universe, O Mother!

You are the redeemer of yearning souls, always stealing the heart of Shiva.

In all bodies You dwell, in all worshipful beings, in that with form and without.

He sings another song:

I have made You the pole-star of my life.

Never shall I lose my way on this sea of the world.

A devotee asks Narendra if he will sing the song "O Mother, ruler of the heart! You are awake within...."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Away with you! Are you going to sing such songs now? Sing a song of joy – 'Shyama, the river of nectar.'"

Narendra sings:

Who can fathom Your various moods?

O Mother Shyama, You are the river of nectar.

Mother! Cupid flees before. Your playful glance...

Narendra becomes intoxicated with ecstasy and sings again and again:

O Brahman Absolute, the Eternal One, my Mother!

Do dance sometimes on the lotus of the heart of Kamala also.

Thakur dances, intoxicated with ecstatic love, singing, “O Brahman Absolute, the Eternal One, my Mother.” After dancing for a long time, he returns to his seat. He is very happy to see Narendra singing with such absorption in ecstasy, with tears in his eyes.

It must be around 9 p.m. Thakur is still sitting with the devotees.

He listens again to Vaishnavcharan’s songs:

Like Krishna’s, the complexion of the handsome Sri Gauranga, the
[\[27\]](#)
dancing lover of God, is of golden hue.

And:

O Hari, how shall I know You now?

O Bankura, living in Mathura, clad in royal splendour and riding elephants,

Have you forgotten the grazing of cows? Have you forgotten us?

Do you remember how you stole butter in Vraja?

It is now 10 or 11 p.m. The devotees are saluting Thakur in preparation to leave.

Sri Ramakrishna: “All right, you can go home now. (*Pointing to Narendra and the younger Naren*) It would be good if they both stay. (*To Girish*) Are you going to have your dinner at home? Wait awhile. What about a smoke? Oh, Balaram’s servant is just like that. Ask for a smoke and he won’t prepare it. (*Everybody laughs.*) But don’t leave without having a smoke.”

A friend wearing glasses had come with Girish. He has left after seeing and hearing everything. Thakur says to Girish, “I tell you, and also Haripal, don’t force anybody to come here. Nothing happens before its time.”

A devotee salutes Thakur. A little boy is with him. Thakur says affectionately, “You may now go. And this child with you.” Narendra, the younger Naren, and one or two devotees will go home a little later.

Chapter VII

Sri Ramakrishna at early dawn – sweet dancing and chanting of God’s name

Sri Ramakrishna is lying on the bed in the small room to the west of the drawing room. It is 4 a.m. To the south of the room is a verandah where M. is sitting on a stool.

After a while Thakur comes out on the verandah. M. salutes him by prostrating. It is Wednesday, 15 July 1885, the 32nd day of Ashada, Sankranti.

Sri Ramakrishna: “I got up once before. Well, should I return in the morning?”

M.: “Yes, sir. The water is less choppy in the morning.”

It is morning. The devotees have not yet assembled. After washing, Thakur sweetly chants the divine name. M. is near him. After some time, Gopal’s Mother comes in and stands close to him. One or two other lady devotees are watching from the door of the inner apartments. It is as if the gopis of Vrindavan are watching Sri Krishna. Or the women devotees of Navadvip, intoxicated with ecstatic love, are looking at Sri Gauranga from behind a screen.

After chanting Rama’s name, Thakur chants the name of Krishna: “Krishna! Krishna! Gopi Krishna! Gopi! Gopi! Krishna, the life breath of the cowherd boys. Krishna, the boy of Nanda! Govinda! Govinda!”

Now he chants the name of Gauranga:

“Sri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda! Hare Krishna! Hare Rama! Radha Govinda!”

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Then he repeats: “The Imperceptible Pure One.” Saying this, he weeps. Watching him weep and hearing his touching

voice, the devotees standing close also begin to cry. He weeps and says, “O, the Pure One! O my dear, come and eat. When shall I make my life blessed by feeding You? You have come, assuming a body, for my sake.”

He is expressing his pain before Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, the friend of the lowly, the friend of the world. “I am not separate from the world; my Master, be merciful to me.”

Becoming intoxicated with ecstatic love, he sings:

Live joyfully chanting the name of Jagannath of Orissa.

Now he dances, singing the name of Narayana: “The Lord Narayana! The Lord Narayana! Narayana! Narayana!”

Dancing, he sings again:

O gopi friend! I have not yet found Him whose love has driven me mad.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva – all three are mad.

These three mad gods have conspired to break Navadvip.

And in the fields of Vrindavan I have seen another who is mad.

He has clad Radha in royal robes and assumed for Himself the role of a guard.

Now Thakur sits in the small room with the devotees. He is naked, like a five-year-old child. M., Balaram and one or two other devotees are sitting with him.

When does one see God’s form? – secrets – seeing Narayana in pure youngsters – Ramlal, Niranjan, Purna, Narendra, Tarak of Belgharia, and the younger Naren

Sri Ramakrishna: “You can see the form of God. You can have this vision when you get rid of all adjuncts of your own identity and reasoning stops. Then a person goes into speechless samadhi. How much people talk in the theatre – of this thing and that. But as soon as the curtain rises, all discussion stops. Then a person is fully absorbed in what he sees.

“I tell you a very secret thing. Why do I love boys like Purna and Narendra so much? When I went to embrace Jagannath in a loving mood, I broke my arm. He made me understand: ‘You have taken up a human body. Now live with human beings as a

friend, a parent, and such other relationships.’

“When I see Purna, I now experience the same feeling that I used to have with Ramlala. I used to bathe Ramlala and feed him and put him to bed. Wherever I went, I took him with me. I would sit and weep for Ramlala. I have the same feeling when I see these young boys. Look at Niranjana. He’s not attached to anything. He takes poor people to the doctor, spending his own money. At the mention of marriage, he says, ‘My God! That is a

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whirlpool of the Vishalakshi!’ I see him sitting on a light.

“Purna belongs to a high spiritual ideal of God with form – he has an element of Vishnu! Ah, what love he has!

(*To M.*) “Did you notice how he looked at you? Just like one looks upon a brother disciple, as if you were his very own. He said he’d come see me again. He said he’d meet me at Captain’s house.”

Many qualities of Narendra – the qualities of the younger Naren

“Narendra is of a very high spiritual ideal – the realm of the Absolute. He has a masculine nature.

“So many devotees come here but none of them is like him.

“Sometimes I sit down and calculate their natures. I see them like lotuses. Some of them have ten petals, some have sixteen, some a hundred. But Narendra is a thousand-petalled lotus.

“Others may be small tumblers or pitchers, but Narendra is a huge barrel.

“Among ponds and tanks, he is a large lake, like the Haldarpukur.

“Among fish, Narendra is a red-eyed carp, others are small fish, like minnows or small white fish.

“He is a big receptacle. Many things can be kept in him. He is like a bamboo with a big hollow space inside.

“Narendra is not the slave of anything. He is not subject to any attachment or sense pleasure. Like a male pigeon. If you hold its beak, it pulls away from you. A female pigeon just stays still.

“Tarak of Belgharia can be called a red-eyed carp.

“Narendra is manly. That’s why he sits on the right side in a carriage. Bhavanath has a feminine nature, so I tell him to sit on the other side.

“When Narendra is in a gathering, I feel strong.”

Mahendra Mukherji enters and salutes. It is about eight o’clock in the morning. Haripada and Tulsiram arrive, one after the other. They salute Sri Ramakrishna and sit down. Baburam is suffering from fever and couldn’t come.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M. and others*): “Hasn’t the younger Naren come? Maybe he’s under the impression I’ve already left. (*To Mukherji*) What a wonder! As a child, that boy (the younger Naren) would cry for the Lord when he returned from school. Is it a small thing to cry for God? And he is so intelligent. He is a bamboo with a big hollow compared to other bamboos.

“And he has given his entire mind to me. Girish Ghosh told me that the day kirtan was held at Navagopal’s house, the younger Naren was there. Asking where I was, he was not conscious of his surroundings. He began to walk over people looking for me.

“And he’s not afraid that he’ll be criticized at home. He stays at Dakshineswar for three nights at a time.”

Chapter VIII

Deep secret of bhakti yoga – harmony of jnana and bhakti

Mukherji, Hari Babu, Purna, Niranjan, M., and Balaram

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[Priyanath] Mukherji: “Hari (Hari Babu of Baghbazar) was amazed at what you said yesterday. He said, ‘All this is in the Samkhya philosophy, in Patanjali, and the Vedanta. He is not an ordinary person.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But I have not read the Samkhya or the Vedanta.

“Perfect jnana and perfect bhakti are one and the same. By

discriminating ‘not this, not this,’ all reasoning ends, leading to the knowledge of Brahman. Then one accepts again what one has renounced. You have to be careful climbing to the roof. But when you get there, you see that the roof is made of the same materials – brick, lime, and brick dust – of which the steps are made.

“He who is aware of high is also aware of low. After attaining spiritual knowledge, high and low appear as one.

“When Prahlada realized the Ultimate Reality, he felt, ‘I am [\[31\]](#) He.’ And when consciousness of the body returned, his

[\[32\]](#) attitude would change to ‘I am Your servant.’

“Hanuman also sometimes felt the attitude of ‘I am He,’ sometimes ‘I am Your servant,’ and at other times, ‘I am a part of You.’

“Why should one cherish love for God? Without it, how can a man spend his days?

“This I-ness does not go away. As long as there is the pot of I-ness, the attitude of ‘I am He’ is not attained. In samadhi, however, that I-ness disappears. Then what exists is only He. Ramprasad says, ‘Mother, only You will know in that state whether I am good or You are good.’

“As long as I-ness persists, it is better to have the attitude of a devotee. It’s not right to think ‘I am God’ or ‘O embodied being, you are not like Krishna, you are just a devotee.’ But it’s a different matter if God Himself draws you. It’s like a master saying affectionately to his servant, ‘Come, come along. Sit beside me. You are the same as I.’

“The waves belong to the Ganges, not the Ganges to the waves.

“Shiva has both states of mind. When he is absorbed in the joy [\[33\]](#)

of the Self, he is in the state of ‘I am He’ – he is fully fixed in union with God. But when he feels himself a separate ‘I-ness,’ he dances, exclaiming, ‘Rama! Rama!’

“That to which the movable belongs, to Him also belongs the immovable.

“That is why you may not be moving just now, but after a while you begin to work.

“Spiritual knowledge and love for God are one and the same. Even so, one person says that it is water and another that it is a piece of ice.”

Two kinds of samadhi – obstacle to samadhi: ‘lust and greed’

“Broadly speaking, samadhi is of two kinds. By reasoning on the path of jnana, I-ness is obliterated and one attains samadhi. It is called sthira samadhi or jada samadhi (nirvikalpa samadhi). The samadhi attained by the path of bhakti is known as bhava samadhi. In this samadhi, a thin line of I-ness persists to enable one to enjoy divine bliss, divine contact. However, if a person is attached to ‘lust and greed,’ this state cannot be attained.

“I said to Kedar, ‘If your mind dwells in “lust and greed,” you can’t realize God.’ Once I thought I might stroke his chest with my hand, but I couldn’t do it. Within him, there was something twisted. It was like a house smelling filthy – I couldn’t enter it. It was like a natural Shiva Lingam, whose roots spread as far as Kashi. As long as you are attracted by the world, as long you are attached to ‘lust and greed,’ you cannot succeed.

“‘Lust and greed’ has not yet entered into these youngsters. That’s why I am so fond of them. Hazra says, ‘You like a boy who is handsome and the son of a rich man.’ If that were true, why would I be so fond of Harish, Latu, Narendra? Narendra can’t find a pice for salt to season his rice.

“Worldliness has not yet entered into these youngsters’ minds. That’s why they are so pure.

[\[34\]](#)

“And many of them are ever-perfect ones. They were drawn to God since their birth. Imagine you’ve bought a garden and when clearing it, you discover a previously installed water pipe. You open it and lo, water gushes out!”

**Purna and Niranjan – serving the mother – the attitude of a
Vaishnava**

Balaram: “Sir, how is it that Purna has realized suddenly that the world is an illusion?”

[\[35\]](#)

Sri Ramakrishna: “From past lives. He’s done everything in previous births. Only the body is small or grows old, not the Atman.

“Do you know how it is with these youngsters? Bearing fruit even before flowering. First they see God, and then they hear about His glories and attributes. After that comes direct union.

“Look at Niranjan. He’s not a bookkeeper – he doesn’t keep track of gain and loss. When he hears the call, he can go. But as long as a person’s mother is alive, she has to be looked after. I used to worship my mother with flowers and sandal paste. It is the Mother of the Universe who has come down in the form of your mother. The memorial service honouring a deceased relative is the worship of one’s chosen deity. Vaishnavas celebrate in a grand way when somebody dies. Their festival has the same significance.

“As long as you take care of your own body, you must look after your mother. So I say to Hazra, ‘When you have a cough, you make a mixture of sugar candy and pepper, and you have to get the pepper and also salt for taste.’ As long as you do this for yourself, you have also to take care of your mother.

“A minor can’t take responsibility for himself, so he has a guardian. Chaitanya Deva’s state was like that of a minor.”

M. goes to take dip in the Ganges.

Chapter IX

**Sri Ramakrishna’s horoscope – his earlier story – Thakur’s
realization of God**

[\[36\]](#)

**Vision of Rama, Lakshmana, and Krishna – naked figure of a
paramahansa**

Sri Ramakrishna is talking with the devotees in the same small room in Balaram's house. Mahendra Mukherji, Balaram, Tulsi, Haripada, Girish, and other devotees are sitting on the floor. Girish has been visiting Thakur for seven or eight months. M. has returned after his bath in the Ganges. He salutes Thakur and sits beside him. Thakur is relating a few of his wonderful visions of God.

[37]

“One day in the Kali Temple I saw Nangta and Haladhari reading the Adhyatma Ramayana. Suddenly I saw a stream with woods and green trees and plants on either side. I saw

[38]

Rama and Lakshmana walking along wearing shorts. One day, in front of the kuthi, I saw Arjuna's chariot, with the Lord sitting in it as the charioteer. I remember this even now.

“Another day, during a kirtan at my native village, I saw the figure of Gauranga before me.

“A naked man used to be with me all the time then. I would touch his penis and cut jokes with him. Then I would laugh and laugh. This naked form came out of my own body – the picture of a paramahansa – like a child.

“Oh, I can't describe the many divine visions I had. At the time I had severe stomach troubles. The visions would aggravate them, so when I had one, I would say, 'Get away!' But they would catch hold of me, like ghosts. I would remain absorbed in ecstasy. I couldn't tell you how I passed my days. Then all divine emotion would pass as if I had had a bout of diarrhea.” (*Laughter.*)

Girish (*smiling*): “I am examining your horoscope.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I was born on the second lunar day. Except

[39]

for the positions of sun, moon, and mercury, it doesn't show much more.”

Girish: “You were born under Aquarius. Rama and Krishna were born under Cancer and Taurus. And Chaitanya Deva

under Leo.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I had two desires. One, to be king of the devotees. Two, that I should not be a dry sadhu.”

Sri Ramakrishna’s horoscope – why spiritual practice for Thakur? – vision of Brahmayoni

Girish (*smiling*): “Why did you have to practice spiritual disciplines?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “The Divine Mother [\[40\]](#) underwent [\[41\]](#) many difficult spiritual practices for Shiva, [\[42\]](#) sitting encircled by five fires, keeping her body immersed in water during cold weather, and gazing at the sun without blinking.

“Krishna practiced a number of spiritual disciplines with the Radha Yantra. That yantra was the Brahmayoni from which universes arise. He would meditate on it and worship it. From it thousands of universes are created.

“This is very secret. Under the bel tree I used to have sparkling visions.”

His earlier story – practicing Tantra under the bel tree – Brahmani procured the articles

“I practiced a number of Tantric disciplines under the bel tree – with a skull, and so forth. And I performed a number of postures. The Brahmani arranged everything.

(*Moving nearer to Haripada*) “In that state I used to worship the penis of young boys with flowers and sandalwood paste. I couldn’t help myself.

“And there was another experience. I would fall sick the very next day if I became egoistic.”

M. sits like a picture without saying a word when he hears Thakur tell of his wonderful experiences, words never heard before. The devotees also sit there as if bathed in the redeeming current of the Ganges, as if the Bhagavata itself were flowing from the lips of Sri Ramakrishna.

Everyone is silent.

[43]

Tulasi: “He (M.) never laughs.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He has laughter within. There is sand over the course of the Phalgu River. But dig into it and you will reach water.

(To M.) “Don’t you scrape your tongue? Please clean your tongue every day.”

Balaram: “Well, Purna has come to know many things about you from him (M.).”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He knows my earlier life story. But what, I don’t know.”

Balaram: “Purna is perfect by nature. What are these

[44]

people?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “They are just instruments.”

It is nine o’clock. Arrangements have been made for Thakur’s return to Dakshineswar. A boat has been hired and is ready for him at the Annapurna ghat of Baghbazar. Prostrating, the devotees salute Thakur.

He boards the boat with one or two devotees. Gopal’s Mother goes into the same boat. After a little rest at Dakshineswar, she will continue on foot to Kamarhatti in the evening.

Thakur’s camp cot from Dakshineswar, which had been sent for repairs, is also loaded into the boat. It was on this cot that Rakhal generally slept.

[45]

This is, however, not an auspicious day for departure. To change his itinerary date, Thakur has decided to return to Balaram’s house this coming Saturday.

[1]

. One-sixteenth divine power (kala).

[2]

. Traditionally offered to Shiva.

[3]

.Traditionally offered to Vishnu.

[4]

. Baby Krishna.

[5]

. Dham.

[6]

. For the complete story refer to Volume III, Section XV, Chapter I.

[7]

. Rupa, swarupa, raj, bij, and pak pranali.

[8]

. nāyaà hanti na hanyate – Bhagavad Gita, 2:19; na hanyate hanyamāne çarére – Bhagavad Gita 2:20.

[9]

. Harinath Chattopadhyaya, the future Swami Turiyananda.

[10]

. Doctrine of Advaita.

[11]

. Doctrine of Vishishtadvaita.

[12]

. Permanent.

[13]

. Impermanent.

[14]

. Sankalpa and vikalpa.

[15]

. Later Swami Trigunatitananda.

