

	Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita by Mahendranath Gupta
Sri Ramakrishna	Volume I of V

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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 founder the 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 Philosophy, 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 Rakhai 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 renounee. 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 his 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

It is a matter of great privilege for us on presenting before our readers the first volume of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita in English. Sri Thakur has been wonderfully gracious to reward our endeavor, that the words emanated from His holy lips and kept carefully unalloyed by M. should be translated word for word from Bengali to English. This further strengthens our resolve to publish all the five parts of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita in the same sequence as published by revered M. in original Bengali. The first part is a verbatim translation of the original Bengali that maintains the sequence of all chapters.

Before you dive deep into the Kathamrita, a look at its publishing history would be of good interest to you. The five volumes of Kathamrita in Bengali saw the light of the day in the years 1902, 1904, 1908, 1910 and 1932. While you read all the five volumes, you can see through the development of M.'s mind: from intellectual to intellectual-spiritual, from intellectual-spiritual to spiritual-intellectual and from spiritual-intellectual to pure spiritual and then the practical pure spiritual state. In the first volume of the Kathamrita, we find the profound truths explained with the help of illustrations with an 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 jack fruit, etc. In Volume II of the Kathamrita, the highest Truth is explained by an intellect that is soaked in Spirit. In Part III, you will find Sri Ramakrishna expounding sublime truths with totally spiritual intellect. In Volume IV the practical spirit shows the way to bring the injunctions into practice and how to internalize the Word. And in Part V, we find the Organized Spirit in action: its interface with the world and the concordance of the Word. In short, the five volumes of the Kathamrita are the five steps leading us from the gross to Mahakarana (the Great Cause).

Smt. Ishwar Devi Gupta discovered this fountain of divine joy and peace in the holy conversations of M. in 1958 in the Bengali Sri Ma Darshan. Inspired by this long cherished discovery, she started translating them into Hindi as a prayerful offering for her own sake and for the Hindi knowing brothers and sisters. The day she completed the translation of sixteenth volume of Sri Ma Darshan into Hindi, she was reminded of the words of her Gurudeva, Swami Nityatmananda, "Mummy, you must translate Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita too, as you have been translating Sri Ma Darshan from Bengali to Hindi.' So, the next day she started the yeoman task of translating the five parts of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita into Hindi.

Sri Dharm Pal Gupta started the task of translating them into English maintaining the same spirit of faithful translation. And before he left this world in 1998, he had completed the colossal work of translating all the five parts of Kathamrita into English. Thereafter, an effort has been made for the presentation of the Word.

Sri Ma Trust offers its sincere gratitude to all those bhaktas and friends who are helping in any way in financing, production, publication and distribution of the volumes. Special mention must be made of Sri Lakshmi Niwas Jhunjhunwala, Dr. Kamal Gupta, Sangeeta Kapoor, Vinay Mehta

and Nitin Nanda. May our readers, friends and associates attain supreme bliss and peace - this is our heartfelt prayer at the feet of the Lord.

Kalpataru Day

Monday, January 01, 2001

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA (1836 - 1886)

Life of Thakur spoken with his own Holy Lips

[Three Classes of Evidences]

It has been a long cherishing desire to publish the life of Thakur since his childhood incidents in a serial form. After completing the Kathamrita in six or seven volumes, material would be available to write his life spoken with his own holy lips. In this regard three classes of evidences would be available.

First: Direct and recorded on the same day. This is what Thakur Sri Ramakrishna said about his childhood, his states of *sadhana* (spiritual practices) etc. and what the bhaktas recorded on the same day. The life of Thakur spoken with his own holy lips that is published in Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita belongs to this class of evidence. The day M. saw Thakur's acts, or heard from his holy lips, he recalled it and recorded in his daily dairy that very day during the night (or in day time). This kind of version is obtained by direct seeing and hearing - along with 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 the bhaktas themselves heard from the holy lips of Thakur, they are recalling it and speaking out now. This kind of version is also very good. The record of the other avatars is generally of this kind. Even then twenty four years have passed. Herein there is a greater possibility of mistakes than what is recorded immediately.

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 like Hridya Mukherji, Roy Chatterji and other bhaktas, or what one hears about the life of Thakur from the residents of Kamarpukur, Jairambati, Shyam Bazaar, or from the circle of Thakur's devotees belongs to the third class evidence.

At the time of writing Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, M. has relied upon the first class evidence. If M. publishes Thakur's life in a serial form, for that too he would rely mainly on the first class evidence. In other words, its contents would be written relying on the life of Thakur spoken with his own holy lips.

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

Letter to M from The Holy Mother

on Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita

Dear Child,

Whatever you had heard from him (Thakur) is nothing but the truth. You need not feel any diffidence about it. At one time it was he who had placed those words with you. And it is now he who is bringing them to the light of the day according to the needs of the time. Know it for certain that unless these words are published, man will not have his consciousness awakened. All the words of his that you have with you everyone of them is true. One day when you read them out to me I felt as if it was he who was speaking.

Jairambati,

21st Ashada, 1304,

(4th July, 1897)

Letters to M. from Swami Vivekananda

on Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita

7 Feb. 1889

Antepore[1]

Thanks! 100,000 Master! You have hit Ramakristo in the right point.

Few alas, few understand him!

My heart leaps in joy and it is a wonder that I do not go mad when I find anybody thoroughly launched into the midst of the doctrine which is to shower peace on earth hereafter.

Narendra Nath

October, 1897

C/O Lala Hansraj

Rawalpindi

Dear M.,

Cest bon mon ami - now you are doing just the thing. Come out man. No sleeping all life. Time is flying. Bravo! That is the way.

Many many thanks for your publication - only I am afraid it will not pay its way in pamphlet form... Never mind - pay or no pay. Let it see the blaze of daylight. You will have many blessings on you and many more curses. But that is always the way of the world, Sir. This is the time.

Yours in the Lord,

Vivekananda.

Dehradun

24 November, 1897

My dear M.,

Many many thanks for your second leaflet. It is indeed wonderful. The move is quite original and never was the life of a great teacher brought before the public untarnished by the writer's mind as you are doing.

The language is also beyond all praise so fresh, so pointed and withal so plain and easy.

I cannot express in adequate terms how I have enjoyed them. I am really in a transport when I read them. Strange, isn't it? Our teacher and Lord was so original and each one of us will have to be original or nothing. I now understand why none of us attempted his life before. It has been reserved for you, this great work. He is evidently with you.

With love and namaskara.

Yours in the Lord,

Vivekananda.

P.S. Socratic dialogues are Plato all over. You are entirely hidden. Moreover, the dramatic part is infinitely beautiful. Everybody likes it, here or in the West.

Other Letters on Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita

Girish Chandra Ghosh

Letter, 22 March, 1905

If my humble opinion goes for anything, I not only endorse the opinion of the great Swami (Vivekananda) but add in a loud voice that Kathamrita has been my very existence during my protracted illness for the last three years... You deserve the gratitude of the whole human race to the end of the days.

Swami Ramakrishnananda (Shashi Maharaj), Belur Math,

then of the Madras Math

Letter 27 October, 1904

"... You have left whole humanity in debt by publishing these invaluable pages fraught with the best wisdom of the greatest avatara of God."

N. Ghosh

The Indian Nation, 19 May, 1902:

Ramakrishna Kathamrita by M., Part I is a work of singular value and interest. He has done a kind of work which no Bengali had ever done before, which, so far as we are aware, no native of India has ever done. It has been done only once in history, namely by Boswell. But then the immortal biography is only the life of a scholar and a kindhearted man. This Kathamrita, on the other hand, is the record of the sayings of a Saint. What is the wit or even the worldly wisdom of the great Doctor by the side of the Divine teachings of a genuine devotee. Its value is immense. We say nothing of the sayings themselves - for the character of the teacher and the teaching is well-known. They take us straight to the truth and not through any metaphysical maze. Their 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 and Chaitanya could have been thus preserved.

[1] Antepore is a village in Hooghly district, the birthplace of Swami Premananda. Swamiji and many of his brother disciples were at this time staying as guests at the house of Swami Premananda (Baburam).

Introduction

A Brief Life Sketch of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna

Birth of Sri Ramakrishna - father Kshudiram and mother Chandramani - the primary school - worship of Raghuvira - company of sadhus and listening to the Puranas - beholds a miraculous light - comes down to Calcutta and company of sadhus at Kali Temple in Dakshineswar - sees a miraculous Divine form - Thakur like one mad - company of sadhus, Bhairavi Brahmini, Tota Puri and Thakur's listening to Vedanta in the Kali Temple - practises spiritual disciplines according to the Tantra and the Puranas - Thakur's talk with the Mother of the Universe - goes on pilgrimage - Thakur's inner circle - Thakur and his bhaktas - Thakur and the Brahmo Samaj - reconciliation of all religions: Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and so on - the women bhaktas of Thakur - his family of bhaktas.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna was born in the interior village of Kamarpukur in the Hooghly district in a pious brahmin family, on the second lunar day of the bright fortnight of Falgun. The village of Kamarpukur is 4 kosas (about 8 miles) west of Jehanabad (Aram Bag) and 12-13 kosas (about 26 miles) south of Burdwan.

There is a difference of opinion on the date of birth of Sri Ramakrishna -

Ambika Acharya made Thakur's horoscope during his illness on the third of Kartik, 1286 B.Y., 1879 A.D. This gives his date of birth as 1756 Shaka, the 10th of Falgun, Wednesday, the second day of the bright fortnight, Purva Bhadrapada Nakshatra. His calculation is - 1756/10/9/59/12.

Kshetra Nath Bhatt's calculation in 1300 B.Y. is 1754/10/9/0/12. According to this calculation it is 1754 Shaka, the 10th day of Falgun, Wednesday, the second day of the bright fortnight, Purva Bhadrapada - all tally. 1239 B.Y., 20th February, 1833. At this time, there is conjunction of sun, moon and mercury. It is the Aquarius sign. Because of the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, he would be the chief of a religious

sect.

Narayana Jyotirbhushan has made a new horoscope (in the Math). According to his calculation 1242 (B.Y.), 6th day of Falgun, Wednesday; 17 February 1836, 4 a. m., the second day of the bright fortnight of Falgun, conjunction of the three planets, all tally except the 10th of Falgun given by Ambika Acharya. 1757/10/5 /59/28/21.

Thakur was in human body for 51/52 years.

Thakur's father Sri Kshudiram Chatterji was a man of firm faith and great devotion. His mother Chandramani Devi was the personification of simplicity and kindness. Previously they used to live in a village named Dere, one and a half kosas (about three miles) from Kamarpukur. Kshudiram did not give evidence in favour of the landlord of the village in a lawsuit. So, he later came and settled with his family in Kamarpukur.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna's childhood name was Gadadhar. After learning elementary reading in the primary school, he stayed at home and served the deity of Raghuvira. He himself would pluck flowers and perform puja daily. In school, the arithmetic book by Shuvankara would confuse him.

He could sing of his own with exquisite sweet voice. He could sing almost all the songs he heard in *yatras* (theatrical performances). He was ever cheerful since his childhood. Everybody in the locality, children, men and women, all loved him.

Holy men frequently visited a guesthouse in the garden of Laha Babus, near Gadadhar's house. He would meet them there and serve them. When the story tellers read from the Puranas, he would listen to everything with rapt attention. In this way he learnt all the stories of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavata.

One day he was passing through a field to a village located near his house. He was eleven then. Thakur himself narrated that he suddenly lost all sense-

consciousness on seeing a miraculous light. People said he had fainted. Thakur had attained bhava-samadhi (a super-conscious state).

After the death of his father, Kshudiram, Thakur came to Calcutta with his elder brother. He was then 17, or 18 years old. In Calcutta, he spent some days at Nathair Bagan, few days at the house of Govinda Chatterji in Jhamapukur where he performed puja. In this connection, he performed puja for sometime in the family of the Mittras of Jhamapukur.

Rani Rasmani dedicated Kali Temple in Dakshineswar, two and a half kosas (about five miles) from Calcutta on 18th of Jaishtha, 1262 B.Y., on the *Snan Yatra*[\[1\]](#) day, Thursday, 31 May, 1855[\[2\]](#). Sri Ramakrishna's elder brother, Pundit Ramakumar, was appointed the first priest of the Kali Temple. Thakur too used to come here often from Calcutta and after some time he was also appointed for the puja work. He was at that time 21/22 years old. His second brother, Rameswar too performed puja in the Kali Temple from time to time. He had two sons Ramalal and Shiva Rama, and a daughter Lakshmi Devi.

As Sri Ramakrishna had been performing the puja for quite sometime, a change came over him. He would remain absorbed and keep sitting beside the image of the Mother.

Soon after his near and dear ones arranged his marriage. They thought that marriage might change his state. He was married in 1859 to Sarada Mani Devi, the daughter of Ramachandra Mukherji of Jairambati, a village two kosas from Kamarpukur. Thakur was 22/23 years old while the Holy Mother was six then.

After his marriage Sri Ramakrishna returned to the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. Within a few days, there was a sudden change in his state. While worshipping the Kali's image, he began to see wonderful divine visions. He would be performing the arati but the arati was not coming to a close. He would sit down to perform the puja but the puja was not coming to a

close. At times, perhaps he would offer flowers on his own head.

At times, he could not carry on the puja; he would roam about like a mad man. Rani Rasmani's son-in-law, Mathur, however, began to see and serve him as a great man and arranged for Mother Kali's puja through another brahmin. He gave the responsibility of performing the puja and attending upon Thakur Sri Ramakrishna to Hriday Mukherji, Thakur's sister's son.

Afterwards Thakur neither attended to the duties of a priest nor did he enter householder's life. This marriage was merely in name. Day and night - 'Mother, Mother' was on his lips. Now he was like a figure of wood, now moving about like a mad person. Sometimes he would live like a child, sometimes he would hide himself at the sight of worldly people attached to 'woman and gold[3]'. But for divine talk, he did not like anything - always uttering, 'Mother! Mother!'

In the Kali Temple, there was (it is still there) a free kitchen. Sadhus and sannyasis would frequently visit it. Totapuri stayed for eleven months and expounded Vedanta to Thakur. While he would do a part of it, Totapuri observed that Thakur would go into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Perhaps it was 1866 A.D. and Bhairavi Brahmini had already come (in 1859 A.D.). She had made Thakur practise several Tantrik exercises. Looking upon him as Sri Chaitanya, she read out to him 'Sri Charitamrita' and other Vaishnava holy books. When she saw him listening to Vedanta from Totapuri, Brahmini would warn him and say, 'Baba, don't listen to Vedanta. It will dilute your bhava and bhakti.'

Vaishnava Charan, a pundit of the Vaishnava sect, often visited him. It was he who took Thakur to an assembly of Chaitanya's bhaktas in Calcutta. In this assembly, Thakur Sri Ramakrishna experienced the state of God consciousness and had stepped up and occupied the seat of Sri Chaitanya. Vaishnava Charan

was the president of this Chaitanya assembly.

Vaishnava Charan had told Mathur, 'This madness is not ordinary, it is the madness of love. He is mad for the Lord.' Vaishnava Charan and the Brahmini had seen Thakur's state of *mahabhava* (divine ecstasy). Like Chaitanya Deva, he sometimes passed through the state of super-consciousness (samadhi - like a piece of wood, unmindful of the world around), sometimes in the state of semi-consciousness and sometimes he would come into the state of outer-consciousness.

Thakur would weep calling out, 'Mother, Mother!' He would always talk to the Mother and take instructions from Her. He would say, 'O Mother, I shall hear You and You alone. I do not know the sacred books, nor do I know the pundit. If You explain me, only then I shall believe.' Thakur knew and would say that He who is Supreme Being Indivisible Sachchidananda is Mother.

Divine Mother had told Thakur, 'You and I are one. Live with bhakti for the good of mankind. All bhaktas will come. Then you will not have to see the worldly minded people alone. There are many bhaktas, pure and free from worldly desires; they will come.'

In the Temple at the time of *arati* when bells and cymbals used to ring, Sri Ramakrishna would go to the roof of the Kuthi and cry in a loud voice, 'O, you bhaktas, who are you? Where are you? Come soon.'

Thakur took his mother Chandramani Devi for another form of the Mother of the Universe and would serve her in the same spirit. When Thakur's elder brother, Ramakumar, departed for heaven the bereaved mother was stricken with grief. Within three-four years, Thakur called her to the Kali Temple and made her stay near him. Daily he would go to see her, take the dust of her feet and ask about her welfare.

Thakur went on pilgrimage twice. During the first one, he took his mother with him. Rama Chatterji and some of the sons of Mathur accompanied him. At that time, the first railway line was just laid for Kashi - within the period of five, or six years of the change in his spiritual state. At that time, night and day he was in

samadhi, or remained overwhelmed and intoxicated in bhava. During the pilgrimage, after visiting Vaidyanath he visited Kashi *dham* (place of pilgrimage) and Prayag in 1863 A.D.

His second pilgrimage took place five years later, in January 1868, with Mathur Babu and his wife Jagadamba Dasi. This time his sister's son Hriday was with him. During the journey, he visited Kashi *dham*, Prayag and Vrindavan. In Kashi, he went into samadhi at the Manikarnika ghat and had divine vision of Lord Vishvanath whispering the name of Tarak Brahman in the ears of the dying ones. He also met and spoke to Trailanga Swami who had taken the vow of silence. In Mathura at the Dhruva ghat, he saw Sri Krishna in the lap of Vasu Deva; in Sri Vrindavan, he saw Sri Krishna amongst the cows returning in the evening from across the Yamuna - such sports he saw with his spiritual eye. In Nidhuvan, he was overjoyed on meeting and conversing with Mother Ganga who was immersed in the love of Radha.

When Keshab Sen was meditating with his disciples in the garden of Belghar, Sri Ramakrishna came to see him with his nephew Hriday in 1875. Vishwa Nath Upadhyay, the Captain from Nepal, used to visit Sri Ramakrishna during these days. Gopal of Sinti (the Elder Gopal), Mahendra Kaviraj, Kishori of Krishna Nagar and Mahima Charan had met Thakur by this time.

The bhaktas of Thakur's inner circle began coming to him in 1879-80. When they met Thakur, he had almost passed the state of 'madness for the Lord'. He was like a child then - calm and ever cheerful. But he was almost always in the state of samadhi - sometimes in *jada* samadhi (like a piece of wood unmindful of the world around), sometimes in *bhava* samadhi (immersed in God). When out of samadhi, he would roam about in the world of bhava. He then looked like a five year old child ever uttering 'Mother! Mother!'

Rama and Manmohan met Thakur towards the end of 1879. Kedar and Surendra came next. Also came

Chuni, Latu, Nityagopal and Tarak. The end of 1881 and the beginning of 1882 - during this time had come Narendra, Rakhal, Bhavanath, Baburam, Balaram, Nirajan, M. and Yogen. During 1883-1884 came Kishori, Adhar, Nitai, the Younger Gopal, Tarak of Belghar, Sarat and Shashi. In the middle of 1884 came Sanyal, Gangadhar, Kali, Girish, Devendra, Sarada, Kalipada, Upendra, Dvija and Hari. In the middle of 1885 came Subodh, the Younger Narendra, Paltu, Purna, Narayana, Tejachandra and Haripada. Likewise came Hara Mohan, Yajneshwar, Hazra, Kshirode, Yogen of Krishna Nagar, Manindra, Bhupati, Akshay, Navagopal, Govinda of Belghar, Ashu, Girendra, Atul, Durgacharan, Suresh, Prana Krishna, Nabai Chaitanya, Hari Prasanna, Mahendra (Mukherji), Priya Mukherji, Sadhu Priyanath (Manmath), Vinod, Tulasi, Harish Mustafi, Basakh, Kathak Thakur, Shashi of Bali (Brahmachari), Nityagopal (Goswami), Vipin of Konnagar, Bihari, Dhiren, Rakhal (Haldar) - one after the other.

Ishwara Vidyasagar, Shashadhar Pundit, Dr. Rajendra, Dr. Sarkar, Bankim (Chatterji), Mr. Cook of United States, Bhakta Williams, Mr. Missir, Michael Madhusudan, Krishna Das (Pal), Pundit Dina Bandhu, Pundit Shyamapada, Dr. Rama Narayana, Dr. Durgacharan, Radhika Goswami, Shishir (Ghosh), Navin (clerk) and Neelkantha - they too had met Thakur. Thakur met Trailanga Swami in Sri Kashi *dham* and Mother Ganga in Vrindavan. Taking him as (the incarnation of) Radha (divine love), Mother Ganga would not let Thakur leave Vrindavan.

Before the bhaktas of inner circle came, Krishna Kishore, Madhura, Shambhu Mullick, Narayana Shastri, Gauri Pundit of Indesh, Chandra and Achalananda always visited Thakur. The court pundit of the King of Burdwan, Padma Lochan and Dayananda (the founder) of Arya Samaj also met Thakur. Out of the bhaktas of Thakur's native village, Kamarpukur, and of Seor, Shyam Bazaar etc., many had met him.

Many persons from Brahma Samaj often came to meet

Thakur. Keshab, Vijay, Kali (Basu), Pratap, Shivanath, Amrit, Trailokya, Krishna Bihari, Manilal, Umesh, Hirananda, Bhavani, Nanda Lal and many other Brahma bhaktas often visited him. Thakur would also go to meet the Brahmos. During the lifetime of Mathur, Thakur went with him to Devendra Nath Tagore's house and paid a visit to the Adi Brahma Samaj during the service hours. Later on, he went to see Keshab's Brahma temple and Sadharan Samaj during the worship time. He would frequently visit Keshab's house. How much he would rejoice in the company of Brahma bhaktas! Keshab also visited him frequently sometimes with bhaktas, sometimes alone.

At Kalna, he met Bhagavan Das Baba ji. Seeing Thakur's state of samadhi, Baba ji said, 'You are indeed a *mahapurusha* (great spiritual personality), only you are fit to take the seat of Chaitanya Deva.'

To realize the harmony of all religions, Thakur, on the one hand, practised the disciplines of the Vaishnavas, the Shaktas, the Shaivites and so on. On the other hand, he recited the name of Allah and meditated upon Christ. In the room where he lived, there were pictures of gods and an image of the Buddha. There was also a picture showing Jesus Christ saving Peter from drowning in the water. These pictures can still be seen if you go to that room. English and American devotees can now be seen meditating upon Thakur in this room.

One day he earnestly said to the Mother, 'O Mother, I shall see how your Christian devotees pray to You. Kindly take me there.' After a few days, he went to Calcutta and watched the service standing at the entrance to a church. On his return, Thakur said to the bhaktas, "I did not enter the church to sit there for fear of the steward. I said to myself, 'Maybe he does not then allow me to return to the Kali Temple.' "

Thakur had many women bhaktas. He had called Gopal's mother as Mother and used to call her as 'Gopal's mother'. He would look upon all women as incarnations of Bhagavati (Divine Mother) and would

worship them as Mother. As long as man cannot see woman as Mother Herself, he cannot have pure love for the Lord. He warned men to guard themselves against women till that stage is reached. So much so that he would forbid the company of even the most devoted woman. He himself said to the Mother, 'Mother, I will run a knife across my throat if any lustful thought arises in my mind.'

Thakur's bhaktas are countless. Out of them, some are known while others unknown. It is impossible to name all of them. The names of many of them will be found in 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita'. Those of childhood are many - Ramakrishna, Patu, Tulasi, Shanti, Shashi, Vipin, Hira Lal, Nagendra Mitra, Upendra, Surendra, Suren and so on; and a number of little girls had also seen Thakur. Now they too are his devotees.

After he ended his leela, so many people became his devotees and are still becoming his devotees. In Madras, Srilanka, U.P., Rajaputana, Kumaon, Nepal, Bombay, Punjab and Japan and also in America, England - at all the places the families of bhaktas are scattering and are gradually increasing.

Janmashtami

1310 B.Y., 1903 A.D.

[1] Ceremony of Lord Jagannath's sallying out in procession for a bath

[2] This information is taken from the deed of sale of Rani Rasamani's Kali Temple: Deed of conveyance, date of purchase of the temple grounds 6 September, 1847; date of registration, 27 August, 1861; price Rs. 2,26,000.00

[3] Lust and greed

Section I

Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar

Chapter One

The Kali Temple and garden

Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar Kali Temple - chandni (porch) and the twelve Shiva temples - brick courtyard and the Vishnu temple - Sri Sri Bhavatarini Mother Kali - Nata Mandir (the concert room) - the store, the pantry, the guest house and the place of sacrifice - the office rooms - Sri Ramakrishna's room - Nahabat, Bakultala and Panchavati - Jhautala, Beltala and Kuthi - ghat for washing utensils, Gazitala, the main gate and the back gate - Hanspukur, stable, cow house and flower garden - the verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room - the 'Abode of Joy.'

It is Sunday today. The bhaktas are free, so they are coming in numbers to the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar to see the Paramahansa Deva (Sri Ramakrishna). The door is open to all. Thakur freely talks with all the visitors. Sadhus, paramahansas, Hindus, Christians, Brahmos, Shaktas [\[1\]](#), Vaishnavas [\[2\]](#), men and women - all visit him. Blessed you are Rani Rasmani! It is because of your virtuous merit that such a beautiful temple has come up. Besides, there is such a living image! People are able to come here to meet and worship this great spiritual personality.

The chandni (porch) and the twelve Shiva temples

The Kali Temple is situated about five miles north of Calcutta. It is situated right upon the bank of the Ganga. Landing from the boat and climbing upon the broad staircase, one enters the Kali Temple as one faces east. It is at this very ghat that the Paramahansa Deva takes his bath. Just after the staircase is the chandni. Watchmen of the temple live there. Their cots, mango wood chests and one or two jugs etc. are lying about in that very chandni. When babus (gentlemen) of the neighbourhood come here to take their bath in the Ganga, some of them sit here and gossip as they take a massage of oil. The sadhus, fakirs, and Vaishnavas who come to take *prasad* [\[3\]](#) from the guest house, some of them await the bell of *bhoga* [\[4\]](#) in this very chandni. At times a Bhairavi (woman worshipper of the Mother) dressed in ochre-clothes and with a trident in her hand is seen seated at this very place. She too would go to the guest house at the right time. The chandni is exactly in the middle of the twelve Shiva temples - out of them six temples are exactly to the north of the chandni, and six exactly to the south. People passing by in boats and seeing the twelve temples from a distance exclaim, 'That is the temple garden of Rani Rasmani.'

The brick courtyard and the Vishnu temple

There is a cemented brick courtyard to the east of the chandni and the twelve temples. In the middle of the courtyard, there are two temples facing each other. To the north is the temple of Radhakanta. Exactly to its south is the temple of Mother Kali. In the Radhakanta Temple, the idols of Radha and Krishna face west. One enters the temple through a flight of steps. The floor of the temple is paved with marble. In front of the temple, there is a chandelier hanging in the vestibule. It is not in use now; so it is protected by red linen covers. A watchman keeps a vigil. Canvas screens are provided, so that the deities do not feel inconvenience by the sun in the western sky during noon. Passages left open between the rows of the columns of the vestibules are covered by these screens. Towards the southeast corner of the vestibule, there is a pitcher of Ganga water. Near the threshold of the door of the temple is a vessel containing *charanamrita*^[5]. Bhaktas come bow down before the deities and take some drops of this very *charanamrita*. Inside the temple are the images of Radha and Krishna on a raised seat. Sri Ramakrishna in the beginning was appointed as the priest of this very temple in 1857-1858.

Sri Sri Bhavatarini Mother Kali

In the southern temple is the beautiful stone image of Kali. The Mother is called Bhavatarini (the saviour of the world). The floor of the temple is paved with white and black marble. The raised platform is furnished with steps. On the platform there is a silver lotus with a thousand petals. On this lotus is Shiva lying down on His back with His head to the south and feet to the north. The image of Shiva is made of white marble. Upon His breast stands the stone image of this very beautiful three eyed Shyama Kali attired in a Banarasi sari and Her person decorated with jewels of many kinds. On Her lotus feet are *nupur* (tinkling anklets), *gujari*, *panchem*, *paijeb*, *chutaki*, red china rose and leaves of bel. The *paijeb* is used by the women of the West (Punjab and Utter Pradesh). It was put by Mathur Babu at the special desire of Sri Ramakrishna. The Mother's arms are adorned with *bauti* (broad bangles), *tavij* (armlet) etc. made of gold. The lower arm has *bala*, flowery bangle, and *pouche*. In the middle arm she has a *kada* made of a two and a half round sections, *tavij* and *baju*. The last is with a hanging pendant attached to it. Round Her neck She wears the golden *chek*, a necklace made of seven strings of pearls, another necklace of thirty two gold strings, a chain of stars and a golden garland made of human skulls. On her head She wears a crown and her ears are adorned with *kanbala*, *kanpash*, gold earrings, *chandni* (round golden ear) and golden fish. There is a nose ring on her nose with a pearl attached to it. The three-eyed Goddess holds a decapitated human head and a sword in both Her left hands. Both Her right hands offer the boon of fearlessness.

Round Her waist She wears the garland of human arms as well as golden waist-chains of neem and kamar-patta. In the north-east corner of the temple is a unique bed. On it the Mother takes rest.

On one side of the wall hangs a *chanvar*^[6]. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna fanned the Mother so many times with this *chanvar*. Upon the platform on a lotus seat there is a silver glass with water in it. Below on the ground are rows of vessels that hold water for Shyama to drink. To the northwest of the lotus seat is a lion made of eight metals, and the image of iguana and a trident towards the east. Towards the southwest of the platform is a she-fox, to the south is a bull made of black stone and to the north-east is a goose. On one of the steps leading to the platform is the image of Narayana installed on a small silver throne. On one side of his is the image of Ramalala, the nick name of Ramachandra, made of eight metals obtained by the Paramahansa Deva from a holy man and also an emblem of Vaneshwar Shiva. There are images of other gods too. The Divine Mother stands with her face to the south. Exactly in front of Her, that is to the south of the platform, is installed a pitcher. After the puja, this *mangal-ghat*^[7] is dubbed with vermilion, covered with various kinds of flowers and decorated with flower garlands. On one side of the wall is a pitcher made of copper, filled with water. The Mother would wash Her face. Above in the temple is a canopy, behind the image is hanging a piece of beautiful Benarasi cloth. There are silver columns on all the four sides of the platform. A very expensive canopy spreads over them. It adds to the beauty of the image. The temple is of medium size. Some of the gates of the vestibule are protected by strong doors. The guard sits near one of the doors. Near the threshold is a small vessel with the holy *charanamrita* in it. The top of the temple is adorned with nine pinnacles. Four of the pinnacles are in the lowermost line, in the middle also are four and above them there is one pinnacle which is now broken. The Paramahansa Deva had performed puja in this shrine as well as in the shrine of Radhakanta.

The Nata Mandir (the Theatrical Hall)

In front of the Kali's shrine, that is to the south is a beautiful and spacious Nata Mandir. Over the Nata Mandir are Mahadeva, Nandi and Bhringi (latter two are attendants of Shiva). Before entering the Mother's temple, Sri Ramakrishna would fold his hands and bow to Sri Mahadeva as though he would be entering the temple after taking His permission. Two rows of very high columns stand north-south of the Nata Mandir with a roof over them. To the east and west of the row of the columns are two portions of the Nata Mandir. At the time of festival worship, especially on the Kali puja day, *yatras* (theatrical performances) are performed in the Nata Mandir. It was in the Nata Mandir that

Mathur Babu, the son-in-law of Rasmani, carried out *dhanyameru* (the ceremony of mound of cereal) at the instruction of Sri Ramakrishna. It was here that Thakur Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Bhairavi in the presence of all.

Store, pantry, guest house and place of sacrifice

To the west of the square courtyard are the twelve Shiva temples and on the three other sides are single storeyed rooms. The rooms to the east include the store room, the room for keeping *puris* (fried bread), the room for the food offerings of Vishnu, the room for food offerings, the room for the food offerings for the Mother, the kitchen for the gods and goddesses and the guesthouse. If the guests and sadhus do not eat in the guesthouse, they have to go to the office of the steward of the temple. On receiving orders of the steward, the sadhus take rations from the store. To the south of the Nata Mandir is the place of sacrifice.

The food prepared for Vishnu's shrine is vegetarian. The kitchen for the food of Kali's shrine is different. In front of the kitchen, the maid servants cut fish with big sickles. On Amavasya (the dark night of the month), a goat is sacrificed. The offering of the food is over before noon. In the mean time the beggars, the sadhus and the guests take plates made of sal leaves from the guesthouse and sit down in rows. The brahmins are allotted a separate corner. The brahmins working here have different seats. The prasad for the steward is sent to his room. The babus of Jaun Bazaar (descendants of Rani Rasmani) stay in the Kuthi when they visit the temple. They have their prasad carried to them in the Kuthi.

Office rooms

In the row of rooms to the south of the courtyard are the office rooms and the residences of the officials. Here the steward and the clerks are always present. And the storekeeper, the maidservants, the men servants, priests, cooks, brahmin cooks, and gate keepers are always found walking in and out. Some of these rooms remain locked. They contain the property of the temple - carpets, tents, etc. Some rooms of this row are utilized as storerooms on the birthday celebrations of the Paramahansa Deva. The cooking for the great festivity is done on the ground lying southwards.

There is a row of single storeyed rooms to the north of the courtyard. Right in middle is the main gate. As in the chandni, here too the gatekeepers keep a watch. Shoes have to be taken off before entering both the places.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna's room

Right in the northwest corner of the courtyard, i.e. to the north of the twelve Shiva temples, is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva's room. Exactly to the west of the room is a semi-circular verandah. It was from here that Sri Ramakrishna often watched Ganga with

his face towards the west. Next to this verandah there is a path. To its west is a flower garden and then the terrace along the side of which flows the pure sweet melodious water of the Ganga, the symbol of all pilgrimages.

Nahabat (the concert room), Bakultala and Panchavati

Right to the north of the Paramahansa Deva's room is a rectangular verandah. To its north is a garden path. Again to its north is a flower garden. Just beyond it is the Nahabat (the concert room). In the room below lived the revered mother of Sri Ramakrishna and later the Holy Mother. Next to Nahabat are the Bakultala and the Bakultala ghat. Here the women of the locality take their bath. It was at this very ghat that the venerable mother of the Paramahansa Deva had breathed her last with the lower half of her body immersed into the holy waters of the Ganga.

A little north to the Bakultala is Panchavati (a grove of five trees). It was at the foot of this Panchavati that the Paramahansa Deva practised many religious austerities. And he would often roam about here with his bhaktas. At times, deep at night, he would rise and come here. This grove is a collection of five trees - the bata (Indian fig), the peepal, the neem, the amalaki and the bel. These were got planted by Thakur under his own care. Coming back from Vrindavan, he scattered here the holy dust of that place. Right to the east of Panchavati, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna had a thatched hut built and meditated so much upon the Lord and practised so many austerities here. This hut has now been turned into a brick-built room.

In the middle of the Panchavati is a bata tree. Along side is a peepal tree. Both these trees have joined each other and look like one. Being very ancient and having many holes within, this old tree has become the living place of many birds and animals. Below it is a brick-built circular platform with steps. Seated on the northwestern side of this platform, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna carried out many devotional exercises, and with a yearning he would call upon Bhagavan in the manner a cow cries for its calf. Now across the hallowed seat there has fallen a branch of the peepal tree, comrade of the bata tree. This branch has not completely broken away and continues partially to adhere to the parent tree. It seems that no great man worthy to sit on that platform has yet been born again.

Jhautala, Beltala and Kuthi

Going a little ahead towards north of the Panchavati is a railing made of iron wire. On the other side of the railing is the Jhautala. There are rows and rows of willow trees. Moving a little east from the Jhautala is the Beltala. Here too the Paramahansa Deva

practised so many difficult austerities. Beyond the Jhautala and the Beltala is a high wall. Just to the north of it, is the Government Magazine.

Coming out of the main gate of the courtyard and going to the north one sees a two-storeyed Kuthi. Whenever Rani Rasmani and her son-in-law, Mathur Babu, and others visited the temple they used to put up at this Kuthi. During their lifetime, the Paramahansa Deva used to live in a western room on the ground floor of the Kuthi. A path from this room leads to the Bakultala ghat from where a splendid view of Ganga is visible.

Ghat for washing utensils, Gazitala and gates

Going towards the east on the path between the main gate of the courtyard and the Kuthi, there is a fine tank with a specially built cemented ghat. Right to the east of Mother Kali's temple, this tank has a ghat that is used for washing utensils and a little away from the above path is another ghat. Near this ghat to the side of the path, there is a tree called Gazitala. Going a little farther to the east on this path there is another gate - this is the main exit from the garden. People from Alam Bazaar or Calcutta visit the temple through this gate. People from Dakshineswar come in through the back gate. The Calcutta people usually enter the Kali Temple from the main gate. There too, a porter keeps a watch. When at midnight, the Paramahansa Deva used to return from Calcutta to the Kali Temple, the porter of this gate would open the lock. The Paramahansa Deva would call the porter to his room and give him puris, sweetmeats and other items of prasad offered to the gods.

Hanspukur, stable, cow house and flower garden

To the east of the Panchavati there is another tank called the Hanspukur (Goose tank). To the northeast corner of the tank are a stable and a cow house. To the east of the cow-house is the back gate. One goes to the village of Dakshineswar through this gate. The priests and the temple-officials who have brought their families and settled in Dakshineswar, they and their sons and daughters use this gate.

There is a pathway running from the southern extremity of the garden to the north up to the Bakultala and the Panchavati along the bank of the Ganga. This path runs with flower plants on both of its sides. And the path that runs east-west from the south of the Kuthi, too, has flower plants on both of its sides. From the Gazitala to the cow house, the stretch of land to the east of the Kuthi and the Hanspukur also has flower plants of different species, fruit-trees and another tank.

Very early in the morning when the eastern sky is taking a red hue, one can hear the sweet sounds of the morning arati and the morning music played on the *shahnai*. At this time they start

plucking the flowers from Mother Kali's flower garden. On the bank of the Ganga in front of the Panchavati are trees of vilva and the flower plants of fragrant (pagoda flower). Sri Ramakrishna was very fond of tulip, madhavi (myrtle) and gulachi flowers. He brought madhavi creeper from Vrindavan *dham* and planted it here. On a part of the land that is to the east of the Hanspukur and the Kuthi are champak plants on the bank of the tank. At a little distance are plants of jhumka, hibiscus, roses and kanchan (gold flower). On the hedges grows the aparajita and close to it are jasmine and shafalika flowers. Alongside the western wall of the line of the twelve temples are the white oleander, the red oleander, the rose, the jasmine and the larger jasmine. At places there are thorn apple flowers used for the worship of Shiva. At intervals there is the tulasi (basil) growing on high brick-built platforms. To the south of the Nahabat are larger jasmine, jasmine, gardenia and rose. Not far from the brick-built ghat are padmakarvi (lotus oleander) and the cuckoo-eyed. Near the Paramahansa Deva's room are a couple of plants of cock spoon and close by are double jasmine, jasmine, gardenia, rose, tulip, white oleander, red oleander, double hibiscus and Chinese hibiscus.

At one time Sri Ramakrishna too used to gather flowers. One day he was plucking the leaves of the bel tree in front of the Panchavati. While plucking leaves of bel tree, a small portion of the bark of the tree came off. Then it seemed to him as if the one that lies within all things had received a severe pain. Thenceforward, he could no longer pluck the bel leaves. On another day, he was walking about to pluck flowers. Suddenly an unknown power made him aware that the various flower plants before him were but so many bouquets - adoring the great image of Shiva - that He was thus being worshipped night and day. Henceforth, he ceased to pluck flowers.

Verandah of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna's room

There is a verandah running to the east of Sri Ramakrishna's room. A wing of the verandah faces the courtyard, i.e. to the south. Sri Ramakrishna often sat with bhaktas in this verandah and talked to them about the Lord and sang songs with them of the name of God. The other wing of this eastern verandah faces the north. In this verandah bhaktas would come to him to celebrate his birthday with him and sing hymns with him. Moreover, at times, he would sit and partake of prasada with them here. It was also in this verandah that Keshab Chandra Sen would come to meet him and converse with him for long hours like a disciple. They would enjoy themselves and sit together to partake of popped rice, coconut, puri, sweets, etc. It was also here that Sri Ramakrishna had gone into samadhi at the sight of Narendra.

The Kali Temple has become the Abode of Joy. Radhakanta, Bhavatarini and Mahadeva are daily worshipped here. Here offerings of worship are made and guests served. On one side stretches afar the sacred view of the Bhagirathi (the Ganga), on the other side there is a unique flower garden with flowers of variegated hues which charm with their overflowing fragrance and beauty. Then there is a god man intoxicated night and day with the love of the Lord. Here is the perennial festival of the ever joyful Mother. Musical notes always emerge from the Nahabat. Once music is played at early dawn at the time of the morning arati. After that at about nine o'clock when the worship starts. Then again at noon when after bhoga arati the Deities retire to rest. It is again played at four o'clock when they rise after their rest and take a wash. After this it is repeated at the time of evening arati. And last of all, at nine in the night, when after the evening offerings of food the deities go to bed, the music is heard from the Nahabat.

Chapter Two

The nectar of Thy story revives the parched soul of man. Poets (men of knowledge) praise it. It wipes away our sins. To hear it is in itself auspicious. It is pervasive, limitless and beautiful. Only those understand it who have been generous in their past lives.

- Srimad Bhagavata, Skandha 10 , Sloka 9

The first meeting - month of February 1882

The Kali Temple in Dakshineswar on the bank of the Ganga. The temple of the Mother Kali. Spring time, the month of February 1882. One day after the birthday of Thakur on Thursday, 23 February, Thakur went for a cruise on a steamer with Keshab Sen and Joseph Cook. It is a few days later. The evening shades are approaching. M. comes in Thakur Sri Ramakrishna's room. This is his first visit.

He sees a roomful of people, seated motionless and drinking the nectar of his words. Thakur is seated on the bedstead, his face towards the east. He is talking of Hari with a smiling face. The bhaktas are seated on the floor.

When does renunciation of *karma* take place?

M. looks in and stands speechless. He wonders as if it is Sukadeva talking of the story of the Lord and at that spot have gathered together all the places of pilgrimage. Or is it Sri Chaitanya sitting in the holy land of Puri singing the names and glories of Bhagavan (the beloved Lord) and seated before him are Ramananda, Swarup and other bhaktas! Says Thakur, "When just at the name of Hari or Rama your hair stand on end and tears flow from your eyes, know it for certain that *sandhya*^[8] and other daily services will not be needed any more. And other daily services are over for you. You have then gained the right to give up *karmas* (work). *Karmas*, indeed, fall off on their own. In that state mere repetition of the name of Rama, or Hari, or Omkar^[9] is enough." And he adds, "*Sandhya* ends in Gayatri^[10] and Gayatri in Om."

M. has come here walking from garden to garden with Siddhu ^[11] from Barahnagar. It is Sunday, 26 February, 15th Falgun. It is holiday, so he has come out for a walk. A little earlier he was having a stroll in the garden of Prasanna Bannerji. It was there that Siddhu said, "There is a beautiful garden on the bank of the Ganga. Will you like to see it? A paramahansa lives there."

Entering the garden through the main gate, M. and Siddhu came direct to Sri Ramakrishna's room. M. stands speechless as he beholds. He thinks, "How charming is this place! How charming is this man! How sweet is his talk! I don't feel like leaving this place!" After a while he says to himself, "But let me once see where I have come! I will then come back and sit here."

As he comes out of the room with Siddhu, the sweet sound of *arati* ^[12] starts. Cymbals, bells and drums all begin to sound together. From the southern side of the garden musical notes emerge from the Nahabat. Floating over the bosom of the Bhagirathi (Ganga), the musical notes begin to merge somewhere far far away. The breeze of the spring is gentle and fragrant with the sweet odour of many a flower. Moonlight starts spreading. It seems as if preparations for the arati of deities are afoot all around. Witnessing arati in the twelve Shiva temples and in the temples of Radhakanta and Bhavatarini, M. is filled with supreme joy. Siddhu says, "This is Rasmani's temple. Here the gods are ministered everyday from morning till evening. Many holy guests and the poor come here."

Both of them wend their way through the grand brick quadrangle, as they emerge talking out of Bhavatarini temple and again reach in front of Sri Ramakrishna's room. Now they find that the door of the room is closed.

The incense has been burnt a little while before. M. is educated in English ways, he cannot enter the room all at once. At the door stands Vrinda (the maidservant). Asks M., "I say, is the sadhu maharaj (holy man) in the room now?"

Vrinda — Yes, he is inside the room.

M. — How long has he been here?

Vrinda — Oh! many many years.

M. — Well, does he read many books?

Vrinda — Oh dear, books or such like that! They are all on his tongue.

M. is fresh from college. He is all the more surprised to hear that Thakur Sri Ramakrishna does not read books at all.

M. — Well, perhaps he will now perform sandhya! Can we enter the room? Will you please tell him about us?

Vrinda — Why, go in my children. Go inside and sit in the room.

Thereupon they enter the room and see that no other person is there. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is seated alone on the bedstead in the room. Incense is burning in the room and all the doors are closed. M. folds his hands to pay his obeisance as he enters the room. At the bidding of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna, M. and Siddhu take their seats on the floor. Thakur asks, "Where do you live? What do you do? What has brought you to Barahnagar?" etc. M. answers all his queries but he notices that in the course of conversation, Thakur lets his mind go to some other object on which he is meditating. Later, he heard that this is called bhava^[13]. It is like a man sitting with a fishing rod in his hand to catch a fish. The fish comes and begins to bite at the bait. The float trembles. The man is now all attention. He grasps the rod and looks at the float with a concentrated mind. He talks to no one. Sri Ramakrishna's state is exactly like this. Later, he hears and sees that Thakur goes into this state after *sandhya* (evening). At times, he loses all external consciousness.

M. — You would now perform your sandhya. In that case, we may leave.

Sri Ramakrishna (in bhava) — No. Sandhya! No, it is not that.

And after some conversation, M. offers obeisance and takes his leave.

Says Thakur, "Come again."

On his way back, M. says to himself, "Who may this god man be! How is that my soul longs to see him again! Can a man be great without reading books? What a wonder that I feel like visiting him again! He too has said, 'Come again.' I shall come tomorrow or day after in the morning."

Chapter Three

Akanda mandalakaram vyaptam yen characharam,

Tatpadam darshitam yen tasmaiya Sri Guruve namah.

- Vishveshwara Tantra 2

[Salutations to the guru who has made it possible to realize Him who pervades this entire universe of movable and immovable objects.]

Second meeting and conversation between the Guru and the disciple

The second meeting. Eight o'clock in the morning. Thakur is going to have his shave. The winter cold is still lingering, so he wears a moleskin shawl. The shawl is hemmed with muslin. On seeing M., says he, "So you have come! Good, take your seat here."

He says this in the south-eastern verandah. The barber is there. Thakur sits in the same verandah for his shave and talks to M. in between. He wears the shawl on his body in the same manner with slippers on his feet. His face is smiling. He stammers a little while talking.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Well, where do you live?

M. — In Calcutta, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — To whom have you come here?

M. — I came here in Barahnagar to visit my elder sister, at Ishan Kaviraj's house.

Keshab Chandra - Sri Ramakrishna weeps before the Mother

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, how is Keshab doing at present? He was seriously ill.

M. — I too heard the same, perhaps he is well now.

Sri Ramakrishna — I made a vow to offer a green coconut and sugar to the Divine Mother for Keshab's recovery. I would sometimes wake up at midnight and cry before the Mother, saying, 'O Mother, grant that Keshab may get well. If Keshab does not live, whom shall I talk to when I go to Calcutta?' That is why I vowed to offer green coconut and sugar.

"I say, one Mr. Cook was here. Does he lecture? Keshab took me on board a steamer. Mr. Cook was there too."

M. — Yes, I did hear of him but have not attended any of his lectures. I do not know much about him.

Household and the duty of a father

Sri Ramakrishna — Pratap's brother came here and stayed for some days. He had no work to do. He said that he would stay here. He had left his wife, son and daughter in the care of his father-in-law. He has many children. I took him to task. Just see, he has so many children! Should they be fed and looked after by others of the locality! He is not ashamed that somebody else should take care of his family and that they should be a burden to his father-in-law. I rated him rather severely and told him to look for work. It was then that he went away from here.

Chapter Four

Ajnana timirandhaysa jnananjan shalakaya,

Chakshu runmilitam yen tasmai Sri Guruve namah.

- Vishveshwar Tantra 3

[Salutations to the Guru who with the collyrium stick of knowledge has opened the eyes of one blinded by the disease of ignorance.]

M. is reprimanded - his egotism is crushed

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Are you married?

M. — Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna (startled) — I say, Ramalal^[14]! Ah me! He has already taken a wife.

M. gets confused and sits speechless, hanging down his head like one guilty of a serious offence. He says to himself, “Is marrying so bad?” Thakur further asks, “Have you any children?”

M. can hear the beating of his own heart. Says he in fear, “Yes sir, I have children.” Thakur rebukes M. all the more saying, “Alas, you have children too!” M. is stunned by this blow.

His egotism is getting crushed. After a while, Thakur Sri Ramakrishna looks at him kindly and speaks affectionately, “See, you have some good signs. I can know it by looking at one’s eyes and forehead.”

“Well, what kind of wife you have? Is she *vidya shakti*^[15], or *avidya shakti*?”

What is jnana? Image worship

M. — Sir, she is good but *ajnani* (ignorant).

Sri Ramakrishna (sharply) — And you are jnani (wise)!

What is jnana and what is ajnana, M. does not know. Till now, he only knows that a jnani is he who has received education and can read books. This false notion was afterwards taken away. Then he learnt that to know the Lord is jnana and not to know Him is ajnana. Thakur said, “Are you jnani?” M.’s egotism again receives a hard blow.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, do you believe in God with form or formless God?

M. (confused, to himself) “Is it possible to have faith in the formless God and believing at the same time that He is with form? How can it be that while believing God to be with form, one can think of Him as formless. Can the two contradictory states coexist in the same substance? Can white things like milk be also black?”

M. — I only like the formless God.

Sri Ramakrishna — That is good. Having faith in either of the two (aspects) is enough. To think of God as formless is quite right. Even so, don’t think that only this idea is true and all others are false. Know this that the formless God is true and so is God- with form. You must hold on to that what you believe.

Hearing again and again that both the ideas are true, M. is speechless. Never has he read such a thing in any of his books.

His egotism is crushed the third time but it is not yet completely knocked out. So, he advances with his reasoning a little further.

M. — Sir, well, let one believe that God is with form but surely He is not an earthen image.

Sri Ramakrishna — My dear sir, why earthen? It is **the image of Spirit!**

M. does not understand the significance of the 'image of the Spirit'. He says, "Well, should one not make it clear to those who worship the image of clay that there is no Lord in an earthen image and that while worshipping they should only keep God in view and not worship the clay."

Lecture and Thakur Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna (sharply) — It is fashionable for Calcutta people to lecture and bring others to light. How to bring light to themselves, they do not know. Who are you to teach others? He who is the Lord of the universe will Himself teach. He who has made this universe, the moon, the sun, the seasons, the human beings and the beasts, He who has made provision of food for men and beasts, and parents to rear and love will Himself teach. He has made this much, will He not arrange it too? If there is a need to teach, God Himself will surely make them understand. And then, God is *antaryamin* (knower of heart within). If there is some mistake in worshipping the clay image, does He not know that He Himself is being called upon? He is pleased with this very worship. Why should you have headache over it? Seek that you may yourself have jnana and develop bhakti.

This time M.'s egotism is completely crushed.

He says to himself, "What he says is indeed true. What need have I go about preaching to others? Have I myself known the Lord? Nor have I developed bhakti for Him. 'Bidding my friend Shankra to lie down on my bed when I have nowhere to lie upon.' Knowing nothing, listening to none and yet going out to preach to others! It would indeed be shameful, a great folly. Is this Mathematics, or History, or Literature that you can teach to others? It is the science of the Lord. Whatever he (Thakur) is saying fully appeals to me.

This was M.'s first and last attempt to argue with Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna — You were talking of worshipping the clay images. Even if made of clay, these need to be worshipped. The Lord Himself has provided various forms of worship. He who is the Lord of the universe has made all this - to suit men in different stages of life. The mother so arranges the food for her children that everyone gets, what agrees with him.

"Say, a mother has five children and she has fish to cook. She makes different dishes out of it and gives each one of her children what suits him. *Pulao* ^[16] with fish for one; fish with sour tamarind

for another; *charchari*^[17] of fish yet for another, and fried fish still for another - she prepares exactly what they like, exactly what agrees with their stomach. Understand?

M. — Yes, sir.

Chapter Five

Sansararnavaghore yahe karnadharswarupakah,

Namostu Ramakrishnaye tasmai Sri Gurve namah.

[Salutations to Sri Ramakrishna, salutations to that Guru who is the pilot to take across the deep sea of the world.]

How to gain bhakti?

M. — How may one fix one's mind on the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — One must chant without ceasing the name of the Lord and His glories. And keep company of the holy - one must frequently go to God's bhaktas, or sadhus. One's mind does not fix itself on the Lord while living night and day in the midst of worldly activities and family life. Hence, one must go into solitude now and then to meditate on God. In the first stage it is very hard to fix the mind on the Lord unless one frequently goes into solitude.

“When the plant is young, it needs a hedge around it. Without the hedge goats and cows eat it up.

“The mind, the solitary corner and the forest are the places where you will meditate. And you will always have good thoughts in your mind. The Lord alone is real, i.e. the eternal substance, and all else is unreal, i.e. transitory. Discriminating thus, you will shake off attachment to the perishable things of the world.”

M. (humbly) — How to live in the household?

Sannyasa in the household - the way - sadhana in solitude

Sri Ramakrishna — You will do all your duties but keep your mind fixed on God. Wife, son, father and mother - you will live with them all and serve them as if they are your own. But you will know in your heart that they are really not yours.

“A rich man's maidservant attends to all her duties but her mind is always set upon her own home in the village. Besides, she nurses her master's children as if they were her own. She calls out: ‘My Rama, my Hari,’ but all the while she knows fully well that they are not hers.

“The tortoise moves about in water but do you know where its mind abides? On the bank of the river, on the dry land, where its eggs are laid. You will attend to all your worldly work but take care that

your mind rests on the Lord.

“If you enter the world (household) before you have acquired bhakti for the Lord, surely you will get entangled more and more. Misfortune, grief and ills of the world will make you lose your balance of mind. And the more you think of worldly matters, the more will come the attachment.

“Rub your hands with oil before you break the jack-fruit, otherwise its milky exudation will stick to your hands. First get the oil of bhakti for the Lord and then engage into the affairs of the world (household).

“But to acquire bhakti, solitude is needed. If you want to make butter, the curds have to be set in some lonely corner. The curds will not set if disturbed. Then you have to sit in a quiet place, giving up all other work and churn the curds. Only then you can get butter.

“Besides, by giving your mind to God in solitude, you gain jnana (spiritual wisdom), *vairagya* (dispassion) and bhakti. But if you give the same mind to the world, it becomes vulgar. In the world there is nothing but the thoughts of ‘woman and gold’^[18].

“The world is like water and the mind like milk. If the milk is poured in water, it will get mixed with water and become one. You will not be able to get pure milk, howsoever much you may try. But if the milk is turned into curds and butter made out of it, it will swim over water when placed in it. So, first get the butter of jnana and bhakti by practising sadhana (spiritual disciplines) in a solitary place. This butter when put in the water of the world will not mix with it. It will swim on its surface.

“Along with this the practice of discrimination is also needed. ‘Woman and gold’ are transitory, the Lord is the only reality. What does money give? It gives us food (rice and dal), clothes and a place to live in - thus far, no further. But it does not help attain Bhagavan. So money cannot be the end of life. This is the process of discrimination. Do you see this?”

M. — Yes, sir. I have recently read in Prabodh Chandrodaya (a Sanskrit play) about discrimination.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, discrimination. Just think, what is there in money or in a beautiful body? Think over it, in the body of a beautiful woman also there are mere bones, flesh, fat, urine and excreta - all these. Why does a man give his mind to such a thing and lose sight of the Lord? Why does he forget the Lord?

How to see the Lord?

M. — Sir, can the Lord be seen?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes. There is no doubt about it. Going into solitude from time to time, chanting His name and His attributes, practising discrimination - these are the means one should employ.

M. — What state of mind leads to God-vision?

Sri Ramakrishna — Cry with a very yearning heart and you shall see God. People shed pitcherfuls of tears for wife and children, they weep streams of tears for money. But who cries for the Lord? ‘Call out to God with a longing and yearning heart.’ Saying this Thakur sings a song -

Call out with a yearning, O mind! I’ll see, how will Mother Shyama hold Herself from you?

How will Shyama stay away? How can Kali remain away?

O mind, if you are within yourself take hibiscus flowers and bel leaves.

Smear them with sandal paste of bhakti, and make a handful offering of them at Her feet.

“Yearning in the heart brings the dawn. Thereafter, the sun is visible. After longing comes God-vision.

“You can see God if you have these three attachments put together: The attachment of a worldly man to the things of the world, the attachment of a mother to her child, and the attachment of a chaste wife to her husband. If these three attachments are put altogether (for God) in a man, the power of these attachments makes one see God.

“The real thing is that you must love the Lord the way a mother loves her son, a chaste wife her husband, and a worldly man the things of the world. When you have the combined intensity of love of all these three persons for the Lord and you put together all these three attachments, you will see Him.

“One should call upon God with a yearning heart.

“The kitten knows only to cry mew, mew to its mother. Wherever the mother keeps it, it remains there - now in the kitchen, now on the floor, and now on the bed. When it feels hurt, it simply cries ‘mew,’ ‘mew’ and knows nothing else. Wherever the mother may be, it comes on hearing its mew, mew.’ ”

Chapter Six

Sarvabhutastham atmanam sarvabhutani cha atmani,

Ikshati yogayuktatma sarvatra samadarshanah.

- (Gita 6:29)

[His mind being harmonized by yoga, he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself; he sees the same in all.]

Third meeting - Narendra Nath, Bhavanath and M.

M. was then putting up at his sister's house in Barahnagar. Ever since he saw Sri Ramakrishna, M. thought of him every moment — as if he always has before his eyes the same joyful image and listening to his words, sweet as nectar. He says to himself: How has this poor brahmin ascertained all these deep truths? M. has never seen earlier anybody explaining so clearly all those things. He thinks day and night when will he go to him and meet him again.

Not long after it is Sunday, 5 March. He reaches the garden of Dakshineswar with Nepal Babu of Barahnagar at four o'clock. He finds Sri Ramakrishna in the same room, seated on the smaller bedstead. The room is filled with bhaktas. It is Sunday, so the bhaktas have time to see him. M. does not yet know any of them. He takes a seat aside in the assemblage and observes that Thakur is talking to the bhaktas with a smiling face.

Addressing a young man of nineteen years old, Thakur looks at him and joyfully talks on a number of matters. The young man is Narendra (Vivekananda). He is a college student and often visits the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. His words are all full of spirit. His eyes are bright and the looks of a bhakta.

M. sees that the subject of the talk is the conduct of worldly men attached to the pleasures of the world; people who ridicule those who seek the Lord and religion. And how many wicked people there are in the world and how to deal with them, such is the topic of conversation.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — What do you say, Narendra? Worldly men say all sort of things. But see, when the elephant wends its way, so many animals bark and make such other noises from behind. But the elephant does not even look at them. If someone condemns you, what will you think of him?

Narendra — I shall think that the dogs are barking.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — No, my child, you mustn't go that far. Know that the Lord lives in all things. Even so, you must mix with the good and keep distance from the bad even while living with them. Narayana (God) is present even in a tiger but surely you cannot hug him for that reason. (Laughter.) If you say that the tiger is also Narayana, why should I run away? To this, the answer is - he who says, 'Run away' is also Narayana. Why should you not listen to him?

“Listen to a story -

“In a certain forest lived a sadhu. He had a number of disciples. One day he taught them saying, 'Narayana is in all things. Knowing this you will offer *namaskar* to all.' One day a disciple went out to collect firewood for *homa* (sacrificial fire). Suddenly, there was a shout, 'Run, run away wherever you may be - a mad elephant is rushing out.' Everyone ran away except this disciple. He reasoned, 'There is Narayana in elephant too, why should I then

run away?' Thinking thus, he kept standing there. Offering *namaskar* to the elephant (as the Lord), he started offering prayers. The *mahut* (driver of the elephant), on the other hand, shouted, 'Run away, run away.' Still the disciple did not move. At last, the elephant came and seized him with his trunk, threw him aside and went away. The disciple stunned, scratched and torn, lay unconscious.

"Hearing this, his guru and other disciples carried him to the ashrama and gave him medicines. After sometime when he came to himself, one of them asked him, 'Why did you not move away even when you heard that an elephant was coming?' He answered, 'Because gurudeva told us that Narayana Himself is present in all human beings and other living creatures. Seeing the elephant Narayana coming I did not, therefore, quit the spot.' At this the guru said, 'My son, indeed, it is true that the elephant Narayana was coming but my child, *Mahut* Narayana (the driver God) had warned you. If everybody is Narayana, why did you not listen to the latter? You should have paid heed to the *Mahut* Narayana.'

"The scriptures say, '*Apo Narayana* (water is God).' But some water is used for divine service while some of it is used only for washing the face, mouth and hands, and also utensils or clothes, but the latter cannot be used for drinking or divine service. Similarly, Narayana is in the hearts of all holy men as well as unholy men, bhaktas and non-bhaktas. But one cannot have dealings with unholy, non-bhaktas and bad people. One cannot be close to them. With some one may only have nodding acquaintance while with others, even that is not possible. One must live apart from such people."

A Particular Bhakta — Sir, when a bad person comes to harm us or actually does so, should we do nothing then?

The household and *tamoguna*

Sri Ramakrishna — To live in the world and save oneself from the hands of bad people, one should make a show of *tamoguna* (the spirit of resisting evil). But it will not be right to harm anyone thinking that he may harm you.