[16]

. The attitude of Gopala toward them.

[17]

. God is the puppeteer.

[18]

. Upadhi.

[19]

. A low bow with the right palm to the forehead.

[20]

. Col. Henry Steel Olcott, first president of the Theosophical Society.

[21]

. For the complete song refer to Section XIII, Chapter III.

[22]

. Nirvana.

[23]

. For the complete song refer to Section XV, Chapter IV.

[24]

. For the complete song refer to Section XVII, Chapter I.

[25]

. For the complete song refer to Section VI, Chapter I.

[26]

. The savior, literally “she who takes one across [the ocean of worldly existence]”.

[27]

. For the complete song refer to Section VIII, Chapter I.

[28]

. Alekh Niranjana.

[29]

. A stream near Kamarpukur.

[30]

Later Swami Turiyananda.

[31]

. So 'ham.

[32]

. Daso 'ham.

[33]

. Atmarama.

[34]

. Nityasiddhas.

[35]

. Janamantrin.

[36]

. Parthasarathi.

[37]

. Totapuri.

[38]

. Jandhiya.

[39]

. Ravi, Chandra, and Buddha.

[40]

. Bhagavati.

[41]

. To win him as a husband.

[42]

. Panchatapa.

[43]

. The future Swami Nirmalananda.

[44]

. M. and the others.

[45]

. Magha Nakshatra.

Section XXIV

Thakur at the Dakshineswar Temple with Rakhal, M., Mahimacharan, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Dwija, Dwija's father, and Sri Ramakrishna – debt owed to one's mother and father

Sri Ramakrishna is in his room at the Dakshineswar temple with Rakhal, M., and other devotees. It is about three or four o'clock.

It is the beginning stage of Sri Ramakrishna's sore throat, yet he thinks the whole day only of the good of the devotees – how they might not get bound to the world, how they can gain knowledge and love of God, and how they may realize God.

Ten or twelve days ago, on Tuesday, 28 July 1885, he visited the home of Nandalal Bose at Calcutta to see the pictures of gods. He then graciously visited the homes of Balaram and other devotees.

Having returned from Vrindavan, Rakhal has stayed at home for some days. At present he, Latu, Harish, and Ramlal are staying with Thakur.

A few months ago, the Holy Mother came from the countryside to nurse Thakur at Dakshineswar. She is staying in the nahabat. The grief-stricken Brahmani has been living with her for some days.

Dwija, Dwija's father and brother, M., and others are sitting beside Thakur. Today is 9 August, 1885.

Dwija is about sixteen years old. After the death of his mother, his father married a second time. Dwija often comes to see Thakur with M., though this displeases his father.

Some time ago Dwija's father spoke about coming to visit Thakur. Today he has come. He is the manager of a Calcutta business. He was a student of D.L. Richardson at the Hindu College and has passed examinations for lawyer of the High Court.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Dwija's father*): "Please don't worry about

your son's visits here.

"I tell you, go live a householder's life after attaining spiritual awakening. If someone finds gold after hard labour, he can keep it underground or in a box or in water. It doesn't affect the gold.

"I tell you, live a householder's life without attachment. Break a jackfruit after rubbing your hands with oil. Then its juice won't stick to your hand.

"If an immature mind is put in worldly life, it gets dirty. You should only live a householder's life after you've attained spiritual knowledge.

"If you put milk in water, it gets ruined. But if you first churn butter out of the milk and then put it in water, you can keep the butter in water."

Dwija's Father: "True, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): "I understand why you scold him. You only threaten. The brahmachari said to the snake, 'You are a real fool. I only asked you not to bite. I never asked you not to hiss. If you'd hissed, your enemies wouldn't have been able to beat you.' When you rebuke the boy, it's only hissing."

Dwija's father laughs.

"If a father has a good son, it's a mark of his father's spiritual nature. If water in a pond is clean, it's a sign of the virtue of its owner.

"A son is said to be born of one's self (*atmaja*). There is no difference between you and your son. You have become your son in another way. On the one hand, you're a worldly man working in an office and enjoying family life. On the other hand, you're a devotee of God in the form of your son. I heard that you were a very worldly person. But it's not true. (*Smiling*) You know all this. But you are very tactful. You are saying yes, yes even to this."

Dwija's father smiles a little.

"If your boys come here, they know what you really are. How great is one's father! A person who practices religion by

deceiving his parents will get nowhere.”

His earlier story – Sri Ramakrishna's worry about his mother in Vrindavan

“A man owes many debts. Debt to the father, debt to the gods, and debt to the rishis. And there is debt to the mother too. Furthermore, there is debt to the wife. She has to be taken care of. If she’s a faithful wife, a person even has to arrange for her maintenance after death.

“I couldn’t stay in Vrindavan because of my mother. As soon as I remembered that she was at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, I couldn’t keep my mind in Vrindavan.

“I tell them to live in the family and also keep their minds on God. I don’t ask them to renounce the world. Do this and do that too.”

Dwija’s Father: “I tell the boys to study. I don’t tell them not to visit you. But I don’t want them to waste time frivolously with the other boys.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He (Dwija) surely has good tendencies from past births. Why aren’t his two brothers the same? Why is only he inclined this way?

“Can you forcibly stop him? A person acts according to tendencies of past births.”

The father: “Yes, that is certainly true.”

Thakur comes down and sits on the mat close to Dwija’s father. He touches him now and then while he talks.

It is almost twilight. Thakur says to M. and the others, “Please take him for darshan of the deities. If I were well, I would go with him.”

He asks for sandesh for the boys. He says to Dwija’s father, “Let them eat a little. They should have some sweets.”

Dwija’s father strolls in the garden after visiting the deities in the temples. Sri Ramakrishna is talking happily with Bhupen, Dwija, M., and others on the southeastern verandah of his room. He slaps the backs of Bhupen and M. in fun and says to

Dwija with a smile, “How I talked to your father!”

After twilight Dwija’s father comes again to Thakur’s room. He is going to leave soon. He is feeling the heat. Thakur himself fans him.

As Dwija’s father leaves, Thakur stands up.

Chapter II

Thakur talks freely – what is Sri Ramakrishna, a perfect man or an incarnation of God?

It is 8 p.m. Thakur is talking with Mahima-charan while Rakhal, M., and a few of Mahimacharan’s companions are also in the room.

Mahimacharan is going to spend the night here.

Sri Ramakrishna: “Well, how do you find Kedar? Has he ‘drunk milk’ or only ‘seen it’?”

Mahima: “Yes, he is enjoying bliss.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “And Nityagopal?”

Mahima: “Good. He’s in a very nice state.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Alright. So tell me, has Girish Ghosh changed?”

Mahima: “Very nicely – but he belongs to a separate class.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Narendra?”

Mahima: “He is what I was fifteen years ago.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “And the younger Naren? Isn’t he guileless?”

Mahima: “Yes. He is very simple-hearted.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “That’s true. (*Thinking some more*) Who else?

“It’s enough if all the youngsters who come here know just two things. When they do, they won’t have to practice much spiritual discipline. First, who I am – and then who they are. Many of these youngsters belong to the inner circle.

“Those who belong to the inner circle won’t attain liberation. I

will take up a body again (in the northwest).

“I feel great peace when I see these youngsters. How can I feel happy when I see those who father sons, engage in law-suits, and are busy with ‘lust and greed?’ How can I live without seeing pure souls?”

Mahimacharan chants verses from the scriptures for Thakur

[\[1\]](#)

and talks of different yogic postures such as bhuchari, khechari, sambhavi, and so forth, mentioned in the Tantra.

Thakur experiences five kinds of samadhi – piercing the six spiritual centres – basic truth of yoga – kundalini

Sri Ramakrishna: “Well, some people say that in samadhi the

[\[2\]](#)

atman flies around like a bird in the Great Space.

“Once a sadhu came here from Hrishikesh. He said, ‘Samadhi is of five kinds. And you experience them all. I have seen this. Like an ant, a fish, a monkey, a bird, and a serpent.’

“At times, the spiritual current rises up like an ant’s movement. Sometimes, in the state of samadhi, the atman swims joyfully in an ocean of ecstasy, like a fish.

“Sometimes, when I’m lying on my side, the great spiritual current pushes me, like a monkey playing with me. I stay quiet. Then this great current suddenly jumps around like a monkey and climbs up to the thousand-petalled centre. That’s why I jump up with a start.

“And sometimes, the great current rises up like a bird, hopping from one branch to another. The place where it rests feels like fire. Perhaps it rises from muladhara to the svadhisthana, from the svadhishtana to the heart, and in this way rises right up to the head.

“Sometimes, the spiritual current rises like the zigzag movement of a snake. When it rises to the head, I experience samadhi.”

His earlier story – first ecstasy at the age of 22 or 23, in 1858 –

piercing the six spiritual centres

“Spiritual consciousness is not awakened until the kundalini has awakened.

“The kundalini lies in the muladhara. When it is awakened, it passes through the centre of the sushumna spiritual nerve, to pierce the svadhisthana, manipura, and the other spiritual centres, until it finally reaches the head. This is known as the movement of the great spiritual current. Thus finally one enters samadhi.

“You can’t gain spiritual awareness by just reading books. You have to call upon Him. The kundalini wakes up when you yearn for God. Listening and reading about spiritual knowledge in books – of what use is that?

“Just before I reached this state, I was shown how the power of the kundalini is awakened. How all the lotuses of the spiritual centres begin to open out one by one – and finally I was in samadhi. This is very secret. I saw that a young man about twenty-two or twenty-three years old, just like me, entered my sushumna nerve and began to play intimately with the lotuses, touching them with his tongue. First at the rectum, then at the organ of reproduction, and then the navel. These lotuses with four petals, six petals, and ten petals, all looking downward, began to look up.

“When it reached the heart, I still remember it very clearly. The twelve-petalled lotus, which looked downward, turned upward and opened out when he touched it with his tongue. Then the sixteen-petalled lotus in the throat and then the two-petalled lotus in the forehead opened up. Last of all, the thousand-petalled lotus, the sahasrara, opened out. Since then I have been in this state.”

Chapter III

His earlier story – Thakur talks openly – is he a perfect human being or an incarnation of God?

(Talks with God – view of maya – sees devotees before their actual coming – sees Keshab Sen in ecstasy – vision of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute – and Narendra – and Kedar – illumined body in his first ecstasy – his father’s dream – the Naked One and samadhi in three days – Mathur’s service from 1858 to 1871, fourteen years – yearns for devotees on the roof of the kuthi – in continuous samadhi – practices all spiritual disciplines)

While he is talking of these things, Thakur comes down from his cot and sits close to Mahimacharan on the floor. M. and one or two other devotees are there. Rakhal is also present.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mahima*): “I have been wanting to tell you this for many days, but I couldn’t. I feel like telling you today.

“You say that my state can be attained just by practicing spiritual disciplines. This is not true. There is something special here.”

M., Rakhal, and the other devotees listen eagerly and in amazement to what Thakur has to say.

Sri Ramakrishna: “God talked to me. It’s not only that you can see God – you can talk with Him. Under the banyan tree, I saw Him coming up from the Ganges. O, how much we laughed after that! He twisted my fingers playfully. And then He talked. He actually talked to me.

“I wept for three days, and He showed me what the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, and other holy books contain. He showed it all to me.

“One day He also revealed to me what the maya of Mahamaya is. A small light in the room gradually became bigger and bigger until it spread out over the whole world and

enveloped it.

“And then He showed me a big lake totally covered with sedge. When a breeze parted it a little, I saw water. But in no time at all, the sedge came dancing from all sides and again covered it completely. I was shown that the water was Sat-chit-ananda and the sedge was maya. Because of maya, you can’t see Sat-chit-ananda. But some-times, though you can get a momentary glimpse, maya again covers it up.

“I am shown what kind of devotees will come before they arrive. Under the banyan tree, I was shown the singing party of Chaitanya Deva stretching to the bakul tree. I saw Balaram in that party. If he had not been there, who would supply me with sugar candy and such things? And I saw him (M.) too.”

Sri Ramakrishna – Keshab Sen introducing the name of Hari and the Divine Mother into his Samaj

“Before I met Keshab Sen, I saw him in a vision. While in the state of samadhi, I saw him and his group. There was a room full of people sitting in front of me. I saw Keshab – like a peacock with its tail spread out. The tail meant his group. And I saw a red jewel on Keshab’s forehead. This is a sign of rajas. Keshab was saying to his devotees, ‘Please listen to everything he says.’ I said to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, they hold the views of English people. Why should I talk to them?’ The Divine Mother made me understand that this is how it is in the Kaliyuga. Then Keshab and his followers carried the names of Hari and the Divine Mother from here. That’s why the Divine Mother took Vijay from Keshab’s group. But he didn’t join the Adi Brahmo Samaj.

(Pointing to himself) “There is something special within [me]. A boy named Gopal Sen used to visit me, quite a long time ago. He who is within me placed his foot on Gopal’s chest. Gopal said in a state of ecstasy, ‘You will have to wait a long time. I can’t get along with worldly people. I have to leave now.’ Saying this, he left. I heard later that he had quit his body after that. Maybe he has now been born as Nityagopal.

“I have had many wonderful visions. I had the vision of the

Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. I saw two groups divided by a fence in the middle. On one side, I saw Kedar, Chuni, and many other believers in God with form. On the other side of the fence was a shining heap of red brick dust – illumined. In the middle of it, I saw Narendra sitting in samadhi.

“Seeing him absorbed in meditation, I called out, ‘Oh, Narendra.’ He opened his eyes a little. I understood that he had

[3]

been born in one form in Simla as the son of a kayastha. I then said to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, please bind him with Your maya. Otherwise, he’ll quit his body absorbed in samadhi.’ Kedar, who was a believer in God with form, peeped in and ran away with a shudder.

“So I say to myself that the Divine Mother Herself resides in this [body] and plays with the devotees. When I first had this state, the body would shine with light and the chest would become red. Then I said, ‘Mother, don’t manifest Yourself externally. Go within, go within.’ So now I have this dull body. If it were not so, people would trouble me a lot. They would gather in crowds if I still had that luminous body. There is no outer manifestation now. This drives away useless fellows. Only those who are pure devotees will stay. Why do I have this illness? It has the same meaning. Those who have devotion for

[4]

some selfish reasons will flee on seeing me ill.

“I had this desire. I said to the Divine Mother, ‘May I become king of the devotees.’

“And then the thought came, ‘Those who sincerely call upon God will have to come here. They will surely have to come.’ Now see, this is exactly what is happening. Only those people are coming.

“My mother and my father knew what is here within. My father had a dream in Gaya in which Raghuvir said, ‘I will be born as your son.’

“It is He who resides here within. As for such renunciation of ‘lust and greed,’ could I have brought it about myself? I haven’t

cohabited with a woman even in dream!

“The Naked One taught me the Vedanta. I attained samadhi in three days. Seeing me in samadhi under the madhavi creeper, he was perplexed and exclaimed, ‘Oh, what is this?’ Later he realized what dwelt within this. Then he said to me, ‘Please let me go.’ Hearing these words I went into a state of ecstasy and said to him, ‘You can’t leave till I have realized the truth of Vedanta.’

“I was with him day and night. There was only Vedanta.

[\[5\]](#)

Brahmani would say, ‘Son, don’t listen to Vedanta. Your love for God will suffer.’

“I said to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, how will I be able to sustain this body? How can I live in the company of sadhus and devotees? Please send a rich man to me.’ That’s why Mathur Babu served me for fourteen years.

“He who dwells within tells me in advance what kind of devotees will come to me. As soon as I see the form of Gauranga before my eyes, I immediately know that the devotees of Gaur will be coming. And if a Shakta comes, I have the vision of Divine Energy, Kali, before my eyes.

“I used to shout from the roof of the kuthi at the time of the evening service, ‘O all of you, where are you? Please come!’ See, now they all are gathering one by one.

“God Himself dwells within this. As if He Himself is working with the devotees.

“How wonderful is the state of mind of some of the devotees! The younger Naren automatically experiences kumbhaka without effort. And then goes into samadhi time and again. Sometimes for two-and-half hours at a stretch! Sometimes longer. How wonderful!

“All kinds of disciplines have been practiced here: jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, and karma yoga. Even hatha yoga, to add years to the life. A person dwells within this. How else could I have love for God and live with devotees after samadhi? Koar Singh said,

‘I have never seen a person returning [to life] after samadhi. You are none other than Nanak.’”

His earlier story – in the steamboat with Keshab, Pratap, and Mr. Cook – 1881

“There are worldly people everywhere – everywhere ‘lust and greed.’ And yet I live in this state surrounded by them, constantly experiencing samadhi or ecstasy. That’s why Pratap (Pratap Chandra Majumdar of the Brahmo Samaj), when he came with Mr. Cook and noticed my samadhi in the steamer, said, ‘Dear sir, you seem to be possessed by a ghost.’”

Rakhal, M. and the others listen wonderstruck to all these amazing words issuing from the mouth of Sri Ramakrishna.

Has Mahimacharan been able to understand what Thakur is hinting at? Even after hearing it all, he says, “Sir, all this has happened as

[\[6\]](#)

ordained by your destiny.” His feeling is that Thakur is just a holy man, a devotee. Consenting to his remark, Thakur says, “Yes, actions of my past lives are showing their effect now. It is like a gentleman possessing a number of houses. Here you have a special parlour. The devotee is His parlour.”

Chapter IV

[\[7\]](#)

Mahimacharan’s brahmachakra – his earlier story – instructions by Totapuri

Is it a small thing to have a vision in dream? Narendra sees divine forms

It is nine o’clock at night. Thakur is sitting on the smaller cot. Mahimacharan wants to form a brahmachakra in the same room that Thakur is in. He forms a circle with Rakhal, M., Kishori, and one or two other devotees. Then he asks them all to meditate. Rakhal goes into ecstasy. Thakur comes down from the bed and, placing his hand on Rakhal’s chest, begins to chant the name of the Divine Mother. Rakhal comes out of the ecstasy.

It must be one o’clock in the morning. It is the fourteenth lunar day of the dark fortnight, pitch dark everywhere. One or two

devotees are pacing alone on the masonry embankment of the Ganges. Thakur gets up. He also comes out and says to the devotees, "The Naked One used to say that at such an hour, in the depth of night, one can hear the anahata sound."

In the later part of the night, Mahimacharan and M. lie down on the floor of Thakur's room. Rakhal is sleeping on the camp cot. Thakur at times paces the room stark-naked like a five-year-old boy.

It is morning. Thakur repeats the name of the Divine Mother. Going to the western verandah, he has a view of the Ganges. He then goes near all the pictures of the gods and goddesses in the room and salutes them. The devotees rise from their beds, salute him, and then attend to their morning ablutions.

Thakur talks to a devotee in the panchavati. The devotee had seen Chaitanya Deva in a dream.

Sri Ramakrishna (*in ecstasy*): "Ah! Ah!"

The devotee: "Sir, it was but a dream."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Is a dream a small matter?"

Thakur has tears in his eyes and his voice full of emotion.

Hearing that a devotee had a divine vision while awake, he says, "What is there to marvel at? Narendra also sees divine forms these days."

Finishing his morning ablutions, Mahimacharan goes to the Shiva temple west of the courtyard and alone chants verses from the Vedas.

It is eight o'clock in the morning. Mani comes to Thakur after a dip in the Ganges. The grief-stricken brahmin woman has also come to see Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the brahmin woman*): "Please give him some prasada to eat. There are some luchi and the like in the recess of the wall."

Brahmin woman: "You must eat first. Later, he will be served."

[8]

Sri Ramakrishna: “First eat the prasād of Jagannath.”

After having prasād, Mani goes to the Shiva temples. Then he returns to Thakur. Saluting him, he takes leave.

Sri Ramakrishna (*affectionately*): “You may go now. You have to attend to your work.”

[1]

. Mudras.

[2]

. Mahakasha.

[3]

. The section of Calcutta in which Narendra was born.

[4]

. Sakama bhakti.

[5]

Bhairavi Brahmani.

[6]

. Prarabdha karma, that karma which has already been set in motion, the result of past actions being experienced in the present.

[7]

. A mystic circle prescribed in Tantra.

[8]

Atka.

Section XXV

Sri Ramakrishna with Rakhal, M., Pundit Shyamapada, and Other Devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter I

In samadhi – showers his grace on Pundit Shyamapada

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in his room with one or two devotees. It is 5 p.m., Thursday, 27 August 1885; 12th of Bhadra, the second day of the dark fortnight of the month of Shravana.

Thakur's illness is in the beginning stage. Even so, he doesn't think of his body when his devotees visit. Sometimes he talks with them the whole day, sometimes even singing.

Doctor Madhu has come by boat. The devotees are very worried about the illness. They would like the doctor to come daily to examine him. M. says to the Master, "He is very competent. It would be nice if he would see you every day."

Pundit Shyamapada Bhattacharya comes to see Thakur. His home is in the village of Antpur. It is now almost evening. Noticing it, the pundit says that he must go for his evening worship and he goes to the chandni on the bank of the Ganges, where he has an amazing vision while performing his worship. Afterward he returns to Thakur's room and sits on the floor. After repeating the name of the Divine Mother and meditating on Her, Thakur sits on his bed. M. is sitting on the foot rug. Rakhal, Latu, and others come in and go out of the room.

Sri Ramakrishna (*pointing to the pundit while speaking to M.*): "He is a very nice person." (*To the pundit*) "God is where you find peace after discriminating by the process of 'Not this, not this.'"

Signs of God-realization and Pundit Shyamapada – Thakur in samadhi

"The king lives beyond the seven gates. When you go to the first

gate, you see a rich man sitting with many people. There is a lot of splendour there. Wanting to see the king, if you ask your companion, ‘Is this the king?’ the companion smiles a little and says, ‘No.’ He says the same thing at the second gate and the other gates. You notice that the farther you go, the more splendour you see. There is greater and greater show of pomp. But when you pass the seventh gate, you no longer need to ask your companion. You stand there amazed, dumb-founded at the sight of the matchless riches of the king. Now you know that this indeed is the king. There is no doubt in your mind about it.”

**God, maya, living beings and the world – Adhyatma Ramayana –
hymn by Yamalarjuna**

Pundit: “Only when one leaves behind the kingdom of maya does one see Him.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “After attaining God-realization, you see that God Himself has become maya, the world and its living beings. If you reason, ‘Not this, not this,’ you realize that this world is a very deceptive place. It’s like a dream. When you attain the realization of God, this world becomes a mart of joy.

“What’s the use of only reading scriptures? Pundits only reason.”

Pundit: “I hate it when someone calls me a pundit.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is His grace. Pundits spend their time reasoning. But some have heard of milk and others have tasted it. After you have realized God, you will see everything as Narayana. It is Narayana who has become all this.”

The pundit chants a verse on Narayana. Thakur is full of joy.

sarvabhūtastham ātmānaà sarvabhūtāni cātmani |

ékñate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarçanaù ||

[His mind being harmonized by yoga, he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself; he sees the same in all.]

– Bhagavad Gita 6:29

Sri Ramakrishna: “Have you read the Adhyatma (Ramayana)?”

Pundit: “Yes, sir. I’ve read some of it.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “It is full of spiritual knowledge and love for

God. The Shavari story and Ahalya's hymn are all full of love for God.

"But this is a fact. God is far beyond worldliness."

[1]

Pundit: "God is very far from worldly intelligence. And where

[2]

it is not, He is near. I saw a landlord of Uttarpara named Mukhujaya, who was quite old. But he only listened to stories from novels."

Sri Ramakrishna: "There is one more thing mentioned in the Adhyatma: that God Himself is the world and its living beings."

The Pundit delightedly recites some verses of Yamalarjuna pertaining to this; they are from the tenth chapter of the

[3]

Srimad Bhagavata:

O Krishna, Krishna, great yogin! You are the supreme, primordial being. The wise know Your form as this universe, manifest and unmanifest.

You are the one ruler over the senses, the ego, the vital force, and the bodies of all creatures. You are truly time, the blessed Lord Vishnu, the all-pervading ruler.

You are the great Prakriti, subtle and consisting of sattva, rajas, and tamas; truly You are Purusha, the witness of change in all spheres of action.

Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi – one will have to come here who sincerely practices meditation and japa

Listening to the hymn, he stands in samadhi. The pundit remains seated. Placing one foot on the pundit's lap and chest, Thakur smiles.

Holding the foot, the pundit says, "Oh Guru, illumine me!" Thakur is standing near the smaller cot, facing east.

After the pundit has left, Thakur says to M., "My words are coming true. Those who have practiced meditation and japa sincerely will have to come here."

It is already 10 p.m. After taking a small, simple meal of farina pudding, Thakur lies on his bed. He says to Mani, "Stroke my

feet a little.”

After a while, he asks M. to stroke his body and chest.

Taking a short nap, he says to Mani, “You may go to sleep now. Let me see if I can fall asleep alone.” In a little while, he says to Ramlal, “He (Mani) and Rakhal can sleep in the room.”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna and Jesus Christ

[\[4\]](#)

It is daybreak. Thakur rises and meditates on the Divine Mother. Because of his illness, the devotees are not able to hear the sweet chanting of God’s name. After his morning ablutions, Thakur comes in the room and sits down. He says to Mani, “Well, why am I suffering this illness?”

Mani: “Sir, people won’t have the courage to go through all these things unless you do. A person sees that you are suffering so much physically, but even then you know nothing but God.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Balaram also said, ‘If you suffer like this, how can we be spared?’

“When Rama couldn’t lift the bow because of his pain of separation from Sita, Lakshmana was astonished. ‘Bound by the five elements, even Brahman laments.’”

Mani: “Jesus Christ also wept like an ordinary man to see the suffering of his devotees.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “How did it happen?”

Mani: “Martha and Mary, two sisters, and their brother Lazarus were devotees of Jesus. Lazarus died. Jesus was going to their house. On the way, one sister (Mary) went up to him and fell at his feet. Weeping bitterly, she said, ‘Lord, if only you had come earlier, he would not have died.’ Seeing her cry, Jesus also began to weep.”

Sri Ramakrishna and miracles

“Then Jesus went to his grave and called him by name.

[5]

Immediately Lazarus came back to life and arose.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But I don’t do such things.”

Mani: “That is because you don’t want to. Those are occult powers, so you don’t practice them. If you did, people’s minds would turn to their bodies, and not to pure love for God. That’s why you don’t do them.

“There are many similarities between you and Jesus Christ.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “What similarities?”

Mani: “You don’t ask devotees to keep fasts or take to severe practices, You have no strict restrictions about food. Jesus Christ’s disciples ate on the Sabbath which was against the

[6]

rules. That’s why the people who strictly followed the scriptural rules showed their displeasure. Jesus said, ‘They have done well to eat. As long as they are with the bridegroom,

[7]

they must enjoy themselves.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What does it mean?”

Mani: “That his disciples will only enjoy themselves as long as they are with the incarnation of God. Why should they be in sorrow? It is only when the incarnation returns to his abode in heaven that they will face the suffering and sorrows of life.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “And is there any more similarity?”

Mani: “Sir, as you say that ‘lust and greed’ has not entered into the youngsters, they will be able to internalize religious instructions. For instance, that you can keep milk in a new pot, but if it’s put in a pot used for making curds, it will turn sour. He said things like that.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What did he say?”

[8]

Mani: “If you put new wine in an old wineskin, it can burst. And if you patch an old cloth with a new piece, it will tear quickly.

“Also, just as you say, ‘The Divine Mother and I are one,’ he
[9]
used to say, ‘I and my Father are one.’”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Anything else?”

Mani: “Well, you say, ‘If you call on Him with a yearning heart, He is sure to listen to you.’ Jesus also said, ‘Knock, and it shall
[10]
be opened unto you.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Well, if God incarnates as a human being, is He a full manifestation, or a portion or a fraction? Some people say it is full.”

Mani: “Sir, whether He incarnates as a full manifestation or a portion or a fraction, I don’t completely understand. But what you said, I have understood fully – a round hole in a wall.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Tell me about it.”

Mani: “There is a round hole in a wall. You can see a little bit of the field beyond the wall through this hole. Similarly, you can have a little glimpse of the infinite God through you.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, you can very clearly see five or six miles
[11]
beyond.”

After a dip in the Ganges at the chandni, Mani returns to Thakur’s room. It is eight o’clock in the morning.

[12]
Mani asks Latu for some rice prasad of Jagannath.

Coming close to Mani, Sri Ramakrishna says, “Eat prasad regularly. A real devotee cannot take his meals without some prasad.”

Mani: “Sir, I brought some prasad of Jagannath from Balaram’s house yesterday. I eat a grain or two of it every day.”

Mani salutes Thakur and asks him for permission to leave. Thakur says to him
[13]
affectionately, “Yes, go early in the morning. The hot sun of the rainy season is harmful.”

[\[1\]](#)

. Suduram.

[\[2\]](#)

. Aduram.

[\[3\]](#)

. Srimad Bhagavata, X:10:29 to 31.

[\[4\]](#)

. 28 August 1885.

[5]

2. Luke 11: 32-44.

3. Mark 2:26-27.

[\[7\]](#)

. Matthew 9:15.

[\[8\]](#)

. Mark 2:22.

[\[9\]](#)

. John 10:30.

[\[10\]](#)

. Matthew 7:7.

[\[11\]](#)

. Two or three kosas.

[\[12\]](#)

. Atka.

[\[13\]](#)

. The month of Bhadra.

Section XXVI

Thakur with Devotees at the Dakshineswar Temple on Janmashtami Festival Day

Chapter I

Coming of Subodh – Purna, M., Gangadhar, Kshirode, and Nitai

Sri Ramakrishna is resting in his room. It is 8 p.m. on Monday, 31st of August 1885, 16th of Bhadra, the 6th day of the dark fortnight of Shravana.

Thakur is unwell. It is the beginning of his throat trouble. But he remains constantly thinking, day and night, of the spiritual welfare of the devotees. Sometimes he worries about his illness like a child. But the very next moment, forgetting everything, he is intoxicated with intense love for God. He becomes almost mad with love for the devotees, like a mother.

Two days ago, last Saturday night, Purna had written in a letter to Thakur: “I feel immense joy. Sometimes, because of the joy, I cannot sleep at night.”

When the letter had been read to Thakur, he had said, “The hair of my body stands on end to hear this. His state of joy will last. Let me see the letter.”

Folding it and pressing it in the palm of his hand, he had said, “Usually I can’t touch letters. But this is a good letter.”

Thakur rests a while in bed. Suddenly, perspiring, he sits up and says, “I feel that I will not be cured of this disease.”

All the devotees are worried to hear this from him.

The Holy Mother has arrived to serve Thakur and is living very quietly in the nahabat. Most of the devotees have no idea that she lives there. A woman devotee (Golap Ma) is also living in the nahabat. She frequently comes to Thakur’s room to visit him.

Thakur said to her yesterday, Sunday, “You have been here for many days. What will people think? You’d better go home and stay there for ten days or so.” M. heard this conversation.

Today is Monday. Thakur is not well. It is about 8 o'clock at night. He is lying on the small cot on his back, his head toward the south. After

[1]

dusk Gangadhar came with M. from Calcutta. He is now sitting at Thakur's feet. Thakur is talking to M.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Two boys came here. The great-grandson of

[2]

Shankar Ghosh, his daughter's son (Subodh), and another boy (Kshirode) from their neighborhood. Both of them are good boys. I am not well now. I have asked them to go to you for instruction. Do please look after them a little."

M.: "Yes, sir. They live in our neighborhood."

Beginning of Thakur's illness – Dr. Bhagavan – Dr. Nitai

Sri Ramakrishna: "The other day I woke up in a sweat. What can this illness be?"

M.: "Sir, we have decided to have you examined by Dr. Bhagavan Rudra. He is an MD and a very good doctor."

Sri Ramakrishna: "What will he charge?"

M.: "He charges twenty or twenty-five rupees from others."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Then leave it alone."

M.: "But sir, we will not pay more than four or five rupees."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well, if you ask him this way, 'Be kind enough to come and see him.' Has he not heard anything about this place?"

M.: "It seems he has. He has indicated that he wouldn't charge, but we will pay him so he will visit again."

Sri Ramakrishna: "It would be better if you called (Dr.) Nitai. After all, what do these doctors do when they come here? They only aggravate it by pressing the throat."

It is 9 p.m. Thakur sits up to take a little farina pudding.

He feels no discomfort in eating. He says to M. happily, "I've been able to eat a little. I am feeling very happy."

Chapter II

Janmashtami Day – with Narendra, Ram, Girish, and others

(Balaram, M., Gopal's Mother, Rakhal, Latu, the younger Naren, the sadhu from Punjab, Navagopal, the Vaishnavas of Katoa, and Dr. Rakhal)

[\[3\]](#)

It is Janmashtami, Tuesday, 1 September 1885, 17th of Bhadra. Thakur is going to take a bath. A devotee massages him with oil while he sits on the southern verandah. Returning from a dip in the Ganges, M. salutes him.

After Thakur's bath, clad in a towel and facing south, he salutes the deities from the verandah. Because of ill health, he is not able to visit the Kali Temple or Vishnu temples.

It is the anniversary of Krishna's birth. Ram and other devotees have brought new clothes for Thakur. He puts them on – a dhoti from Vrindavan and a red silk cloth for the upper body. His pure body looks charming in these new clothes. When he has put them on, he salutes the deities.

[\[4\]](#)

Gopal's Mother has prepared some food for Gopala and brought it from Kamarhatti. When she arrives, she says sadly to Thakur, "But you won't eat any of it."

Sri Ramakrishna: "You see, I'm not well."

Gopal's Mother: "My misfortune! Please have a little in your hand."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Please bless me."

Understanding him to be her Gopala, Gopal's Mother feeds

Thakur.

The devotees have brought sugar candy. Gopal's Mother says, "Let me take this candy to the nahabat." Sri Ramakrishna says, "I have to give it to the devotees. It's difficult to keep asking for it from the nahabat. Leave it here."

It is eleven o'clock. The devotees of Calcutta are arriving one by one: Balaram, Narendra, the younger Naren, Navagopal, and a Vaishnava devotee from Katoa. Rakhal and Latu are living here. A sadhu from the Punjab has been staying in the panchavati for some time.

The younger Naren has a tumor on his forehead. While strolling in the panchavati, Ramakrishna says, "Why don't you get this lump removed? It's not on the throat, it's on the forehead. It wouldn't harm you. People even have surgery to treat swollen testicles." (*Laughter.*)

The Punjabi sadhu is going along the garden path. Thakur says, "I don't attract him. He has the disposition of a jnani. I see him as a dry piece of wood."

Thakur returns to his room. They talk about Shyamapada Bhattacharya.

Balaram: "He said, 'The ecstasy Narendra felt when Thakur placed his foot on his chest I didn't experience.'"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Do you know why? It's very difficult to concentrate a mind scattered by 'lust and greed.' He has to hold

[\[5\]](#)

a village court. He said so. And he has to worry about his children. Narendra's and the other youngsters' minds are not scattered. 'Lust and greed' have not yet entered into them.

"But he (Shyamapada) is a great person."

The Vaishnava from Katoa is asking Thakur questions. He is a bit squint-eyed.

Discussion about previous lives – taking birth to gain love for God

Vaishnava: "Sir, is there another life after this one?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "The Gita says, 'A man is reborn with the same tendencies he had at the time of his death.' King

Bharata was born as a deer because he was thinking of his deer in his last moments.”

Vaishnava: “I could believe this if someone had seen it with his own eyes and told me.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I don’t know, my dear. I’m unable to cure myself of disease, how can I tell you what happens after death?

“What you are talking about is a matter of petty intelligence. Make an effort to attain love for God. You have taken birth as a human being only for that. You have come to the garden to eat mangoes. What need is there to know how many thousands of branches and how many millions of leaves there are in the garden? What is the use of knowledge about what happens after death?”

Girish Ghosh and avatarhood – who is holy? He who has faith and love for God

Girish Ghosh arrives by carriage with a couple of friends. He is drunk. Weeping when he comes in, he places his head on Thakur’s feet, still crying.

Sri Ramakrishna pats his back affectionately. He calls a devotee and says, “Prepare a smoke for him.”

Raising his head, Girish says with folded hands, “You alone are [\[6\]](#)

the full manifestation of Brahman. If this is not true, everything is false. I have been regretting that I could not serve you.” (These words are said so tenderly that one or two devotees begin to weep).

“Oh Lord, grant a boon that I may serve you for a year. Who cares for salvation? I don’t give a damn. Tell me, may I serve you for a year?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “People here are not nice. They could say something about it.”