"A cowboy used to graze his cattle in a field. In that field was a terrible venomous serpent. Everybody was very cautious because of the danger of the reptile. One day a *brahmachari* was passing through that field. The cowboys ran up to him and said, 'Holy man, please don't go this way. There is a terrible venomous snake there.' The brahmachari said, 'Child, never mind. I am not afraid of it. I know a *mantra* (a spell to ward off this danger).' Saying so, the brahmachari moved towards that direction. No cowboy accompanied him out of fear. And here came the snake raising its hood moving swiftly. But as it came near, the brahmachari

muttered a *mantra* and lo! the snake fell at his feet like an earthworm. 'Well,' said the brahmachari, 'Why do you go about harming others? Come, I'll give you a mantra. By repeating this mantra you will develop bhakti for Bhagavan, you will attain Him and your desire to harm others will leave you.' Saying so, he gave the mantra to the snake. Having received the mantra, the snake bowed before the guru and asked, 'Sir, what *sadhana* (spiritual practice) should I carry out, please tell me this.' The guru said, 'Repeat this mantra and also don't harm anybody. I shall come again,' said the brahmachari before leaving.

"Some days passed thus. The cowboys noticed that now the snake did not bite. Even when they struck it with stones, it did not feel angry. It had become like an earthworm. One day a cowboy went near it and catching hold of its tail whirled it round and round and dashed it several times against the ground. The snake vomited blood and became unconscious. It could not move. The cowboys thought that it was dead. So they left the place.

"Late at night, the snake regained consciousness. Slowly it dragged itself into its hole with great difficulty. Its body broke and it had no strength to move. After a few days when its body was reduced to a mere skeleton, it would come out of its hole once in the night to look for food; for fear (of the boys) it did not come out during the day. After its initiation with the mantra it ceased to harm anybody. It lived as well as it could on leaves and fruits fallen on the ground from the trees.

"Almost after a year the brahmachari came that way again. As he reached the spot, he looked about for the snake. The cowboys said that it was dead. But the brahmachari found it hard to believe. He knew that the snake had taken the mantra and so the death was out of question before it has seen God. So he made a search and called out for it in the same direction by the name he had given it. Hearing the voice of its guru, the snake came out of its hole and bowed down reverently before him. The brahmachari asked, 'How are you?' The snake replied, 'I am quite well, sir.' The brahmachari asked, 'But why are you so weak?' The snake said, 'Holy sir! You had asked me not to harm anybody. So I live on leaves and fruits. Perhaps this is the reason why I have grown weak.' The snake had developed the quality of *sattva* (the quality leading one Godward), you see. That's why it did not get angry with anyone. It had forgotten that the cowboys had tried to kill it. The brahmachari said, 'Your food alone could not have brought you to this pass. Surely there is something else. Just think over it.' The snake then recalled that the cowboys had once whirled it round and round and dashed it against the ground. So it said, 'Holy sir! Now I see it all. The cowboys one day threw me violently on the ground. They are ignorant. They do not know what change has come over my mind. How could they know that I was not going to bite anybody or do any harm?' The brahmachari said, 'Fie! You are so stupid that you don't

even know how to save yourself. What I forbade you was to bite any creature. I didn't ask you not to hiss at anybody. Why did you not frighten them away by hissing?

“One should hiss to bad persons to frighten them away, so that they may not harm you later on. One must not inject poison into them and injure them.”

Are all men equal? Their natures differ

“In the Lord's creation there are different types of creatures and plants. Amongst the animals, there are bad as well as good ones. There are beasts like tigers who kill others. Amongst the trees, some bring forth fruit sweet like nectar, while the others yield poisonous fruit. In the same way, there are good men and bad men; holy as well as unholy; men attached to the world and then bhaktas also.

“People can be divided into four classes - worldly people bound to the world, seekers after liberation, the liberated, and the ever-free.

“The ever-free, like Narada and others - they are those who abide in the world for the good of mankind, to teach truth to others.

“The bound souls - they are attached to worldly objects. They forget God and never give a thought to Him.

“The seekers after liberation - they try to get liberated. But only some of them attain liberation, the others cannot.

“The liberated ones - they are not attached to ‘woman and gold’, for example sadhus and *mahatmas* (great spiritual personalities). In their mind there is no attachment for the worldly things. They always meditate on the lotus feet of Hari ^[19].

“Suppose a net is cast into a tank. Some of the fish are too clever never to be caught in the net. They can be likened to the ever-free ones. However, most of the fish get caught in the net. Of these, some try to escape. They are like the seekers after liberation. However, not all the fish can escape - only a few are able to leap out of the net. The boys then shout: Look here! A big fish has escaped. But most of the fish caught in the net cannot escape - they don't even try to do so. And what is more, they hold the net with the mouth and lie quietly hiding themselves in the mud of the tank. They think, ‘We are quite safe now; there is no danger.’ But they do not know that the fisherman would haul them up with a jerk and throw them out on the river bank. They may indeed be compared to worldly men.”

Worldly men - bound in fetters

“Worldly men remain bound to ‘woman and gold’ of the world. They are bound hand and foot. And they think that they can find

happiness only in 'woman and gold' of the world and feel secure in it. They know not that they will die in that alone. When a worldly man is on his deathbed, his wife says to him, 'You are departing. What have you done for me?' Besides, maya is such that on seeing a lamp burning for long the bound man says, 'Oil will get consumed, lower the wick.' And here he is lying on the deathbed!

"The worldly man does not think of the Lord. If he has leisure, even then he indulges either in empty talk or engages himself in useless activities. Upon being asked he says, 'I am not able to sit idle, so I am setting a hedge.' Perhaps when the time hangs heavy on him, he starts playing cards." (All laugh.)

Chapter Seven

*Yo mam ajam anadim cha vetti lokamaheshvaram,
Asammudhah sa martyeshu sarvapapaih pra-muchyate.*

- Gita 10:3

[He who knows Me as unborn and beginningless, and the great Lord of the worlds, he is no more deluded amongst mortals and freed from all sins.]

The way - faith

A Bhakta — Sir, is there no way out for such a worldly man?

Sri Ramakrishna — Certainly there is a way. Now and then one must seek the company of holy men and at times one should go to meditate upon God in solitude. And one should practise discrimination and pray to God: 'Grant me bhakti and faith.'

"Once you acquire faith, your work is done. There is nothing higher than faith.

(To Kedar) "You have heard of the power of faith! The Purana says that Ramachandra, the Perfect Brahman and Narayana, had to build a bridge to reach Lanka. But Hanuman by dint of his faith in the name of Rama jumped across the sea. He had no need for a bridge. (All laugh.)

"Vibhishana wrote the name of Rama on a leaf and tied it within the folds of the cloth of a man who wanted to cross the sea. Vibhishana said to him, 'Fear not. Have faith and walk across the sea. But mind you, as soon as you lose your faith you will drown.' This man was walking nicely on the sea till he was seized with an intense desire to see just once what was there in the folds of his cloth. He untied the folds of his cloth and saw that it was just the name of Rama written on the leaf. Then he said to himself, 'What! Just the name of Rama written thereon!' And on the instant with the loss of faith, he went under the water.

"One who has faith in the Lord can be redeemed of great sins no

matter he may have committed the vilest sins - killed a cow, a brahmin or a woman. Let him only say, 'I shall not do so again,' he need not fear anything."

Saying so, Thakur sings.

The vilest sin and the great importance of Name

Mother, If I die with the Name of Durga on my lips,
I shall see, O Shankari, how You shall not redeem me?
If I kill the cow, or a brahmin, or destroy the child in the womb;
If I indulge in drinking wine and the like, killing woman,
For all these sins I care not the least,
As I can get at the feet of Brahman in a moment.

Narendra - the Homa bird

"You all see this boy. He is so different here. When a naughty boy is in the presence of his father, he behaves as if there is a goblin in front. But when he plays in the chandni, he is quite different. A boy like this belongs to the class of the ever-perfect. They never get attached to the world. When they get a little older, they feel an awakening within the heart and move Godward at once. They come to the world to teach mankind. They have no love for things of the world. Their mind never goes towards 'woman and gold'.

"There is a mention of a bird called Homa in the Vedas. It lives high above in the sky. There in the sky itself it brings forth its egg. As soon as the egg is brought forth, it begins to fall. But it is so high that the egg goes on falling for days. During the fall it breaks and then the young bird coming out of it goes on falling. While it is going down, its eyes and wings open out. Just as it opens its eyes it sees that it is falling and shall soon be smashed on touching the earth. Then it suddenly shoots upward towards its mother and attains a great height."

Narendra rises and leaves.

Kedar, Pranakrishna, M. and many others are in the room.

Sri Ramakrishna — You see, Narendra excels in everything - singing, playing on musical instruments, reading and writing. The other day he had a discussion with Kedar. He just chopped off Kedar's argument. (Thakur and all others laugh.) (To M.) Is there a book in English on reasoning?

M. — Yes, sir. It is called 'Logic' in English.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, give me some idea of it.

M. now finds himself in a difficult situation. Says he, "One part of logic

is reasoning from the general proposition to a particular. For example:
All men will die. Pundits are men. So pundits will also die.

“Another division deals with reasoning from a particular illustration, or an event to a general proposition. Such as:

This crow is black,
That crow is black,
(And so) all the crows I see are black.
Hence, all crows are black.

“But to arrive at a conclusion in such a way is open to fallacy, for it is possible that you may find a white crow somewhere while looking for it. An another illustration: When there is rain, there was a cloud or still it is there. So the general proposition is that the rain comes from the cloud. Yet another illustration: This man has thirty two teeth. That man also has the same number. And then, everybody we see has thirty two teeth. Thus all men have thirty two teeth.

“So there are such general propositions in the English Logic.”

Sri Ramakrishna just heard it all. As he was listening, his mind went elsewhere. So, there was no further talk on this subject.

Chapter Eight

Shrutivipratipanna te yada sthasyati nishchala.

Samadhav achala buddhih tada yogam avapsyasi.

- Gita 2: 53

[When your intellect tossed about by the conflict of opinions has become poised and firmly fixed in equilibrium; then you shall get into yoga.]

In samadhi

The meeting ended. The bhaktas are walking about here and there. M. too is walking in the Panchavati and other places. It is about five o'clock. Coming back after some time to Sri Ramakrishna's room he comes upon a strange sight in the small verandah, north of the room.

Sri Ramakrishna is standing still. Narendra is singing a hymn and bhaktas are standing there. M. is charmed to hear the song. Never and nowhere has he heard such a sweet voice except that of Thakur. As he looks at Thakur, he becomes speechless with wonder. Thakur is standing motionless, his eyes move not; it is difficult to say whether he is breathing or not. When asked, a bhakta tells him that it is known as samadhi (divine ecstasy). M. had never seen or heard anything like this. Speechless, he says to himself: Is it possible that the thought of Bhagavan can make one lose so much of outer-consciousness? How great must be one's bhakti and faith who is put into such a state! The song is as follows:

Meditate you upon Hari (the Lord), O my mind! He is the essence of the spirit. He is free from all impurity!

Without equal is His glory, beautiful is His shape, how very beloved He is in the hearts of His bhaktas!

Behold, His beauty is enhanced by fresh manifestations of love! It throws into shade the effulgence of a million moons!

Verily, the lightning flashes out of His glorious beauty! His blessed vision causes hairs to stand on end.

Sri Ramakrishna is deeply touched when this line of the hymn is chanted. The hairs on his body stand on end. His eyes are bedewed with tears of joy. Now and then He smiles, it appears on seeing something. One cannot say what a vision of unequal beauty he is enjoying which puts into shade the effulgence of a million moons! Is this called the vision of the conscious form of Bhagavan? What must be the intensity of the spiritual discipline and austerities, how much bhakti and faith must be there which can bring about such a vision! The song goes on -

Worship His holy feet on the lotus of your heart!

Gaze you upon the matchless beauty of that beloved form. Now that the mind enjoys peace and the eyes are filled with divine love.

That bewitching smile once more! His body becomes motionless in the same manner; eyes fixed! But it seems as if he is beholding some strange vision! And having seen this wonderful vision, he swims in supreme joy.

Now the song comes to an end. Narendra sang:

Inspired with love divine be you immersed, O my mind, in the sweetness of Him who is the fountain of Absolute Intelligence and Bliss.

(O! the joy of the Supreme Consciousness, the joy of love.)

Carrying with him this unique picture of samadhi and the bliss of love in his heart, M. wends his way back home. The heart intoxicating sweet music bubbles up from time to time in his heart -

Inspired with Love divine be you immersed in the fountain of His love.
(Be intoxicated in the love of Hari.)

Chapter Nine

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.]

Fourth visit - merry making with Narendra, Bhavanath and others

The next day (6 March) is also a holiday. M. has come again at three o'clock in the afternoon. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is seated in the same aforesaid room. A mat is spread on the floor. Narendra, Bhavanath and two other bhaktas are seated there. Some are young men, nineteen or twenty years old. Thakur is sitting on the smaller bedstead and with a smile playing on his face is conversing merrily with the boys.

Seeing M. enter the room, Thakur laughs loudly and says suddenly to the boys, "Look, he is here again!" As he says so he laughs and all join him. M. comes in, salutes him by prostrating himself on the ground and

takes a seat. Previously, he had been saluting Thakur while standing with folded hands, after the manner of English educated persons. But today he has learnt to salute by lying down at his feet. As he takes his seat, Sri Ramakrishna tells Narendra and other disciples what has made him laugh.

“Listen, some opium was given to a peacock at four o’clock in the afternoon. Next day the same peacock arrived punctually at four in the afternoon. It has become an addict of opium, so it came punctually for a dose of opium.” (All laugh.)

M. says to himself, “He is right. I go back home but my mind, day and night, abides in him alone thinking - when shall I see him, when shall I see him! It seems as if somebody has pulled me to this place. I cannot go anywhere else even if I want to, I have to come here.” M. thinks in this way while Thakur amuses himself with the boys as if they are of his age. Peels of laughter begin to rise as though it is a mart of joy.

M. is speechless as he is looking at this unique character. Says he to himself, “Is he the same person whom I saw yesterday in samadhi and in the joy of divine love never seen before? Is he the same man behaving like an ordinary person today? Is it he who on my first visit scolded me while teaching me? Didn’t he tell me that God with form and the formless God are both true? Didn’t he say to me that the Lord alone is real and all else in the world is transitory? Didn’t he advise me to live in the world like a maidservant?”

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is having great fun and is glancing at M. every now and then. He sees that M. is sitting in silence. Addressing Ramalal he says, “You see, he is a little older, therefore he is somewhat grave. These people are laughing and making so much merry but he is sitting quiet.” M. was then about twenty seven years old.

During the conversation they talk of Hanuman, the great bhakta. There is a picture of Hanuman on the wall of Thakur’s room. Thakur says: See, the state of mind of Hanuman! He wants none of these: Wealth, honour, bodily comforts. He only longs for Bhagavan. When he was running away with *Brahmastra* (a heavenly weapon of the Brahma) taken from the crystalline pillar, Mandodari started showing him many kinds of fruits. She thought that tempted by fruits he might climb down and drop the weapon, but Hanuman could not be tricked. He said -

Sri Rama, the *Kalpataru* (wish fulfilling tree)

Do I stand in need of fruits?

I have got the fruit that has made my life fruitful,

The tree of the fruit of liberation - Rama - is planted in my heart.

I sit under the *Kalpataru* (wish fulfilling tree) of Sri Rama

Whenever I desire any fruit I get it.

But you speak of the fruit; O woman, I am not bargaining for.

I go leaving the bitter fruit to you.

In samadhi

Thakur sings this very song. And again he goes into the same samadhi. Again his body is motionless, eyes fixed, and he sits still. He is seated the way as if a picture in the photograph. Only just now the bhaktas

were laughing and making merry, now they are all gazing at this unique state of Thakur. It is for the second time that M. sees the state of samadhi. After some time a change comes in this state - his body is relaxed and a smile plays on his face. The senses begin to function again in a normal way. Shedding tears of joy from the corners of his eyes, he utters the name, “**Rama! Rama!**”

M. says to himself, “Is this the same great saint who was making fun with the boys! At that time he was as if a child of five years.”

Returning to his earlier natural state, Thakur again behaves like an ordinary man. Addressing M. and Narendra says he, “I would like to hear both of you talk in English, and question and reason amongst yourselves.”

M. and Narendra both laugh at his words. They talk a little but in Bengali. It is not possible for M. to argue any more before Thakur. His entire tendency to argue, in a way, has been erased by Thakur’s grace. How can he argue then? Thakur presses them once again but the talk in English does not come about.

Chapter Ten

*Tvam aksharam paramam veditavyam tvam asya vishvasya param
nidhanam,*

*Tvam avyayah shashvata dharma gopta sanatanas tvam purusho mato
me.* - Gita 11:18

[You are the imperishable, the Supreme Being to be realized. You are the great treasure house of this universe; You are the imperishable guardian of the Eternal dharma. You are the ancient Purusha. I deem.]

With his intimate disciples - ‘who am I?’

It is five o’clock. Many bhaktas have left, each one to his own house. Only M. and Narendra stay behind. Narendra goes to Hanspukur and the Jhautala with a pitcher to wash his face. M. paces the path round the temple. After a while, he comes towards the Hanspukur near the Kuthi. He finds Sri Ramakrishna standing on the steps of the staircase, south of the tank. Narendra has washed his face and stands with the pitcher in his hands. Thakur is saying, “Look here, you must come here more often. You are a newcomer, you see. After the first acquaintance, people meet more often - like a newly wedded husband. (Narendra and M. laugh.) Won’t you come?” Narendra belongs to the Brahmo Samaj. He laughs and says, “Yes sir, I shall try.”

All of them now come to Thakur’s room by way of the Kuthi path. Near the Kuthi, Thakur says to M. “You know, peasants go to the market to buy bullocks. They know a good bullock from a bad one very well. They touch the tail. Some bullocks lie down on the ground as soon as the tail is touched. Peasants don’t buy such bullocks. They choose only those who spring up with a start as soon as their tail is touched. Narendra is a bullock of the latter class. There is a lot of mettle in him.” Having said so, Thakur smiles and adds, “But there are so many who are soft like popped rice soaked in milk - no strength within, no grit, soft and slippery.”

It is dusk. Thakur meditates upon God. He says to M., “Go and talk to Narendra and tell me what sort of boy he is.”

The arati is over. M. meets Narendra after quite sometime to the west of the chandni. They converse with each other. Narendra says, “I belong to

the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. I am a college student,” and so on.

It is night, M. will now take his leave. Something, however, seems to hold him back. So, he leaves Narendra and looks about for Thakur Sri Ramakrishna. Thakur’s songs have charmed his heart and mind. So he is longing to hear him sing again. At last, he finds him alone pacing up and down the Nata Mandir in front of Mother Kali’s temple. There are brilliant lights burning on both sides of the Mother in Her temple. The vast Nata Mandir, however, has only one light, and that is rather dim. As is the effect of blending of light and darkness, the same is seen in the Nata Mandir.

M. is beside himself on hearing Thakur’s songs, spellbound like a snake. He says to Thakur with great diffidence, “Will there be any more hymns today?” Thakur thinks for a moment and says, “No, there will be no more hymns today.” As he says this, it seems as if he is reminded of something and says immediately, “But you can do this - I shall go to Balaram’s house in Calcutta, you come there. There you will have songs.”

M. — Right, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — You know him, Balaram Basu?

M. — No, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — Balaram Basu. His house is in Bosepara.

M. — Very well, sir. I shall find out.

Sri Ramakrishna (as he walks in the Nata Mandir with M.) — Well, let me ask you one thing - **what do you think of me?**

M. keeps silent. Thakur says again —

“What do you feel? How many *annas*^[20] of jnana (knowledge) I have?”

M. — *Annas!* I don’t understand. But I have never and nowhere seen such jnana (knowledge of Absolute), such love for the Lord, such faith, such *vairagya* (dispassion) and such catholicity.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna laughs.

After this conversation, M. bows and takes his leave.

He comes to the main gate but remembering something, he immediately returns.

He again comes to Thakur Sri Ramakrishna in the Nata Mandir.

Thakur is still walking up and down in that dim light - alone, with no companion. Like the king of animals who walks alone himself in the forest. **Atmaram**^[21], the lion rejoices to be alone and to walk about itself! **Companionless!**

M. stands speechless and again looks at the great man.

Sri Ramakrishna — You have come back again.

M. — Sir, they may not let me enter the rich man's house. So, I think I shall not go there. It is here that I shall come and meet you.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, my dear sir, why ? You can mention my name. Say that you want to see me. Someone will surely lead you to me then.

Saying, "As you please," M. bows down again and departs.

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- [1] Hindus who worship God as the Primal Divine Energy
 - [2] Hindus who worship God as the Preserver (Vishnu)
 - [3] Offered food
 - [4] Food offering to Gods
 - [5] Nectar of divine feet
 - [6] A fan made of the white hair from the tail of the cow called Chamari.
 - [7] Consecrated pitcher placed to win Divine favour
 - [8] Daily service morning, noon and evening, as laid down for the twice-born.
 - [9] Om, the Vedic symbol for the Supreme Being
 - [10] The Vedic mantra (sacred text) that the brahmins and other twice-born Hindus repeat everyday while meditating on the Supreme Being
 - [11] Siddheswar Majumdar. He has his house in north Barahnagar
 - [12] Waving of lights before sacred images along with singing of hymns
 - [13] God-consciousness
 - [14] Ramalal, nephew of Sri Ramakrishna and the priest of Kali Temple
 - [15] Of divine nature leading to God and to light
 - [16] A highly spiced fish dish of rice and meat boiled in clarified butter
 - 2 Dry fish with spiced vegetables soaked in oil
 - [18] Lust and greed
 - [19] Lord the Preserver
 - [20] Anna - sixteen annas make one rupee
 - [21] Rejoicing in that Companionship

Section II

Sri Ramakrishna's Steamer Trip with Keshab Chandra Sen Joy and Conversation

Chapter One

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna - 'in samadhi'

Today it is Kojagar Lakshmi Puja ^[1]. Friday, 27 October, 1882. Thakur is seated in the same aforesaid room at the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. He is conversing with Vijay Goswami and Haralal. Someone comes in and says, "Keshab Sen has come in the steamer at the ghat." Keshab's disciples offer obeisance and say, "Sir, the steamer has arrived, please come. Come for a little excursion. Keshab Sen is on board the steamer, he has sent us."

It is 4 o'clock. Thakur steps into the steamer by a boat. Vijay is with him. As he steps into the boat, he loses outer-consciousness. He goes into samadhi.

M., on board the steamer, looks at the picture of Thakur in samadhi. Boarding on Keshab's steamer at 3 o'clock, he has come from Calcutta. He is very eager to see the meeting between Thakur and Keshab, witness their joy and listen to their conversation. By his saintly character and eloquence, Keshab has captivated the mind of many a Bengali young man like M. Regarding Keshab as their own, many have given him their heart's love. Keshab is an English educated man and well versed in English philosophy and literature. Many a time he has termed the worship of gods and goddesses idolatry. It is rather strange that such a man looks upon Sri Ramakrishna with reverence and admiration and visits him off and on! It is curious for M. and others to find out the common ground on which they both meet. Though Thakur believes in the formless God but he holds that God is with form too. He meditates upon Brahman, but at the same time he worships gods and goddesses with flowers, incense and other offerings. And, diving deep in intense love of God, he sings and dances. He sits on a bed with a bedspread. He uses a red-bordered dhoti, shirt, socks, shoes etc. But he is not a householder. His entire *bhava* (disposition) is that of a *sannyasi*, hence people call him a paramahansa. On the other hand, Keshab believes in God without form, with wife and children he lives the life of a householder, delivers lectures in English, brings out a paper and attends to worldly affairs.

Along with Keshab all the Brahma bhaktas observe the beauty of the temple from the steamer. Not far from the steamer, towards the east, there is a cemented ghat and chandni (porch) of the temple. To the left of the passengers and to the north of the chandni, is a continuous row of six temples out of the twelve Shiva temples and to the right hand side also are six Shiva temples. Upon the canvas of the blue sky of autumn are visible the pinnacle of the temple of Bhavatarini and to the north the top of the trees of the Panchavati and willow trees. Near the Bakultala there is a concert room and to the southern side of Kali Temple there is another concert room. In the middle of both the concert rooms there are garden paths and rows of flowering plants on their sides. The blue of autumn sky is reflected in the holy waters of Jahnavi (Ganga). Serene atmosphere prevails everywhere outside. The same serenity is there in the hearts of Brahma bhaktas. Above is the beautiful dark blue infinite sky, in front is the beautiful temple and below is the holy water of the Ganga on the banks of which the Aryan rishis used to meditate on Bhagavan. And, now again a special *mahapurusha* (great saint) is coming - an incarnation of the *Sanatana* dharma (eternal religion). It is not always the fortune of a man to see such a sight. At such a place who does not feel the arousing of bhakti for the great saint in samadhi and whose stone like heart does not melt?

Chapter Two

Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grihnati narah aparani,

Tatha sharirani vihaya jirnany anyani samyati navani dehi.

- Gita 2:22

[As a man having cast away old garments wears new ones, so having cast away worn out bodies, the embodied enters into other new ones.]

In samadhi - the imperishable Atman - Pavahari Baba

The boat has come alongside the steamer. All are eager to see Thakur Sri Ramakrishna. There is a big crowd. Keshab is very anxious that Thakur gets down the boat comfortably. With great difficulty he is brought back to sense-consciousness and then taken inside the cabin. He is still in divine ecstasy. He leans on a bhakta as he moves. Merely his feet are in motion. He enters the cabin. Keshab and other bhaktas offer their obeisance but he has no sense-consciousness. Inside the cabin are some chairs and a table. Thakur is made to sit on a chair, Keshab sits on another. Vijay has taken his seat. Other bhaktas sit wherever they find a seat, even on the bare floor. Many don't find a place - these people peep in from outside. Thakur, after taking his seat, is again in samadhi - absolutely devoid of outer consciousness! All are gazing at him.

Keshab sees that there are too many persons in the cabin and Thakur is feeling uneasy. Leaving Keshab, Vijay has joined the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. He spoke against Keshab on many of his acts like the early marriage of his daughter. That is why Keshab feels a little embarrassed to see Vijay. Keshab leaves his seat to open the window of the cabin.

Brahmo bhaktas are looking at Thakur with their eyes fixed. Thakur comes down from his samadhi. Still he is absorbed fully in bhava (divine mood). Thakur is speaking in a tone that is hardly articulate, "Mother! Why have You brought me here? Shall I be able to save them out of their prison house?"

Does Thakur look upon the men of the world that they are within a prison house and cannot come out - they can't even see the light outside. All of them are bound hand and foot in worldly affairs. They only see the things that are within the prison house and think that the aim of life is only to have body comforts, worldly work and 'woman and gold'. Is it for this reason that Thakur says, "Mother! Why have You brought me here? Shall I be able to save them out of their prison house?"

Thakur gradually gains sense-consciousness. Neel Madhava of Gazipur and a Brahma bhakta take up the topic of Pavahari Baba.

A Brahma bhakta (to Thakur) — Sir, they all have seen Pavahari Baba. He lives in Gazipur. He is another holy man like your good self.

Thakur is not in a position to speak even now. He smiles a little.

The Brahma Bhakta (to Thakur) — Sir, Pavahari Baba has kept your photograph in his room.

Thakur smiles a little and speaks pointing to his body, "This pillow case!"

Chapter Three

Yat samkhyaih prapyate sthanam tad yogair api gamyate,

Ekam samkhyam cha yogam cha yah pashyati sa pashyati.

- Gita 5:5

[The state reached by the jnanis is also attained by the yogis. He indeed sees who sees that jnana and yoga are one.]

Harmony of Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga

The pillow and its pillow case - the soul and the body. Does Thakur say that the

body is perishable, it won't last? The soul within the body is alone imperishable. So, what use is it to have a photograph of the body? The body is transitory. What use is there to have regards for it? Rather, it is right to worship only the

antaryamin^[2] Bhagavan who is present within the heart of man.

Thakur has come a little to the normal state. Says he, "But there is one thing. The heart of the bhakta is His dwelling place. Maybe that God is manifest in all things, but He is manifest in a special sense in the heart of a bhakta. For example, a zemindar (landlord) can be seen at all the places of his estate. Still people say that the zemindar is usually seen in a particular drawing room. The heart of the bhakta is the Bhagavan's drawing room." (All rejoice.)

**One Lord with different names -
the jnani, the yogi and the bhakta**

"The same Being whom the jnanis call Brahman (the Absolute) is called Atman (Universal Soul) by the yogis and Bhagavan (Personal God with divine attributes) by the bhaktas.

"The brahmin is one and the same person. When he worships, he is called a priest; when employed in the kitchen, he is called a brahmin cook. The jnani who holds on to the Jnana Yoga reasons saying, 'Not this, not this.' That is, the Brahman is neither this nor that, neither the individual soul nor the external world. When as a result of this reasoning the mind becomes steady, it vanishes and one goes into samadhi. Then one attains Brahmajnana (knowledge of the Absolute). The Brahmajnani truly realizes that Brahman is real and the world unreal; names and forms are all like dreams. What Brahman is cannot be described by the word of mouth. God is a person, even that cannot be described by words.

"The jnanis say the same as the Vedantins. But bhaktas accept all the states. They look upon the waking state as real and they do not consider the external world as a dream. The bhaktas say that this world is the glory of Bhagavan. The sky, the stars, the moon, the sun, the mountains, the ocean, men, birds and beasts - they are all created by the Lord. These are only His 'riches'. He is both within the core of the heart and He is without. The superior most bhakta says, 'God Himself has become these twenty-four categories^[3] - the living beings and the universe.' The bhakta wants not to be one with the sugar but would rather have a taste of it. (All laugh.)

"How does a bhakta feel, do you know? 'O Bhagavan! You are the Master, I am Your servant. You are my Mother, I am Your child. And again You are both my Mother and Father. You are the whole, I am Your part.' The bhakta doesn't like to say, 'I am Brahman.'

"The yogi^[4] also seeks to see Parmatman^[5]. His object is to bring the embodied soul in communion with the Parmatman. The yogi withdraws his mind from worldly objects and tries to fix it on Parmatman. So, to begin with he meditates on Him in solitude in some fixed posture with a concentrated mind.

"But It is one and the same Substance. The difference is only in names. He who is Brahman is Himself Atman and also Bhagavan. He is Brahman of the Brahmajnani^[6], Parmatman of the yogi^[7], Bhagavan of the bhakta^[8]."

Chapter Four

Tvema sukshama tvam sthula vyaktavyakta swarupani,

[You are the subtle and You are the gross; You
O Mother! are manifest as well as unmanifest. You are both with form and
formless. Who has the capacity to know You?]

**Harmony of Veda and Tantra -
glory of Adya Shakti (Primeval Power)**

The steamer is on its way to Calcutta. Those who are having *darshan* of Sri Ramakrishna and are listening to his nectarine words in the cabin are not even conscious of the movement of the steamer. Does the bee buzz while sitting on a flower?