Girish: “No, that will not be. Grant that –”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Well, serve me when I go to your house.”

Girish: “No. Let me serve you here.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*seeing that he won't relent*): "All right, let it be as God wills."

Thakur's illness is in his throat. Girish says, "Say that you will be cured. All right. I will expel it magically. Kali! Kali!"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Will it cure the disease?"

Girish: "Get well! (*Blowing at the throat*) Phuh. If you are not cured, then you will be with the love and devotion I have for you. Say that you are cured."

Sri Ramakrishna (*irritated*): "Go away. I can't say those things. I can't ask the Divine Mother to cure the illness. Alright, it will be according to God's will."

Girish: "You are deceiving me! It depends on your will."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Shame! Don't say such a thing. I am only a devotee and not Krishna. You may think what you like. You may look on your guru as God, but it is wrong to talk that way. You must not say such a thing."

Girish: "Say that you will be cured."

Sri Ramakrishna: "All right. Whatever has come about will go away."

According to his mood, Girish addresses Thakur now and then, "Well, dear sir, why haven't you come in your beautiful form this time?"

Later, he adds, "Perhaps this time it will save Bengal."

Some devotees say to themselves, "Is it just for saving Bengal? It will be the whole world!"

Girish again says, "Why is he here? Does anybody understand? He has come down out of compassion for the sorrows of mankind – to save them."

The coachman has been calling. Girish rises and goes to him. Sri Ramakrishna says to M., "See where he is going. I hope he doesn't beat him." M. follows Girish.

Girish returns and recites a prayer to Thakur, "O Lord, grant that I may be so pure that I may never have a sinful thought."

Sri Ramakrishna: “But you are already pure. You have faith and love for God. Aren’t you already in a joyful state?”

Girish: “No, sir. The mind is sick. No peace. That’s why I drink so much wine.”

After a while Girish adds, “Lord, I am surprised that I am

[7]

serving the Supreme Brahman. What austerities did I perform that I am eligible for this service?”

Thakur has his midday meal. Because of his illness, he eats only a little very simple food.

He is always in a state of ecstasy, forcing his mind down to bring it to his body. But like a child he is unable to take care of the body. Childlike, he says to the devotees, “I have eaten a little. Now I’d like to lie down. You may go outside a little while.”

Thakur has a little rest. The devotees seat themselves again in his room.

Girish Ghosh – guru is one's spiritual ideal – two kinds of devotees

Girish: “Yes sir, the guru and the spiritual ideal. I am fond of the form of the guru! I don’t fear him. Why is that? Whenever I see a person in ecstasy, I run away from him ten cubits. I fear it.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “The spiritual ideal itself comes as the guru.

[8]

After practicing meditation on a corpse, when a person gets the vision of the chosen ideal, the guru himself comes and says to the disciple, ‘O disciple, this is your ideal.’ Saying this, the guru merges into the form of the chosen ideal. The disciple then no longer sees the guru. When one attains the ultimate knowledge, who can be the guru and who can be the disciple? This is a very difficult situation, where there is no difference between the disciple and the guru.”

Devotee: “The head of the guru and feet of the disciple.”

Girish (*happily*): “Yes!”

Navagopal: “Listen to the meaning. The head of the disciple

belongs to the guru, just as the feet of the guru belong to the disciple. Do you understand?"

Girish: "No, that is not the meaning. Doesn't a son climb up on his father's shoulder? So it says 'the feet of the disciple.'"

Navagopal: "That happens only when the son feels like an infant."

His earlier story – Sikh devotees – two classes of devotees: baby monkeys and kittens

Sri Ramakrishna: "There are two kinds of devotees: One kind has the nature of a kitten – absolute dependence on what the mother may do. It only knows how to meow. It doesn't know where it is going, or what it will do. The mother cat sometimes puts it in the kitchen and sometimes on a bed. In the same way, a devotee gives the power of attorney to God. Having given God the power of attorney, he is free from any anxiety.

"The Sikhs said, 'God is kind.' I said, 'He is our mother and father, why say He is kind? If after giving birth to children, shouldn't the parents bring them up? Should the neighbours do it? This kind of devotee really believes that He is our own mother and our own father.'

"There is another class of devotee. They have the nature of a young monkey. A young monkey holds onto its mother with all its strength. These devotees feel they have some duty to perform – to go on pilgrimage, to practice japa and spiritual disciplines, to worship with sixteen items – and that only then will they be able to hold onto God. This is their attitude.

"Both types are devotees. (*To the devotees*) The more you proceed towards God, the more you will see that God Himself has become everything, that it is He who is doing everything. He is the guru and He Himself is the spiritual ideal. It is He Himself who has granted you spiritual knowledge and love for God."

His earlier story – advice to Keshab Sen: go forward

"The farther you proceed, the more you will see that there is something beyond the sandalwood forest – silver mines, gold

mines, and diamonds and jewels. Therefore, go forward.

“But how can I even say, ‘Go forward?’ When householders go too far, their world falls away. Once Keshab Sen was conducting a worship. He said, ‘Oh God, may we drown in the river of Your love!’ When the service was over, I said to him, ‘My dear, can you drown yourself in a river of love? What then would happen to those who are sitting behind the screen?’ But please do this. Dive every now and then and then get back to the bank.” (*All laugh.*)

**Chattering of Vaishnava – ‘one must bring injunctions into practice’
– truthfulness is austerity**

The Vaishnava from Katoa is arguing with Thakur. Thakur says to him, ‘Stop all this chattering. When butter contains water, it produces a sizzling sound.’

“Once a person has tasted the bliss of God, the tendency to argue vanishes. When a bee tastes the joy of sipping honey, it no longer buzzes.

“What will you achieve with talk after reading books? How many verses the pundits quote – ‘Shirna Gokulmandali’ (“The group in Gokul has shrunk”) and so forth.

“What will you gain by just repeating ‘hemp, hemp?’ Even if you rinse your mouth with it, nothing happens. It has to go into the stomach. Only then will you feel intoxicated. Without calling on God in solitude and with yearning, all these things cannot be internalized.”

Doctor Rakhal arrives to examine Thakur, who says to him eagerly, “Please come and sit down.” The conversation with the Vaishnava continues.

Sri Ramakrishna: “There are ordinary men and men with

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awakened minds. A man who is spiritually conscious is awake. Without spiritual consciousness, birth as a human being is futile.”

His earlier story – settling of disputes by a truthful and religious person

“In our village there are many people with pot-bellies and mustaches. But good people are brought from several miles away in a palanquin because they are truthful and religious. They are brought to settle disputes. They don’t bring those who are mere pundits.

“Truthfulness is the austerity of the Kaliyuga. Truthfulness, dependence on God, and looking upon other men’s wives as mother – these are the means.”

Like a child, Thakur says to the doctor, “Sir, please cure me of this.”

Doctor: “Can I cure you?”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “A doctor is the Lord Himself. I honour all.”

**Reconciliation of free will and God's will – liberty and necessity –
God Himself is the mahout Narayana**

“If you say I should remain quiet because everyone is God, I
[\[10\]](#)

believe in the mahout Narayana as well.

“Pure mind and pure atman are one and the same. What comes to a pure mind is God Himself. He is Himself the mahout Narayana.

“Why shouldn’t I listen to Him? God alone is the doer. As long as He keeps my ‘I-ness’ in me, so long will I act according to His instruction.”

The doctor is now going to examine Thakur’s throat. Thakur says, “Doctor Mahendra Sarkar pressed my tongue the way they press a cow’s tongue.”

Thakur touches the doctor’s shirt and says to him again, like a child, “Sir, please cure me of this.”

Seeing the laryngoscope, Thakur laughs and says, “I understand – you will see the image of my throat in it.”

Narendra sings. Because of Thakur’s illness, not many songs

are sung.

Chapter III

Doctor Bhagavan Rudra and Sri Ramakrishna

After taking his midday meal, Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on his bed, talking to Doctor Bhagavan Rudra. M., Rakhal, Latu, and some other devotees are also in the room.

It is Wednesday, 2 September 1885, 18th of Bhadra, the eighth to ninth day of the month of Shravana, the day of the Nanda Festival. The doctor hears all about Thakur's disease.

Thakur comes down to the floor and sits near the doctor.

Sri Ramakrishna: "You see, I can't tolerate the medicine. I have a different constitution."

Touching money, tying knots, saving – all these are impossible for Thakur

"Well, what do you think about this? My hand becomes twisted when I touch money and my breathing stops. And if I tie a knot, I can't breathe till the knot is untied."

After saying this, he asks for a rupee. The doctor is left speechless by what he sees: the hand on which the rupee coin is placed twists and Thakur's breathing stops. When the rupee is removed, Thakur exhales three long breaths one after the other and his hand again relaxes.

The doctor says to M., "It is action on the nerves."

His earlier story – saving opium in Sambhu Mallick's garden – picking mangoes in the native village of Kamarpukur – saving impossible

Thakur says to the doctor again, "There's another thing. I can't save anything at all. One day I went to Sambhu Mallick's garden. I had great stomach trouble and Sambhu said, 'Take a little opium bit by bit. It will make you feel better.' He tied a little in a corner of my cloth. When I was returning, I began to wander around at the gate – I couldn't find the way. When I threw the opium away, I regained my normal state and

returned to the temple garden.

“One day in my village, I picked some mangoes to take home, but then I couldn’t walk. I remained standing in one place. When I put the mangoes in a pit, only then could I return home. Well, what do you think of this?”

Doctor: “There is special power behind it – will power.”

Mani: “He says it is the Lord’s power. But you say it is will power.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the doctor*): “And then if someone says, ‘You are better,’ at once I feel much better. The other day the brahmin woman said, ‘You are fifty percent better.’ I immediately began to dance.”

Thakur is pleased with the doctor’s nature. He tells him, “You have a fine nature. There are two signs of a person who has attained knowledge: a serene temperament and absence of pride.”

Mani: “He (the doctor) has lost his wife.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the doctor*): “I tell you that God can be attained if one has these three attractions combined: a mother’s love for her child, the love a chaste woman for her husband, and the love of a worldly person for his possessions.

“Sir, please cure me however you can.”

The doctor is now going to examine the diseased throat. Thakur sits on a chair in the semicircular verandah. First he talks of Doctor Sarkar, “The rascal! He pressed my tongue as if it was a cow’s!”

Doctor Bhagavan: “I don’t think he meant to.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, it’s not that. He pressed it so he could examine it properly.”

[1]

. Later Swami Akhandananda.

[2]

. Later Swami Subodhananda.

[3]

. Anniversary of Krishna’s birth.

[\[4\]](#)

. Baby Krishna.

[\[5\]](#)

. Panchayat, “acting as an arbiter.”

[\[6\]](#)

. Purna Brahman, or Brahman in His absolute fullness. “Manifestation” implies partialness and differentiation; this is the unmanifest Whole.

[\[7\]](#)

. Brahman in His full manifestation, Purna Brahman.

[\[8\]](#)

. Shava sadhana.

[\[9\]](#)

. *Manushya* means “human being,” and *manhosha* “awakened mind.”

[\[10\]](#)

. A reference to the fable of the Lord as the Elephant Driver, told several times by Thakur.

Section XXVII

With Doctor Sarkar, Narendra, Sashi, Sarat, M., Girish, and Others at the Shyampukur House

Chapter I

**His earlier story – in a state of God-intoxication, behind the kuthi,
Thakur feels his body burnt by a sacrificial fire – Pundit
Padmalochan's faith and his death**

For treatment of his illness, Sri Ramakrishna is living with devotees in a house at Shyampukur. Today is Friday, 23 October 1885, the day of

[\[1\]](#)

the full moon. The time is 10:00 in the morning. Thakur is talking with M., who is helping him with his socks.

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Would it be all right to cut my woolen scarf to wrap around my legs to warm them?”

Yesterday, on Thursday night, Sri Ramakrishna had a long

[\[2\]](#)

conversation with Dr. Sarkar. Referring to it, Thakur laughs and says to M., “Yesterday I told him the story about saying

[\[3\]](#)

‘You, you [the calf and egotism being the cause of all suffering].’”

Sri Ramakrishna had said, “A person keeps getting scalded by

[\[4\]](#)

the three fires of the world, yet says it is alright. A sharp thorn cuts into his hand and he bleeds profusely, yet he says, ‘There’s nothing wrong with my hand.’ This thorn has to be burnt in the fire of spiritual knowledge.”

The younger Naren, remembering it, says, “What you said about the thorn was nice. Burn it in the fire of spiritual knowledge!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I had the experience of this myself. One day when I was walking behind the kuthi, my body felt like it was

ablaze in a sacrificial fire.

“Padmalochan said, ‘I will call an assembly of people and talk about your experiences.’ But he died soon after.”

The time is eleven o’clock. Mani has taken news of Thakur to Dr Sarkar at his house. Hearing about Thakur’s condition, the doctor speaks of him and shows his eagerness to hear more.

Doctor (*smiling*): “How well I said yesterday, ‘To say ‘You, you,’ first you have to fall into the hands of a carder!’”

Mani: “That’s true, sir. Unless you fall into the hands of a real guru, your ego doesn’t disappear. And how nicely he talked about love for God. Bhakti is a woman and can go right into the inner apartments.”

Doctor: “Yes, these really are beautiful words. But you still can’t give up jnana.”

Mani: “The Paramahansa Deva doesn’t say that. He accepts both knowledge and love – God with form and God without form. He says that the cooling power of love for God has formed water into ice, but when the sun of knowledge rises, the ice melts again. In other words, you realize God with form through love, and the formless Absolute through knowledge.

“And we have noticed that he feels God is so very near that he’s always talking with Him. Like a small boy, he says, ‘Mother, it hurts a lot.’

“And what powers of observation he has! He saw some fossils in the museum. Immediately he found in them a simile for holy company. Just as they [the fossils] have become stone by dwelling near stones, one becomes holy by associating with the holy.”

Doctor: “Yesterday Ishan Babu was harping on the subject of the incarnation of God. ‘What is an incarnation after all! It is calling a man God!’”

Mani: “But such is his faith. What is the use of interfering with it?”

Doctor: “You’re right, it would be of no use.”

Mani: “And how he made us laugh when he said, ‘Someone saw that a certain house had collapsed, but it wasn’t mentioned in the newspaper, so no one would believe it.’”

The doctor keeps quiet because Thakur has said to him, “Your science does not mention incarnations of God, so there is no incarnation of God.”

It is midday. The doctor gets into the carriage with Mani. After visiting some other patients, he will go to examine Sri Ramakrishna.

The other day the doctor was invited by Girish to see the play *Buddha Lila*. Now sitting in the carriage, he says to Mani, “It would have been better to call Buddha the incarnation of compassion. Why was he called an incarnation of Vishnu?”

The Doctor drops Mani at the crossing of Hedua road.

Chapter II

Thakur in the state of a Paramahansa – seeing joy spreading like fog all around – vision of Mother of the Universe seeming to say, ‘Come delusion, come illusion!’

It is about 3 o’clock. One or two devotees are sitting with Thakur. Impatient like a child, he asks repeatedly, “When is the doctor coming? What time is it now?” The doctor is to come this evening.

Suddenly Thakur goes into the mood of a child. Taking a pillow on his lap, he holds it maternally, as if nursing a child. Then he laughs like a child and, in ecstasy, and puts on his dhoti in a strange way. Mani and the others watch him in amazement.

In a little while the ecstatic mood diminishes. It is time for his meal. He eats a little farina pudding and talks to Mani alone about a very secret experience.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Mani*): “Do you know what I just saw in a

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state of ecstasy? A vast meadow extending six or eight miles through which the road to Sihore runs. I was alone in that field. I saw a fifteen- or sixteen-year old boy paramahansa, like the

one I had seen earlier under the banyan tree.

“I was surrounded on all sides by a mist of joy when a boy thirteen or fourteen years old raised his head out of the mist. He looked like Purna. Both of us were naked. We began running around the field and playing.

“Purna felt thirsty. He drank water from a glass and then offered it to me. I said, ‘My dear, I can’t drink your leftovers.’ Then he laughed and went away to wash the glass. He brought me fresh water in it.”

Dreadful and fearful Mother – She shows that everything is a spell

Thakur again goes into samadhi. Returning to normal consciousness, he resumes his conversation with Mani.

“My mental attitude has changed. I can no longer eat the holy food offered to the deities. The Real and the apparent have become the same to me. Do you know what I saw? A divine form, the Mother of the Universe, with a child in her womb. She gave birth to it and then swallowed it again. As much as went into Her became empty. She was showing me that everything is empty.

“She seemed to be saying, ‘Come, delusion; come illusion! Come!’”

Mani reflects on Thakur’s saying, “Only the magician is real, all else is illusion.”

Occult powers are not good – occult powers are of a lower order

Sri Ramakrishna: “Well, I tried to attract Purna, but I couldn’t. It weakens my faith a little.”

Mani: “But that would be occult power.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Yes, downright occult power.”

Mani: “When we were returning to Dak-shineswar with you from Adhar Sen’s house, a bottle broke in the carriage. Somebody said, ‘Is that going to cause any trouble?’ You said, ‘I can’t bother about that. That would be using occult power.’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “In the same way sickly boys are made to lie

on the ground where Hari's name is chanted so they may get well. Curing disease using occult powers is an act of miracle. Those who call upon the Lord for healing a disease have a very low spiritual ideal."

Chapter III

Ultimate spiritual knowledge – the body and Self are different – Thakur's life as told by him

It is evening. Sitting on his bed, Thakur is meditating on the Divine Mother and chanting Her name. A number of devotees are sitting silently near him.

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After a while Dr. Sarkar arrives. Latu, Sashi, the younger Naren, Paltu, and many other devotees are present. Ramtaran of the Star Theatre has come with Girish. He is going to sing.

Doctor (*to Sri Ramakrishna*): "Last night at three o'clock, I was very worried about you. It had rained and I wondered if the doors and windows of your room had been closed or left open. How could I know?"

Sri Ramakrishna is happy with the doctor's affection and says, "What are you saying, my dear? As long as you have a body, you have to take care of it. But I see that it is separate from the Self. When you are completely rid of the attachment to 'lust and greed,' you realize that the body and the Self are different from each other. When the water in a coconut dries up completely, the shell and the kernel separate from each other. Then you can feel the kernel rattling inside the shell. Or, take another example, a sword and its sheath.

"The sword is separate from the sheath. That's why I can't ask the Divine Mother to cure the disease of my body."

Girish: "Pundit Shashadhar said to him [Sri Ramakrishna], 'Please bring your mind to your body in samadhi. That will get rid of your disease.' But he had seen in ecstasy that the body was rattling like a skeleton."

His earlier story – visit to the museum – his prayer in pain

Sri Ramakrishna: “Long ago I was very ill. I was sitting in the Kali Temple. I felt like praying to the Divine Mother for help, but I couldn’t do it for myself. I said, ‘Mother, Hriday asked me to speak to you about my illness.’ I couldn’t say more. While I was saying it, I suddenly remembered the Asiatic Society Museum. It had a skeleton of human bones tied together with wires. Immediately I said, ‘Mother, please tie this body with wires like the skeleton so I can go around chanting your name and glories.’ I couldn’t ask for any occult powers.

“In the beginning Hriday said to me – you see, in those days I was under Hriday’s care – ‘Ask the Divine Mother for some power.’ And what a sight I saw when I went to the Kali temple to ask for power! I saw a widow prostitute thirty or thirty-five years old shamelessly opening her cloth and excreting. I became angry with Hriday because he told me to pray for occult powers.”

Ramtaran’s song – Thakur in ecstasy

Ramtaran sings now:

Behold my beloved vina, strung with special care,

For him who plays it tenderly, its strings tuned neither high nor low, its sweetness flows in a hundred streams.

But if the strings are slack, they will be mute, and over-stretched, they will break in two.

Doctor (*to Girish*): “Are these songs original?”

Girish: “No, they are adapted from Edwin Arnold.”

Ramtaran first sings a song from a play of Buddha’s life:

We cry for rest, but where to find it?

We know not from where we have come, nor to where we will float away.

We return again and again, weeping and laughing without end,

And always wondering where we may go.

O Awakened One, let me also awaken.

How long will it take for my dream to end?

The awakened sleep no more.

But for now a dense and dreadful darkness lies all around.

Destroy this darkness! Be my light!

Except for you, there is no way. And so I seek refuge at your feet.

Thakur goes into samadhi listening to the song. Then Ramtaran sings again:

Blow, blow, O raging storm...

Vision of god, the sun

When the song is over, Thakur says, “What have you done? Why the bitter soup of neem leaves after rice pudding?

“As soon as you sang, ‘Destroy this darkness,’ I saw the darkness all around dispelled by the rising sun. And everyone taking refuge at the feet of the sun.”

Ramtaran sings again, first:

O Mother, saviour of the helpless, You are the slayer of evil. In You the three qualities of sattva, rajas, and tamas dwell.

You, who create, preserve, and dissolve the world, are with form as well

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as Formless. O my Mother, truly You manifest in every form.

And then:

My devotion and worship have come to an end; no longer can I offer worship to Mother Shyama,

And by no means can I control the mind. Oh, how it torments me! For shame!

Hearing this song, Thakur again goes into samadhi.

O Mother, who has offered these heaps of red hibiscus flowers at Your feet?

Chapter IV

The ecstasy of younger Naren and others – duties of monks and householders

The song is over. Most of the devotees sit silently, deeply touched. The younger Naren is absorbed in meditation, sitting motionless like a wooden figure.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the doctor, pointing at the younger Naren*): “He is very pure – untouched by the least trace of worldly thoughts.”

The doctor looks at younger Naren, who is still in meditation.

Manomohan (*laughing, to the doctor*): “About your son, he [Ramakrishna] says, ‘If I have the son, I don’t care about the father.’”

Doctor: “That’s it! That’s why I say that you forget everything else when thinking of the child. (that is, you are occupied with the incarnation or the devotee and forget God).”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “It’s not that I don’t want the Father.”

Doctor: “I understand. How can you do without saying a few things like this?”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Your son really is guileless. Sambhu’s face reddened when he said, ‘God is bound to listen if you call on Him sincerely.’ Do you know why I love these boys so much? They are like pure milk that only needs to be brought to a boil to be offered to the deity. Watery milk has to be boiled quite a bit. A lot of firewood is wasted.

“These boys are like unused earthen pots – they are good receptacles. Milk can be put in them without a care. Talk to them just a little about spiritual knowledge and their consciousness is awakened. Worldly people are not easily awakened. It is always risky to keep milk in a pot that’s been used for curds. It might go bad.

“Worldliness – ‘lust and greed’ – hasn’t touched your son.”

Doctor: “That’s because he’s living off his father’s earnings! I’d like to see if he’d remain untouched by worldliness if he had to earn his own living.”

Monk and renunciation of woman – monk and renunciation of gold

Sri Ramakrishna: “That’s true! That’s certainly true. But the fact is that God is very far away from worldliness. Otherwise, He is as near as the palm of the hand. (*To Doctor Sarkar and*

Doctor Dokari) Renunciation of ‘lust and greed’ is not for you. You only have to renounce them mentally. I said the same thing to the goswamis, ‘Why do you talk about renunciation? It won’t do for you to renounce – you have to attend to the worship of Shyamasundar.’

“Renunciation is for sannyasins. They shouldn’t even see the picture of a woman. Women are like poison for them. They must keep at least ten cubits away or, if that’s not possible, at least one cubit. Even if a woman is a great devotee, a sannyasin shouldn’t talk to her for long.

“A sannyasin should live in a place where he doesn’t even see the face of a woman, or very rarely.

“Money is also a poison for sannyasins. When you have money, you quickly fall prey to anxiety, pride, physical comfort, anger, and so forth. *Rajas* increases. When there is *rajoguna*, it leads to *tamoguna*. So a sannyasin shouldn’t touch money. ‘Lust and greed’ make you forget God.”

Advice to the doctor – right use of money – wife for a householder

“But you know, money buys food and clothing and a place to live. It also provides for worship of the Lord and for holy men and devotees.

“But hoarding it is useless. A bee takes great trouble to make its hive. But then someone comes and breaks into it and takes away the honey.”

The Doctor: “For whom does one save? Perhaps for the sake of a bad son!”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Not just a bad son alone. Maybe your wife is of easy virtue. She may even give away your watch and chain to her lover.

“You don’t have to renounce women altogether. It’s not wrong to sleep with your own wife. But after you’ve had children, you should live like brother and sister.

“If you are attached to ‘lust and greed,’ you develop pride of learning, pride of wealth and high position – all these things.”

Chapter V

Advice to Dr. Sarkar – pride is not good – ego of knowledge is good – it enables one to teach others

Sri Ramakrishna: “Unless you give up pride, you can’t attain spiritual knowledge. Water doesn’t stay on the top of a mound. It flows down quickly on all sides to the ground below.”

Doctor: “The water that comes down to the lower ground from all sides is both good and bad. It can be muddy and full of sewage, too. And there are hollows on the tops of hills – for instance, in Nanital and Mansarovar – where you have only pure water from the sky.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Only water from the sky. Ah, beautiful!”

Doctor: “And water from a higher level flows down in all directions.”

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Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Someone got a siddha mantra. He stood on the top of a hill and shouted to the people below, ‘You can realize God if you repeat this mantra.’”

Doctor: “Yes.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But then, there is a problem. When your soul is full of yearning for God, you don’t see any difference between good water and dirty water. To know God, one might go to a good person, but sometimes also to people who are ignorant. But when His grace descends, even the turbid water does no harm. When He grants Knowledge, He tells everything – which water is good and which bad.

“There can be low ground on the top of a hill, but not on the hill of the ‘rascal I.’ The pure water from the sky only collects when there is the ‘I of knowledge,’ or the ‘I of a devotee.’

“The water from a higher level can no doubt flow in all directions, but it is only possible if it comes down from the hill of the ‘ego of knowledge.’

“Without receiving God’s command, a person can’t teach other people. Shankaracharya retained the ‘I of knowledge’ after

attaining Knowledge in order to teach mankind. But lecturing without having attained Him! What good can it do for people?"

**His earlier story – Samadhyayi's lecture – visit to Nandan Bagan
Brahmo Samaj**

"I went to the Nandan Bagan Brahmo Samaj. After worship, the leader lectured from a podium. While reading his prepared lecture, he looked all around. Even while meditating, he opened his eyes to see now and then.

"A person who hasn't realized God can't give right instruction. He may say one thing correctly but the next thing he says is totally confusing.

"Samadhyayi gave a lecture in which he said, 'God is beyond mind and speech. He is without sweetness and bliss. You must sing His glories with the sweetness of your own love and devotion.' Look at how he describes Him who is the very fountain of sweetness and bliss, the essence of joy! What will such a lecture do? Can it teach anybody?

"Someone said, 'My maternal uncle has a cowshed full of horses.' Horses in a cowshed! (*Everyone laughs.*) This can only mean that there are no horses there."

Doctor (*smiling*): "There are no cows either." (*All laugh.*)

The devotees who had been enraptured regain their normal mood. The doctor is enjoying them.

He asks M., "Who is that person?" M. introduces Paltu, the younger Naren, Bhupati, Sarat, Sashi, and the other young devotees by pointing to them one after the other.

[\[9\]](#)

About Sashi, M. says, "He is going to take his B.A. examination."

The doctor's mind has gone elsewhere.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the doctor*): "Look here, listen to what he's saying."

The doctor hears about Sashi.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to the doctor, pointing to M.*): “He teaches school boys.”

The Doctor: “That’s what I heard.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “How amazing! I’m unlettered but educated people come here. Isn’t it surprising? You have to admit that it’s God’s play.”

[10]

Today is the Kojagar Purnima day, about half past nine in the evening. The doctor has been here watching everything since six o’clock.

Girish (*to the doctor*): “Well, sir, does this happen to you? You say to yourself, ‘I’m not going there,’ and yet you seem pulled by something. I’m asking because it happens to me.”

Doctor: “I don’t feel quite like that, but only the heart knows what is happening in the heart. (*To Sri Ramakrishna*) Besides, you shouldn’t talk about things like this.”

[1]

. Kojagar Purnima.

[2]

. See Volume I, Section XV.

[3]

. Tuhum, tuhum. For the complete story of the calf, see Volume I, Section XV, Chapter II.

[4]

. Three afflictions or fires of the world: Adhidaivika, misfortunes caused by natural disasters or the forces of nature; adhibhautika, misfortunes caused by other living beings, i.e. war, physical or verbal assault, attacks of animals, snake bites, and so on; adhyatmika, misfortunes arising from the harm we do ourselves by mental anguish, addictions, and self-destructive behavior.

[5]

. Three to four kosas.

[6]

. Later Swami Ramakrishnananda.

[7]

. For complete song refer to Volume III, Section XXII, Chapter III.

[8]

. A mantra that leads to perfection.

[9]

. Sashi (later Swami Ramakrishnananda) first saw Sri Ramakrishna in 1884.

[\[10\]](#)

. The full moon day after the worship of Durga.

Section XXVIII

At the Shyampukur House with Narendra, Dr. Sarkar, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Dr. Sarkar and comparative religion

Thakur is sitting with Narendra, Mahimacharan, M., Dr. Sarkar, and other devotees in the second storey room of the Shyampukur house. It is one o'clock, 24 October 1885, 9th of Kartik.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Your homeopathic treatment is good."

Doctor: "We need to compare the symptoms of the patient with those mentioned in the book. It is like English music – you read and then you sing."

"Where is Girish Ghosh? Never mind. Don't bother him. He didn't sleep last night."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well, when I'm in ecstasy, I feel inebriated, like I've taken hemp. Why is that?"

Doctor (*to M.*): "The action of the nervous system stops, so one is benumbed and staggers. All energy has gone to the brain. Life is nothing but the nervous system. The *medulla oblongata* is near the nape of the neck. If it is injured, life may be extinguished."

Mahimacharan Chakravarty talks about the kulakundalini power in the sushumna nerve. "The sushumna nerve, which none can see, and being subtle, runs through the spinal cord. That's what Mahadeva says."

Doctor: "Mahadeva examined man in maturity. The Europeans have examined all stages, from the embryo to maturity. It's good to know comparative history. A study of the Santhal history has revealed that Kali was a Santhal woman. She was a great fighter. (*All laugh.*)"

"Please don't laugh. Listen to what great good comparative anatomy has done. Earlier one could not distinguish between

pancreatic fluid and bile. Then Claude Bernard examined the stomach, liver, and other parts of a rabbit and showed that bile had a different action from pancreatic fluid.

“It proves that we should examine lower animals as well. It will not do to examine man only.

“Similarly, a study of comparative religion is also highly beneficial.

“Why does what he (the Paramahansa) says touch the heart so? He has examined all religions. He himself has practiced Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Shakta, and Vaishnava faiths. Bees gather honey from different kinds of flowers to make a beautiful hive.”

M. (*to the Doctor*): “He (Mahima) has studied science a great deal.”

Doctor (*smiling*): “Did you mean Max Müller’s *Science of Religion*?”

Mahima (*to Sri Ramakrishna*): “What help can doctors give you for your illness? When I heard that you were sick, I said to myself that you were only boosting the pride of the doctors.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “He is a very good doctor, and very learned.”

Mahima: “Yes sir! He is a ship and we are only small boats made of a single tree-trunk.”

The doctor folds his hands humbly.

Mahima: “But here (with Sri Ramakrishna) all are equal.”

Thakur asks Narendra to sing.

Narendra sings:

I have made You the pole star of my life...

Next he sings:

Ever intoxicated with pride am I, and with the unending cravings of my heart....

And then:

O Lord! The creation of your universe is infinite and wonderful;

This whole world is a mansion of beauty...

Then he sings:

O Lord of the universe, seated on Your great throne,
You listen to the music of the universe, Your creation.

I, born of the dust of the earth, come to the portal of Your house with a feeble voice.

O Lord! I ask for nothing but Your vision.

I have come to sing to You in Your great hall,
where the sun and the moon praise you with hymns.
where from a far corner I too would sing Your praise.

And then:

O King of kings, reveal Yourself to me.

At Your feet I dedicate my soul and my life,

Seared by the fire of this world,

And a heart stained with wrongful acts.

O compassionate Lord, entangled in maya, I live as one who is dead.

Revive me by Your life-giving glance.

Finally he sings:

O my mind, be drunk with the wine of divine love;

Rolling on the ground, weep and chant the name of Hari...

Sri Ramakrishna: "And sing, 'You are all that exists.'"

Doctor: "Ah!"

The singing over, the doctor is almost spell-bound.

After a few minutes he folds his hands devotedly and says to Thakur, "May I take your leave now? I shall come again tomorrow."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Stay a little longer. I've sent for Girish Ghosh. (*Pointing to Mahima*) He is a scholar, but he dances when the name of Hari is chanted. There is no pride in him. He went to Konnagar just because we were there. Besides, he is independent. He's rich and doesn't have to work under anyone. (*Pointing to Narendra*) What do you think of him?"

Doctor: “A very good man!”

Sri Ramakrishna (*pointing to a devotee*): “And him?”

Doctor: “Wonderful!”

Mahima: “If one has not read some Hindu philosophy, one cannot claim to know philosophy. Europeans don’t know the twenty-four cosmic principles of the Samkhya philosophy. They cannot even grasp them.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “What are the three paths that you talk about?”

Mahima: “The path of Sat, or existence, is the path of knowledge. The path of Chit is the path of yoga, the path of karma yoga, which includes the duties of the four stages of life. And the path of Ananda, or the way of bliss, is the path of love and devotion for God. You know all three paths and give information on all of them. (*Thakur laughs.*)

“What more can I say? Janaka is the teacher and Sukadeva the listener.”

The doctor takes leave.

In samadhi after dusk – Nityagopal and Narendra – perfection through japa

The moon rises after dusk. Today is the second day of Kojagar Purnima, Saturday, 9th of Kartik. Thakur is standing, in samadhi. Nityagopal stands nearby devotedly.

When Thakur sits down, Nityagopal gently strokes his feet. Devendra, Kalipada, and many other devotees sit close to him.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Devendra and others*): “It has come to my mind that these states of Nityagopal’s will pass away and his whole mind will be concentrated on me – that is, on Him who dwells inside me.

“Don’t you see how Narendra’s whole mind is also becoming fixed on me?”

Many devotees are leaving. Thakur, standing, says to one of the devotees, “Japa is sitting quietly in solitude and repeating His

name. Repeating His name with a concentrated mind – performing japa – one gets the vision of God’s form and realizes Him. Think of a chain tied to a wooden log submerged in the Ganges, its other end fixed to the bank. Proceeding along each link of this chain, you enter the water and eventually reach the log. In the same way, by repeating God’s name, you become absorbed in Him and realize Him.”

Kalipada (*to the devotees, laughing*): “Our Thakur is wonderful! We don’t have to practice austerities – japa or meditation.”

Suddenly Thakur exclaims, “Something’s not right!” His throat is troubling him.

Devendra says, “We aren’t fooled by your words.” His idea is that Thakur is only acting ill to fool the devotees.

The devotees leave. A few of the younger men have decided to stay for the night so they can nurse Thakur by turns. M. will also stay the night.

Section XXIX

The House in Shyampukur – Thakur with Narendra, Mani, and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Why the illness? Advice to Narendra about sannyasa

Thakur is sitting in the Shyampukur house with Narendra and other devotees. It is 10 o'clock, Tuesday, 27 October 1885, 12th of Kartik, the fourth day of the dark fortnight of Ashwin. The conversations on 26 October, 11th Kartik and discussions with Dr. Sarkar have been published in *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Volume I.

Thakur is talking with Narendra and Mani.

Narendra: “How strange the doctor was behaving yesterday.”

A devotee: “The fish was hooked, but the line broke.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “It was tied to the fishhook. The fish will die and come to the surface.”

Narendra goes out for a while. He will return soon. Thakur talks to Mani about Purna.

Sri Ramakrishna: “I am telling this only to you. Ordinary men shouldn't hear these things. With a feminine attitude, a devotee naturally wants to embrace and kiss God.”^[1]

Mani: “Many are His sports. Even your illness is a part of God's sport. It is because of your illness that new devotees are coming.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “Bhupati says, ‘Had you not contracted the disease, what would people have said if you had just rented this house?’ Well, what about the doctor?”

Mani: “On the one hand, he accepts the attitude of a servant – ‘I am the servant and You are my Master.’ On the other, he asks, ‘Why do you call a man God?’”