The steamer has gradually left Dakshineswar behind. The picture of the beautiful temple has gone out of sight. As the steamer cleaves through the holy waters of the Ganga, that reflect the blue firmament above, the waves are broken into crests of foam making a roaring sound. The murmurs of the waves are now lost on the ears of the bhaktas. Spellbound they are gazing at the smiling, joyful, sweet face and loving eyes of the wonderful yogi. They are gazing in him an all-renouncing loving *vairagi*^[9] intoxicated with the love for the Lord and who knows none but the Lord. In the meanwhile, Sri Ramakrishna converses.

Sri Ramakrishna — The Vedantin Brahmajñani says that creation, preservation, dissolution, the living beings and the world are all the sport of Shakti (the Divine Mother). If you reason, they are all like dreams. Brahman alone is the Reality, all else is unreal! Shakti is also like a dream, unreal.

“You may reason a thousand times, but without attaining the state of samadhi you cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of Shakti. ‘I am meditating,’ ‘I am thinking’ - all this is within the jurisdiction of Shakti.

“That’s why Brahman and Shakti are inseparable. Belief in one implies belief in the other. Just as the fire and its burning power - if you postulate the fire, you must postulate the burning power. Fire cannot be thought of apart from its burning power, nor can its burning power be thought of apart from the fire. The sun’s rays cannot be conceived apart from the sun, nor can the sun be conceived apart from its rays.

“What is milk like? Well, it is something white! Milky whiteness cannot be conceived apart from the milk, nor can the milk be conceived apart from its milky whiteness.

“Thus, Shakti cannot be thought of apart from Brahman, nor can Brahman be thought of apart from Shakti. *Nitya* (the Absolute) and *leela* (the relative phenomenal world) cannot be thought of apart from each other.

“The sporting Adya Shakti (Primeval Divine Energy) creates, preserves and dissolves. She is known as Kali (the Mother of the universe). **Kali is Brahman and Brahman is Kali**, one and the same substance. When She is inactive - neither creating, nor preserving, nor destroying, I call Her Brahman. When She performs all these activities I call Her Kali, I call Her Shakti. The Being is the same, only the names and forms are different.

“For example - ‘*jal*,’ ‘water,’ and ‘*pani*’. A tank may have three or four ghats. At one ghat the Hindus drink water, they call it ‘*jal*’. At another ghat the Muslims drink water and they call it ‘*pani*’. On another ghat the English drink water, they call it ‘water’. All the three are one and the same but the

names are different. Some call Him Allah, some God, some Brahman, some Kali, again some Rama, Hari, Jesus and Durga.”

Keshab — In what different ways Kali performs Her sport, please say it once.

Talk with Keshab - Mahakali and mode of creation

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — She sports in various ways. She Herself is Mahakali (the Goddess, Unconditioned Absolute, without form), Nitya Kali (the everlasting Goddess), Shamsan Kali (Goddess of crematories), Raksha Kali (the Goddess that blesses and is ready to preserve) and Shyama Kali (the Mother with dark blue complexion - consort of the God of Eternity and Infinity). The Tantras speak of Mahakali and Nitya Kali. When there was no creation, no moon, no sun, no planets, no earth - nothing but deep darkness, then there was only the formless Divine Mother Mahakali living with Mahakala.

“Shyama Kali has very tender heart, **bestower of fearlessness**. She is worshipped in households. At the time of epidemic, famine, earthquake, drought, or excess of rain, you should worship Raksha Kali. Shamsan Kali has the form of destruction. She lives in the midst of the dead bodies, the jackals, *Dakinis* and *Yoginis* ^[10] in crematories. Streams of blood, a garland of skulls round Her neck, a girdle of human hands on Her waist. Upon the destruction of the world, at the time of *maha pralaya* (total destruction of the world), the Mother preserves all the seeds of creation. As the mistress of the house has a hodgepodge pot in which she keeps sundry things of all kinds. (Keshab and all others laugh.)

(Smiling) “Yes, my friend. The mistress of the house does have such a pot in her possession. In it are kept the sea-foam in a solid state, small packets containing the seeds of cucumber, pumpkin, gourd, etc. All types of such seeds are kept carefully. She brings them out when wanted. In the same way the Divine Mother keeps all the seeds at the time of destruction of the world. After the creation, Adya Shakti (the Primeval Divine Energy) lives very much in the world. Giving birth to the world, She lives within it. The Vedas talk of the *Urnanabhi* - the spider and its web. The spider creates the web out of itself and then lives in the same web. The Lord is both the container and the content of the world.”

Kali Brahman - Kali with form and formless

“Is Kali of dark hue? She is far off, that’s why She seems to be of dark complexion. When you know Her, She does not appear to be dark in hue.

“The sky appears to be blue because of distance. When seen from near, it has no colour. The sea water appears to be blue from a distance. When you go near it and take some in your hand, it has no colour.”

Saying this, drunk with the wine of divine love, Sri Ramakrishna begins to sing a song.

O, is my Divine Mother black?

Infinite is the garment that She puts on! She illumines the lotus of the heart!

Chapter Five

*Tribhiih gunamayaih bhavaih ebhiih sarvam idam jagat,
Mohitam na abhijanati mamebhyah param avyayam.*

- Gita 7:13

[Deluded by the three gunas this world does not know Me, who am beyond them and immutable.]

Why this world exists?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Keshab and others) — She is the creator of both bondage and liberation. Due to Her maya (illusion) the worldly man is bound with the chains of ‘woman and gold,’ and then he is liberated by Her mercy and grace. She is the Being who takes humans across the sea of the world removing the fetters.

Saying this, Thakur sings in a voice sweeter than *gandharvas*^[11] a song by Rama Prasad -

O my Mother Shyama You are flying the paper kite of the human being in the market place of the world.

The kite flies in the wind of hope, and is fastened to the string made of maya.

The wooden framework of the paper kite is the skeleton - ribs, veins and the internal organs of the human body.

The kite is made purely of Your own attributes (*sattva, rajas, tamas*); the rest of the workmanship is merely ornamental.

The string is made sharp with the powdered glass of worldliness.

Out of a hundred-thousand kites, one or two only have their string cut through and they are thus set free; O, then, how You laugh and clap Your hands!

Rama Prasad says, ‘The kite thus set free will be carried rapidly on favourable wind until it drops into the Infinite beyond the sea of the world.’

“The Mother is always in Her sportive mood! This world is Her sport. She has Her own way and She is full of joy. She liberates just one from amongst the millions.”

A Brahma Bhakta — Sir, She can free all if She so desires. Why then She has bound us in the chains of the world?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is Her pleasure! It is Her desire to sport with all this. If a player touches the Grand-dame (in the game of hide and seek) first, he no longer has to run about. If all the players touch, how will the game continue? If everyone touches the Grand-dame She would by no means be glad. If the game continues, the Grand-dame feels happy. That’s why She (the Mother of the universe) is happy and claps Her hands when She cuts the string of one or two (kites of the human soul) out of a hundred thousand. (All laugh.)

“With a twinkle of Her eye, She has directed the mind to go and live in the world. What is the fault of the mind then? And again if by Her grace She changes the mind, one is liberated from the clutches of the worldly intellect. Then the mind goes to Her lotus feet.”

Thakur sings placing himself in the position of the man of the world and expressing his right on the Mother -

This indeed is the thought that weighs heavily on my heart - You, my own Mother, is here and I am wide awake, and behold! thieves (passions) do rob me of my all!

Sometimes I form the resolution of repeating Your holy name, but I forget to do so at the proper hour!

And now I know, I feel, that all this is Your trick.

You have not given, so You have not received, ought to keep or to eat; am I to blame for this?

Had You given, You would have surely received, and I would have offered You, out of Your own gifts!

Fame or calumny, sweet or bitter, all is Yours!

O, You ruler of all tender feelings why do You break them as they are called forth in me instead of giving them play?

Prasad says: You have given me the mind but have with a twinkle of Your eye confided to it a secret at the same time.

Thus do I roam about seeking joy through the world, which is Your creation, taking bitter for sweet, unreal for real [\[12\]](#).

“Baffled by Her delusion, man has become worldly. Prasad says, ‘You have given me the mind but have with a twinkle of Your eye confided to it a secret at the same time.’ ”

Instruction about Karma Yoga - the world and *nishkama karma* (selfless work)

A Brahma Bhakta — Sir, is it not possible to realize the Lord without renouncing everything?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — No, my dear. Why have you to renounce all? You are very well in joy as you are. You are all right at do, re, fa (lower notes of the gamut). (All laugh.) Do you know the game of ‘nux’ (a play with cards)? I have been ‘burnt’ as I have ‘cut’ so many times. You are very clever. Some of you are at ten points, some at six and others at five (out of the seventeen needed to win). You didn’t ‘cut’ more. So you have not been ‘burnt’ like me. The game is going on - it is so nice! (Everybody laughs.)

“Verily, I say that there is nothing wrong in living as a householder as you are. Even so, you have to fix your mind on the Lord. Otherwise, it won’t do. Do your work with one hand and hold the Lord with the other. When you finish your work, you will hold God with both the hands.

“It is the mind that matters. If the mind is bound, you are bound; if the mind is free, you are free. The mind gets dyed in the colour you dye it with. It is just like the laundered white cloth. You can get it dyed in any colour - red, blue or green. It gets the colour you dip it in. Just see, if you study a little of English, you start speaking English in spite of yourself: Foot-fut, it-mit. (All laugh.) And also putting on shoes (English boots), whistling and singing, all these actions follow. And if a pundit studies Sanskrit, he starts quoting slokas. If the mind is kept in bad company, it adopts the same style of conversation and thoughts. If you keep it in the company of a bhakta, meditation on the Lord and talk on Hari and so on would follow.

“It is, indeed, the mind that matters. You have wife on the one hand and the child on the other. The attraction for wife is of one kind and the affection for the child of another. But the mind is the same.”

*Sarvadharmā parityajya mām ekam śaranam vraja,
Aham tva sarvāpāpēbhyo mokṣayishyāmi mā
śuśrah.* - Gita 18:66

[Renouncing all duties take refuge in Me alone.
I shall liberate you from all sins; grieve not.]

Instruction to Brahmos - Christianity, Brahma Samaj and concept of sin

Sri Ramakrishna (to Brahma bhaktas) — It is the mind that binds and it is the mind that liberates. I am a free soul; I may live in the household or in the forest; there is no bondage for me. I am the child of the Lord, the son of the king of kings; who will bind me then? When bitten by a snake, if you say loudly, 'There is no poison in it,' you are rid of the venom. In the same way if you say emphatically, 'I am not bound; I am free,' you become like that. You become liberated.

The earlier story of his life - Sri Ramakrishna listens to the Bible - Krishna Kishore's faith

"Someone gave me a book on Christianity. I asked him to read it out to me. It contained 'sin' and 'sin' alone. (To Keshab) Your Brahma Samaj also speaks of 'sin' and 'sin' alone. One who constantly speaks, 'I am bound, I am bound,' that rascal really gets bound! He who repeats day and night, 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner,' does become a sinner.

"There should be such faith in the name of the Lord, 'I have chanted His name, shall I be a sinner still? What sin for me! What bondage for me!' Krishna Kishore is a pious Hindu, a brahmin who worships the Lord with single-minded devotion. Once he went to Vrindavan. One day while roaming about, he felt thirsty. He went to a well where he saw a man standing. He said to him, 'Brother, will you please give me a pot of water? Of what caste are you?' The man replied, 'Pundit ji, I belong to a low caste - a cobbler.' Krishna Kishore said, 'You say Shiva and now draw water for me.'

"By chanting the name of Bhagavan, the body and mind of man all become pure.

"Why talk of 'sin' and 'hell' alone? Just say but once, 'I shall not repeat the wrongs I have done,' and have faith in His name."

Thakur overwhelmed with love sings the power of God's Name.

Mother, if I die with the name of Durga on my lips,

I shall see, O Shankari, how You shall not redeem me? [\[13\]](#)

"I prayed to my Mother only for bhakti. Keeping flowers in my hands I offered them to the lotus feet of the Mother and said -

O Mother, take Your sin and take Your merit, grant that I may have pure bhakti.

Take Your knowledge and take Your ignorance grant me pure bhakti.

Here is Your purity and here is Your impurity, grant me pure bhakti.

Take Your *dharma* (righteousness) and take Your *adharma* (unrighteousness), grant me pure bhakti.

(To the Brahmo bhaktas) “Listen to a song by Rama Prasad.”

Come, O my mind, let us go out for a walk.

Let us gather the four fruits^[14] at the foot of Kalpataru^[15], viz., Kali.

You have, O my mind, two wives *pravritti*^[16] and *nivritti*^[17]. Take *nivritti* on the way to the tree.

Ask - about the Lord - the son called *viveka* who knows the Real (God) from the unreal phenomenal world.

O, when shall you lie down in the abode of the blessed with purification and defilement alike by the side.

You shall see my Divine Mother as soon as all difference between the two co-wives ceases to exist.

Do you turn out your parents, egoism and ignorance.

Should mine-ness try to draw you into its hole do you cling to the post of patience.

Tie to a worthless post the two goats *dharma* and *adharma*.

Should they prove refractory, let them be killed before the altar of God with the sword of knowledge.

Admonish, O my mind, the children of your wife *pravritti* from a safe distance.

Should they not obey you, see that they are drowned in the sea of jnana.

Prasad says: If you go on like this, you shall be able to render satisfactory account of yourself to the Lord of death.

And I shall be glad to call you ‘my child,’ ‘my darling,’ the ‘idol of my father’ and other pet names; and you shall be indeed a mind after my mind.

“Why would God-realization be not possible in the household? Raja Janak had realized God. This world is a ‘structure of dreams,’ so said Prasad. After attaining bhakti at His lotus feet -

The world is indeed a thing of joy; let me eat, drink and be merry.

Raja Janak, was he inferior in any respect to the holy man who has given up the world?

Oh no, he was loyal to both matter and Spirit, who realized God and at the same time drank his cup of milk. (All laugh.)

Brahmo Samaj and Raja Janak - way in household - to live in solitude and *viveka* (discrimination)

“But one cannot become Raja Janak all at once.

Raja Janak had performed penance for a long time in solitude. Even while living in the family one should go into solitude at times. It is good if one can cry for Bhagavan even for three days in solitude away from home. Even if a man goes out in solitude for a day when he gets an opportunity and thinks upon Him, that too is good indeed. People shed pitcherful of tears for wife and children, but who cries for the Lord, tell me? One should go in solitude at times and perform sadhana to realize Bhagavan. While attending to particular duties in the world there are so many difficulties in making the mind steady in the initial stage. For example, when the trees on the footpath are young, they may be eaten up by goats or cows for want of fencing. A fence is needed in the initial stage. When, however, the trunk gets thicker no fence is needed. Then even an elephant tied to the trunk will not do any harm to it.

“The disease is of typhoid. And, there are a pot of water and tamarind

pickles in the room where the patient is lying with typhoid fever. If you want to cure such a patient, you'll have to change his place. The worldly man is a patient of typhoid, the worldly things are like the water pot, and desire for sensory enjoyments is the thirst for water. The mouth begins to water at the mere thought of tamarind pickles. They should not be placed nearby. Such things are very much present in the house - company of a woman and so on. That's why, living in solitude is necessary for cure.

“One should enter family life after attaining *viveka* and *vairagya* (discrimination and non-attachment). In the ocean of the world there are crocodiles of passion, anger, etc. If you enter the water after anointing your body with turmeric, you need not fear crocodiles. Discrimination and non-attachment are the turmeric. Knowledge of real and unreal is known as discrimination. The Lord alone is real, eternal. All else is unreal, transitory, lasting just a couple of days. One must realize this and develop love for the Lord. Attraction for the Lord - love for Him. The gopis had such an attraction for Krishna. Here is a song -

The way - love for the Lord. Attachment, or attraction like that of gopis

O, the sweet flute is again being played on in yonder wood!

(I for my part must go there!)

(My beloved of the dark blue hue stands waiting for me there!)

O tell me, my dears, if you too are coming or not.

My beloved - O, I am afraid He is a mere word - an empty sound to you, my friends!

But to me He is a vital part. O, He is my very life, my heart, my soul!

Do come out - Shyam is playing on the flute.

The grove has no beauty without you.

Singing this song with tearful eyes, Thakur says to Keshab and other bhaktas, “You may or may not accept Radha and Krishna but make this attraction and attachment your own. Who has such a yearning for Bhagavan? Make effort. Only when you yearn for God, you will realize Him.”

Chapter Seven

Samniyamya indriyagramam sarvatra sam-buddhayah,

Te prapnuvante man eva sarva bhute hite ratah.

- Gita 12:4

[Having restrained all the senses, even-minded everywhere, engaged in the welfare of all beings - verily they also come unto Me.]

Steamer trip with Keshab Sen - engaged in the welfare of all beings

It is the ebb tide. The steamer is going fast towards Calcutta. This is because the captain has orders to go a little farther down the Botanical Gardens to the other side of the bridge. How far the steamer has gone is not known to many, they have been listening to Sri Ramakrishna's words with rapt attention. They have no idea of time!

Now they partake of popped rice with coconut. Taking within the folds of their cloth all of them eat it. It is a mart of joy. Keshab has arranged for the popped rice. At this moment Thakur sees that both Vijay and Keshab are not quite at home in each other's presence. Now he will make them compromise as if they are two innocent boys. He is engaged in the welfare of all beings.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Keshab) — I say! Vijay is here. Your disputes and

differences are like skirmishes between Rama and Shiva. (Laughter.) Shiva is Rama's guru. They had a fight and they also had a compromise. But the fight and gibberish between Shiva's ghosts and Rama's monkeys do not end! (Loud laughter.)

“Both of you are one's own flesh and blood! Such things, you know, cannot be avoided. Lava and Kusha fought a war with Rama. And do you know, the mother and the daughter observed the 'Tuesday' (as the day of fast and prayers) separately. It is as if the weal of the mother and the weal of the daughter are different. In fact, the mother's 'Tuesday' brings weal to the daughter and daughter's 'Tuesday' brings weal to the mother. In the same way, he (Keshab) has a Samaj (religious society) of his own and he (Vijay) must have a separate Samaj of his own too. (Laughter.) Still it all is required. If you say that when Bhagavan Himself enacts His sport, where is the need for Jatila and Kutila ^[18]? If there are no Jatila and Kutila, the sport does not nourish. (All laugh.) Without Jatila and Kutila there is no joy. (Loud laughter.)

“Ramanuja was a believer of the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism). His guru believed in Advaitavada (non-dualism). In the end they had differences. The guru and the disciple started criticising each other's faith. This happens quite often. Howsoever, he is still our own flesh and blood.”

Chapter Eight

Pita asi lokasya chara acharasya tvam asya puhyas cha gurur gariyan,

Na tvatsamah asti abhyadhikah kutah anyah lokatraye api apratima prabhava.

- Gita 11:43

[You are the Father of the moving and the unmoving world. You are adorable by this world, You are the greatest Guru. In the three worlds there is none who can excel you? You, O Being, of unparallel power!]

Advice to Keshab - Gurudom and Brahmo Samaj -Sachchidananda alone is Guru

All are rejoicing. Thakur says to Keshab, “You do not see the nature of your disciples before taking them in, that's why they break away like this.”

“Men are the same in appearance, but they differ in nature. In some *sattvaguna* ^[19] dominates, in some *rajoguna* ^[20] and in others *tamoguna* ^[21]. Pooli (a kind of stuffed sweet) may all have the same look. But some contain sweet condensed milk, some the kernel of coconut sweetened by treacle or sugar and some have the kalai pulse (boiled without any admixture of sweets.) (All laugh.)

“Do you know what is my way of thinking? I go about eating and drinking and the Mother knows all. There are three words that prick me - guru, doer and father.

“It is Guru alone who is Sachchidananda. It is only He who will preach. I for my part feel like a child. You can find lakhs of men as gurus. Every one wants to be a guru. Who wants to be a disciple?”

“Preaching to mankind is very difficult. It is when God manifests and commissions, only then it is possible. Narada, Sukadeva and some others had received the commandment. Sankracharya was commissioned by God. If

you are not commissioned, who will listen to you? You know the Calcutta people's mind! So long as there is fire, the milk comes to the boiling point. As soon as the fire is withdrawn, nothing happens to it. The people of Calcutta are moody. They begin digging a well here. Reason, they need water. But they give it up when they find some rock there. They then start digging at another place. If they find sand there, they will give up and they start digging at another point. This is the way they do!

“Again, there are people who think a particular thought and believe it to be God's commandment. Such an idea is quite a mistaken one. He verily appears before you and talks. It is then that you receive the commandment. What a weight then that instruction carries! A mountain is moved by it. Mere lecturing! People will listen for a few days and later they forget. They do not act according to that instruction.”

The earlier story of his life - vision of Haldarpukur in bhava

“In that part of the country (in Thakur's native village), there is a pond named Haldarpukur. People used to ease themselves at its bank every morning. Others who came there in the morning, would shout at them in abusive language. Yet the same would be repeated the next day. Defecation stopped not. People then approached the Company (Municipality). They (the Municipality) sent a peon there. That peon put up a notice saying, ‘Do not ease yourself here.’ All that stopped then. (Everybody laughs.)

“The person who preaches must have the badge of authority. Without it, it is all-ridiculous. We do not instruct ourselves but preach others! **It is like the blind leading the blind.** (Laughter.) It brings more harm than good. It is only when you have seen God that you can see through other people and understand what diseases (of the soul) they have been take with. You can then instruct them.

Ahamkara vimudhatma karta aham iti manyate ^[22]

“You must have direct commandment of God, else it would be asserting yourself to say, ‘I teach mankind.’ Self assertion is the offspring of ignorance. Out of ignorance one feels, ‘I am the doer.’ One becomes a *jivanmukta* if one can but realize that God is the sole Actor (in the world system) and that I am a mere instrument in His hands. All troubles, all want of peace, come of the notion, ‘I am the doer, I am the free agent.’ ”

Chapter Nine

Tasmad asaktah satatam kayam karma samachara,

Asakto hy acharan karma param apnoti purushah.

- Gita 3:19

[Therefore, constantly perform your obligatory duties without attachment; for by doing duties without attachment man verily obtains the Supreme.]

The Steamer Trip

[Instruction to Keshab and other Brahmo bhaktas on Karma Yoga]

Sri Ramakrishna (to Keshab and other bhaktas) — You people talk of doing good to the world. I say, is the world so small? And who are you to do good to the world? Attain God by performing sadhana (devotional practices). Attain Him. He will give you power, only then you will be able to do good to others,

otherwise not.

A Particular Bhakta — Should we give up all work so long as we do not realize God?

Sri Ramakrishna — No, why will you give up work? You will have to do all this: Meditation upon the Lord, chanting His names and glories, and undertaking day to day rituals.

The Brahma Bhakta — And what about the worldly work? About worldly affairs?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, you will attend that too, as much as is necessary to run the household. But you must cry in a lonely corner and pray to God so that you do all these works in a *nishkama* manner (selflessly). And you will say, ‘O Lord, please lessen my worldly work, because O Lord, I see that when engrossed too much in work, I forget You. I think in my mind that I am doing the work in a *nishkama* way but it turns out to be *sakama* (with a selfish motive.) Perhaps a desire for name and fame crops up when there is increase in giving charity and distributing free meals.’

The earlier story of his life - talk on activities such as charity with Shambhu Mullick

“Shambhu Mullick took up the topic of hospitals, dispensaries, schools, roads and tanks. I said to him, ‘You should do only that much that comes to your way and which appears to be of pressing necessity - this too with the spirit of *nishkama*. Do not seek more work because if you do so you will lose sight of the Lord. Say, you go to the Kali ghat and become busy in distributing alms there. But in that you miss the very darshan of Kali! (Laughter.) First of all have the darshan of Kali even if you have to push your way through to reach there. Afterwards you may or may not take to charity. If you like, do as much as you can. After all, work is meant to realize the Lord. That’s why I said to Shambhu: Suppose the Lord appears before you, what will you say to Him? ‘Please build a number of hospitals and dispensaries?’ (Laughter.) A bhakta never asks for such things. Instead he says, ‘Thakur, grant me place at Your lotus feet, always keep me with You and grant me pure bhakti at Your lotus feet.’

“Karma Yoga is indeed very hard. The rituals laid down in the sacred books are very hard to practise in the age of Kali. Life is dependent on food. Too much of work is not possible. It will be all over with the patient suffering from fever if he is given the (slow process of) treatment of a *kaviraj* [23]. He cannot go for long. These days he needs D. Gupta [24]. In the age of Kali one should take to Bhakti Yoga, chanting of Bhagavan’s names and His glories, and prayer. Bhakti Yoga indeed is the law of this age. (To the Brahma bhaktas) You people also practise Bhakti Yoga. You repeat the name of Hari, chant the glories of the Mother, you people are indeed blessed! Your path is really fine. Like the Vedantins you do not say, ‘The world is like a dream.’ You are not such Brahmajnanis, you are bhaktas, you believe that God is a person. This too is nice indeed. You are bhaktas. You will certainly attain God when you call upon Him with a yearning heart.”

Surendra's house - with Narendra and others

The steamer has now come back to the Koyla ghat (Calcutta). All get ready to land. Coming out of the cabin they see that the full moon of Kojagar (the month of Aswin) is shining bright. The bosom of the Bhagirathi (Ganga) has become the place of sport for moonlight. A cab has been called for Thakur Sri Ramakrishna. After a while Sri Ramakrishna enters the cab with M. and some devotees. Nanda Lal, Keshab's nephew, also gets in. He will accompany Thakur up to some distance.

When they all are seated in the cab, Thakur asks, "Where is he?" He means, where is Keshab. Soon Keshab appears alone. There is a smile on his face. As he comes, he asks who are the persons accompanying him? After everyone is seated in the cab, Keshab prostrates himself on the ground and takes the dust of Thakur's feet. Thakur also bids him adieu affectionately.

The cab rolls on. The British locality. Beautiful main road with beautiful mansions on both sides of the road. The full moon has arisen. The mansions seem to repose in the mellow and serene rays of the moon. Near the main gates are the gas lights; numerous lights illuminate the rooms and in almost every home English ladies are singing to the accompaniment of harmonium, or piano. Thakur smiles in joy as he passes. Suddenly says he, "I am feeling thirsty; what is to be done?" What to do! Nanda Lal stops the carriage near the India Club, goes upstairs to fetch water and brings it in a glass tumbler. Thakur asks smilingly, "Is the tumbler well washed?" Nanda Lal says, "Yes, it is." Thakur takes water in that very tumbler.

Thakur has the nature of a child! When the cab starts, Thakur puts forward his face to look at people, horses, carriages and moonlight. He is happy to see all these.

Nanda Lal alights at Calootola. Thakur's cab stops in Shimuliya Street at Suresh Mitra's house. Thakur calls him Surendra. Surendra is a great bhakta of Thakur.

But Surendra was not at home. He has gone to his new garden. The inmates of the house open a room on the ground floor for them to sit. The cab fare is to be paid. Who will pay it? Had Surendra been there, he would have paid. Thakur says to a bhakta, "Ask the ladies of the house for the fare. Don't they know that their men are frequent visitors?"

Narendra lives in that very locality. Thakur sends for Narendra. Meanwhile, the inmates of the house led Thakur to a room on the second level. The floor of the room is covered with a sheet, a few bolsters are lying over it. On the wall of the room is an oil painting specially prepared by Surendra, wherein Thakur is showing to Keshab harmony of all religions: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. And also the harmony amongst all the sects of Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Shaivites and so on.

Sitting there Thakur talks smilingly. At that juncture enters Narendra. It is as if the joy of Thakur is redoubled. He says, "I had a steamer trip with Keshab Sen. Vijay was there and also all these people." Pointing to M. he adds, "You may ask him how I told Vijay and Keshab about 'Tuesday' of the mother and the daughter and that God's sport does not nourish without Jatila and Kutila - all these matters." (To M.) Was this not so?

M. — Yes, sir.

It is getting dark, but Surendra has not yet come back. Thakur will go to Dakshineswar. It cannot be delayed any further, it is 10.30 p.m. There is moonlight on the road.

The cab has arrived. Thakur gets in. Narendra and M. offer their obeisance and return to their houses in Calcutta.

[1] Kojagar Lakshmi Puja - The full moon night in the dark fortnight of Aswin. Lakshmi (goddess of wealth and prosperity) is worshipped in North India on Diwali festival. In Bengal Lakshmi is worshipped fifteen days prior to Diwali. On Diwali festival people worship Kali in Bengal.

[2] Knower of heart within

- [3] The twenty four categories are the following, viz. - the five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air, space); the five pranas (vital airs) (prana, udana, samana, vyana, apana); the five organs of sense; the five organs of work; the mind; the determinative faculty (*buddhi*); the ego; *Prakriti*
- [4] The aspirant who seeks to commune with God
- [5] Universal Soul
- [6] Monist
- [7] Unionist
- [8] Dualist
- [9] One who looks not for anything except the Lord
- [10] The spirits of destruction
- [11] Demi-gods who sing in heaven
- [12] Text of this song taken from 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,' According to M. (Mahendra), a Son of the Lord and Disciple, Part I.
- [13] For complete song see Section I, Chapter VII of this book.
- [14] Four fruits: Dharma (good works), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires), *moksha* (liberation of the soul)
- [15] Wish fulfilling tree of heaven
- [16] Worldliness
- [17] Non-worldliness
- [18] The two obstructives
- [19] Qualities that lead Godward
- [20] Qualities that make one inclined to multiply work and duty
- [21] That cause ignorance which turns the mind away from God
- [22] Clouded by egotism one thinks that he is the doer. (Gita 3:27)
- [23] Old fashioned Hindu physician
- [24] Dr. Gupta's patent fever mixture

Section III

Visit to Sinti Brahma Samaj Conversation and Enjoyment with Shivanath and other Brahmo Bhaktas

Chapter One

Sri Ramakrishna at the place of festivity

The Paramahansa Deva has come to visit the Brahma Samaj at Sinti. It is Saturday, 28 October, 1882, the second day of the dark fortnight in the month of Aswin.

Grand festivities are going on here today - the six monthly celebrations of the Brahma Samaj. That is why Sri Ramakrishna has been invited here. At about three or four in the afternoon he has come to the beautiful garden house of Sri Veni Madhava Pal by a cab from Dakshineswar Kali Temple with many a bhakta. It is here in this garden house that the Brahma Samaj conducts its meetings. He has great love for the Brahma Samaj. Brahma bhaktas too have great bhakti and reverence for him. It is only yesterday, on Friday evening, that he enjoyed so much when along with Keshab Chandra Sen and his disciples, he was on a steamer trip with the bhaktas on the bosom of the Bhagirathi (the Ganga) from Kali Temple to Calcutta.

Sinti is located near Paikpara about one and a half kosas (three miles) to the north of Calcutta. This is a beautiful garden house. Located far from the din of the city, this place is particularly suitable for Bhagavan's worship. The owner of this garden house arranges two festivals every year - one in autumn and the other in spring. He invites many bhaktas from Calcutta and nearby villages of Sinti to these festivities. So, Shivanath and other bhaktas have come here today from Calcutta. Most of them had joined the morning service and are now waiting for the evening service. It is particularly because they had heard that the great saint would be there in the afternoon and they would be able to see his 'happy figure,' drink the heart charming nectar of his words, hear his very sweet *sankirtan*^[1] and witness his dance full of love for Hari - a dance that is rare even amongst gods.

In the afternoon, a big crowd has gathered in the garden. Some are sitting on wooden benches under the shadow of some creeper canopy. Others are moving with their friends around the bank of the beautiful tank while many have already occupied their seats in the Samaj house and are awaiting the arrival of Sri Ramakrishna. There is a beetle leaf shop at the entrance of the garden. As one enters, one has the feeling that it is a place of worship. In the evening there will be musical *yatra* (a play). All the four directions are filled with joy. The blue sky of the autumn is reflecting joy. Since morning, a current of joy has been passing through the trees, the creepers and the shrubs of the garden. It appears as if the sky, the trees, the creepers and the creatures are singing in one tune -

What a joy the breeze is carrying today into the heart (of bhaktas) through the divine propitious rays!

It is as if all are thirsting after the divine appear-ance! It is at this time that the carriage of the Paramahansa Deva reaches in front of the Samaj building.

All rise to welcome the great saint. He has arrived. Forming a circle, people surround him from all sides.

A platform has been built in the middle of the main hall of the Samaj building. This place is full of people. In front is the vestibule. The Paramahansa Deva is seated there. Some people are seated there too. There are two rooms on both sides of the vestibule. People are there in those rooms too. Keeping their necks erect people are standing at the doors of the rooms. There are steps from one end to the other to go up the vestibule. These steps are also full of people. There are two or three trees near the steps. There is a creeper canopy close by. A number of benches are there. Here too people are gazing at the great saint with their necks erect and ears agog. There is a path between so many rows of flower and fruit trees. All the trees are waving gently with the touch of the breeze as if bowing in joy they are giving him a welcome.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva smilingly takes his seat. Now the sight of all falls instantly upon his happy and joyful figure. Till the start of the play, among the spectators some smile, some talk on worldly matters, some walk about either alone or with friends, some chew the beetle leaf, or the tobacco and some of them smoke cigarettes. But as soon as the curtain rises, they all stop talking about all matters and witness the play with full attention. It is like the garden bees which on seeing the lotus leave other flowers and come to drink nectar of the lotus.

Chapter Two

*Mama cha yah avybhichrena bhakti yogena sevate,
Sa gunan samatitya etan Brahmabhuyaya kalpate.*

- Gita 14:26

[He who serves Me with unswerving devotion goes beyond the three gunas, and is fit to become Brahman.]

Conversation with bhaktas

With a smiling face, Sri Ramakrishna looks at Shivanath and other bhaktas. Says he, "I say, this is Shivanath! You see, you are a bhakta, I feel very happy to see you. This is the nature of all those who are addicted to smoking hemp. Such a smoker feels happy when he meets another like him. He may perhaps embrace him." (Shivanath and all others laugh.)

Nature of a worldly man - the great importance of Name

"When I see a person whose mind is not in the Lord, I tell him, 'Please go and sit there.' Or I say, 'See what a beautiful building this is! (Rani Rasmani's Kali Temple, etc.) Go and see it. (All laugh.)

"And I see there are persons of non-serious nature who come with the bhaktas. They are very worldly-minded and do not like talk about the Lord. Perhaps they (bhaktas) would be talking of the Lord for long. On the other hand, these men cannot sit for long and feel restless. Again and again these people whisper into their ears, 'When are you leaving, when?' Perhaps the latter sometimes tell, 'Wait for a while, we shall be leaving shortly.' Then these people get indifferent and say, 'All right, you carry on. We are going and sitting in the boat.' (All laugh.)

“If you ask worldly people to renounce all and devote themselves at the feet of the Lord, they do not listen to you. That is why, to attract worldly people Gaur and Nitai, the two brothers, made a proposition after consulting each other, ‘Soup of magur fish, embrace of a young woman, and repeat the name of Hari.’ In the beginning, so many people came to repeat the name of Hari tempted by the first two. Then having tasted a bit of the nectar of Hari’s name they realized that the fish soup was nothing compared to the tears falling in the love of Hari; that ‘a young woman’ meant the earth and ‘embrace of a young woman’ meant to roll about in the dust in the love of Hari.

“Nitai, somehow, used to find some way to make one repeat the name of Hari. Chaitanya Deva said that there is great importance of the Name of the Lord. It may not show immediate result but sooner or later it does yield fruit. As for example, somebody kept a seed on the cornice of a house. After a long time, the **house fell down. The seed then fell on the ground, developed into a tree and bore fruit too.**”

Man’s nature and the three gunas - sattva, rajas and tamas of bhakti

“Just as there are three gunas (qualities) of sattva, rajas and tamas in the worldly people, in the same way there are three gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas of bhakti too.

“Do you know, what kind of sattva quality of the worldly man is? His house lies crumbled at places but he would not get it repaired. The pigeons purge in the vestibule of the shrine and moss is growing in the courtyard, yet he is not aware of this. Household goods have grown old but no care to set them right. He lives with just a pair of clothes that he has. Such a man is very calm, polite, compassionate and simple. He does not do any harm to anybody.

“There are signs of rajoguna also in a worldly man. A watch, a chain of the watch and two or three rings on his fingers. Household goods quite tip top. On the wall there will be picture of the queen, picture of the prince, or picture of some great person. House well plastered and so forth as if no stain anywhere. Various superior clothes, uniforms of servants and maids and all such things would be there.

“Tamoguna of the worldly man has also its signs: Sleep, lust, anger, pride and the rest.

“Bhakti can also be of sattvic type. The bhakta who possesses the quality of sattva meditates secretly. He perhaps meditates inside his mosquito net. Everybody thinks, ‘He is in sleep. It appears he could not sleep at night so he is late in rising.’ And his attachment to his body is only to the extent of filling his stomach - if he can have rice with spinach (a simple food), it suffices for him. There is no sophistication in his meals, nor in his dress; his household furniture is not polished. And a sattvic bhakta never flatters anybody for money.

“When a person has bhakti of the rajasic type, maybe he has a holy

mark on his forehead and a rosary of *rudraksha*^[2]; perhaps gold beads are strung in between the rosary. (Everybody laughs.) When he worships the deity, he clads himself in a silk dhoti?"

Chapter Three

Klaibyam ma sma gamah partha na etat tvayi upapadyate,

Kshuram hridaya daurbalyam tyaktva uttishtha paramtapa.

- Gita 2:3

[O Partha (Arjuna), do not yield to feebleness. It does not befit you. Give up petty faint-heartedness and arise, O vanquisher of foes!]

The great importance of Name and sin - three kinds of teachers

Sri Ramakrishna — A man having bhakti of tamas type has a burning faith. Such a bhakta forces the Lord like a dacoit forcing one to part with his wealth. 'Kill, cut him down, tie him,' such is the disposition of a dacoit.

Sri Ramakrishna raises his eyes and sings in a voice infused with love -

What need of Ganga, Prabhas, Kashi, Kanchi if the lips can utter 'Kali, Kali' when my life ebbs out?

He who utters Kali in all the three *sandhyas*^[3] needs no daily ritualistic worship.

Worship itself follows his footsteps but can never overtake him.

He can no longer take to charity, kindness and vows.

For Madan, the poet, all worship means the red feet of the Blissful Mother.

Who can know the qualities of the holy name of Kali,

The praises of which are sung by the God of the gods, Mahadeva Himself?

Thakur sings intoxicated in bhava as if he is initiated in *agnimantra*^[4] -

Mother, if I die with the Name of Durga on my lips,

I shall see, O Shankari, how you shall not redeem me?

"Why! I have chanted Her name - how can there be any sin in me? I am Her son! I am eligible to Her wealth (power and glory). Such must be the spirit.

"If you can give a turn to your tamoguna, you can realize the Lord. Forcing demands on Him! He is no stranger, He is indeed our own person. And see, the quality of tamas can be used for the welfare of others.

"There are three types of physicians - superior, mediocre and inferior. The physician who comes, feels the patient's pulse and then says to him, 'Brother, please take the medicine,' and leaves, he is an inferior type of physician. He doesn't care to find out if the patient has taken

the medicine. The physician who persuades the patient in many ways to take the medicine, who says in a sweet voice, 'O brother, how can you be cured unless you take the medicine? Dear brother, please take it. See I myself mix it for you. Now take it,' is a mediocre physician. And the physician who sees that the patient is stubbornly refusing to take the medicine, puts his knee on the patient's chest and forces the medicine down his throat is the superior type of physician. This is the tamoguna of the physician. This quality does good to the patient, it does not harm him.

“Like the physicians *acharyas* (religious teachers) are also of three types. Those who instruct their disciples on spiritual matters and then make no inquiries about their progress are inferior *acharyas*. Those who repeat their teachings again and again for the good of their disciples so that they may internalize the instructions, make requests in various ways and show love are mediocre *acharyas*. And the type of *acharyas* who use force when they find that the disciples do not listen in any way them I call superior *acharyas*.”

Chapter Four

Yato vacho nivarttante aprapya mansa saha.

- Taittiriya Upanishad 2 :4

[Where mind and speech cannot reach.]

What Brahman is cannot be expressed by speech

A Brahmo bhakta asked, “Is the Lord with form or formless?”

Sri Ramakrishna — One cannot reach the end of God. He is formless and then with form too. For a bhakta He is with form. For a jnani, that is to say, for him who takes the world like a dream, He is formless. The bhakta thinks that he is one and the world another, that is why the Lord manifests Himself to him as 'Personal God.' Jnanis such as the Vedantins reason, 'Not this, not this.' By so reasoning the jnani has the *bodhebodha*^[5] that his individuality is an illusion and so the world is like a dream. The jnani has the *bodhebodha* of Brahman (understands Brahman with his intellect). What God is, he just cannot express by the word of mouth.

“Do you know how is this? It is like the shoreless ocean of Sachchidananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute). Water in it turns into ice at places with the cold of bhakti. This ice takes a form. In other words, at times He manifests and takes a physical form before the bhakta. When the sun of jnana rises, the ice melts. Then the Lord does not appear like a person. Also His form is not visible. What He is cannot be expressed in words. And who is there to express God? He who is to describe is himself not there. Search as much as you like you cannot trace the I-ness.

“When one goes on reasoning, the I-ness vanishes completely. First you peel off the outer red skin of onion, then the soft white one.

Continuing to peel in this way, nothing of the onion remains.

“When the I-ness vanishes, who remains there to look for it? Who is there to tell in what way comes the *bodhebodha* of the real nature of Brahman?”

“A salt doll went to measure the ocean. As soon as it went in the ocean, it melted and became one with it. So, who remained to come and give the information?”

“It is the sign of *purna* jnana (ultimate knowledge) that man becomes silent on attaining it. Then the salt doll of I-ness gets dissolved in the sea of Sachchidananda, not a trace of the perception of difference remains then.

“So long as reasoning is not over, man continues to indulge in voluble discussions. But no sooner does it stop, he becomes silent. When the pitcher is full of water the water in it and that of the pond becomes one and all gurgling stops. There is sound only till the pitcher is full.

“People used to say in the olden days that the ship does not return back if it reaches ‘Dark waters.’”

But I-ness does not vanish

“When the I-ness dies, all troubles cease. Reason you may a thousand times, I-ness does not vanish. For you and me it is good to cherish the idea of ‘I am bhakta.’”

“For a bhakta Brahman is *saguna* (with qualities). In other words, God is with qualities and He is visible as a person with a form. It is He Who listens to prayers. All your prayers are addressed to Him alone. You are not the Vedantins either, nor are you jnanis, you are bhaktas. Whether you accept God with form or not, it does not matter. It is enough to understand that the Lord is a person who listens to your prayers, who creates, preserves and dissolves, a person who is infinitely powerful.

“It is only by the path of bhakti that you can easily reach Him.”

Chapter Five

Bhakta tv ananyaya shakya aham evamvidhah Arjuna,

Jnatum drahtum cha tattvena praveshtum cha paramtapa.

- Gita 11:54

[But by unswerving devotion can I, of this form, be known and seen in reality and also entered, O scorcher of foes.]

Vision of God - with form or without form

A Brahmo bhakta asked, “Sir, can we see the Lord? If so, why don’t we see Him?”

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes surely, He can be seen. He is seen with form and He is seen without form too. How can I explain this to you!

The Brahma Bhakta — By which method can one see Him?

Sri Ramakrishna — **Can you weep longingly for Him?**

“People shed pitcherful of tears for son, wife and money. But who cries for the Lord? So long as the baby remains cajoled with his pap, his mother attends to all her household chores like cooking, etc. But when the child has no more liking for the pap and throwing it away begins to scream, the mother takes down the rice pan off the fire, comes running and picks up the baby in her arms.”

The Brahma bhakta — Sir, why are there so many beliefs concerning the Lord’s form? Some say that God is with form, some say that He is formless. And even among believers in God with form, we hear of so many different forms. Why such a confusion?

Sri Ramakrishna — Whichever form of God a bhakta sees, he believes in that alone. In reality, there is no confusion. If He is attained by any means, He will Himself explain everything. If you have never been to a particular residential quarter, how can you know everything about it?

“Listen to a story. A man went out to answer the call of nature. He saw a bird perched on a tree. On his return he said to another man, ‘See, I saw a beautiful red coloured bird on that tree.’ The other man replied, ‘When I went there to answer the call of nature, I also saw it. But it is not of red colour, it is green.’ Yet another man said, ‘No, no, I also saw it. It is yellow.’ In the same manner many others said, ‘No, it is of tobacco, brinjal, blue colour and so on.’ All this resulted in a quarrel. Then they went to the foot of the tree and saw a man sitting there. When asked he said, ‘I live under this tree. I know the bird very well. Whatever you are saying is all true. It is sometimes red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, sometimes blue and also of many more colours. See, it has many colours. Besides, at times I find that it has no colour at all. Now it is with qualities, now without qualities.’

“It means that the man who is always thinking of the Lord can only know His real nature. He alone knows that He is seen in different forms and in different moods. He is with qualities and also He is without qualities. It is only he who lives under the tree, knows that the variegated bird has different hues, and that sometimes it has no colour at all. Other people just argue, quarrel and trouble themselves.

“Kabir used to say, ‘The One without form is my Father, with form my Mother.’

“God grants darshan to the bhakta in the form he loves most - gracious loving Lord of the bhakta as He is. The Purana says that God assumed the form of Rama for the sake of heroic bhakta Hanuman.”

Explanation of the forms of Kali and Shyama - the Infinite is not

comprehensible

“In Vedanta philosophy there are no forms and the like. Its ultimate principle is that Brahman is the only Reality and the phenomenal universe constituting the names and forms illusory. So long as one cherishes the idea that ‘I am a bhakta,’ there is a possibility of getting the vision of the form of the Lord and seeing Him as a person. Looking at it with the perspective of reasoning, the feeling of ‘I am the bhakta’ keeps him somewhat away from Him.

“Why are the forms of Kali and Shyama three and a half cubits tall? It is because of the distance. On account of distance, the sun seems small. If you go near, it will look big beyond your imagination. And why is the complexion of Kali, or Shyama black? That, too, on account of distance. For example, water in a lake appears green, blue or black from a distance. But if you go near and take some water in your palm, you will find that it is colourless. The sky from a distance appears blue. But if you go near it, it has no colour.

“So I say that according to the Vedanta philosophy, Brahman is without attributes. What Its real nature is like cannot be expressed in words. But so long as you are real, the world is also real. The names and forms of the Lord are also real, taking Him as a person is real too.

“For you there is the path of bhakti. It is a very good and easy path. Can the Infinite Lord be known? Besides, where is the need to know Him? Having the rare privilege of been born as a man, we should develop devotion at His lotus feet by all means possible.

“If I can quench my thirst with one pot of water, what need is there for me to measure the quantity of water in the tank? I get intoxicated with half a bottle of wine what need is there to know how many maunds of wine there is in the wine shop? So, what is the need to know the Infinite?”

Chapter Six

*Yas tv atmaratir eva syad atmatriptas cha manavah,
Atmany eva cha samtushtas tasya karyam na vidyate.*

- Gita 3:17

[But the man who rejoices in the Self, is satisfied with the Self and is centred in the Self, there remains no obligatory duty for him.]

Signs of God-realization - seven planes and the knowledge of Brahman

Sri Ramakrishna — The Vedas describe the different states of a Brahmajñani. However, this path, the path of jñana, is a very difficult path. If the least trace of worldly wisdom, or that of attachment to ‘women and gold’ persists one cannot attain jñana. **This path is not for the age of Kali.**

“The Vedas talk of the seven planes in relation to this. These are the seven states of the mind. When the mind is attached to the world, it has its location in the generative organ, rectum and naval. The mind does not look upward in this state, its only concern is ‘woman and gold’. The fourth plane of the mind is the heart. It is here that the mind gains initial awareness. One sees light all around. Seeing the divine light, he is amazed and exclaims, ‘What is this! What is this!’ The mind then does not go downwards (towards the world).

“The fifth plane of the mind is the throat.

When the mind of a person rises to the throat, he loses all his ignorance and illusion. He does not then like to talk or hear anything except about the Lord. If someone talks of other matters, he leaves that place. The sixth plane of the mind is the forehead. When the mind reaches there, one sees a divine form all the twenty four hours a day. However, a bit of I-ness subsists even then. Such a person feels intoxicated at the vision of that supreme and unique form. He tries to touch and embrace this form but cannot. It is like the light in the lantern. One feels that one can touch the light but because of the glass in between, one cannot touch it. In the top of the head is the seventh plane. When the mind rises to it, one goes into samadhi and the Brahmajnani has direct vision of Brahman. But in this state the body does not last for many days. He always remains unconscious, he can eat nothing and if milk is poured into his mouth it runs out. On this plane, the man dies in twenty one days. This is the state of the Brahmajnani. For you is the path of bhakti - it is a very good and easy path.

Actions drop out after samadhi - the earlier story of his life - how Thakur gave up karmas like *tarpan* [\[6\]](#)

“Once a person asked me, ‘Sir, can you teach me (how to attain) samadhi?’ (Everybody laughs.)

“All actions drop out after samadhi. Actions like puja (worship), japa and all other worldly activities drop off. In the beginning one is overactive with *karmas* (works) but as the man advances towards the Lord, the display of *karmas* becomes less - so much so that even singing of His names and glories ceases. (To Shivanath) Till you did not reach the meeting, people talked so much of your good name, qualities and so on. But as soon as you arrived, all that stopped. Now everybody takes joy only at your sight. And people then say, ‘Here, here comes Shivanath Babu.’ All other talk about you stops.

“After this state of mine, I noticed at the time of performing *tarpan* with Ganga water that it was trickling down my fingers. I began to cry and asked Haladhari, ‘Brother, what has happened?’ Haladhari told me that it is called *galitahasta* (fingers of the hand remain apart). After the vision of the Lord, actions like *tarpan* drop out.

In the *sankirtan* one first sing, ‘Nitai is my mad elephant.’ As this

mood deepens, one simply utters, 'Elephant, elephant.' Next it is only, 'Elephant.' And lastly while saying, 'Ele,' one goes into bhava samadhi. Then the man who was singing says not a word.

"It is the same as in a feast given to the brahmins. In the beginning there is so much of activity. When they sit down with a leaf plate in front, much of the noise ceases. One hears only, 'Bring some *puris*, bring some here.' And again, when they begin eating *puris* and vegetables, seventy five percent of the noise subsides. When they have curds, you can hear only one sound, 'Sup sup' (of smacking their lips). (All laugh.) It is right to say that nobody utters a word. The feast over, the next step is to go to sleep. Then it is absolute silence.

"Therefore I say that in the beginning there is so much of activity. The more you advance on the path of the Lord, the lesser the *karma* becomes. At the end, all *karmas* drop and it is followed by samadhi.

"When the housewife is in her family way, her mother in-law reduces her duties. In the tenth month, she is almost free from work. When the child is born, there is complete renunciation of work. The mother has only to look after the baby. All chores in the household are attended to by the mother-in-law, the husband's sister, or his elder sister-in-law."

The avatara and the like live after samadhi for instruction of mankind

"After samadhi the general rule is that the person dies. But some persons like Narada and avatars like Chaitanya Deva live for instructing mankind. After digging the well, some people send off the spade and the basket. There are some who keep them thinking that these may perhaps be needed by their neighbours. In the same way, the *mahapurushas* (high spiritual personalities) feel greatly concerned for the troubles of common man. They are not so selfish so as to be satisfied with their own attainment of jnana. You know well how the selfish people behave. If you ask them to urinate here, they won't lest it should later do you good. (All laugh.) If you ask them to bring sandesh for a pice from a shop, they will lick it on their way. (All laugh.)

"There is special manifestation of divine power in some. A man of ordinary calibre is afraid of imparting instruction to others. *Habate* wood (worn out wood) may itself float on the water somehow, but it sinks the moment a bird sits on it. Sages like Narada are *bahaduri* wood (logs of wood). This wood not only floats on the water, but can also carry men, bullocks and even elephants."

Chapter Seven

Adrishtapurvam hrishitah asmi drishitva bhayena cha pravayathitam mano me,

Tad eva me darsaya deva rupam prasid devesa jagannivasa.

[I rejoice that I have seen what was never seen before, but my mind is confounded with fear. Show me that form only, O God, have mercy, O God of gods, O Abode of the Universe.]

Prayer system of Brahma Samaj and talk on Lord's splendour and glory
The earlier story of his life - theft of an ornament from
Radhakanta Temple in Dakshineswar

Sri Ramakrishna (to Shivanath) — Yes, my dear sir, why do you dwell so much on glories and splendour of the Lord? I said the same to Keshab Sen. One day they all came here to the Kali Temple. I said, 'I would like to hear how you lecture.' A meeting was then arranged in the chandni (porch) on the Ganga ghat and Keshab began to lecture. He spoke so well; I went into samadhi. Later on, I said to Keshab, 'Why do you so much talk of all this: O Lord, what beautiful flowers You have made! You have created the sky, the stars, the sea and so on!' Those who love splendour, love to talk about the Lord's splendour. When the Radhakanta's ornament was stolen, Sejo Babu (son-in-law of Rasmani) went to the Radhakanta Temple and said to the deity, 'Fie on you, Thakur (god)! You could not guard your own ornaments!' I said to Sejo Babu, 'What an intelligence you have! He who has Lakshmi herself for His handmaid, He whose feet she massages, how can He lack splendour? The jewellery is something very precious for you, but for the Lord it is just a few clods of earth. Fie on you! You should not talk so unintelligently. What riches can you give to God?' That is why I say that a man seeks a person whom he finds joy. What use it is to find out from him where he lives, how many buildings and gardens he possesses, how much wealth, how many relatives, male and female servants he has? When I see Narendra, I forget everything. I have never asked him even by mistake where he lives, what is his father, how many brothers he has and so on. Dive deep into the sweetness of the Lord. What need is there for us to find out about God's infinite creation, His limitless splendour!"

Sri Ramakrishna again sings the same song full of sweetness with a voice that excels the Gandharvas [\[7\]](#) -

Dive deep, dive deep, dive deep, O my mind into the sea of Beauty.

Make a search in the regions lower and lower down under the sea;

You will come by the jewel, the wealth of *prema* (intense love of God).

Within your heart is Vrindavan, the abode of God who is love.

Search and look; search and look; search and look. You will find it.

Then shall burn without ceasing the lamp of divine wisdom.

Who is that Being that does steer the boat on land - on land, on solid ground?

Kabir says, 'Listen, listen, listen! Meditate on the hallowed feet of the Guru (Divine preceptor).'

“Even so, after the vision of God, the bhakta wants to witness His

leela. After slaying Ravana, Ramachandra entered Lanka. Nikasha, Ravana's old mother, tried to run away. Lakshman said, 'Brother Rama, just see how strange it is! This Nikasha is such an old woman, she has suffered so much on the loss of her sons, yet she is so afraid of losing her own life and is taking to her heels.' Ramachandra giving assurance of safety to Nikasha called her to his presence and asked her about it. She replied, 'Rama, I have been able to see all this leela of Yours because I am alive for all these days. I want to live longer so that I may witness more of it.' (All laugh.)

(To Shivanath) "I desire to see you. What shall I live for if I don't see the pure souled ones? Reason? I feel the pure souled ones as the friends of my previous incarnation."

A Brahmo bhakta asks, "Sir, do you believe in rebirth?"

Rebirth - Bahune me vyatitani janmani lava cha Arjuna [\[8\]](#)

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, they say there is rebirth. How can we of tiny intellect understand the actions of the Lord? Many people have said so, that is why I do not disbelieve. Bhishma Deva lay dying on his bed of arrows. All the Pandavas are standing with Sri Krishna. They see tears flowing from the eyes of Bhishma Deva. Arjuna says to Sri Krishna, 'Brother, how strange it is! Pitamah, who is Bhishma Deva himself, truthful, has conquered his senses, a jnani and one of the eight Vasus [\[9\]](#), even he is weeping at the time of his death because of maya. When Sri Krishna asked Bhishma about it, Bhishma replied, 'Sri Krishna! You know very well that I am not weeping because of this. When I see that there is no end to the sufferings even of the Pandavas who have Bhagavan Himself as their charioteer, I weep thinking that I have not been able to understand anything of the ways of Bhagavan.'

In the joy of kirtan with the bhaktas

Now the evening worship begins in the Samaj building. It is about half past eight at night. At four or five dandas after the evening the night is lit with the moonlight. It is as if the trees and the leaves of the creepers in the garden begin to float in the clear autumnal moonbeams. In the meanwhile, *sankirtan* starts in the prayer hall. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna is dancing intoxicated in the love of Hari. Brahmo bhaktas holding drums and cymbals are dancing around him. All are intoxicated in bhava as if having the vision of Sri Bhagavan. The tune of Hari's name is going a crescendo. The villagers all around listen the name of Hari with their minds full of gratitude for Veni Madhava, the devotee owner of the garden.

At the end of the kirtan, Sri Ramakrishna prostrates on the ground to offer his obeisance to the Mother of the Universe. While offering his obeisance says he, "Bhagavata bhakta Bhagavan! Salutations at the feet of jnanis, salutations at the feet of bhaktas, salutations at the feet of the bhaktas of God with form, salutations at the feet of the bhaktas of the formless God, salutations at the feet of the Brahmajnanis of yore, salutations at the feet of the Brahmajnanis of today's Brahmo Samaj."

Veni Madhava had made provisions for various kinds of delicious dishes that he fed to all the assembled bhaktas to their full satisfaction. Sri

Ramakrishna also partakes of the *prasada*^[10] full of joy in the company of the bhaktas.

[1] Singing of hymns and devotional songs

[2] A kind of dried fruit used as a bead

[3] At dawn, noon and twilight hour

[4] A *mantra* that makes one determined to achieve an extremely difficult and daunting task

[5] Bodhebodha is the intellectual, literal, imaginative, inner feeling of the real nature of Brahman (Atman, Bhagavan). The Vedanta illustrates it in this way (taken from Vol. III of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, 24 August, 1882): A babu is lying in a room in the dark. Somebody gropes in the dark to reach him. His hand touches a couch and he says, 'No, this is not he.' Then he touches the window. This too is not he. Then he touches the door and again says to himself, 'No, not he.' 'Not this, not this, not this.' At last his hand does touch the babu. Then he says, 'That's it. He is the babu' - it means that he has realized that 'the babu is'. He has reached the babu but hasn't known him intimately.

[6] Sacrament of offering drinking water to the deities

[7] Class of demi-gods proficient in music and war

[8] O Arjuna, you and I have passed through many births (Gita 4:5)

[9] A compact group of eight *devas* (gods)

[10] Sacramental food having offered to the deity

Section IV

Sri Ramakrishna instructs Vijaykrishna Goswami and other Brahma Bhaktas

Chapter One

Na jayate mriyate va kedachin na yam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah,

Ajo nityah sashvato yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire. (Gita 2:20)

[The Atman is neither born nor does it die. Coming into being and ceasing to be do not take place in it. Unborn, eternal, constant and ancient, it is not killed when the body is slain.]

Is it suicide if a liberated person terminates his life?

Vijaykrishna Goswami has come to see Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. He is accompanied by three or four Brahma bhaktas. It is the month of Agrahayana, the fourth day of the bright fortnight, Thursday, 14 December 1882. These people have come from Calcutta by boat with Balaram, the great devotee of the Paramahansa Deva. Sri Ramakrishna at that time was resting for a while at midday. It is on Sundays that people come in large numbers. However, bhaktas who want to have personal talk with him usually come on other days.

The Paramahansa Deva is seated on the wooden cot. Vijay, Balaram, M. and some other bhaktas are sitting on a mat while others are seated on the bare floor in front of Thakur facing west. Bhagirathi (the Ganga) is seen from the western door of the room. Winter time waters of Bhagirathi are steady and limpid. Just beyond the door is the western semi-circular verandah. Beyond it are the flower gardens followed by the embankment. Along the western side of the embankment flows the holy Ganga, redeemer of the sins, as if washing joyfully the feet of the temple of the Lord.

It is winter, so all are clad in woollen clothes. Vijay is suffering from acute colic pain, so he has brought medicine with him in a small glass bottle. He will take the medicine when due. Nowadays Vijay is a paid preacher in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. He has to deliver sermons from the pulpit of the Samaj. So, he has controversies with the Samaj on different matters these days. He has accepted the assignment, so he is helpless. He is not free to act and express his independent views. Vijay comes from a very pious family - from the family of Advaita Goswami. Advaita Goswami was a jnani. He meditated upon the formless Brahman and at the same time he showed the highest excellence of bhakti. He was a chief intimate disciple of Bhagavan Chaitanya Deva. He used to dance mad in the love of Hari. When he danced he would lose his entity so much that even the cloth that he was wearing would slip down. Vijay too has joined the Brahma Samaj. Here he meditates on the formless Para Brahman. But the blood of the great bhakta Advaita Goswami, his ancestor, flows through his veins. So, the seed of Hari's love lies ready to sprout within him, only the right time is awaited. That is why he has been charmed on seeing the state of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna of being deep drunk in the divine love for Hari, the state that is rare even amongst gods. Just as the snake charmed by the music keeps sitting beside the snake charmer, Vijay too charmed by the Bhagavata (divine words) issuing out of the hallowed lips of the Paramahansa Deva keeps sitting by his side. And when he dances like a child in the love of Hari, Vijay too dances with him.

Vishnu's house is in Ariadaha, he has committed suicide by cutting his throat with a knife. Today his topic comes up first.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay, M. and other bhaktas) — See, this boy has terminated his life. When I heard it, I felt very bad. He used to come here, he was a schoolboy but he would often say that he had no liking for the world. He had lived with some relatives for a few days in the West (in the west of Bengal, i.e. Uttar Pradesh or Punjab etc.). He would occasionally meditate sitting in some solitary plain, forest or hill. He used to tell me that he had strange visions of various forms of the Lord.

“I believe that it was his last birth. In his previous birth he had done much of the work, some was left undone. It appears that he accomplished that much in this

life.