Sri Ramakrishna: “See for yourself. Are you going to see him

today?”

Mani: “I’ll go if I have to report news about you.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “What kind of boy is Bankim? If he can’t come here, you yourself instruct him. His spiritual consciousness will be awakened.”

What comes first: show of the world or God? – Sri Ramakrishna hints to Keshab and Narendra

Narendra comes in and sits down near Sri Ramakrishna. He is very worried since his father’s death. He has his mother and brothers at home to provide for. He is preparing for his law examination and also has been working for a few months as a teacher at Vidyasagar’s Bowbazar school. He will be at peace only after he has provided for the family. This is what he is trying to do.

Thakur knows all this. He gazes at Narendra affectionately.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Well, I said to Keshab, ‘One should be satisfied with what comes of its own accord. ^[2] The son of a rich family has no worry about his food – he gets an allowance every month. Narendra belongs to a high plane, so why isn’t he getting help? If you surrender your mind completely to God, He will surely provide for everything.’”

M.: “Sir, it will surely come about. It is not yet too late.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “But when a person develops deep dispassion, all such calculations vanish. Feeling intense nonattachment, it just doesn’t come to the mind, ‘Let me first arrange everything for the family and then I will take to spiritual practices.’ (*Smiling*) A goswami said in a lecture, ‘If you have ten thousand rupees, it is enough for meals, and then you can sit down free of worries and call on God.’”

“Keshab Sen also alluded to the same thing. He said, ‘Sir, is it all right if a person settles his worldly affairs and then thinks of God? Is there any harm in that?’”

“I said, ‘When a person attains deep dispassion, the world appears like a deep well and one’s family like deadly snakes.

That person doesn't calculate, saying, 'Let me save my money and arrange my worldly affairs.' God alone is the Reality and everything else is unreal. Thinking of the world, abandoning God!

"A woman suffered extreme grief. First she took her nose-ring and tied it to the end of her cloth. Then she fell on the ground and began to wail, 'Oh what a catastrophe has befallen me!' But she took great care that her nose-ring did not break." (*Everybody laughs.*)

Hearing these words, Narendra lies down on the floor as if hit by an arrow. M., though realizing his mental condition, says to him with a smile, "You are lying down. What is the matter?"

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M., laughing*): "It's like the woman who said, 'I'm sleeping with my husband's elder brother and feeling so ashamed. How do all these (women) sleep with strangers?'"

M., himself a householder, should be ashamed of it. No one sees his own faults but notices the faults of others. This is what Thakur is saying. A woman had an illicit affair with her husband's elder brother but thought that she was less at fault than other women who were mistresses of strangers. She would argue, "The husband's brother is, after all, one's own. Even so, I am dying of shame."

Who is liberal? – One is more attached to money earned by flattery and servility

A Vaishnava is singing downstairs, and Thakur is overjoyed to hear him. He asks the devotees to give him some money. A devotee goes to give him something. Thakur asks, "What did he give?" The devotee says, "Two pice."

Thakur: "That devotee earns money with great difficulty through servitude. It is hard-earned money, earned by flattery. I thought he would give at least four annas."

Electric machine and Bagchi – sees portrait of the six-armed Gauranga and Ramachandra – his earlier story: long haired sannyasin at Dakshineswar

The younger Naren had said he would bring a machine to demonstrate to Sri Ramakrishna the nature of electricity. He has done this today.

It is two o'clock. Thakur is sitting with the devotees. Atul has brought a friend, who is a subordinate judge, with him. Bagchi, the famous painter from Shikdarpara, has come. He presents several pictures to Thakur.

Thakur, full of joy, examines the paintings. When he sees the picture of Gauranga with six arms, he says to the devotees, "Look! How beautiful it is!"

Wanting to show the devotees more, he asks for the picture of Ahalya turned into stone. He is very happy to see Ramachandra in the picture.

Bagchi has long hair like a woman. Thakur says, "A long time ago I saw a sannyasin at Dakshineswar. He had hair nine cubits long. He used to chant, 'Radhe, 'Radhe.' It was not an act."

After a while, Narendra sings. All the songs are filled with dispassion. Is Narendra inspired by hearing Thakur speak of deep dispassion and sannyasa?

Narendra sings, first:

Will my days just pass in vain, O Lord?^[3]

Day and night my eyes are on the path of hope...

Then:

O Mother, as the Inner Controller! You are awake within, day and night.^[4]

And finally:

O Lord, O Compassionate One! What joy have I in this life
If my soul, like a bee, does not remain inebriated at Your lotus feet?

^[1]

. Purusha.

^[2]

. yadācchālābha, Gita 4:22.

^[3]

. For the complete song refer to Volume III, Appendix, Chapter I.

^[4]

. For the complete song refer to Section XXI, Chapter III.

Section XXX

Sri Ramakrishna with Hariballav, Narendra, Mishra, and Other Devotees at Shyampukur House

Chapter I

Thakur's anxiety for Balaram – Hariballav Basu

Sri Ramakrishna is staying in the Shyampukur house with the devotees for treatment. Today is Saturday, 31 October 1885, 16th Kartik, the eighth day of the dark fortnight of Ashwin. The time is 9 o'clock.

The devotees are living here day and night to nurse Thakur. None of them has yet renounced the world.

Balaram and his family are serving Thakur. Balaram was born into a family of great devotees. His father, now old, lives alone in Vrindavan at Shyam Sunder Kunj, which he had built. His cousin Hariballav Basu

[\[1\]](#)

and other members of the family are all Vaishnavas.

Hariballav is the Chief Advocate at Cuttack. He did not approve of Balaram's visits to the Paramahansa Deva, especially his taking the women of the family with him. Balaram had said to him, "Go see him once. Then you can say whatever you like."

Hariballav has come today. He salutes Thakur with great devotion.

Sri Ramakrishna: "How shall I get cured? Do you think that it's a serious illness?"

Hariballav: "Only the doctors can say, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna: "The women take the dust of my feet. Then I think that God dwells in this form. That's how I take it."

Hariballav: "You are a holy man. Everyone salutes you like that. What harm is there in that?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "That would be true with Dhruva, Prahlada,

Narada, Kapila, and saints like them. But what am I? Do come again.”

Hariballav: “Sir, I will come because you attract me. You don’t have to urge me.”

About to leave, Hariballav salutes Sri Rama-krishna and advances to take the dust of his feet, but Thakur pulls his feet back. Hariballav does not give up but takes the dust of Thakur’s feet anyway.

Hariballav rises. Thakur also stands up, to show him courtesy. He says, “Balaram is very sad [that I haven’t gone to his house]. I thought that I should one day go to his house and meet you all. But I was afraid you’d say, ‘Who brought him here?’”

Hariballav: “Why do you say that? Please don’t worry about such things.”

Hariballav leaves.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “He has love for God. Otherwise, why would he take the dust of my feet forcibly?”

“I told you the other day that in divine ecstasy I saw the doctor and someone else. He is the other person. That’s why he has come.”

M.: “Yes, sir. He certainly has great devotion to God.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “How guileless he is!”

M. has gone to Sankharitola to give a report on Thakur’s illness to Doctor Sarkar. The doctor is coming again today to examine Sri Ramakrishna.

The doctor talks about Thakur, Mahimacharan, and other devotees.

Doctor: “He (Mahimacharan) hasn’t brought the book he promised to show me. He said he had forgotten to bring it. That’s possible. I’m forgetful too.”

M.: “He has read a great deal.”

Doctor: “He is in such a plight in spite of it?”

Talking of Thakur, the doctor says, “What use is mere love and

devotion for God if there is no knowledge?”

M.: “Why? Thakur says love for God comes after knowledge. But his meaning of knowledge and devotion is different from yours.

“When he says, ‘Love and devotion follow knowledge,’ he means the devotion that comes after attaining ultimate knowledge, Knowledge of Brahman – first knowledge of God, then love for Him. What you mean by knowledge is information acquired through the senses. Ultimate Knowledge is not verifiable by our standard; it can’t be arrived at through knowledge acquired through the senses. The latter can be verified.”

The doctor is silent. Then he talks about the incarnation of God.

Doctor: “What is this idea of the incarnation of God? And why should one take the dust of a man’s feet?”

M.: “Why, you yourself say that you feel ecstatic seeing God’s creation when you’re doing scientific experiments. And also when you think of man. That being so, why shouldn’t we bow before God? There is God in man.

“The Hindu religion says that God is present in all existence. You haven’t studied this subject very much. Since God resides in all beings, what’s wrong with saluting a man?

“The Paramahansa Deva says, ‘There is greater manifestation of God in some things than in others.’ The sun is reflected in water and in a mirror. There is water everywhere, but more apparent in rivers or lakes. It is God whom one salutes, not man. God is God – not man is God.

“God can’t be known by reasoning. It all depends on faith. All these are Thakur’s words.”

As a token of brotherly regard, the doctor today presents M. with one of the books he has written, *Physiological Basis of Psychology*.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna and Jesus Christ – manifestation of Christ in Sri Ramakrishna

Thakur is sitting with devotees. It is eleven o'clock. He is talking with Misra, a Christian devotee. Misra is about thirty-five years old. He was born in a Christian family in northwestern India. Though he is wearing European clothes, he wears ochre clothes under the Western dress. He has renounced the world. He was born in west India. Two of his brothers died on the day fixed for the marriage of one of them. Misra renounced the world that very day. He belongs to the Quaker sect.

Misra: "The same Rama dwells in all beings."

Sri Ramakrishna whispers to the younger Naren within Misra's hearing, "There is but one Rama, though he has a thousand names.

"He who is called God by the Christians is known by the Hindus as Rama, Krishna, Ishvara, and so forth. There are many drinking ghats at a reservoir. Hindus take water from one spot and call it 'jal,' or Ishvara. Christians take water from another spot and call it 'water,' that is to say God or Jesus. Muslims go to yet another spot and call it 'pani,' or Allah."

Misra: "Jesus was not the son of Mary, he was God Himself. (*To the devotees*) He (Sri Rama-krishna) appears this way now – at another time, he is God Himself.

"You (the devotees) don't recognize him. I saw him before in a vision. Now I see him in person. In my vision I saw him seated on a raised seat in a garden. Another person was sitting on the ground. He wasn't as spiritually advanced.

"There are four doorkeepers in this country. Tukaram in Bombay and Robert Michael in Kashmir. Here it is he [Sri Ramakrishna], and there's another person in the eastern region."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Do you see visions?"

Misra: "When I lived at home I used to see light. Then I had a vision of Jesus. How can I describe his beauty? What is the beauty of a woman in comparison with his!"

After a while, when talking to the devotees, Misra takes off his

coat and trousers and shows his gerua loincloth.

Thakur comes in from the verandah and says, “It is not external. I saw him (Misra) standing in a heroic pose.”

While he is saying this, Thakur goes into samadhi. He stands facing west.

Returning to the normal state somewhat, Thakur looks at Misra and laughs. Taking his [Misra’s] hands, he laughs again. He says, “You will achieve what you are seeking.”

It seems that Thakur is in the mood of Jesus. Are he and Jesus the same?

Misra (*with folded hands*): “I have surrendered to you my mind, heart, and soul since that day.”

In an ecstatic mood, Thakur smiles.

He sits down. Misra tells the devotees about his earlier life. He tells how two of his brothers were killed when the canopy fell during the marriage.

Thakur asks the devotees to take care of Misra.

Thakur in the joy of devotional song, with Narendra, Doctor Sarkar, and others

Doctor Sarkar comes in. When he sees him, Thakur goes into samadhi. After the intensity of his ecstasy has decreased a little, Thakur says, “Sat-chit-ananda follows karanananda – He is the Karana of karana (the cause of the causal).”

Doctor: “Yes.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “I have not become uncon-scious.”

The doctor realizes that Thakur is full of God-consciousness. He says, “No! You are very con-scious.”

Thakur recites with a smile:

I drink no ordinary wine, but the nectar of everlasting bliss, as I repeat
“Jai Kali – to Kali, victory!”

Seeing me drunk on this wine of the mind, by drunkards am I taken for a drunk.

[\[2\]](#)

But my mind is drunk on drops of wine by knowledge distilled from the molasses of the mantra, the guru's gift, and by the ferment of my own determination.

Filled full with the Mother's nectar is the vessel of this body, which I purify by uttering Tara's name.

Drink of this wine, says Prasad, and the four fruits of life shall be yours.

[\[3\]](#)

Listening to the song, the doctor is almost overwhelmed with feeling. Thakur also becomes ecstatic and he puts his foot in the doctor's lap. A little later he comes out of ecstasy and pulls his foot back. He says to the doctor, "Oh, what a nice thing you said the other day. You said, 'We are sitting in the lap of God. If we don't tell him about our illness, whom shall we tell? If we have to pray, we should pray to Him.'"

While saying this Thakur's eyes are filled with tears. He goes into an ecstatic mood again, and in that state he says to the doctor, "You are very pure. Otherwise, I could not have put my foot in your lap." And then he adds, "Only he is at peace who tastes the bliss of Rama."

"What is there in sense-enjoyment? What is there? And what is there in money, name, fame, and comforts of the body? If one has not known Rama, what has he known?"

The devotees are worried to see Thakur going into ecstasy during his serious illness. Thakur says, "I'll rest if someone sings that song, 'The wine of divine love.'"

Narendra is in another room. They ask him to come. He sings in his sweet voice, rare even among the gods:

O my mind, be drunk with the wine of divine love;

Rolling on the ground, weep and chant the name of Hari.

Fill the sky with the solemn roar of Hari's name.

Sri Ramakrishna: "And that song, too, 'On the sea of the bliss of consciousness.'"

Narendra sings:

The waves of ecstatic love for God rise on the sea of the bliss of
[4]
consciousness.

And then:

Meditate upon Hari, O my mind! He is the essence of consciousness. He is free from all impurity!

Without equal is His glory, beautiful is His shape, how very beloved is He in the hearts of His devotees!

Behold, His beauty is enhanced by fresh manifestations of love! It casts into shadow the effulgence of a million moons!

Verily, lightning flashes out of His glorious beauty! His blessed vision causes the hair to stand on end.

Worship His holy feet in the lotus of your heart. Gaze upon the matchless beauty of that Beloved Form.

Now that the mind enjoys peace and the eyes are filled with love, be immersed in divine love. Inspired with your devotion, remain merged in the joy of love.

The doctor listens to the song with rapt attention. When it is over, he says, “That was very good – ‘on the sea of the bliss of consciousness.’”

Noticing how full of joy the doctor is, Thakur says, “A boy said to his father, ‘Father, just taste a little wine. Then if you ask me to give it up, I will do so.’ The father tasted it and said, ‘Child, you may give it up, I have no objection – but I won’t give it up.’ *(The doctor and all others laugh.)*

“The other day the Divine Mother showed me two men. He was one of them. I saw that he would have immense knowledge – but dry knowledge. *(To the doctor, smiling)* But you will become succulent.”

The doctor remains quiet.

[1]

. His father’s younger brother’s son.

[2]

. Jnana, knowledge of God.

[\[3\]](#)

. Dharma (righteousness), artha (material comfort), kama (enjoyment), and moksha (liberation).

[\[4\]](#)

. For the complete song refer to Section XVII, Chapter I.

Section XXXI

With Narendra and Other Devotees at the Cossipore Garden House

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna, an ocean of grace – M., Niranjan, and Bhavanath

Sri Ramakrishna is staying at a Cossipore garden house with his devotees. He is extremely ill, yet he has but one thought on his mind, the spiritual welfare of the devotees. He worries day and night for one or another of them.

He moved from the Shyampukur house to the Cossipore garden house on Friday, 11 December, the 27th of Agrahayana, the fifth day of the bright fortnight. He has been here for twelve days now. The young devotees have been gradually coming to stay in order to serve him. Many of them still visit their homes frequently. The householder devotees come almost daily, sometimes spending the night.

Most of the devotees, who have been gathering since 1881, have already met each other. The last have now come. Sashi and Sarat met Thakur at the end of 1884. After their college examinations in the middle of 1885, they began visiting him regularly. In September of 1884 Girish Ghosh saw Thakur at the Star Theatre. Three months after that, since the beginning of December, he has become a regular visitor. At the end of December 1884, Sarada saw Thakur at the Dakshineswar temple garden. Subodh and Kshirode met him for the first time in August of 1885.

All morning Sri Ramakrishna has been showering his love. He said to Niranjan, "You are my father. I will sit on your lap." Touching Kalipada's chest, he said, "Be awakened!" Then stroking his chin with affection, he said, "Whoever has sincerely called on God or performed his daily religious duties will surely come here." He gave his blessings in the morning to two women, in the state of samadhi, touching their chests with his feet. They began to shed tears, one of them weeping, "Such grace!" His was a torrent of ecstatic love. As he wishes to bless Gopal of Sinthi, he said, "Fetch Gopal here."

Today is Wednesday, 23 December 1885, 9th of Pausha, the second day of the dark fortnight of Agrahayana. It is now evening. Thakur is meditating on the Mother of the Universe.

After a while he talks sweetly with one or two devotees. Kali, Chunilal, M., Navagopal, Sashi, Niranjan and other devotees are there in the room.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Buy a stool for me. How much will it cost?"

M.: "Between two and three rupees."

Sri Ramakrishna: "If a low seat for bathing costs twelve annas, why would a stool cost that much?"

M.: "It won't be too much. It might be less than that."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Well, tomorrow is Thursday and late in the afternoon is not auspicious. Can you come before three o'clock?"

M.: "Certainly, sir. I shall come then."

Is Sri Ramakrishna an incarnation of God? The hidden significance of his illness

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "Well, how long will it take me to recover from this illness?"

M.: "It is rather serious. It will take time."

Sri Ramakrishna: "How many days?"

M.: "It may take five or six months."

Hearing this, Thakur becomes impatient, like a child, and says, "What are you saying?"

M.: "Sir, that long to get completely well."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Please tell me why I have such illness when I see so many divine visions and go into ecstasy and samadhi."

M.: "You are suffering a lot, sir. But it has a meaning."

Sri Ramakrishna: "What is that?"