“One must believe in the *sanskaras*^[1] of the previous lives. They say that a man was practising *shava sadhana* (spiritual discipline on a corpse). Seated in a deep forest he was worshipping Bhagavati (the Divine Mother). But he started having frightful visions and in the end a tiger carried him away. There was another man who had climbed up a nearby tree for fear of the tiger. Seeing a dead body and ready arrangements for worship he came down, took some holy water and sat on the corpse. He had performed only a little japa when Bhagavati appeared before him and said, ‘I am pleased with you. Ask for a boon.’ Paying obeisance at the lotus feet of the Mother, he said, ‘Mother, I just ask you one thing. I am amazed at Your action. After making so many arrangements, this man had been practising sadhana laboriously for so many days, but You did not bless him. On the other hand, I know nothing, hear nothing, never repeat Your name, nor practise any spiritual discipline, have no spiritual knowledge, no bhakti - still I am receiving so much of Your grace!’ Bhagavati laughed as she said, ‘Child, you don’t remember your past lives. You did sadhana for Me during so many births. It is because of the strength of that sadhana that all these things were arranged for you, it is also for that reason that you are blessed with My vision. Now speak out, what boon do you want?’

A bhakta says, “I feel frightened to hear of the suicide.”

Sri Ramakrishna — Suicide is a great sin, one will have to return to this world again and again and suffer its trials and tribulations.

“Even so if a person terminates his life after having the vision of the Lord, it is not suicide. There is no harm in giving up the body that way. Some people terminate their lives after attaining jnana. When a gold image has been cast in an earthen mould, the mould may be preserved, or may be cracked and thrown away.

“Many years ago, a boy used to come here from Barahnagar. He was about twenty years old. His name was Gopal Sen. When he would come here, he used to experience such deep emotions that Hriday had to hold him - later he fell and broke his limbs. The boy suddenly touched my feet and said, ‘Sir, I shall not be able to come here any more. So I take your leave.’ A few days later I heard that he had given up his body.

Chapter Two

Anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhjasva man.

- (Gita 9:33)

[Having come to this transitory and miserable world, worship Me.]

Four classes of men - attachment to ‘woman and gold’ is the sign of worldly man

Sri Ramakrishna — Four classes of human beings have been stated - the bound souls, the seekers after liberation, the liberated and the ever free. The world is like the fishing net, the *jiva* (individual soul) like the fish and the Lord (whose maya constitutes the world) is the fisherman. When fishes fall into the fisherman’s net many of them try to tear the net to escape, i.e. they try to free themselves. They are like the men seeking liberation. However, all those who try to escape cannot run away. Only a few fishes slip out with a splash. Then people call out, ‘There goes the big fish.’ Such two or four beings are the liberated ones. Some fishes are so cautious by nature that they never fall into the net. Narada and such other saints are ever free; they never fall in the net of the world. However, most of the fish keep lying in the net unaware of the fact that they have

fallen into a net and will die. Remaining in the net, they dart straight ahead taking the net along and try to hide their body into the mud. They make no attempt to escape, rather they fall deeper into the mud. They are like the bound souls. They live in the net and think, 'We are quite happy here.' The bound *jivas* remain attached to the world that is to 'woman and gold'. They remain sunk in the sea of evil and think that they are very happy there. Those who seek for liberation and those who are liberated look upon the world as a death well, they don't like it. So, some of them having attained jnana and the vision of Bhagavan give up their bodies. However, giving up body in this way is a far cry.

"The bound creatures, the worldly men, don't get awareness by any means. They suffer so much misery, so many trials, and so many sorrows; even then they don't get awakening.

"The camel likes thorny bushes but the more it eats, the more it bleeds from its face. Even so, it continues to eat the same thorny bush and does not leave it. The worldly man suffers so much agony, so much sorrow, yet he reverts back to his old self quite soon. Perhaps his wife has died or she has proved faithless to him, yet he marries again. Perhaps he has lost his son and suffered so much of sorrow, yet he forgets all this in a few days. The mother of this boy, who was beside herself with grief, ties up her hair again and bedecks herself with jewellery. In the same way though people spend all in the marriage of their daughters, they continue giving birth to more children year after year. They lose all in litigation. Yet they again go to law! They cannot feed the children they have, neither can they educate them, nor can they look after them properly, still they beget more children every year.

"At times, their state can be likened to that of the snake trying to swallow the mole. The snake cannot swallow the mole, nor can it give it up. The bound soul may have realized that there is no substance in the world - that it is like a hog plum that has nothing but stone and skin - yet he cannot give it up. Even though he cannot turn his mind towards the Lord.

"A relative of Keshab Sen, fifty years old, was playing cards, as if time was not yet ripe for him to think of the Lord.

"The bound *jiva* has yet another sign. If he is lifted from worldly life to a better place, he will pine away to death. The worm of faeces feels pleasure in the excreta alone; it is only there that it thrives. If you put it in a pot of rice, it will die." (All laugh.)

Chapter Three

Asanshayam mahabaho mano durnigraham chalam,

Abhyasena tu Kaunteya vairagyena cha grihyate.

- Gita 6:35

[O mighty armed, the mind is undoubtedly restless and hard to control, but by practice and non-attachment, O son of Kunti, it can be controlled.]

Deep vairagya (dispassion) and worldly man

Vijay — What must be the state of mind of a bound soul for attaining salvation?

Sri Ramakrishna — By the grace of the Lord when one develops deep *vairagya* (non-attachment; dispassion), one can be freed from this attachment of 'woman and gold'. What is deep *vairagya*? Whatever is going on let it be; you just go on repeating the name of the Lord - this is **mild *vairagya***. He who has deep dispassion, his *prana* (life breath) becomes restless for Bhagavan - like the mother for the child in her womb. He who has deep dispassion does not want anything but Bhagavan. He sees the world as a deep well, a death well. He feels

he is perhaps drowned. He looks upon his owns as venomous snakes. He always wants to run away from them. And he does run away. He does not think, 'Let me first arrange for my family. I will then think of the Lord.' **He has great will power.**

"What is deep dispassion like? Listen to a story. Once there was a drought in a certain region. All the farmers were digging canals to bring water from afar. A farmer had great determination. One day he resolved that he would go on digging till water from the river flowed along the whole canal. And here the time came for his bath. His wife sent him some oil through her daughter. The daughter said to him, 'Father, it is time for your bath. Massage your body with the oil and take your bath.' He replied, 'Please go away, I have some work to do.' It was past midday. The farmer is still at work in his field, forgetting all about his bath. Now his wife came to the field and said, 'Why haven't you taken your bath yet? Your rice is getting cold. You are always over doing things. If the work is not yet accomplished, do it tomorrow, or do it after your meals.' Taking the spade in his hand the farmer hurled some abuses at her and made her run away. And said he to her, 'You have no sense. There have been no rains. There is no crop. What will the children eat? Without food, we shall all starve to death this time. I have vowed that I shall bring water to the field today, after that I shall think of bath and food.' Seeing his mood and determination, the woman ran away. The farmer worked very hard throughout the day and joined the canal to the river in the evening. He then sat on its bank and enjoyed seeing the river water gurgling in the field. He was now at peace and full of happiness. He went home and calling his wife he said to her, 'Now bring some oil and prepare a smoke.' Then in a carefree mood he took his bath, ate his meals and snored happily in his bed. This kind of determination is an illustration of deep *vairagya*.

"And there was another farmer, he was also bringing water to his field. His wife went and said to him, 'It is already late. Come on now, there is no need to work so hard.' Without saying much in protest, this fellow put down his spade saying, 'Since you say so, I am coming.' (All laugh.) This farmer then could never bring water to his field. This is the example of mild *vairagya*.

"Just as without great determination water did not reach the field of the farmer, in the same way the man does not attain the Lord."

Chapter Four

*Apuryamanam achalapratishitam samudram apah pravishanti yadvat,
Tadvat kama yam pravishanti sarve sa shantim apnoti na
kamakami.*

- Gita 2:70

[He unto whom all desires enter as all waters enter into the sea, which is always full and motionless, attains peace and not he who desires all desires.]

Slaving for 'woman and gold'

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay) — You used to come here so often, why not now?

Vijay — Sir, I so much desire to come here but I am not free. I have accepted work in the Brahmo Samaj.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay) — 'Woman and gold' bind the man. One loses one's freedom. When there is a woman, you need 'gold'. And for that you have to be a slave of another person. One loses one's freedom and cannot act as one likes.

"The priests of (the temple of) Govindaji in Jaipur did not marry at first. They had great spiritual and mental powers then. The king once sent for them but they did not go to him. Instead they sent a message: Let the king come here. After

consulting his counselors the king arranged for their marriage. Now the king no longer needed to send for them. They would come to him themselves - 'Sir, I have come to shower my blessings. Here are some sacred flowers, kindly accept them.' They had to go to the king for everything: Now for building a house, now for celebrating the rice taking ceremony of their sons, now for putting the children to school and so on.

"Twelve hundred *nedas*^[2] and thirteen hundred *nedis*^[3] '*tar sakshi udam sari*' - you know this story. Nityananda Goswami's son Virbhadrā had thirteen hundred *nedas* as his disciples. When they became spiritually perfect, Virbhadrā was alarmed. Thought he, 'They all have become spiritually perfect. Anything they say to people will come to pass. Whichever way they go, they may cause danger. For even if people unknowingly do some wrong, they will come to grief.' Thinking thus, Virbhadrā called them to him and said, 'Go to the Ganga, perform *sandhya* and worship and come back.' The *nedas* had attained such spiritual perfection that they went into samadhi as they meditated. When the flood tide came they were unaware of it and they remained absorbed in meditation even when the ebb tide receded. Out of thirteen hundred *nedas*, one hundred anticipated what Virbhadrā would ask them to do. One should not disobey one's preceptor, thinking thus they disappeared and never to go to see Virbhadrā. The remaining twelve hundred came to him. Virbhadrā said to them, 'These thirteen hundred *nedis* will serve you. Please marry them.' 'As you please,' said they, 'but a hundred of us have left.' However, with each of these twelve hundred *nedas* one *nedi* began to live as a wife to serve each of them. Now they lessened their spiritual powers and the strength of their austerities notwithstanding. Living with women, they lost their powers because in their company they lost their independence. (To Vijay) You have yourself seen to what a pass you have come by accepting service with others. And see, by accepting job with their masters so many scholars who have studied English and passed so many examinations are trampled every morning and evening under their feet. Reason - only woman. Having married and enjoyed the happy household fair, they cannot now pull out from it. That's why, they put with so much of suffering of slavery and humiliation."

After God realization women are worshipped as Mother

"If you once in this manner develop such deep *vairagya* and realize the Lord, you no longer have attachment to women. Even if you live in the household, you don't feel attraction for women; there is no danger from them. Say, there is one big magnet and the other is a small one. Which one will pull the iron? Surely, the big one will pull. The Lord is a big magnet. Compared to Him, woman is a small magnet. What can woman do?"

A Bhakta — Sir, should we hate women?

Sri Ramakrishna — Those who have realized the Lord, do not look upon women the other way. So, where is the cause of fear for them? They actually see that women are a portion of the Mother of the Universe. So, they worship them all as the Mother. (To Vijay) Do come here sometimes. I very much like to see you.

Chapter Five

The real acharya is he who has received the commandment of the Lord

Vijay — I have to do the work of the Brahmo Samaj. So, I cannot often come here. I shall visit whenever possible.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay) — Look here, the task of an *acharya* (religious

teacher) is very difficult. Public instruction cannot be imparted without having direct commandment from the Lord.

“If one preaches without receiving the commandment, people do not listen. Such a teaching carries no force. First of all, one should attain the Lord by practising religious disciplines or by any possible means. Then one may teach after receiving His command. In that village (in Thakur’s native village) there is a pond called Haldarpukur. People used to defecate daily on its bank. Those who came to the pond in the morning would use foul language and create so much fuss. These abuses did not help; next day again defecation on the bank. At last, a peon from the Company (Municipality) put up a notice there: ‘This place must not be used for this purpose. Defaulters will be prosecuted.’ After this notice nobody defecated there.

“After receiving His commandment one can become an *acharya* (religious teacher) and deliver a lecture anywhere. He who receives His commandment also receives power from Him. He can then perform the difficult task of a religious preceptor.

“An ordinary tenant once went to law against a big landlord. People then knew that there was some powerful man behind the tenant. Perhaps another bigger landlord was fighting the case through this man. Man is insignificant. He cannot perform the difficult duty of a religious teacher without receiving direct power from the Lord.”

Vijay — Sir, don’t the teachings of Brahma Samaj lead people to liberation?

**Sachchidananda Himself is the Guru -
It is He who liberates**

Sri Ramakrishna — Where is the capacity in man to liberate another from bondage of the world? Only He who is the creator of this world-bewitching *maya* can liberate man from *maya*. But for Sachchidananda Guru, there is no refuge. Where is the capacity of those who have neither realized the Lord, nor received His commandment, nor have become powerful with the power of the Lord to liberate a *jiva* (embodied soul) from the bondage of the world?

“One day I was going from Panchavati to Jhautala (pine grove) to answer the call of nature. I heard a bullfrog croaking aloud. I learnt that it had been seized by a snake. After quite some time when I was returning, I noticed that the frog was still croaking aloud. I peeped in to see what the matter was. I saw that a *dhonda* (a kind of poison less) snake had seized the frog. It could neither release it nor swallow it. There was no end to the frog’s agony. Then I said to myself: Had it been seized by a cobra, the frog would have been silent just after three croaks. But it had been seized by a *dhonda*! And so the snake was suffering and also the frog.

“If you have a *Sadguru* (true preceptor), the ego of the *jiva* ends with just three cries. **And if the guru is unripe, both the guru and the disciple undergo suffering. The disciple does not get rid of his ego nor his bondage of the world. Falling in the hands of an unripe guru, the disciple does not attain salvation.**”

Chapter Six

Ahamkara vimudhatma karta aham iti manyate.

- (Gita 3:27)

[Deluded by egotism one thinks, ‘I am the doer.’]

**Liberation or God realization comes
as soon as *maya* or the veil of ego goes**

Vijay — Sir, why are we bound like this? Why can't we see the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — The very ego of man is maya. This egotism has veiled everything. 'All troubles cease when the I-ness dies.' If by the grace of the Lord a man realizes, 'I am not the doer,' he becomes a *jivanmukta*^[4]. He has nothing to fear then.

"The maya or the I-ness is like a cloud. The sun becomes invisible even if there is a patch of cloud. As soon as the cloud passes away, one can see the sun. If by the grace of the Guru the feeling of I-ness vanishes, one realizes the Lord.

"Sri Ramachandra is only two and a half cubits away, he is the Lord Himself. But maya in the form of Sita stands in between, so the *jiva* in the form of Lakshman cannot see the Lord. Just see, I am creating a barrier in front of my face with this hand towel. Now you cannot see me though I am so near. Similarly, Bhagavan in comparison to all is so near to us all, even then we cannot see Him due to the veil of maya.

"The *jiva* is a form of Sachchidananda, but because of maya, or ego it is covered with various *upadhis*^[5] and it has forgotten its own real Self.

"Every *upadhi* changes the nature of man. He who wears a black-bordered dhoti is at once found to hum the love songs of Nidhu, or he begins to play cards, or automatically picks a stick while going for a walk! Even a thin emaciated person begins to whistle as soon as he puts on English type shoes. While climbing the stairs, he jumps from one step to the other like an Englishman. If a man is holding a pen in his hand, such is the nature of a pen that he begins to scribble the moment he finds some piece of paper.

"Money is also a great *upadhi*. As soon as money comes to a man, he becomes so different - he is no longer the same man.

"A brahmin used to come here. Outwardly he was very humble. After a few days I went to Konnagar. Hriday was with me. As I was landing from the boat, I saw the same brahmin sitting on the bank of the Ganga, perhaps he was enjoying open air. Seeing us he said, 'I say, how are you Thakur?' Seeing his tone I said to Hriday, 'O Hriday, this man has acquired some money. That's why he is talking this way.' Hriday laughed.

"A frog had a rupee which he had kept in a pit. An elephant on its way walked over the pit. Rushing out angrily the frog raised its foot at the elephant and said, 'How dare you walk over me?' Such is the pride money breeds!"

The Seven Planes - when does I-ness vanish - the state of Brahmajnana

"You can get rid of I-ness when you have attained jnana (spiritual knowledge). On attaining jnana, you go into samadhi. Only in samadhi does I-ness disappear. But it is very difficult to attain this jnana.

"The Vedas say that I-ness vanishes only when the mind ascends to the seventh plane. It is only after attaining samadhi, that I-ness disappears. Where does the mind generally dwell? In the first three planes - at the organs of generation and evacuation, and at the navel. Here the mind remains only attached to the world, to 'woman and gold'. When the mind dwells in the heart, one sees the divine light. While seeing this light, one exclaims, 'O, what is this! What is this!' The next plane is at the throat. On this plane one likes to hear and speak only of the Lord. When the mind goes to the forehead, between the eyebrows, one sees the form of Sachchidananda. One has the desire to embrace and touch this very form, but one cannot. Though the flame in the lantern can be seen but it cannot be touched. You feel as if you are just touching it but you cannot. When the mind ascends to the

seventh plane, I-ness vanishes - one goes into samadhi.”

Vijay — When the mind reaches there, one attains Brahmajnana. What does one see there?

Sri Ramakrishna — What happens when the mind ascends to the seventh plane cannot be described by the word of mouth. Once the ship enters the black waters, it does not return. No information of the ship comes then. So, the ship also does not give any information about the sea.

“Once a salt doll went to fathom the sea. No sooner did it descend than it dissolved into the waters of the sea. Now, who would tell how deep the sea was? The one who was to tell had itself got dissolved. The mind vanishes at the seventh plane and one attains samadhi. What he feels then cannot be described by the word of mouth.”

I-ness does not vanish - the ‘rascal I’ and the ‘servant I’

“The ‘I’ that makes one worldly, attaches one to ‘woman and gold’ is the ‘rascal I’. Because of its intervention the *jiva* and the atman appear apart. If a stick is put on water, it appears to be divided into two. In reality the water is one but it appears to be two because of the stick.

“I-ness is the stick. Remove the stick, the water will become one as before.

“What is the ‘rascal I’? That which says, ‘Don’t you know me? I have so much money. Who is greater than me?’ If a thief steals ten rupees, first of all this man snatches the money from him and gives him a good beating. He doesn’t leave him even then. He sends for the watchman and handing him over to the police gets him punished. The ‘rascal I’ says, ‘Don’t you know, you stole my ten rupees. Such impertinence!’ ”

Vijay — If without getting rid of I-ness one is not freed from the attachment of the world and does not experience samadhi, it is better to follow the path of Brahmajnana which leads to samadhi. And if the I-ness persists in the path of Bhakti Yoga, it is better to take to the path of Jnana Yoga.

Sri Ramakrishna — May be a person or two can experience samadhi and get rid of their I-ness but usually the I-ness does not go. You may reason in a thousand ways, this I-ness still finds its way to you. Cut the peepal tree today, but tomorrow morning you will see it sprouting again. So, if ‘I’ does not go at all, let the rascal remain as the ‘servant-I’. O, Lord! You are my Master, I am Your servant - live with this attitude. ‘I am the servant,’ ‘I am the bhakta’ - there is no harm in this kind of I-ness. Sweetmeat causes acidity in the stomach. But sugar candy is not counted among sweetmeats.

“Jnana Yoga is very difficult. Jnana cannot be attained without ridding oneself of the conviction that I am the body. In the age of Kali life depends on food. The conviction that I am the body, the feeling of I-ness, does not disappear. So, the path of Bhakti Yoga is enjoined for the age of Kali. Bhakti Yoga is an easy path. If you sing His names and glories, and pray to Him longingly from the core of your heart, you will attain Bhagavan - there is no doubt about it.

“It is like a line drawn on the surface of water rather than placing a bamboo stick on it. You find that the water has been divided into two parts, but this line does not last. The feeling of the ‘servant-I’ or the ‘I of a bhakta,’ or the ‘I of a child’ is only like a line drawn on water.”

*Klesho adhikataras tesham avyaktasakta cetasam,
Avyakta hi gatih duhkham dehavabhir avaypate.*

- Gita 12:5

[It is more difficult for those whose minds are attached to the Unmanifested because it is very hard for the embodied to reach the goal of the Unmanifested.]

Bhakti Yoga is the law of this age - Jnana Yoga is very difficult - servant I, I of a bhakta, I of a child

Vijay (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Sir, you ask us to renounce the ‘rascal I’. Is there no harm in the ‘servant I’?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, one should have this ego - the ‘servant I,’ that is to say I am the servant of the Lord, I am His bhakta. There is no harm in it, it rather leads to God-realization.

Vijay — Well sir, what is the nature of lust and anger of the man having the ‘servant I’?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is only the semblance of lust and anger in the man if he has the right feeling of it. If he retains the feeling of the ‘servant I,’ or the ‘I of a bhakta’ after having God realization, he can do no harm to others. After the sword has touched the philosopher’s stone, it becomes gold - it only has the semblance of a sword but it does not kill anybody.

“The leaves of a coconut tree dry up and drop down leaving only a mark (on the stem). One can make out from these marks that there were once palm leaves there. Similarly, the ego of the one who has realized the Lord only leaves a mark and he has only a semblance of lust and anger. He is then like a child. The child is not subject to any of the three *gunas* (qualities) of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It takes as much time for a child to give up a thing as he has taken to feel attracted to it.

“You can take away from the child a piece of cloth worth five rupees by tempting him with half a pice doll. But in the first instance he may say firmly: ‘No, I shall not give it to you. My father has bought it for me.’ For a child all is alike, there is nothing big or small for him. So he has no feeling of caste. His mother says, ‘Look, he is your elder brother.’ He may even be a carpenter (by caste), yet the child would sit with him and eat in the same plate. A child has hatred towards none, he has no feeling of purity and impurity. He does not care to clean his hands with mud after answering the call of nature.

“Even after attaining samadhi some people live with the ‘I of a bhakta’ and the ‘I of a servant.’ The bhakta retains the feeling of I-ness: ‘I am Your servant, You are my Master,’ ‘I am Your bhakta, You are my Bhagavan.’ Even after God-realization one retains this I-ness. One’s I-ness does not vanish completely. Besides, practice of this feeling of I-ness leads one to God-realization. This is what is known as path of Bhakti Yoga.

“By following the path of bhakti one can attain Brahmajnana. Bhagavan is omnipotent - when one thinks in this way He can also impart Brahmajnana (knowledge of Brahman). But generally speaking, a bhakta does not seek Brahmajnana. He wishes to retain the I-ness: ‘I am Your servant, You are my Master,’ ‘I am Your child, You are my Mother.’”

Vijay — But the people who reason in the manner of Vedanta also attain Him?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, He can also be attained by the path of reason. This is known as Jnana Yoga. The path of reason is very difficult. I had told you about

the seven planes. When the mind reaches the seventh plane, one attains samadhi. On true realization that Brahman is real and the world illusory, the mind merges and it experiences samadhi. But in the age of Kali life of man depends on food. Then how can he know that Brahman is real and the world illusory? Such awareness does not come without getting rid of body consciousness. I am neither the body, nor the mind, nor the twenty-four elements and that I am beyond pleasure and pain, then how can I have disease and sorrow, old age and death? Such a realization is difficult in Kaliyuga. Howsoever much you may reason, the conviction that I am the body creeps in somehow and shows itself. You may cut the peepal tree now, you may think that you have uprooted it but the very next day in the morning you will see that a new sprout has shot up. The feeling of the body does not leave you. Thus, the Bhakti Yoga is good and easy path in the age of Kali.

“I don’t want to become sugar, I like to eat it. I never feel like saying, ‘I am Brahman.’ I say, ‘You are my Bhagavan and I Your servant.’ It is good to play between the fifth plane and the sixth. After crossing the sixth plane I have no desire to stay on the seventh plane for long. I desire that I shall sing His names and glories. The attitude of the Master and the servant is very good. And see, everybody calls the wave of the Ganga, nobody calls the Ganga of the wave. That ‘I am He’ is not a good feeling of I-ness. If a person entertains such a feeling of I-ness while retaining the conviction that I am the body, it brings great harm to him; he cannot advance further. He gradually goes down spiritually. He deceives others and he also deceives himself. He cannot understand his own state.”

Two kinds of bhakti - most eligible person - way to realize the Lord

“Bhakti alone does not enable you to realize the Lord. Unless you have *prema* bhakti (loving devotion), you cannot attain the Lord. The *raga* bhakti is another name of *prema* bhakti. Without *prema*, without love, you cannot realize Bhagavan. Without love for the Lord, you cannot attain Him.

“There is another kind of bhakti. It is known as *vaidhi* bhakti (prescribed worship). You have to repeat the name of God for a fixed number of times, you have to keep fast, you have to go to pilgrimages, you have to worship in some prescribed manner, you have to make so many sacrifices and so on - all this constitutes *vaidhi* bhakti. By practising all this you gradually gain *raga* bhakti. But so long as you don’t have *raga* bhakti, you cannot realize the Lord. You should have love for Him. When your worldly way of thinking disappears completely and your mind goes to Him all the sixteen annas (one hundred percent), only then you attain God.

“But some people acquire *raga* bhakti naturally. **They are perfect by themselves.** They have it from their very childhood. They weep for the Lord from the very childhood. For example, Prahlada. *Vaidhi* bhakti (prescribed worship) is like moving a fan to have breeze. You need a fan to get breeze. You will eventually attain love for the Lord, so you need *japa* (repetition of the Name), austerity, fasting and so on. But when the southern breeze blows by itself, people then set aside the fan. When love, *prema* for the Lord comes of itself, rituals like *japa*, etc. drop off. When one is mad with the love of Hari, how can one perform the *vaidhi* bhakti?

“So long as you have not acquired love for God your bhakti is unripe. When you have acquired love for God yours is the ripe bhakti.

“He who has unripe bhakti cannot internalize spiritual instructions and the talk on the Lord. It is only when the photographer’s glass is coated black (with silver nitrate), it catches the image and it is retained there. Otherwise, you may throw a thousand images on ordinary glass not one of them will be retained - the moment

the object is removed, the glass becomes the same as it was. One cannot internalize spiritual instruction unless one has attained love for the Lord.”

Vijay — Sir, is it sufficient to have bhakti alone for attaining the Lord, for having his vision?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, one can see God only through bhakti but it must be ripe bhakti, *prema* bhakti, or *raga* bhakti. Only after gaining that bhakti, one loves God as the son loves his mother, or the mother loves her child, or the wife her husband.

“When you have such a love, such a *raga* bhakti, you don’t have that attraction of maya for your wife, son and dear relatives. You only retain kindness for them. The world then appears a foreign land - a land of duty alone. As you may have your home in a village and your place of work in Calcutta. You may have to live in a rented house in Calcutta for work. When you have acquired love for the Lord, you are completely rid of your attachment to the world, of your worldly wisdom.

“If there is just a trace of worldly wisdom, you cannot see God. If the match stick is wet you may rub it a thousand times, it will not strike fire; you will only waste heaps of sticks. The mind attached to the worldly objects is like wet matchstick.

“When Srimati (Radha) said, ‘I see Krishna everywhere,’ her *sakhis* ^[6] said, ‘How? We are not able to see him. Are you delirious?’ Srimati said, ‘*Sakhi*, apply the collyrium of love in your eyes, you will be able to see him.’ (To Vijay) A song of your Brahmo Samaj says -

O Lord, is it possible to know You without love, however much one may perform yajnas, worship and the rest?

“If you but once acquire this love, this *prema*, this ripe bhakti, you will see Him both with form and without form.”

Vision of the Lord not possible without His grace

Vijay — How can one see the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — Not till the mind is purified. Living amidst ‘woman and gold,’ the mind remains soiled, it remains covered with their dirt. If the needle is covered with mud, the magnet does not attract it. But when the mud and dirt are washed off, the magnet attracts. You can wash the dirt of the mind with the water of your eyes. If you weep with tears of repentance, saying, ‘O Lord, I shall never do such a thing again,’ then this dirt is washed away. Then the magnet of the Lord attracts the needle of the mind. You then go into samadhi and have the vision of the Lord.

“But you may try a thousand times, nothing is achieved without God’s grace. Without His grace you cannot see Him. Is it easy to gain His grace? You will have to get rid of your egoism completely. When you have the feeling that you are the doer, you cannot see the Lord. Suppose there is a man in the storeroom and somebody comes and says to the master of the house, ‘Sir, please give me some provision out of your store.’ The master then says, ‘There is a man in the storeroom; there is no need for me to go there.’ He who himself has become the doer, the Lord does not appear easily in his heart.

“Only after gaining God’s grace you can have His vision. He is the sun of jnana. With just one of His rays this world is illuminated with the light of jnana. That is how we are able to know one another and acquire different kinds of knowledge in the world. If God once brings His light on His own face, only then one can see Him. The sergeant roams about at night with a lantern in his hand. Nobody can

see his face. But in this light he can see everybody's face and everybody can see one another's face.

“If you want to see the sergeant, you should make a request to him alone. You should say, ‘Sir, be kind enough to bring this light to your face, let me see you once.’

“One should pray to the Lord, ‘Thakur, be kind enough to bring the light of jnana once on Your face so that I may see You.’

“If light is not lit in the house, it is a sign of poverty. So one should light the lamp of knowledge in the heart: ‘Lighting the lamp of knowledge in the house, behold the face of the All Blissful Mother.’”

Vijay has brought medicine with him. He will take it in Thakur's presence. The medicine has to be taken with water. So Thakur asks someone to bring some water. Thakur is a sea of motiveless grace. Vijay cannot afford the carriage, or the boat fare for coming here. So Thakur sends someone at times to bring him here. This time he sent Balaram. Balaram will pay for the carriage fare. Vijay had come with Balaram. In the evening, Vijay, Nava Kumar and other companions of Vijay again embark Balaram's boat. Balaram would take them to the Bag Bazaar ghat. M. also takes the same boat.

The boat reaches the Annapurna ghat in Bag Bazaar. As these people reach close to Balaram's residence in Bag Bazaar, the moon begins to cast its mellow light. Today is the fourth day of the bright fortnight. It is winter. It is a little chilly. Pondering over the nectar like teachings of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna and carrying his blissful image in their hearts, Vijay, Balaram, M. and others return home.

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- [1] Tendencies of one's past births
 - [2] Shaven headed Vaishnava monks
 - [3] Shaven headed Vaishnava nuns
 - [4] Liberated in this very life
 - [5] Adjuncts
 - [6] The milkmaid friends of Vraja

Section V

Conversation with Amrit, Trailokya and other Brahmos in Kali Temple at Dakshineswar

Chapter One

In samadhi

The fifth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Falgun, Thursday, 19 Chaitra, March 29, 1883. After his midday meal, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna is taking some rest. The same room in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. The Ganga is flowing in front; to the west. The flood tide has started at 2 o'clock. A few bhaktas have arrived. Among them are Brahma bhaktas - Amrit and sweet singer Trailokya who has charmed the minds of the young and the old so many times by singing the glories of divine sport in Keshab's Brahma Samaj.

Rakhal is not well. Sri Ramakrishna tells the bhaktas about it.