M.: "Your mood will undergo a change. You are becoming inclined toward the Formless. Even the 'I of knowledge' is disappearing."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Yes, my teaching to others is coming to an end. I am not able to speak any more. I see everything is Rama. Time and again I ask myself, whom shall I tell? Just see, this

house has been rented with the result that so many different devotees are coming here. But there is no signboard announcing the lecture times, like Krishnaprasanna Sen's or Shashadhar's." (*Both Thakur and M. laugh.*)

M.: "And there is another meaning, to sift the devotees. What cannot be achieved by practicing austerities for five years, the devotees are gaining during these few days – spiritual disciplines, ecstatic love, devotion."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Yes, undoubtedly. Niranjan has just been home. (*To Niranjan*) Tell me, how do you feel?"

Niranjan: "I did love you earlier, but now I simply cannot stay away."

M.: "One day I realized how great all these men are."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Where?"

M.: "Sir, I noticed this one day when I was standing by myself in the Shyampukur house. I realized how each one of them has come here to serve you, brushing aside so many obstacles."

**Thakur in samadhi – in wondrous state – vision of the formless –
selection of intimate disciples**

Hearing this, Thakur becomes absorbed in ecstasy. After some time, he remains absolutely still, in samadhi.

When his ecstasy is over, he says to M., "I saw that all forms of God were merging into the Formless. I want to say much more, but I can't. Well, this inclination to the Formless – is it because the body will cease to exist? Do you think so?"

M. (*speechless*): "That could be, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna: "I see even now the Formless Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute – just like that. But I have concealed the inclination with great effort.

"What you say about sifting of devotees is right. This illness is showing who belongs to the inner circle and who belongs to the outer. Those who come here after renouncing the world belong to the intimate group. And those who just come once and ask, 'How do you do, sir?' belong to the outer circle.

“Did you notice Bhavanath? He came to Shyampukur dressed as a bridegroom and asked me how I was doing. He never came again. I treat him kindly because of Narendra, but my mind is no longer attracted to him.”

Chapter II

Speaking freely the story of his life in his own words – who is Sri Ramakrishna?

āhus tvām āñayaù sarve devarñir nāradas tathā |

asito devalo vyāsaù svayaà caiva bravēni me ||

[Thus do all the seers acclaim You – the divine seer Narada, also Asita Devala and Vyasa – and now you yourself tell me so.]

– Bhagavad Gita: 10:13

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “When God descends, assuming a human form for the sake of His devotee, he is accompanied by devotees as well. Some are his intimate disciples, others belong to the outer circle, and some are suppliers of provisions.

“When I was ten or eleven years old, I was going to the Vishalakshi shrine in my native village and had my first experience of ecstasy in an open field. What did I see? It made me completely lose all external consciousness.

“When I was twenty-two or twenty-three, I was asked by the Divine Mother in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar, ‘Do you want to be Akshara?’ I didn’t know the meaning of *Akshara* and I asked Haladhari. He said, ‘*Kshara* means an embodied being and *Akshara* means the Paramatman, or the Supreme Self.’

“At the time of arati, I would climb up to the roof of the Kuthi and cry out from there, ‘Come, O devotees! Wherever you may be!’ I would stop breathing when I met worldly people. I told English-educated men and they said, ‘All this is delusion of the mind.’ I became peaceful, thinking to myself, That may be so. But all this is being confirmed now. All the devotees are gathering.

“Then the five providers were revealed to me. First I saw

Mathur Babu and then Sambhu Mallick – I had never seen him before, but I had seen in ecstasy a fair-complexioned man wearing a crown. When I met Sambhu many days later, I remembered that it was this very man I had seen in ecstasy. The other three providers I have not yet been able to spot clearly. But they were all fair-skinned. Surendra might very well be one of the providers.

“When this state came over me, a person identical to me came and shook the spiritual nerve channels – the ida, the pingala, the sushumna. He licked the lotus of each of the six chakras and all the drooping lotuses turned up. Last of all, the lotus at the sahasrara opened out completely.

“I was shown beforehand what kind of person would visit me. I saw with these physical eyes, not in a vision, a kirtan party led by Chaitanya Deva, going from the banyan tree to the bakultala. I saw Balaram in it and, I think, yourself [M.]. The regular visits of Chuni and yourself to me have awakened spiritual consciousness [in both of you]. I also saw Sashi and Sarat. They were in the group of the rishi Christ.

“I saw a boy under the banyan tree. Hriday said that a son would be born to me. For me every woman is the Mother. How could I have a son? That boy is Rakhal.

“I said, ‘Mother, since you have given me this temperament, please find me a rich man.’ So it was that Mathur Babu served me for fourteen years. He did so much! A separate provision store for sadhus, carriages and palanquins for me – whatever I asked him to give to anyone, he gave. The Brahmani (Bhairavi

[\[1\]](#)

Brahmani) used to say, ‘He is Pratap Rudra.’

“Vijay had a vision of this very form (of Sri Ramakrishna). What does this mean? He said he touched it just as I touch you.

“Noto (Latu) counted thirty-one devotees. This is not a big number. Kedar and Vijay are making a few more.

“I was shown in a vision that during my last days, I would have to live on farina pudding.

“During this illness, my wife (Holy Mother) is feeding me farina pudding. I weep,

saying, ‘Is this the living on farina pudding? In this painful condition?’”

[\[1\]](#)

. A king of Orissa and a devotee of Chaitanya Deva, whom he served with immense faith, respect, and devotion.

Section XXXII

Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra and Other Devotees at the Cossipore Garden House

Chapter I

Advice to Narendra on the harmony of Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

Sri Ramakrishna is with the devotees in the big hall at the Cossipore garden house. It is about 8 p.m. Narendra, Sashi, M., the elder Gopal, and Sarat are there. Today is Thursday, 11 March 1886, 28th of Phalgun, 1292 (B.Y.), the sixth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Phalgun.

Thakur is ill. He is resting in bed with the devotees sitting near him. Sarat is standing and fanning him. Thakur talks of his illness.

Sri Ramakrishna: “If you go to Bholanath, he will give you some oil and tell you how to use it.”

The elder Gopal: “Then we’ll bring it tomorrow morning.”

M.: “Somebody can go and get it today.”

Sashi: “I can do it.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*pointing at Sarat*): “He can go.”

In a little while Sarat leaves for Dakshineswar temple to get the

[\[1\]](#)

oil from Bholanath Mukherji.

Thakur is lying down. The devotees sit silently. Suddenly he sits up and addresses Narendra.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Narendra*): “Brahman is unattached. The three gunas are in Him, but He is not attached to them.

“It is like a breeze carrying the fragrance of both good and bad smells. The air remains unaffected. Shankaracharya was walking along a road in Kashi. An outcaste carrying a load of meat was coming his way and suddenly touched him. Shankara

exclaimed, 'You've touched me!' The outcaste said, 'Master, you have not touched me, nor have I touched you. The Atman is not attached. You are that pure Atman.'

"Brahman and maya! A man of knowledge rejects maya.

"Maya is like a veil. See, I am using this towel in front of the lamp to bar the view, and I can't see the light of the lamp."

Thakur holds the towel between himself and the devotees. He says, "Look. Now you can't see my face.

"As Ramprasad says, 'Raise the mosquito net and see.'

"But a devotee doesn't reject maya. He worships Mahamaya. Taking refuge in it, he prays, 'Mother, don't stand in the way. Only when you step out of the way will I attain the knowledge of Brahman.' A man of knowledge denies the three states of wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep. But devotees accept them all. As long as 'I-ness' persists, so long does everything else exist.

"As long as you retain 'I-ness', so long do you see that God indeed has become maya, the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles."

Narendra and the others remain silent.

[2]

"The theory of maya is dry. Now tell me, what I said."

Narendra: "Maya is dry."

Thakur strokes Narendra's face and hands and says, "All these are the signs of a devotee. The features of a man of knowledge are different: his face and body are dry."

"But a man of knowledge can live in the world with

[3]

vidyamaya – love for God, compassion, and non-attachment – after attaining spiritual knowledge. This is for two particular objectives. First, to teach mankind and second, to enjoy bliss.

"If a jnani remains silently in samadhi, he would not be able to instruct people. That's why Shankaracharya retained the 'ego of knowledge.'

“And a man of knowledge lives with devotees and love for God to enjoy and experience the bliss of God.

“There is no harm in the ‘I of knowledge,’ the ‘I of a devotee.’ But the ‘rascal I’ is harmful. When one realizes God, one becomes childlike. There is no harm in the ‘I of a child.’ It’s like a face reflected in a mirror. It doesn’t say bad things. A burnt rope is a rope only in appearance – it is blown away with a puff. The ‘I’ gets burnt in the fire of spiritual knowledge. Then it can no longer harm anyone. It is ‘I’ only in name.

“Living in the relative world after reaching the Absolute is like going to the other bank and then returning. It is for teaching people and for enjoyment, for pleasure.”

Thakur talks in a very low voice. He pauses for a while and then he says to the devotees, “I am so sick, but my mind is not

[4]

subject to the power of ignorance. Just look, I don’t think of Ramlal or home or wife. But I am worried about Purna, a kayastha boy unrelated to me. I have no worry about the others.

“It is God who has kept vidyamaya in me for the benefit of others – for the devotees.

“And as long as one keeps vidyamaya, one has to return. Divine incarnations and other god-men keep vidyamaya. You have to come back even if you have the least trace of desire – you have to return repeatedly. A person gains liberation only when all desires are gone. But devotees don’t want liberation.

“If you die in Kashi, you don’t have to return. Men of knowledge want liberation.”

Narendra: “The other day we went to Mahimacharan Chakravarty’s house.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “And then?”

Narendra: “I have never seen a jnani as dry as he is.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*smiling*): “What happened?”

[5]

Narendra: “He asked us to sing. Gangadhar sang:

By Krishna's name restored to life, Radha looks round and round,
searching, searching....

Then catching sight of the black tamal tree, Radha exclaims, "Behold!
There is my Krishna's crest!"

"Hearing the song, he [Mahima] said, 'Why sing such songs? I
don't like love, or things like that. Besides, I have a wife and
son. Why sing such songs here?'"

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "See his fear!"

[1]

. A clerk at the Dakshineswar temple garden.

[2]

. The Vedantic theory that the world of names and forms is illusory, dream-like.

[3]

. Bhakti, daya, and vairagya.

[4]

. Avidyamaya.

[5]

. Later Swami Akhandananda.

Section XXXIII

Sri Ramakrishna at Cossipore Garden House with Narendra and Other Devotees

Chapter I

Modesty is the ornament of women – his earlier story – gracious visit to M.'s house

Sri Ramakrishna is staying at the Cossipore garden house with the devotees. Although very ill, he is constantly anxious about the welfare of the devotees. Today is Saturday, 17 April 1886, 5th of Vaishakh, fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra. It is also a full moon day.

Narendra has been visiting Dakshineswar almost daily to meditate in the panchavati for several days. Today he returns to Cossipore in the evening, accompanied by Tarak and Kali.

It is 8 p.m. The moonlight and southern breeze have made the garden very beautiful. Many of the devotees are meditating in the room downstairs. Narendra says to Mani, “They are giving it up” (i.e. giving up their personal adjuncts as they meditate).

In a little while Mani goes to the hall upstairs and sits with Thakur, who asks him to bring a spittoon and hand towel after cleaning them. Mani goes to the bathing ghat of the western pond and washes them in the moonlight. Then he brings them back.

The next morning Thakur sends someone for Mani. He had gone to the roof of the hall after taking his bath in the Ganges and meeting Thakur.

Mani's wife has gone almost insane with grief over the death of her son. Thakur asks for her to be brought to the garden for her meals. He indicates by a sign, “Ask her to come and stay here for two days. She should bring her baby and have her meals here.”

Mani: “As you request, sir. It would be good for her to develop great love for God.”

Sri Ramakrishna says by a sign, “Grief drives away (love of God). And he [the boy] was quite grown up.

“Krishnakishore had two sons almost Bhava-nath’s age. Each of them had two university degrees. They died. Krishnakishore is such a jnani, but he could not keep his balance in the beginning. Luckily, God has not given me a son.

“Such a great jnani Arjuna was! And he had Krishna as his companion. Even so, his grief was inconsolable at Abhimanyu’s death.

“Why hasn’t Kishori come?”

Devotee: “He goes every day to bathe in the Ganges.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “Why doesn’t he come here?”

Devotee: “I’ll ask him to.”

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Latu*): “Why doesn’t Harish come?”

Modesty is an ornament of women – his earlier story – gracious visit to M.’s house

Two girls nine or ten years old, from M.’s family, have come to the Cossipore garden house and sung these songs for Thakur: ‘O my tongue, always repeat the name of Durga,’ ‘The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight,’ and others. When Thakur visited M.’s house at Telipara in Shyampukur (Thursday, 30 October 1884, 15th of Kartik, onset of the eleventh day of the lunar month), the same two girls sang for him then. He had been very pleased to hear them. When they sang today at the Cossipore garden house, the devotees heard them from downstairs and called them down to hear their songs again.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): “Don’t teach your girls songs anymore. It is different if they sing on their own, but a woman’s modesty suffers if she sings in the presence of anybody and everybody. It is very important that women preserve their modesty.”

Sri Ramakrishna’s self-worship – he gives prasad to the devotees

Flowers and sandal paste are brought to Thakur in a flower bowl. Sitting on his bed, he begins to worship himself, touching

the flowers with sandal paste to his forehead, throat, and heart, and sometimes to his navel.

Manomohan has come from Konnagar. After saluting Thakur, he sits down. Thakur, still worshiping himself, places a garland around his own neck.

After a while, as if pleased with him, Thakur gives some offered flowers to Manomohan and a champak flower to Mani.

Chapter II

Did Buddha believe in the existence of God? Instruction to Narendra

It is 9 o'clock. Thakur is talking to M. Sashi is also in the room.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to M.*): "What did Narendra and Sashi talk about? What did they discuss?"

M. (*to Sashi*): "What were you talking about?"

Sashi: "Maybe Niranjan told you about it. Did he?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "God does not exist, God does exist. Is that what you were talking about?"

Sashi (*smiling*): "Shall I call Narendra?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Yes, do call him." (Narendra comes in and sits down.)

(*To M.*) "Please ask him something. (*To Narendra*) Tell me what you were talking about."

Narendra: "My stomach is upset. What more can I say?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "It will be all right."

M. (*smiling*): "What is the state of Buddha [illumination] like?"

Narendra: "Did I ever attain it that I could tell you?"

M.: "What is Buddha's opinion about whether or not God exists?"

Narendra: "How can you say that God exists? It is you who have [\[1\]](#) created the world. You do know what Berkeley says."

M.: "Yes, indeed he does say about external objects, '*Esse est*

percipi (the existence of external objects depends upon their being perceived).”

His earlier story – Totapuri's instructions to Thakur: ‘the world is only the projection of the mind’

Sri Ramakrishna: “The Naked One used to say, ‘The world is the product of the mind, then it dissolves itself back into the mind.’

“But as long as ‘I-ness’ persists, the attitude of master and servant is the right attitude.”

Narendra (*to M.*): “How can you prove by reasoning that God exists? But if you rely on faith, you have to accept the attitude of master and servant. And if you accept that – and accept you must – you have to accept that He is kind as well.

“You only think of your sorrow. What about the happiness He has bestowed? Why do you forget it? How great is His grace! He has given us three precious things: human birth, longing for God, and the company of a great spiritual personality – *manushyatam, mumukshutvam, mahapurusha-sanshrya.*”

They all sit silently.

Sri Ramakrishna (*to Narendra*): “But I do definitely feel that there is someone within.”

Dr. Rajendra Lal Dutta arrives and takes a seat. He is treating Thakur with homeopathic medicine. When the conversation about medicine ends, Thakur points to Manomohan.

Dr. Rajendra: “He is a son of my maternal uncle’s son.”

Narendra comes down to the lower floor and begins to sing to himself:

By giving Your vision, You have rid me of all sorrows and charmed my soul.

Beholding You, all the seven worlds forget their grief,

What to speak of my poor self so mean and unworthy.

Narendra has been suffering from mild indigestion. He says to M., “Feelings of love and devotion for God make the mind tend toward the body. Were it otherwise, who would ‘I’ be? Then

there would be no man and no god, and I would have neither sorrow nor happiness.”

Thakur’s worship of himself – his prasad to Surendra – Surendra’s service to Thakur

It is already 9 p.m. Surendra and other devotees have brought a garland of flowers and offered it to Thakur. Baburam, Surendra, Latu, M., and some others are in the room.

Thakur puts the garland brought by Surendra, around his own neck. Everyone sits silently. Thakur is worshiping Him who resides within.

Suddenly he motions to Surendra. When he comes near the bed, Thakur puts the offered garland around Surendra’s neck.

Surendra salutes after receiving the garland. Thakur asks him by a sign to stroke his feet gently. Surendra strokes Thakur’s feet for some time.

Thakur in devotional singing with devotees in Cossipore garden house

There is a reservoir to the west of the room Thakur occupies. A few devotees are singing on the platform of its ghat with the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. Thakur sends word through Latu, “Please chant the Lord’s name for a while.”

M. and Baburam are still sitting with Thakur. They listen to the music of the devotees:

My Gaur is dancing,

[\[2\]](#)

Dancing with the devotees to the kirtan in Srivas’s courtyard.

Listening to the song, Thakur signals to Baburam, M., and the others, by a sign, “Please go downstairs. Sing with them and dance.”

They go down and take part in the kirtan.

After a while Thakur sends someone to ask them to sing:

O friend! My Gaur even knows how to dance!

His divine mood I cannot describe,

As my Gaur dances with both hands upraised!
The kirtan ends. Surendra, in an ecstatic mood, sings:

[3]
My father is mad, my mother too,
And I, their son, am mad.
My Mother is none other than Shyama,

[4]
And my father, He who utters “ba-ba-bam!”
Drunk with wine, my Mother staggers, Her disheveled hair away.
While bees beyond number swarm around Her crimson feet,
Buzzing to the ring of her anklets’ bells.

Chapter III

Existence of God and Narendra – Bhavanath, Purna, and Surendra

After visiting Sri Ramakrishna, Hirananda gets into a carriage. Standing close by, Narendra and Rakhal exchange a few words with him. It is 10 o’clock. Hirananda will come again tomorrow. This has been narrated in *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Volume II, Section XXVII.

Today is Wednesday, 21 April, 1886, 9th day of Vaisakha, the 3rd day of the dark fortnight of Chaitra. Narendra and M. converse while they stroll the garden path. Narendra’s mother and brothers are in great difficulty at home. He has not yet been able to make satisfactory arrangement for their well-being and is very worried.