Sri Ramakrishna — Look here, Rakhal is not well. I say, could soda water be of any help? O Father, what shall happen! Rakhal, you take some prasad of Jagannath.

While speaking thus, Sri Ramakrishna goes into a peculiar state of bhava. It looks as if he is seeing in Rakhal Narayana Himself appearing in the body of a child in front of him. On one hand is Rakhal a young bhakta, pure in spirit, who has renounced 'woman and gold' and on the other are the loving eyes of Sri Ramakrishna who remains inebriated with the love of the Lord day and night, in whose eyes is seen a natural *vatsalya*^[1] bhava. He sees the same young boy Rakhal with the *vatsalya* bhava and begins to utter 'Govinda, Govinda' lovingly. It seems that it is the same bhava that Yashoda used to have when she would see Sri Krishna. The bhaktas are seeing this amazing scene. At this moment everything is still. Uttering the name of Govinda, Thakur Sri Ramakrishna, the God-incarnate for the bhakta, goes into samadhi. His body is still like a picture, his sense organs as if have ceased working and

his sight is fixed towards the tip of the nose. One can't say whether he is breathing or not. Only his body is lying on the earth while the bird of his soul is perhaps soaring in the sky of God-consciousness. Whither has gone he who was for so long worrying for the child with a mother's tenderness? Is this amazing transformation of bhava known as samadhi?

Just then dressed in gerua (ochre) clothes, an unknown Bengali enters the room and sits on the floor.

Chapter Two

Karmendriyani samyamya ya aste manasa smaran,

Indriyarthan vinudhatma mithyacarah sa veyate. Gita 3:6

[He who controlling the organs of action sits with his mind dwelling on sense objects is a fool and is known as a hypocrite.]

Gerua (ochre) clothes and sannyasi - untruth is not good even in acting

The Paramahansa Deva's samadhi is gradually coming to an end. He speaks in divine bhava. He converses on his own.

Sri Ramakrishna (at the sight of the gerua) — And why this *gerua*? What can be achieved by merely wearing the cloth? (Laughter.) Somebody said, 'Giving up the Chandi, he has taken to the drum - previously he used to sing the hymns of Chandi, now he beats the drum!' (All laugh.)

“*Vairagya* (dispassion) is of three or four kinds: Having got scalded by the fire of the world, one puts on the *gerua* - such a dispassion does not last long. A man is perhaps out of work. So, putting on the *gerua*, he leaves for Kashi. After three months his family gets a letter, 'I have a job now, I shall return home after a few days. Please don't worry.' And there is a man who has everything, who lacks nothing, but does not have liking for anything. Sitting alone, he weeps for Bhagavan. This kind of dispassion is genuine dispassion.

“Untruth is not at all good. Not even a false garb. If

one's garb does not correspond to one's mind, it gradually brings complete ruin. By uttering lies or practising falsehood one gradually loses the fear of it. It is rather better to put on white clothes. There is attachment in the mind and also there is a fall within; but outwardly there is *gerua*. This is highly dreadful."

Visit to Keshab's house and witnessing the 'Nava Vrindavan'

"The point is that even while acting in a play, the virtuous persons should not use false words or do anything unworthy. I went to Keshab Sen's house to witness the play 'Nava Vrindavan'. A person brought something on the stage - a cross - and then he began to sprinkle water, saying, 'It is the water of peace.' I also saw a man acting mad as if intoxicated."

A Brahma Bhakta — It was Ku-Babu.

Sri Ramakrishna — It's not good for a bhakta even to play a part in this way. Keeping the mind on such matters for long brings harm. The mind is like a white laundered cloth, whichever colour you dye it in it takes up the same. By keeping the mind in falsehood for long it will take up the colour of falsehood.

"Another day, I went to witness the play. 'Nimai sannyasa' ^[2] in Keshab's house. Some flattering disciples of Keshab spoiled this folk drama. One of them said to Keshab, 'You are the Chaitanya of the Kali.' Keshab then looked at me and said laughing, 'And what about him?' I said, 'I am the servant of your servants, the dust of the dust.' Keshab had the desire for name and fame."

Narendra and others are ever-perfect - they have bhakti since birth

(To Amrit and Trailokya) — Narendra, Rakhal and all these boys are ever-perfect. They are bhaktas of the Lord in every birth. Many attain a little devotion after

practicing spiritual discipline and austerities but these boys have love for the Lord ever since their birth. For example, the idol of Shiva emerging from the earth and not an installed one.

“The ever-perfect are a class by themselves. Every bird doesn’t have a bent beak. They are never attached to the world. For example, Prahlada.

“Ordinary people practise spiritual discipline, they also have bhakti for the Lord. Along with it they get attached to the world too - they are enchanted by ‘woman and gold’. For example, a fly sits on the flower, on sandesh (a Bengali sweetmeat) and yet also on filth. (All are still and silent.)

“The ever-perfect are like a bee - it sits only on the flower and sips honey. The ever-perfect drink the nectar of Hari, they never go towards worldly pleasures.

“The bhakti of these (the ever-perfect ones) is not like the bhakti acquired by practicing spiritual discipline and austerities. So much of *japa* and so much of meditation is to be performed, worshipping in a prescribed manner — all these constitute ritualistic bhakti. It is like when there is paddy in a field, one has to go around along the ridge of the field to reach the other side of it. And again, suppose you have to go to a village in front, you will have to go around zigzag along the river.

“When *raga* bhakti^[3], *prema* bhakti^[4], or love for the Lord as one’s near and dear develops one doesn’t have to practise rituals any more. It is like crossing a harvested rice field. One doesn’t have to walk along the ridge of the field. One can go straight in one direction.

“When the river is flooded, you don’t have to walk around zigzag along with it. Then there is pole deep water in the field, the boat can go straight.

“You cannot attain the Lord without such *raga* bhakti, such devotion, such love.”

The essence of samadhi - savikalpa and Nirvikalpa

Amrita — Sir, what do you experience in the state of samadhi?

Sri Ramakrishna — Have you not heard that the cockroach by meditating on the beetle itself becomes the beetle. Do you know how it is? It is like a fish released from a pot into the Ganga.

Amrit — Does even the least trace of ego is not left then?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, usually a little of ego remains in my case. Howsoever much you may rub a little piece of gold on a gold-stone, even then a small grain of it remains behind. Another example: A big fire and its spark. Outer consciousness disappears but usually He retains a bit of I-ness for enjoyment. It is only 'I' and 'you' that gives enjoyment. Sometimes He effaces even this I-ness. This is called *jada samadhi - Nirvikalpa samadhi*. What this experience is cannot be described by the word of mouth. A salt doll went to fathom the sea, as it went a little down it got dissolved. 'Became just like it.' Who would then come back to give the account - about how deep the ocean is?

[1] One of the attitudes of worship in which the aspirant has the feeling of a child towards God.

[2] The play depicting sannyasa of Sri Chaitanya

[3] Loving devotion for God

[4] Ecstatic love

Section VI

Conversation with Bhaktas about Essence of Brahman and Primeval Power in Dakshineswar Kali Temple Talk on Vidyasagar and Keshab Sen

Chapter One

The third day of the dark fortnight in the month of Ashadha, 22 July 1883. It is Sunday. The bhaktas have come again to see Sri Ramakrishna Deva. Generally they cannot come on other days of the week. On Sundays they have leisure to come. Adhar, Rakhal and M. arrived from Calcutta at the Kali Temple in a hired carriage at about one or two in the afternoon. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna has taken a little rest after his midday meal. Mani Mullick and some other bhaktas are also seated in the room.

The temple of Radhakanta and the temple of Bhavatarini (saviour of mankind from bonds of the world) are located in the eastern part of the big courtyard of Rasmani's Kali Temple. In its western region are the twelve Shiva temples. Right to the north of the row of the Shiva temples is located Sri Ramakrishna Deva's room. To the west of this room is a semicircular verandah. Standing there to the west he watches the Ganga. In the middle of the embankment of the Ganga and the verandah is a stretch of land having a flower garden of the temple garden. It extends very far - to the boundary of the garden in the south and to the Panchavati in the north where Thakur Sri Ramakrishna had practised austerities. And also up to both the entrances of the garden in the east. On the side of the Paramahansa Deva's room, there are a few *krishnachuda* trees (poinciana regia, or gulmohar). Nearby are gardenia, kokilax and white and red oleanders. On the inner wall of the room hang pictures of gods. Among them is also the picture of Christ rescuing the drowning Peter by holding his hand. And there is a stone-idol of the Buddha too. Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the wooden cot facing north. The bhaktas are seated some on the floor, some on a mat and the others on asanas (small carpets). All of them are gazing at the great man's blissful image. Not far from the room, along the western side of the embankment flows the holy river Ganga towards the south. It appears that the strong current of the rainy season is gushing to meet the sea, casting a glance on the meditation room of the great saint and touching on its way.

Mani Mullick is an old Brahma bhakta sixty or sixty five years old. A few days ago he went to visit Kashi *dham* (place of pilgrimage). Today he has come to see Thakur and is giving him an account of his visit to Kashi.

Mani Mullick — And I met another sadhu. He said, 'Without control over the sense organs nothing can be achieved! What avail it is merely repeating Lord, Lord?'

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know what they believe? One must first practise sadhana (spiritual disciplines): *Shama* (mental restraint), *dama* (self control over sense organs) and *titiksha*

(forbearance). These people strive for Nirvana. They are Vedantins. They only meditate upon this - 'Brahman is real and the world illusory.' It is an extremely difficult path. If the world is illusory, then you too are illusory. Those who say so are also illusory and what they say is also like a dream. It is a very distant matter.

“Do you know how it is? It is like burning camphor that leaves no residual. However, when you burn firewood you still get ash as its residue. After the ultimate reasoning comes samadhi. Then there is no awareness of 'I', 'You' and 'the universe'.”

Meetings with Pundit Padmalochan and Vidyasagar

“Padmalochan was a man of great spiritual knowledge. But I used to utter 'Mother, Mother.' Even then he had great respect for me. Padmalochan was the court pundit of the king of Burdwan. He came to Calcutta and was staying in a garden near Kamarhati. I felt some desire to visit the Pundit. I sent Hriday to see whether he had ego or not. I was told that the Pundit had no ego. He met me. Such a great jnani and such a pundit, yet he began to weep on hearing Rama Prasad's song from me! **The satisfaction that I found in conversing with him, I never found it elsewhere.** He said to me, 'Give up your desire for the company of devotees. Otherwise, all sorts of people will bring your downfall.' Once he had a written discussion with Utsavananda, the guru of Vaishnava Charan. He then said to me, 'Hear something about it.' In a meeting a discussion was going on - who was bigger, Shiva or Brahma. At the end the pundits consulted Padmalochan. Padmalochan was so guileless that he replied, 'Not any of my fourteen ancestors ever saw Shiva or Brahma.' Upon hearing the renunciation of 'woman and gold,' he said to me one day, 'Why have you given them up? This is money and that is clay, such a feeling of difference is the result of ignorance.' What could I say to him? I said, 'I know not brother! I don't relish money and the like.'”

Charities of Vidyasagar, but gold lies buried within

“There was a pundit who was very vain. He did not accept the form of the Lord. But who can understand the Lord's ways? He granted him His vision in the form of Adya Shakti (Primeval Power). The pundit remained unconscious for a long time. After regaining a little consciousness he just uttered, 'Ka! Ka! Ka!' (that is Kali) - just that syllable.”

A Bhakta — Sir, you have met Vidyasagar. How did you find him?

Sri Ramakrishna — Vidyasagar has scholarship, he has kindness

but he lacks insight. Gold lies buried within him. Had he discovered this gold, so much of external activity that he does would have been reduced; finally, he would have given it up completely. Had he known that the Lord resides inside within the heart, his mind would have gone in meditation and contemplation on Him. Having performed *nishkama karma* (selfless work) for a long time, some people develop dispassion in the end and their mind goes to God - the mind gets absorbed in the Lord.

“The kind of work Ishwara Vidyasagar does is very good. Kindness is very good. There is, however, a great difference between *daya* (kindness) and *maya*. Kindness is good, *maya* is not good. *Maya* is love for one’s own near and dear ones - wife, son, brother, sister, brother’s son, sister’s son, father and mother - love for these. Kindness, however, is the equal affection for all beings.”

Chapter Two

‘Guna treya vyatiriktam Sachchidananda swarupa.’

[The real nature of Sachchidananda is beyond the three gunas.]

Brahman is beyond the three gunas, He is beyond speech

M. — Is *daya* (kindness) also bondage?

Sri Ramakrishna — That is a very distant concept. Kindness results from *sattvaguna*. *Sattvaguna* preserves, *rajoguna* creates and *tamoguna* destroys. But Brahman is beyond all the three gunas of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is beyond *prakriti* (nature).

“The gunas cannot really reach where Brahman abides. They are like robbers who cannot go out in the open. They are afraid lest they should be arrested. *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* all the three gunas are robbers. Let me tell you a story -

“Once a man was going through a forest when three robbers came and caught hold of him. They robbed him of all he possessed. One of the robbers said, ‘Why keep this man alive now?’ Saying so, he came forward with a sword to hack him. The second robber then said, ‘No brother, what use killing him? Let us tie his hands and feet and leave him here.’ Then tying his hands and feet the robbers left him there and went away. After a while one of them returned and said, ‘Ah! you are suffering a lot! Let me free you from the knots.’ Untying his bonds he said, ‘Come with me, I will take you to the main road.’ After a long time when they reached the main road, the robber said, ‘Take this road. See that is your house.’ This man then said to the robber, ‘Sir, you have been very good to me. Please come with me to my house.’ The robber said, ‘No, I cannot go there. The police will come to know of it.’

“The world itself is a forest. In this forest *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*

all the three gunas are robbers. They rob the jiva of his tattva jnana (spiritual knowledge). Tamoguna destroys the jiva, rajoguna binds him to the world. But the sattvaguna saves him from rajas and tamas. By taking refuge in sattvaguna one is saved from lust, anger and such other evils of tamas. Besides, sattvaguna cuts asunder the bonds of the world also. But even the sattvaguna is a robber, it cannot give the *tattva* jnana (highest knowledge). However, it puts you on the road to the Supreme Abode. Putting you on the road it says, 'Just see, this is your house.' Sattvaguna remains at a great distance from the Brahmajnana.

"What Brahman is cannot be expressed by the word of mouth. He who attains Brahman, cannot give information about Him. There is a saying, 'The ship never returns once it has reached the black waters.'

"Four friends while roaming about saw a place enclosed by a wall. The wall was very high. They were very curious to see what was inside it. One of these men climbed up the wall. As he peeped inside, he exclaimed in great wonder, 'Ha, ha, ha' and fell down. He did not give any information. Whosoever climbed, he cried, 'Ha, ha, ha' and fell in. Who would then give information?"

**Jada Bharat, Duttatreya and
Sukadeva - all Brahmajnanis**

"Jada Bharat and Duttatreya could give no information after having vision of Brahman. One's I-ness vanishes after samadhi on attaining Brahmajnana. So Rama Prasad says: 'If you cannot attain (Brahmajnana) yourself, O mind, take Rama Prasad with you.' The mind must merge. After that Rama Prasad i.e. ego must merge. Only then one attains the Brahmajnana (knowledge of Brahman)."

A Bhakta — Sir, did Sukadeva not attain jnana?

Sri Ramakrishna — Some say that Sukadeva only saw and touched the ocean of Brahman, he did not go down and dive deep into it. That is why he could return and impart so much instruction. According to others, he returned after attaining Brahmajnana - for instruction to mankind. He was to narrate the Bhagavata to Prikshit and also impart so much of instruction to mankind. So the Lord did not merge his 'I' altogether. His 'I of knowledge' was retained.

**Instruction to Keshab -
organization (religious group) is not right**

A Bhakta — Can one keep an organization or the like intact after attaining Brahmajnana?

Sri Ramakrishna — I talked to Keshab Sen about Brahmajnana. Keshab said, 'Please elaborate it further.' I said, 'If I talk further, you will not be able to keep your organization intact.' 'Then please don't tell any more, sir,' said Keshab. (All laugh.) Then I said to Keshab, 'I and mine these alone constitute ignorance. I am the doer, this is my wife, that is my son, these are my possessions, honour, respect and so on - such feelings arise due to ignorance.' Thereupon Keshab said, 'Sir, if one gives up the 'I' nothing whatsoever would remain.' I said, 'Keshab, I am not asking you to renounce your 'I' altogether. You only give up your 'unripe I'. I am the doer, this is my wife or son, I am the guru and so on - this pride is 'unripe I,' you give it up. Renounce it and keep the 'ripe I' - that I am His servant, I am His bhakta, I am not the doer, He is the doer.'

It is right to preach religion only when one has received the Lord's commandment

A Bhakta — Can the 'ripe I' create an organization?

Sri Ramakrishna — I said to Keshab Sen, 'That 'I' am the leader of the organization, 'I' have made it, that 'I' impart instruction to mankind - this 'I' is the 'unripe I'.' It is very difficult to propagate a religion. Without the Lord's command it cannot be done. His commandment is needed. For example, Sukadeva had received the command to narrate the story of the Bhagavata. There is nothing wrong if one preaches and instructs mankind after seeing the Lord and having received His commandment. The 'I' of such a person is not 'unripe I' - it is the 'ripe I'.

'I asked Keshab to renounce the 'unripe I'. There is no harm in having the 'I of a servant' or the 'I of a bhakta.'

'You are talking of organization. So many people are going out of it. Keshab said, 'Sir, during these three years people from this group have gone back to the other group. They even used impolite language while leaving.' I said, 'Why don't you see the signs? What comes out of making disciples indiscriminately?'

Instruction to Keshab, accept the Primeval Power

'And I said to Keshab, 'Accept the Primeval Power. Brahman and Shakti (His power) are inseparable. He who is Brahman is Himself Shakti. So long as there is body consciousness, you are also conscious of duality. They are two only in name.' Keshab had accepted Kali (Shakti).

“One day Keshab came here with his disciples. I said to him, ‘I would like to hear your lecture.’ He delivered his lecture seated in the chandni. Then we came to the ghat and had a long talk seated there. I said, ‘He who is Bhagavan is Himself a bhakta in one form, He Himself is the Bhagavata (God’s word) in another form. You people please say, Bhagavata-Bhakta-Bhagavan.’ Keshab said it and his bhaktas also repeated together **Bhagavata-Bhakta-Bhagavan**. When I said, ‘Please say, Guru Krishna Vaishnava,’ Keshab said, ‘Sir, not that far. If I say so, people will call me orthodox.’”

Past story of his life - Sri Ramakrishna swoons on seeing the ways of maya

“It is very difficult to go beyond the three gunas. It is not possible before God-realization. The *jiva* (embodied soul) lives in the domain of maya. This very maya does not let one know the Lord; the same maya keeps the human being in ignorance. Hriday once brought a little calf. One day I saw that he tied it in the garden to graze. I asked him, ‘Hriday, why do you tie it there everyday?’ Hriday replied, ‘Uncle, I will send this calf to the village. When it grows, it will be yoked to the plough.’ As he said these words, I became unconscious and fell down. I said to myself, ‘Such are the ways of maya!’ Whither Kamarpukur and Seor are! So far away from Calcutta! This little calf will tread so long a path! There it will grow. And later after so many days it will pull the plough - this is what is called the world, this is what is called maya.

“It was after a long time that I regained consciousness.”

Chapter Three

In samadhi

Sri Ramakrishna remains merged in samadhi day and night. How his days and nights pass! At times he talks of God or takes part in singing hymns with the bhaktas. At about three or four o’clock M. sees that Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the smaller cot - lost in divine emotion. After some time he begins to talk to the Divine Mother.

While talking to the Mother, he uttered it once, “Mother, why You have given him only one *kala* (one sixteenth part of divine power)?” Thakur remains silent for a moment. He again says, “I understand Mother. This one *kala* will be enough for him. This one *kala* alone will enable him to do Your work - to preach mankind.”

Does Thakur transmit spiritual powers to his inner disciples in this way? What is it all about? Later these disciples would teach mankind - is he making arrangements for this? Besides M., Rakhal is also there in the room. Thakur is still in divine emotion. Says he to Rakhal, “You grew angry with me; why did I reprimand you? There was a reason for it: Reason, the medicine would work well. When the disease of spleen advances, a leaf of *mansa* (herbal leaf) has to be applied to it.”

After a while he says, "I have seen that Hazra is dry like a piece of wood. Even then he lives here. Why so? This has a meaning. Without Jatila and Kutila (the trouble making mother and sister-in-law of Radha), the leela does not nourish."

(To M.) "You must accept the forms of the Lord. Do you know the significance of the Divine Mother in the form of Jagadhatri? It means that She supports the world. If She doesn't support, doesn't protect the world would fall, it would perish. He who can tame the elephant of his mind, it is only in his heart that Jagadhatri dawns."

Rakhal — *Mana-matt-kari* (the mind is a mad elephant).

Sri Ramakrishna — That is why the lion of the Singhavahini (Divine Mother riding a lion) keeps the elephant under its control.

At dusk the arati is being performed in the temple. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is chanting the name of gods and goddesses in his room. Incense has been burnt in the room. Thakur is seated on the smaller cot with folded hands. He is meditating on the Mother. Govinda Mukherji of Belgharia and some of his friends enter the room, offer their pranams and take their seats on the floor. M. is seated there. Rakhal too is seated.

Outside there is the moon. The whole nature is still and smiling. Everybody in the room is seated still and gazing at the serene image of Thakur. Thakur is under the spell of bhava (divine emotion). After a while he begins to talk. He is still surcharged with bhava.

The form of Shyama - Purusha and Prakriti - Yogamaya - ShivaKali, and Radha and Krishna - explanation of the forms - superior devotee - the path of reason

Sri Ramakrishna (surcharged with bhava) — Tell me if you have any doubt. I shall explain everything.

Govinda and other devotees begin to think.

Govinda — Revered sir, why does Shyama ^[1] have such complexion?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is because She is at distance. Going nearer, there is no colour. The water in a pond looks dark from a distance. Go near it, take some in your hand and you will see that it has no colour. Sky appears blue from a distance. See the sky that is nearer, you will find no colour. The nearer you go to the Lord, the more you will realize that He has neither name nor form. Move a little away, you will again find your same Mother Shyama - She has the complexion as that of the grass and flowers. Is Shyama

Purusha^[2] or *Prakriti*^[3]? A bhakta performed worship. Another man came and saw the deity wearing a sacred thread. The latter said, 'You have put the sacred thread round the Mother's neck.' The former said, 'Brother, only you have recognized the Mother. As for me, I have never been able to know whether She is *Purusha* or *Prakriti*. So I have put a sacred thread round her neck.'

"The One who is Shyama is also Brahman. The One who has form is also formless. The Being who has attributes is also without-attributes. Brahman is Shakti and Shakti is Brahman. Inseparable. The male Sachchidananda and the female Sachchidananda."

Govinda — Why do we call Yogamaya?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yogamaya means the union of Purusha and Prakriti. Whatever you see is all the union of Purusha and Prakriti. The image of Shiva and Kali, Kali stands on Shiva. Shiva is lying like a corpse. Kali is looking at Shiva. All this is the union of Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha is inactive, so Shiva is lying like a corpse. It is in conjunction with Purusha that Prakriti performs all Her actions - She creates, preserves and dissolves.

"The dual image of Radha and Krishna (both Radha and Krishna in one piece) also signifies the same. Because of this union they are bent towards each other. To denote this very union Sri Krishna wears a pearl in his nose and Radha a blue stone in hers. Radha has the fair complexion of a bright pearl. Sri Krishna is of dark complexion. For this reason Radha wears the blue stone. Furthermore, Sri Krishna's apparel is yellow while that of Radha is blue.

"Who is a superior devotee? He who sees after attaining Brahmajnana that God alone has become the universe and the twenty-four categories. He first reaches the roof by discriminating 'not this, not this.' Then he sees that the steps are also made of the same material - brick, lime, and brick-dust - with which the roof is made. Then he sees that Brahman Himself has become the creatures and the universe, all.

"Mere reasoning! I spit on it! I spit on it! It is of no use."

Thakur spits the nectar of his mouth.

"Why remain dry by reasoning? So long as you have the consciousness of 'I' and 'You', have pure devotion at His lotus feet. (To Govinda) "At times I say, 'You are I and I am You!' And sometimes it remains only You. The 'I' then disappears and is not traceable.

“It is Shakti that becomes the avatara. According to one school of thought, Rama and Krishna are but the two waves of the Ocean of *chidananda* (Bliss and Consciousness).

“After the attainment of *advaita* jnana (knowledge of non-duality) comes *chaitanya* (consciousness). Then I see that God alone inheres all the things as consciousness. After consciousness comes *ananda* (bliss).

“Advaita, Chaitanya and Nityananda^[4].”

The Lord has forms - longings comes after sensuous desires vanish

(To M.) “I say to you, ‘Don’t disbelieve in the forms; in the forms of the Lord. Have faith that God has forms and meditate on the form that you love most.’

(To Govinda) “Do you know what it is? So long as the desire for sensory enjoyments remains, the earnest longing for knowing God and His realization does not come. The child plays with his toys forgetting everything else. Cajole him with sandesh, he will eat just a piece of it. When he does not like even his toy and does not relish sandesh he says, ‘I will go to the mother.’ He no longer likes sandesh. A person whom he does not know, whom he has never seen, if he says to it, ‘**Come along, I shall take you to your mother,**’ the child will go with him. He will go with anyone who carries it in his arms.

“When one has done with the enjoyment of worldly things, one becomes restless for the Lord. How to realize Him remains his only concern. He listens to everybody who tells him anything about God.”

M. (to himself), “Only when one has done with the desire for worldly enjoyments one becomes restless for the Lord.”

[1] Goddess Kali

[2] The male aspect of God

[3] The female aspect of God

[4] Advaita, Chaitanya and Nityananda. These three great spiritual personalities were born in the 15th century at Nadia. Chaitanya is believed to be God-incarnate, and Advaita and Nityananda his intimate disciples.

Section VII

With Bhaktas in Dakshineswar Temple

Chapter One

Talk on Vedanta

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is in the Dakshineswar temple with the bhaktas. Today is Sunday, 19 August, 1883, the first day of the dark fortnight in the month of Shravana. Only a short while ago the *shahnai*^[1] was being played at the time of *bhoga arati*^[2]. Doors of the temple have been shut. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is resting after his (midday) prasad. After his rest he sits on the smaller bedstead in his room. Still it is noon. Just then enters M. and offers him his obeisance. After a while Sri Ramakrishna talks with him on Vedanta.

Belief of Vedantins - talk on Krishna Kishore

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Listen, the Ashtavakra Samhita talks of Self-knowledge. The knowers of the Self say ‘Soham,’ that is, ‘I am that Parmatman (the highest Self).’ This is the view of the sannyasi of the Vedantic school. But it is not suitable for the householders. When he does everything, how can he say, ‘I am that Parmatman beyond all action.’ According to the Vedantins the Self has no attachment to anything. Pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, all these cannot harm the Self. Yet they afflict those who identify their body as the Self. The smoke soils the wall but it cannot affect the space. Krishna Kishore would talk like the jnanis and say - I am ‘Kha’ (void), i.e. like space. And then he is a true devotee. It lies in his mouth to say so, but it does not suite others.

Vice and virtue - maya or kindness

“But to cherish the idea that ‘I am free’ is very good. If you say again and again, ‘I am free, I am free,’ you become free. On the other hand if you constantly speak, ‘I am bound, I am bound,’ you become bound indeed. He who only keeps on saying, ‘I am a sinner, I am a sinner,’ that wretch is sure to have a fall. Rather one should say, ‘I have chanted His Name, what sin can be there for me, what bondage?’

(To M.) “Look here, my mind is upset. Hriday^[3] has written a letter to me saying that he is very ill. Is it maya or *daya* (kindness)?”

What can M. say? He remains silent.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know what is maya? Your love towards all these relations of father and mother, brother and sister, wife and son, nephew and niece constitutes maya. On the other hand, *daya* (kindness) means love for all created beings. Well, what is it in my case - maya or kindness? Hriday has, however, done so much for me, served me so well. He would clean my excreta with his own hands. But he was equally hard on me at the end. He became so hard that I once went to the embankment to drown myself in the Ganga. Yet, he has done a lot for me. If he could get some (money), my mind would feel at rest. But whom shall I ask for it? I don’t want to ask any babu.”

Chapter Two

Clay image personifying Divine Mother - vision of Divine Mother Mrinmayi in Vishnupur

At two or three o’clock in the afternoon, arrive the great bhaktas Adhar Sen and Balaram Basu. They prostrate themselves before the Paramahansa Deva and take their seats. They ask Sri Ramakrishna how he was doing. Sri Ramakrishna says, “Well, my body is all right but my mind is a little perturbed.”

He does not mention anything at all about Hriday’s trouble.

The conversation turns to Goddess Singhavahini in the house of Mullicks of Bara Bazaar.

Sri Ramakrishna — I had gone to see Singhavahini^[4]. I saw the Goddess in the house of Mullicks of Chashadhopa Para. The family lives in a dilapidated house in straightened circumstances, pigeons' droppings here, moss growing there, and lime and sand plaster was crumbling from the wall. The neatness that I saw in the houses of other Mullicks was not there in this house. (To M.) Well, tell me what does it signify. Please tell me.

M. remains silent.

“Do you know what it is? Everyone must reap the consequences of his past actions. One must accept *sanskaras* (tendencies of one's past births) and *prarabdha* (the fruit of one's past actions).

(To M.) “And in that dilapidated house too, I saw the face of Singhavahini beaming with glory. You must believe in *avirbhava*^[5].

“Once I went to Vishnupur. The raja has a beautiful temple there. There is an image of Bhagavati name Mrinmayi. There is a big lake near the temple with Krishna

Bandh and Lal Bandh^[6]. Now tell me why I had the smell of *abatha* (ointment used by women for their hair) there? I did not know at that time that women devotees offer the Goddess this ointment while having Her darshan. I went into bhava samadhi near the lake. Till then I had not seen the image. And in that ecstatic state I had the vision of Mrinmayi from the waist up near the lake.”

Pleasure and Pain of the bhakta - stories of Bhagavata and Mahabharata

By this time some other devotees have assembled. The conversation turns to the coup and war in Kabul. One of them says, “Yakub Khan has been deposed from the throne.” Addressing the Paramahansa Deva he says, “Sir, Yakub Khan is otherwise a great devotee.”

Sri Ramakrishna — The fact is that pleasure and pain are the characteristics of embodiment. In Kavi Kankan's 'Chandi' it is narrated that Kalubir was sent to jail and stones were placed on his chest, though Kalubir was a highly favoured child of Bhagavati. When one takes up a body one takes pleasures and pains with it.

“Srimanta was a great devotee. Bhagavati had great affection for his mother Khullana. Yet this Srimanta suffered so much - he was taken to the cremation ground to be cut into pieces!

“A woodcutter was a great devotee. He was granted the vision of Bhagavati. She loved him immensely and bestowed upon him so much of Her grace. Yet the woodcutter could not get free from his work - still he had to earn his living by cutting wood. Devaki had the vision of the four-armed Bhagavan (Vishnu) holding conch, discus, mace and lotus. But her imprisonment did not end.”