Narendra: “I don’t want to work in Vidyasagar’s school anymore. I’m thinking of going to Gaya. Somebody told me there’s a manager’s job for someone’s estate there. There is no God – or anything like God.”

Mani (*smiling*): “You say this now, but later you won’t. Skepticism is a stage on the path to God-realization. When you’ve passed this stage and progressed further, you will realize God. That’s what the paramahansa says.”

Narendra: “Has anyone seen God the way I see these trees?”

Mani: “Yes, Thakur has.”

Narendra: “That may be a hallucination.”

Mani: “What a person sees in a particular state is reality for him – the truth – in that state. If you dream you are in a garden, that garden is a reality for you. However, in another state, say when you are awake, you may know that it was unreal, an illusion. When you attain the state of God-realization, you see Him as the Reality, the truth.”

Narendra: “I want the truth. The other day I had a long argument with the paramahamsa.”

Mani (*smiling*): “What was it about?”

Narendra: “He said to me, ‘Some people call me God.’ I said, ‘Let a thousand people say so, but I won’t unless I realize it myself.’

“He said, ‘What many people say is the truth, that is the law.’

“I said, ‘Unless I realize it for myself, I will not listen to what others say.’”

[\[5\]](#)

Mani (*smiling*): “You have the same attitude as Copernicus and Berkeley. Everybody said that it was the sun that revolves [around the earth]. Copernicus didn’t listen. The man in the street says that the external world is a reality. Berkeley refused to believe it. That is why Lewis said, ‘Why was Berkeley not a philosophical Copernicus?’”

Narendra: “Can you give me a book on the history of philosophy?”

M.: “The one by Lewis?”

[\[6\]](#)

Narendra: “No, by Überweg. I want to study a German author.”

Mani: “You say, ‘Has anyone seen God the way I see this tree?’ Suppose God came as a human being and said, ‘I am God,’ will you believe him? Don’t you know the story of Lazarus? When he died and was in the other world, Lazarus said to Abraham, ‘Let me go tell my relatives and friends that there really is another world and a hell.’ Abraham said, ‘Will they believe you if you say that? They’ll say that some charlatan has come and is

telling stories.’ Thakur says, ‘God can’t be known by reasoning. Everything comes from faith: jnana, vijnana, vision, intimacy – everything.’”

Bhavanath has married. He is worried about making a living. He comes to M. and says, “I hear Vidyasagar is going to establish a new school. I need to earn a living. Can I get a job there?”

Ramlal – carriage fare for Purna – Surendra’s straw screens

It is between three and four o’clock. Thakur is resting. Ramlal, who has come from Dakshineswar to see him, is gently stroking his feet. Gopal of Sinthi and Mani are also in the room.

Thakur asks Mani to shut the window and massage his feet.

Purna had been asked to hire a carriage and come to the Cossipore garden house. He has already visited Thakur and left. Mani will pay the carriage fare. Thakur asks Gopal by a sign, “Has he (M.) given the money?”

Gopal: “Yes sir.”

It is about 9 p.m. Surendra, Ram, and others are planning to return to Calcutta.

It is a hot day in the month of Vaishakh. Thakur’s room becomes extremely hot during the day, so Surendra has brought straw screens. Hung on the windows they will cool the room to a great extent.

Surendra: “Where are the screens? Why, they haven’t been hung! Nobody pays any attention.”

A devotee (*smiling*): “The devotees are now in the state of brahmajnana. It is now ‘I am

[7]

He’; the world is an illusion. When the feeling of ‘You are the Lord and I am your servant’ returns, they will attend to his service.” (*All laugh.*)

[1]

George Berkeley (1685-1753), Irish philosopher.

[2]

. For the complete song refer to Section XV, Chapter V.

1. Shiva.

[\[4\]](#)

. The hollow, drumming sound that Shiva makes while striking his cheeks.

[\[5\]](#)

. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Polish astronomer and founder of modern astronomy.

[\[6\]](#)

. Friedrich Überweg, *An Outline of a History of Philosophy from Thales to the Present*, 3 vols., 1867.

[\[7\]](#)

. So 'ham.

APPENDIX A

BARANAGORE MATH

Shivaratri fast by Narendra, Rakhal, and other brothers of the monastery

Baranagore Math. Narendra, Rakhal, and other devotees have observed a fast today for Shivaratri. Two days later they will celebrate the anniversary of Thakur's birth.

Baranagore Math was founded only five months ago, not long after Thakur Sri Ramakrishna had gone to his eternal abode. Narendra, Rakhal, and other devotees are in a state of deep renunciation. One day, when Rakhal's father came to persuade him to return home, Rakhal said to him, "Why do you take the trouble of coming here? I'm alright here. Just bless me that you may all forget me and I may forget you." They are all in a state of deep dispassion, ever engaged in spiritual practices and singing the name of God. They have only one ideal, – to realize God.

Narendra and the other devotees sometimes practice japa and at other times study the scriptures. Narendra says, "Work without expectation of any reward, which the Lord talks about in the Gita, is what we are to do – worship, japa, meditation, and such. We are not to do activities of any other kind."

Narendra had gone to Calcutta in the morning, to appear in court in connection with his family's lawsuit. He had to testify in court personally.

M. reaches the monastery at 9 o'clock. Seeing him enter the

[\[1\]](#)

"demons' room," Tarak begins to sing a song in praise of Shiva:

Tathaiya tathaiya dances Shiva ...

Rakhal also joins him and both begin to dance as they sing the song that Narendra had recently composed:

[\[2\]](#)

Tathaiya tathaiya dances Shiva to the sound of *ba-ba-bam! ba-ba-bam!*

[\[3\]](#)

Dimi-dimi-dimi rings His damaru, while around his neck sways a garland of skulls.

And through his matted locks the Ganges roars and his scintillating trident flashes fire – *dhak-dhak-dhak!*

His hair, tied in a bun atop his head – how splendidly the moon glows upon it!

All the brothers in the monastery are fasting. Narendra, Rakhal, Niranjana, Sarat, Sashi, Kali, Baburam, Tarak, Harish, Gopal of Sinthi, Sarada, and M. are present. Jogen and Latu are in Vrindavan these days; they have not seen the monastery yet.

Today is Monday, 21 February 1887. Sarat, Kali, Niranjana, and Sarada are planning to go to Puri next Saturday to visit Lord Jagannath. Sashi is engaged in serving Thakur day and night.

The worship over, Sarat begins to sing to the accompaniment of a tanpura.

The Lord of Kailas, the King of Kings, Shiva Shankara dances – *ba-ba-bam!*

The beat of his damaru rumbles over Kailas's peak, a garland of serpents encircles his neck, and his bloodshot eyes shine brightly,

Even as the crescent moon, adorning his forehead, shines brightly too.

Narendra has just returned from Calcutta and has not yet taken his bath. Kali asks him, "What is the news about the lawsuit?"

Narendra (*irritated*): "Why are you concerned about it?"

Narendra is smoking and talking to M. and others: "You cannot succeed without renouncing 'lust and greed.' 'Woman is the door to hell.' All men are under the control of women. Shiva and Krishna are different. Shiva made Shakti his maidservant. Sri Krishna did live a householder's life, but how unattached he was! How quickly he gave up Vrindavan!"

Rakhal: "And also how he left Dwaraka."

Narendra returns to the monastery after a dip in the Ganges, holding his wet dhoti and a towel in his hand. Sarada, his whole body covered in dust, comes and prostrates before Narendra. He has also observed the fast of Shivaratri and is now going to the Ganges to bathe. Narendra goes to the shrine room, salutes Thakur, and then sits and meditates for quite a long time.

They are now talking about Bhavanath, who has married and taken a job. Narendra, says, “Oh, he and people like him are but worldly worms!”

It is midday. Arrangements for the worship of Shivaratri are being made. Wood and vilwa leaves of the bel tree have been gathered for the homa fire that will be performed after the puja.

Evening arrives. Having waved incense in Thakur’s shrine, Sashi takes the incense stick to the other rooms as well and bows to the picture of each god and goddess, chanting their names with utmost devotion. “I bow to the guru; I bow to Kalika; I bow to Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balaram; I bow to the six-armed one; I bow to Radha Vallabha; I bow to Nityananda, Advaita, and the devotees; I bow to Gopala and I bow to Yashoda; I bow to Rama, Lakshmana, and Vishwamitra.”

Arrangements have been made for the worship of Shiva under the bel tree of the monastery. It is 9 o’clock [in the evening]. The first worship will be performed now. The second worship will be at half past eleven. There will be four worships in the four watches of the night. Narendra, Rakhal, Sarat, Kali, Gopal from Sinthi, and the other brothers of the monastery are present under the bel tree. Bhupati and M. are also there. A brother of the monastery is performing the worship.

Kali reads from the Gita sections on the review of the armies, Samkhya Yoga, and Karma Yoga. During the reading he discusses them with Narendra.

Kali: “I myself am everything. I create, preserve, and destroy.”

Narendra: “How can I create? There is a power which makes me do it. All actions – even thinking – are caused by God.”

M. (*to himself*): “Thakur said, ‘As long as you are aware that you are in meditation, you are in the jurisdiction of Primal Power. You have to accept the fact of Primal Power.’”

Kali thinks for some time silently. Then he says, “The action you are talking about is all illusion. There is not even such a thing as thinking. I laugh when I think of these things.”

Narendra: “The ‘I’ that is understood when we say ‘I am He’ (So

'ham) is not this ego. It is what remains after getting rid of the mind and body and so on."

After reading of the Gita, Kali chants, "Peace, peace, peace (Santih, santih, santih)."

Narendra and the other devotees all stand up and

[\[4\]](#)

circumambulate the vilwa tree repeatedly as they dance and sing. Now and then they chant in chorus, "Shiva Guru! Shiva Guru!" It is a deep dark night. The fourteenth day of the dark fortnight – darkness all around. All living creatures are still.

"Shiva Guru, Shiva Guru," chanted from the lips of these young, ochre-clothed, unmarried devotees, is full of dispassion. The sound of the great mantra merges with the Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, having risen like rain clouds rumbling through the infinite sky.

It is almost dawn when the worship ends. Narendra and the devotees bathe in the Ganges during this sacred time of early dawn, the Brahmamuhurta.

It is day break. After their dip in the Ganges, the devotees go to the shrine of the monastery and salute Sri Ramakrishna. Then they assemble in the "demons' room" (the parlour). Narendra has put on a beautiful new ochre cloth. The indescribably pure, celestial radiance of his face and body, the result of spiritual austerities, blend with the color of his apparel. His countenance is filled with vigour and also intense love for God. It looks as if a drop from the ocean of Indivisible Sat-chit-ananda has assumed a divine body in order to teach mankind knowledge and love for God – as a helper in the work of a divine incarnation. None can turn his eyes away from Narendra, who is now twenty-four years old – exactly Sri Chaitanya's age when he renounced the world.

The day before, Balaram had sent fruits and sweets from his house for the devotees to break their fast the next day.

Standing in the room, Narendra, Rakhal, and a couple of other devotees have some refreshments. After eating one or two, they say joyfully, "Blessed Balaram! Blessed you are!" (*They all*

laugh.)

Now Narendra makes fun like a child. Putting a rasagolla in his mouth, he stands absolutely still, his eyes unblinking. Seeing Narendra in this state, a devotee pretends to hold him from behind lest he fall.

After some time, Narendra (with the rasagolla still in his mouth) opens his eyes and says, “I ... am ... well ...” (*Everyone laughs loudly.*)

M. and the others are served the offered sweets and hemp.

M. watches this mart of joy. The devotees shout together, “Victory to Guru Maharaj, Victory to Guru Maharaj!”

[1]

. “The monastic brothers were nicknamed “demons.” The “demons’ room” was a room in the house that they used as a parlour.”

[2]

. A reference to the hollow, drumming sound that Shiva makes while striking his cheeks.

[3]

. A small, handheld drum, shaped like an hourglass.

[4]

.The vilwa tree is also called the bel tree.

M.'s Visits to Sri Ramakrishna

S. No.	Date	Volume
1.	26-Feb-1882	1
2.	28-Feb-1882	1
3.	5-Mar-1882	1
4.	6-Mar-1882	1
5.	11-Mar-1882	5
6.	March 1882	5
7.	March 1882	5
8.	2-Apr-1882	5
9.	5-Aug-1882	3
10.	13-Aug-1882	5
11.	24-Aug-1882	3
12.	16-Oct-1882	2
13.	17-Oct-1882	2
14.	22-Oct-1882	3
15.	24-Oct-1882	3
16.	27-Oct-1882	1
17.	28-Oct-1882	1
18.	15-Nov-1882	5
19.	16-Nov-1882	5
20.	19-Nov-1882	5
21.	26-Nov-1882	5
22.	Dec.1882	5
23.	Dec.1882	5
24.	14-Dec-1882	1
25.	1-Jan-1883	4
26.	18-Feb-1883	5
27.	25-Feb-1883	4
28.	9-Mar-1883	5
29.	11-Mar-1883	2
30.	29-Mar-1883	1
31.	7-Apr-1883	4
32.	8-Apr-1883	2
33.	15-Apr-1883	2
34.	22-Apr-1883	5
35.	2-May-1883	4
36.	13-May-1883	5
37.	20-May-1883	5
38.	27-May-1883	5
39(a)	2-Jun-1883	5
39(b)	2-Jun-1883	2
40.	4-Jun-1883	2
41.	5-Jun-1883	2
42.	8-Jun-1883	4
43.	10-Jun-1883	5
44.	15-Jun-1883	2
45.	17-Jun-1883	5

46.	18-Jun-1883	4
47.	25-Jun-1883	5
48.	14-Jul-1883	5
49.	21-Jul-1883	3
50.	22-Jul-1883	1
51.	18-Aug-1883	5
52.	19-Aug-1883	1
53.	20-Aug-1883	3
54.	7-Sept-1883	3
55.	9-Sept-1883	3
56.	22-Sept-1883	5
57.	23-Sept-1883	5
58(a)	26-Sept-1883	2
58(b)	26-Sept-1883	5
59.	10-Oct-1883	5
60.	16-Oct-1883	5
61.	26-Nov-1883	1
62(a)	28-Nov-1883	2
62(b)	28-Nov-1883	1
63.	9-Dec-1883	2
64.	10-Dec-1883	2
65.	14-Dec-1883	2
66.	15-Dec-1883	4
67.	16-Dec-1883	4
68.	17-Dec-1883	4
69.	18-Dec-1883	5
70(a)	19-Dec-1883	4
70(b)	19-Dec-1883	5
71.	21-Dec-1883	5
72.	22-Dec-1883	5
73.	23-Dec-1883	4
74.	24-Dec-1883	4
75.	25-Dec-1883	4
76.	26-Dec-1883	5
77.	27-Dec-1883	3
78.	29-Dec-1883	4
79.	30-Dec-1883	4
80.	31-Dec-1883	4
81(a)	2-Jan-1884	5
81(b)	2-Jan-1884	4
82.	4-Jan-1884	5
83.	5-Jan-1884	4
84.	2-Feb-1884	4
85.	3-Feb-1884	4
86.	24-Feb-1884	4
87.	2-Mar-1884	3
88.	9-Mar-1884	5
89.	23-Mar-1884	4
90.	5-Apr-1884	2
91.	24-May-1884	5

92.	25-May-1884	4
93.	15-Jun-1884	1
94.	20-Jun-1884	4
95.	25-Jun-1884	1
96.	30-Jun-1884	3
97.	3-Jul-1884	4
98.	3-Aug-1884	4
99.	6-Sept-1884	4
100.	7-Sept-1884	4
101.	14-Sept-1884	4
102.	19-Sept-1884	4
103.	21-Sept-1884	2
104.	26-Sept-1884	2
105.	28-Sept-1884	2
106.	29-Sept-1884	2
107.	1-Oct-1884	2
108.	2-Oct-1884	4
109.	4-Oct-1884	4
110.	5-Oct-1884	4
111.	11-Oct-1884	2
112.	18-Oct-1884	2
113.	19-Oct-1884	1
114.	20-Oct-1884	2
115.	26-Oct-1884	1
116.	9-Nov-1884	3
117.	10-Nov-1884	3
118.	6-Dec-1884	5
119.	14-Dec-1884	3
120.	27-Dec-1884	2
121.	22-Feb-1885	5
122.	25-Feb-1885	5
123.	1-Mar-1885	2
124.	7-Mar-1885	3
125.	11-Mar-1885	1
126.	6-Apr-1885	3
127.	12-Apr-1885	3
128.	24-Apr-1885	2
129.	9-May-1885	3
130.	23-May-1885	3
131.	13-Jun-1885	3
132.	13-Jul-1885	4
133.	14-Jul-1885	4
134.	15-Jul-1885	4
135(a)	28-Jul-1885	3
135(b)	28-Jul-1885	4
136.	9-Aug-1885	4
137.	10-Aug-1885	4
138.	11-Aug-1885	5
139.	16-Aug-1885	5
140.	27-Aug-1885	4

141.	28-Aug-1885	4
142.	31-Aug-1885	4
143.	1-Sept-1885	4
144.	2-Sept-1885	4
145.	20-Sept-1885	5
146.	24-Sept-1885	5
147.	18-Oct-1885	3
148.	22-Oct-1885	1
149.	23-Oct-1885	4
150.	24-Oct-1885	4
151.	25-Oct-1885	1
152.	26-Oct-1885	1
153(a)	27-Oct-1885	4
153(b)	27-Oct-1885	1
154.	29-Oct-1885	2
155.	30-Oct-1885	3
156.	31-Oct-1885	4
157.	6-Nov-1885	3
158.	11-Dec-1885	4
159.	23-Dec-1885	4
160.	4-Jan-1886	3
161.	5-Jan-1886	3
162.	11-Mar-1886	4
163.	14-Mar-1886	3
164.	15-Mar-1886	3
165.	9-Apr-1886	3
166.	12-Apr-1886	3
167.	13-Apr-1886	3
168.	16-Apr-1886	2
169.	17-Apr-1886	4
170.	18-Apr-1886	4
171.	21-Apr-1886	4
172.	22-Apr-1886	2
173.	23-Apr-1886	2
174.	24-Apr-1886	2

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Sri Ramakrishna and Bankim 6-Dec-1884, Vol. 5