M. — Why should only the imprisonment end? This body is the source of all trouble. It would have been better (for her) to be freed from the body.

Sri Ramakrishna — The fact is that one reaps the fruit of one's *prarabdha karma* (past actions). One has to remain in a body till one's past actions are not cleared. Once a blind man had a dip in the Ganga. He was freed from all his sins. But his blindness did not get cured. (All laugh.) It was the fruit of his actions in his past life, so he had to bear it.

Mani — The arrow once shot is no longer within one's control.

Sri Ramakrishna — **Whatever be the pleasure and pain of the body, the spiritual knowledge of a bhakta, the wealth of his bhakti lasts.** This treasure is never lost. Just see what calamities the Pandavas suffered! But they never lost their spiritual

consciousness even once amidst their troubles. Where can one find such jnanis and such bhaktas?

Chapter Three

In samadhi - arrival of the Captain and Narendra

Just then arrive Narendra and Vishvanath Upadhyay. Vishvanath is the emissary of the king of Nepal and the representative of that kingdom. Thakur calls him as Captain. Narendra is twenty-two years old and is studying for his B.A. He comes to Sri Ramakrishna at times, particularly on Sundays.

They offer pranam and sit down. The Paramahansa Deva asks Narendra to sing. A *tanapura* (a stringed musical instrument) is hanging on the western end of the room. Now, all eyes turn towards the singer. The *banya*^[7] and the tabla are being tuned. When shall the singing start!

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — Look here, it does not sound that well now.

The Captain — It is filled, so there is no sound. (All laugh.) As with a *purna kumbha* (pitcher filled to the brim water).

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Captain) — But what about Narada and such sages?

The Captain — They talked when they were moved by the sufferings of others.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes. Narada and Sukadeva, they came down from their samadhi out of compassion, they talked for the good of others.

Narendra begins to sing -

Satyam Shivam Sundaram^[8] manifesting Itself in the temple of the heart.

When shall come that day constantly looking on Him my mind shall dive deep in the Sea of that Divine Beauty?

When, O Lord, will grow the never-ending jnana in my heart,

And this restless mind will become dumbfounded and take shelter at Your feet?

When, O the Friend of my soul, will this mind be sold at the holy feet of the King of kings.

Thine are the matchless feet of peace, Absolute good and then the end of my life will be realized!

And where shall I be worthy of the delight of paradise in this very body, in this very life?

O Lord, seeing Your pure and sinless form, seeing Your radiance, the darkness of sin is dispelled like darkness by light.

Just as the *chakor*^[9] on seeing the moon begins to sport in joy,

In the same manner bliss like embodied nectar will rise in the firmament of my heart and I, O Lord, will too get intoxicated in Your light.

O, the friend of the lowly, pray light in my heart a burning faith like the polestar and fulfill my desire.

I will remain merged night and day in the joy of love having attained You and shall forget myself.

But when will such a day dawn?

As Sri Ramakrishna hears the words 'bliss like embodied nectar,' he goes into deep samadhi. He sits with his hands folded, facing the east, his body erect; diving deep in the ocean of beauty - the All Blissful Mother. He has lost all external consciousness. One doesn't know whether he is even breathing. He is still and unwinking, sitting like one drawn in a picture, gone away as if from this kingdom.

Chapter Four

Ways to attain Sachchidananda - difference between jnani and bhakta

Sri Ramakrishna's samadhi comes to an end. Earlier seeing Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi, Narendra had left the room and gone to the eastern verandah. There sits Hazra on a blanket with rosary in his hand. Narendra begins to talk with him. By this time Sri Ramakrishna's room is full with devotees. Sri Ramakrishna looks round at the bhaktas when his samadhi is over. He finds that Narendra is not there. The tanapura is lying soundless. All the devotees are gazing at him with curiosity.

Sri Ramakrishna — He has lit the fire. Now it does not matter whether he stays or goes. (To the Captain and others) Give your mind to *chidananda* (the Being of knowledge and bliss). You people will also feel joy. This *chidananda* is always there. **Only it is hidden by a veil.** The lesser is the attachment to the senses, the more shall the mind proceed towards the Lord.

The Captain — The more you advance towards Calcutta, the farther you go from Kashi; and the more you proceed towards Kashi, the more distant you will be from your home.

Sri Ramakrishna — The more Srimati (Radha) advances towards Krishna, the more she feels the odour of his body. The more one advances towards the Lord, the more one gains bhava and bhakti for Him. The more does the river advance towards the sea, the more one sees its ebb and flow.

“The Ganga flows only in one direction within a jnani (man of knowledge). For him everything is like a dream. He always dwells in his own true Self. Within the bhakta the Ganga flows not in one direction. It has its ebb and flow. He laughs and weeps, sings and dances. Bhakta wants to enjoy himself with Him - now he swims; now he dives, now he rises - just as a lump of ice floats up and down upon the water.” (Laughter.)

**Sachchidananda and Sachchidanandamayi -
Brahman and Adya Shakti are inseparable**

“The jnani wants to know Brahman. The Bhagavan of the bhakta possessed of the six kinds of spiritual wealth is Almighty. But in fact, Brahman and Shakti are inseparable. He who is Sachchidananda is Himself Sachchidanandamayi^[10]. Take for example, the jewel and its lustre. As you talk of the lustre of a jewel, you know the jewel and when you talk of the jewel, you know its lustre. Without knowing the jewel you cannot know its lustre. Without knowing the lustre of a jewel you cannot know what the jewel is.

“There is but one Sachchidananda who has different adjuncts because of (the manifestation of) His different powers. For the same reason God has many forms - Thou art He, O Tara^[11]. Where there is action (of creation, preservation and dissolution), there is Shakti (Power). However, when water is still, it is yet water; and when there are ripples and bubbles over its surface, it is still water. The same Sachchidananda is Himself Adya Shakti (Primeval Power) who brings about creation, preservation and dissolution. When the Captain is not working, he is still the Captain and when he is worshipping he is the same being. When the Captain goes to the ‘Lat Sahib’ (the Governor General) he is still the same - only he has particular designation (or adjunct).”

The Captain — Quite right, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — I said the same to Keshab Sen.

The Captain — Keshab is depraved, he is self-willed, he is a babu, not a sadhu.

Sri Ramakrishna (to devotees) — The Captain wants me not to visit Keshab Sen.

The Captain — Sir, I am helpless if you go.

Sri Ramakrishna (irritated) — You can go to the Governor General for money and I cannot go to Keshab Sen! He meditates on the Lord and chants the Name of Hari. And then you yourself say: ‘Ishwara maya *jiva jagat*.’ That one who is Ishwara (the Lord) has Himself become the *jiva* (embodied soul) and the *jagat* (the world).

Chapter Five

With Narendra - synthesis of Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

Having spoken thus, Thakur abruptly leaves the room and goes to the northeastern verandah. The Captain and other devotees remain waiting for his return to the room. However, M. accompanies him into the verandah. In this northeastern verandah, Narendra is conversing with Hazra. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna knows that Hazra is given to dry reasoning. He says, “The world is like a dream; all kinds of worship and offering are mental delusions. One’s only aim is to meditate on one’s own true Self, and that ‘I am That.’”

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — I say, what are you talking about?

Narendra (smiling) — We are talking on so many matters - we are talking long.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — But pure knowledge and pure devotion are the same. Pure devotion takes you to the same goal where pure knowledge takes. **The path of bhakti is, however, very smooth and easy.**

Narendra — I have no need to take to reasoning. Mother! Grant that I may be mad in Your love. (To M.) Look, I have read Hamilton. He wrote: A learned ignorance is the end of Philosophy and the beginning of Religion.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — What does it mean, brother?

Narendra — When one completes the study of Philosophy, one becomes a ‘learned fool’. Then he begins to talk on religion. Religion starts then.

Sri Ramakrishna — Thank you, Thank you ^[12]! (Laughter.)

Chapter Six

Chanting of the name of Hari as evening approaches - so many qualities of Narendra

It is after some time that seeing the evening drawing nigh most of the people depart. Narendra also takes his leave.

It is getting late. It is almost evening. The *faras* ^[13] of the temple are arranging for lights all around. Two priests of the Kali Temple and of the Vishnu Temple standing up to the waist in the Ganga purify themselves, body and soul. They will shortly perform the evening arati and offer evening meals to the deities. Young men of Dakshineswar village some with walking sticks, some with friends have come out for a walk in the garden. Enjoying the pure evening breeze made fragrant by the flowers and watching the slightly undulating breasts of the fast flowing Ganga of the month of Shravana, they are walking on the embankment. Some of them who are perhaps more reflective are pacing the lonely tract of the Panchavati. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna also stands in the western verandah and watches the Ganga for a while.

It is evening, the *faras* (lamp men) have lighted all the lamps. The maidservant comes to the Paramahansa Deva’s room, lights the lamp and burns incense.

In the meantime the arati begins in the twelve Shiva temples. Soon after it begins in the temples of Vishnu and Kali. Cymbals, gongs and bells begin to ring sweetly and solemnly - sweetly and solemnly because of the murmuring Ganga flowing close by.

The first day of the dark fortnight of the month of Shravana. After a short while the moon appears. The big courtyard and the tops of the trees in the garden get bathed in the

moonlight. And also the water in the Ganga is flowing so joyfully by the touch of the rays of the moon.

As soon as it is evening Sri Ramakrishna pays obeisance to the Mother of the Universe and utters 'Haribol' clapping his hands. His room has images of many gods and goddesses: Of Dhruva, Prahlada, Raja Rama, Mother Kali and Radha-Krishna. He bows down to all the deities, repeating their names and then he says, "Brahman-Atman-Bhagavan, Bhagavata-Bhakta-Bhagavan, Brahman-Shakti, Shakti-Brahman; Veda, Purana, Tantra, Gita, Gayatri. My only refuge, my only refuge. Not I, Not I, but You, only You. I am just the instrument, You are the Being who uses the instrument," and so on.

After uttering these divine names, Sri Ramakrishna meditates on the Mother of the Universe folding his hands. Some of the devotees walk on the bank of the Ganga in the evening. Soon after the arati of the deities is over, they come one by one and gradually assemble in the Paramahansa Deva's room. He is sitting on the bedstead while M., Adhar, Kishori and others are seated in front of him on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Narendra, Bhavanath, Rakhai they are all ever-perfect souls. They belong to the class of God-man. Teaching them is only to nourish the leela. You see Narendra does not care for anybody. He was with me in the Captain's carriage. When the Captain asked him to take a comfortable seat, he did not even look at him. He does not care even for me. And he does not even speak out what he knows lest I should say about him before others that Narendra is very learned. He has no maya, no attachment, as if completely unbound. He is a good 'receptacle' possessing so many qualities. Vocal and instrumental music, reading and writing. At the same time he has control over his senses. He says that he will not marry. There is such a great affinity between Narendra and Bhavanath as between a husband and a wife. Narendra does not come here so often. This is good. I feel overwhelmed on seeing him too often.

[1] A wooden wind instrument

[2] Worship performed after offering of meals to the deities

[3] Hridaya had served the Paramahansa Deva for almost twenty three years in Dakshineswar Kali Temple till the day of Snan Yatra Festival (the ceremony of Jagannath sallying out in procession for a bath), i.e. 1881.

[4] The goddess seated upon a lion.

[5] The Divine presence infilling the images of the Deity.

[5] Name of two embankments.

[7] A semi-circular percussion instrument played along with tabla.

[8] Absolute Truth, Absolute Good and Absolute Beauty are one.

[9] A red-legged partridge which enjoys moonbeam.

[10] All Knowing, All Intelligent and All Blissful Mother of the Universe.

[11] Divine Mother

[12] Sri Ramakrishna actually used these English words.

[13] The temple attendant who arranges the lights.

Section VIII

Visit of Sri Ramakrishna to Sinduriyapatti Brahmo Samaj Conversation with Vijaykrishna Goswami and others

Chapter One

In samadhi

The eleventh day of the dark fortnight in the month of Kartik. 26 November, 1883. The Sinduriyapatti Brahmo Samaj holds its sessions in the house of Mani Lal Mullick. It is situated on the Chitpur Road, in the southern corner of the Harrison Road where fruits and dry fruits such as seedless pomegranate, pistachio and apples are sold - a little to the north of the shops. The Samaj holds its session in the hall towards the main road on the first floor. Today it is the annual session, so Mani Lal has made arrangements for the occasion.

The worship room is full of joy today. It is decorated outside and inside with green leaves, various flowers and garlands. The bhaktas sitting in the hall are waiting for the worship to begin. There is not enough space for everybody in the room. Quite a number of persons are pacing on the western roof or are sitting on the beautifully made variegated benches placed here and there. At times the master of the house and his near relatives come to greet the invited bhaktas with sweet words. The Brahmo bhaktas have started arriving before the evening. They are inspired today with special zeal. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva is paying his auspicious visit today. He has great affection for the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj - Keshab, Vijay, Shivanath and other bhaktas. That is why he is so beloved of the Brahmo bhaktas. He is intoxicated with the wine of divine love of Hari. His Prema, his burning faith, his childlike conversation with the Lord, his tearful yearning for God, his worship of women as Mother, his avoidance of all worldly talk and his incessant talk on God like the unbroken flow of oil, his harmony with all religions and absence of the least trace of contempt for other religions and his tearful cry for the bhaktas of God - all these things have attracted the mind of Brahmo bhaktas. This is the reason why so many people have come from distant places to have his darshan.

Shivanath and speaking truth

Before the worship Sri Ramakrishna is talking happily with Vijaykrishna Goswami and other Brahmo bhaktas. The assembly room has been lit - the worship is to begin soon.

The Paramahansa Deva says, "Why brother, is Shivanath not coming?" A Brahmo bhakta says, "No, he is very busy today. He

will not be able to come.” The Paramahansa Deva says -

“I feel very happy on seeing Shivanath. It seems as if he is drenched in the nectar of devotion. Besides, when many accept one, there is undoubtedly some power of the Lord in him. Even so, Shivanath has a great defect. He does not keep his word. He told me that he would once come there (at Kali Temple in Dakshineswar), but he did not turn up. He did not even send a word. This is not right. They say that the **truthful speech indeed is the tapasya in the age of Kali**. By sticking to truth one realizes Bhagavan and by not sticking to truth, everything gradually perishes. Keeping this in mind, if I sometimes say that I am going to answer the call of nature and even I have no pressure, I take a wash pot and go to the Jhautala. My fear is that I may not ultimately lose my truthful speech. After this state of mine I took flowers in my hand and said to the Mother -

Mother! Take Your knowledge and take Your ignorance, only grant me pure love.

O Mother! Take Your cleanliness and take Your defilement, only grant me pure devotion.

O Mother! Take what is good and what is not, only grant me pure devotion.

O Mother! Take Your virtue and take Your sin, only grant me pure devotion, O Mother!

“When I said all this, I could not say, ‘Mother! Take your truth and take your untruth.’ I could give everything to the Mother. But I could not give Her truth.”

The worship starts according to the Brahmo system. The *acharya* (preacher) is on the platform with a candelabrum in front. After the initial ceremony he chants holy verses from the Vedas on Para Brahman. The Brahmo bhaktas also begin to sing together in the same tune the same ancient words of the Aryan rishis. They chant, ‘Brahman is truth, knowledge and infinite. It radiates as bliss and immortality. It is peace, all good and one without a second; It is pure and untouched by sin.’

The sound of these words impregnated with ‘Om’ resounds in the firmament of the heart of bhaktas. Most of them have their worldly desires almost quenched, their minds becoming quite steady and meditation oriented. They all sit with eyes closed and contemplate for a while on Brahman with attributes of the Vedas.

The Paramahansa Deva is overwhelmed with emotion - his body still, his eyes fixed, speechless, he sits like a picture. The bird of his soul is flying elsewhere in joy; only his inert body remains there in void.

As soon as his samadhi is over, he opens his eyes and looks

around. He notices that everybody in the meeting has his eyes closed. Then uttering, "Brahman! Brahman!" he rises all of a sudden. At the end of worship the Brahmo bhaktas sing together with *khol* (drum) and cymbals. Intoxicated with the joy of prema (ecstatic love), Sri Ramakrishna joins them and begins to dance. Everybody gets charmed and watch that pleasant dance. Vijaykrishna and other bhaktas also begin to dance encircling him. Many persons having watched this wonderful scene and having enjoyed the community singing have forgotten the world for sometime - having drunk the wine of Hari's nectar they forget their worldly pleasures for a while. They begin to feel that the worldly joy is bitter in taste.

After the kirtan all take their seats. They all sit around Thakur to hear what he says.

Chapter Two

Advice to householders

Sri Ramakrishna addresses the assembled Brahmo bhaktas and says thus, "It is very difficult to lead the family life without attachment. Pratap used to say, 'Sir, we believe the same way as Raja Janak. Raja Janak lived the family life without attachment, we shall also do the same.' I said, 'Can you become Raja Janak just by thinking so? Raja Janak gained jnana after so much of austerities. He returned to his family after undergoing extremely hard austerities standing on his head for years.'"

"Even so, does it mean that there is no way for the householders? Certainly there is. The householder should practise religious discipline for some days in a solitary place. By doing so one develops bhakti and gains spiritual knowledge. After this there is nothing wrong if he goes back and leads the family life. However, when a man practises spiritual discipline in a solitary place, he must cut himself completely by all means from the household - wife, son, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, near relatives; none should stay with him. At the time of solitary spiritual practice he should say to himself, 'I have none as my own. The Lord is all in all for me.' He should weep persistently and pray to Him for jnana and bhakti.

"If you were to ask how many days one should live away from the family? Even one day of stay in this manner is good but three days are still better. One can live for twelve days, a month, three months, a year, as long as possible. After gaining jnana and bhakti, there is not much danger in living a family life.

"If you rub your hands with oil before cutting the jack-fruit, its milky exudation will not stick to your hands. When playing the game of 'thief-thief' if you touch the grand-dame,

there is no danger then. Touch the philosopher's stone once and become gold; thereafter if this gold remains buried under the earth for a thousand years and then taken out, it shall still be gold.

“This mind is like milk. If you keep this mind in the water of the world, the milk will get mixed with water. One must transform the milk into curds in a lonely corner and take out butter from it. When by practising spiritual discipline in a solitary corner one has taken out the butter of jnana and bhakti from the milk of the mind then that butter can easily be kept in the water of the world. This butter will never get mixed with the water of the world, it will float free from any attachment on its surface.”

Chapter Three

Sadhana in solitude of Vijaykrishna Goswami

Vijay Goswami has recently returned from Gaya. There he spent quite a few days in solitude and lived in the company of sadhus. He has now taken to ochre clothes. A very nice state he is in - as if his mind is always drawn within. He keeps his head bent down before the Paramahansa Deva as if he is absorbed in contemplation.

Looking at Vijay, Sri Ramakrishna asks him, “Vijay, have you found a *vasa* (place to stay)?”

“Listen to this. Two sadhus reached a town during their wanderings. One of them was curiously watching the bazaar, shops and residential quarters of the town when he came across the other one. The latter said, ‘You are going round the city gaping. Where is your luggage?’ The first sadhu replied, ‘I first found a *vasa* (place of stay) where I have locked my belongings. Then I have come out without any anxiety. Now I am roaming about the city to find out how it looks like.’ That is why I am asking you whether you have found a ‘*vasa*’. (To M. and others) Look, the fountain within Vijay was lying restrained for so long and now it has opened up.”

Vijay and Shivanath - selfless work - sannyasi's renunciation of desire

(To Vijay) “Look here, Shivanath has so many problems. He has to write for the newspaper and many other things he has to do. Worldly work brings restlessness with it. A number of anxieties and worries accumulate in the mind.

“The Srimad Bhagavata talks about the twenty-four gurus of the avadhoot (Rishi Duttatreya), one of whom was a kite.

Some fishermen were catching fish at some place when a kite came and swooping over the fish carried one away. However, seeing the fish some ten hundred crows forming themselves into a flight followed the kite crowing behind it and creating so much of nuisance. Whichever side the kite flew with the fish, the crows followed it in groups in that very direction. The kite flew towards the south, the crows also went that side and when it flew northwards, the crows did the same. Now the kite began to fly in the same manner to the east and the west and at last the kite got confused of the rambling motion and the fish fell from it. Then the crows left the kite and flew towards the fish. The kite then sat on the branch of a tree at peace within itself. It said to itself: That fish had created this entire confusion, now that I have no fish I am so much at peace.

“The avadhoot learned this from the kite that so long as the fish of desire is there one has work before him. And because of work there is worry, anxiety and restlessness. As soon as one gives up desires, it brings *karma kshaya*^[1] and he is at peace.

“That is why *nishkama karma* (selfless work) is good. It does not bring restlessness. But it is very difficult to do selfless work. I may think that I am doing selfless work but somehow selfish motivation creeps in, I do not know from where? If a lot of religious discipline has already been practised then with the power of this sadhana only a few can work selflessly. After God-realization, selfless work comes automatically. Upon God-realization, one almost gives up work. Only a person or two (like Narada) keep on working for the instruction of others.”

**Sannyasi will not hoard -
renunciation of work only after developing prema**

“The avadhoot had another guru, the bee. The bee collects honey labouring hard for days together but this honey does not fall to its share. Some other person comes, breaks the honeycomb and takes away the honey. The avadhoot learnt from the bee that one should not hoard. **Sadhus will depend a hundred percent on the Lord. They must not accumulate.**

“However, this is not for the householders. The householder must rear his family. Therefore, he has to accumulate. The bird and the sadhu don't accumulate. The bird, however, accumulates when it has a chick - it brings food for its chick in its beak.

“Look here Vijay, if you see some baggage or a bundle (of possessions) tied with fifteen knots with a sadhu, don't trust

him. I saw such sadhus under the banyan tree. Two or three of them were sitting there - one was separating good grains of dal from the bad ones, the other was repairing his dhoti (a wearing cloth) and they were talking of the feasts given by rich men. They were saying, 'I say, that babu has spent hundreds of thousands of rupees. He fed the sadhus so well: *Puris, jalebis, peras, barfis, malapuas* and what not he prepared.' " (All laugh.)

Vijay — Yes, I saw such sadhus in Gaya too. In Gaya sadhus swindle. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay) — On developing ecstatic love for the Lord *karmas* (activities) fall off automatically. Let those act whom the Lord makes them to work. Your time has come now. Giving up everything you should say: 'O my mind, may you behold Her, may I behold Her and none else!'

Saying so, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna sings in his exquisitely sweet voice and describes the sweetness of God -

Preserve revered Shyama Mother with great care in your heart.

O my mind, may you behold Her, may I behold Her and none else.

Tricking desires, anger and such other vices, come, O my mind, let me see Her in solitude.

I shall keep my tongue with me so that it can utter, 'Mother, Mother.'

(Let it call out, 'Mother, Mother,' every now and then.)

O my mind, don't let perversion and such instigations come near.

Let the eyes of your jnana keep a watch and beware.

(Do be careful.)

(To Vijay) "You have taken refuge in Bhagavan. Now eschew the feeling of shame, fear and so on. Give up the idea that if you dance while singing the name of Hari what will people say about you."

Feeling of shame, contempt and fear

"When you have the feeling of shame, contempt, and fear you cannot succeed. The feeling of shame, contempt, fear, the pride of caste, desire for secrecy and the rest are all bonds. The jiva is liberated only when he is free from them.

"He who is bound is a *jiva* (embodied soul), he who is free from the bonds is Shiva (divine). Love for Bhagavan is something rare. If you have *nishtha* (single minded devotion)

for the Lord, like a wife has for her husband in the beginning, only then you develop bhakti. Pure selfless bhakti is very difficult to attain. In bhakti, soul and mind lose themselves in the Lord.

“Thereafter comes the state of bhava. In bhava, man becomes speechless. His breathing stops and he goes automatically into *kumbhak* (suspension of breath) - as it happens while firing from the gun. A marksman while firing a bullet becomes speechless and his breathing stops.

“To attain *prema* is a far cry. Chaitanya Deva attained it. When you have *prema* for the Lord, you forget the external objects, you forget the world. You forget even your own body which is so dear to you.”

Saying so, Sri Ramakrishna begins to sing again -

When will such a day come?

When streams of tears shall flow down my eyes uttering Hari,
Hari (when will such a day come?)

When I am able to rid myself of worldly desires (when will such a day come?)

When shall my hairs stand on end (when will such a day come?)

Chapter Four

Bhava and *Kumbhak* -

vision of Bhagavan when *mahavayu*^[2] rises

While the conversation is going on in this way, many other invited Brahma bhaktas arrive. Many among them are learned, occupying high position in the government. One of them is Rajni Nath Ray.

Thakur says, “In the state of bhava your breathing stops.” He further says, “When Arjuna pierced his target, his sight was fixed only on the eye of the fish - he was not looking at anything else. So much so that he was not able to see any other organ (of the fish) but the eye. In such a state, one’s breathing stops and one attains the state of *kumbhak*.”

“There is another mark of the vision of the Lord: The *mahavayu* current from within gurgles up towards the brain. At that time if one attains samadhi, one sees Bhagavan.”

Mere learning by itself is deceptive - riches, power, honour and rank are all illusory

(Looking at the arrived Brahma bhaktas) “They who are mere

learned and have no bhakti for Bhagavan talk confusing. There was a pundit, Samadhyayi by name. He said, 'The Lord is *neeras*^[3]. Make Him *saras*^[4] by your *prema* and bhakti.'

He who is called *Rasaswaroop*^[5] in the Vedas was termed *neeras* by this fellow. This only shows that the man did not know at all what the Lord is. That is why he talked absurd.

"Somebody said, 'There is a cowshed full of horses in my maternal uncle's house.' From this, you can well understand that there was not a single horse - because horses are not kept in the cowshed. (All laugh.)

"There are people who are proud of riches, wealth, possessions, property, honour, rank and so on. These last only for a few days; nothing accompanies one at death. A song goes like this -

O my mind, just think it over. Nobody really belongs to anyone in the world. There is mere illusion in the world.

Don't forget the *Dakshina*^[6] Mother Kali by getting ensnared in Her Own maya.

Just think it over. Will they accompany you for whom you are dying?

This beloved wife of yours would rebuke you saying: 'It brings harm if the dead revisits.'

It is just for two or three days that people call you as the lord, the master.

They will cease to call you the master when the Master in the form of death shall arrive.

**The great remedy for pride -
there are others greater than you**

"One should not be proud of one's money. If one thinks that he is wealthy, there are more wealthy and still wealthier persons than him. When the evening is over and the firefly comes out, it thinks that it gives light to the world. But as soon as the stars appear, its pride has a fall. The stars then begin to think that they are giving light to the world. After sometime the moon appears, the stars then feel ashamed and get dim. The moon then begins to think that the whole world is smiling because of its light, that it is giving light to the world. But not much later comes the dawn. The sun rises, and now the moon becomes dim. In a short while it becomes invisible.

"If the wealthy were to think in this way, they would not have pride of their wealth."

Manilal has arranged for a big feast in connection with the festival. He serves food to Sri Ramakrishna and the assembled bhaktas with great attention and love to their heart's satisfaction. It is already quite dark when the guests start returning home but nobody feels any inconvenience.

[1] Work no longer binds one

[2] The current of spirit

[3] Totally devoid of sweetness, love, joy, bliss and other attributes.

[4] Sweet

[5] Fountain of love and bliss

[6] Bestower of happiness and bliss.

Section IX

Visit to the House of Jaigopal Sen

Chapter One

Family life and Sri Ramakrishna

It is 28 November, 1883. At about 4 or 5 p.m., Sri Ramakrishna visited Lily Cottage of Keshab Chandra Sen. Keshab is ill, soon he will leave the mortal world. After seeing Keshab Thakur has come to the house of Jaigopal Sen in the Mathaghasa Street after 7 p.m. along with some bhaktas.

The devotees think over many matters, “We see Thakur night and day mad in the love of Hari. He has married but has not established that sort of family life with his wife. He has bhakti for her and worships her. With her he talks only of the Lord, he sings of God, worships God, meditates on Him, and has no worldly connection. He sees that the Lord is the only Reality and all else is unreal. He cannot touch money, any metallic object, jug or bowl. He cannot touch women - if he touches them, his body develops tremor at the spot as if stung by the *singi* fish. His hand twists when money or gold is placed on his palm - like the state of a handicapped person. His breathing stops. And when he throws these things away, he again begins to breathe normally as before.”

The devotees think over many matters, “Shall we have to renounce the world? What is the need of studies now? If we don't marry, we will not have to take up service anywhere. Shall we have to leave our parents? I have married, I have children, I am to look after my wife - what about me? I also want that I should remain night and day absorbed in the love of Hari. When I see Thakur Sri Ramakrishna, I say to myself what I am doing. Day and night, he meditates ceaselessly on the Lord like the flow of oil, while I am running about night and day thinking worldly matters! Just his darshan is like a small spot of light on a sky overcast with clouds. How shall I now solve the problem of my life?

“He has personally shown by practising it himself. But do I still have doubts?

“Shall I break this embankment of sand and fulfil my desire? Is it really a sand embankment? If that is so,

why can't I give it up? I see that I have less power. When I have developed that sort of love for Him, I shall not calculate then. If the tide appears on the Ganga, who can stop it? If one just has a drop of the *prema* which made Sri Gauranga (Chaitanya) put on the loin cloth, the *prema* that moved Christ go into exile without the consideration of anything else and made him give up his body after having the vision of the face of loving Father, the *prema* that made the Buddha give up his state luxury and become a *vairagi*^[1], then this transitory world would be cast away by me.

“Well, what is the way for those who are weak, who have not developed that *prema*, who are worldly beings tied by the fetters of maya? I shall not leave company of this great soul intoxicated with the love of the Lord and who looks not for anything except the Lord. Let me see what he says.”

The devotees are thinking thus. Thakur is sitting in the drawing room of Jaigopal with the bhaktas. In front of him are seated Jaigopal, his near and dear ones and some of his neighbours. A neighbour was ready for discussion. He is the first to begin the conversation. Vaikuntha, Jaigopal's brother, is also there.

Family Life and Sri Ramakrishna

Vaikuntha — We are householders. Kindly advise us.

Sri Ramakrishna — Know Him and keep one of your hands at His lotus feet and attend to your worldly work with the other.

Vaikuntha — Sir, is this world illusory?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is illusory until you know God. The man forgets Him and utters, ‘Mine, mine.’ Bound by maya, deluded by ‘woman and gold,’ he goes down and down. The man has lost his consciousness while entangled in maya. He cannot run out of it even when there is a way. The song goes thus -

The Mahamaya has created such maya with its magic
That even Brahma and Vishnu have lost their
consciousness. What can you, O jiva (embodied soul),

understand?

The fish makes pit and enters it. There is a way for it to come out, but it does not.

The silkworm makes a cocoon and can escape out of it.

But such is the work of Mahamaya that the insect gets bound within its own cocoon and dies there.

“You people are yourself able to see that this world is transitory. Why don't you see this very family? So many people have come and then departed, so many were born and so many died. The world now is and now it is not - it is transitory. They whom you call 'my' and 'mine' are not there as soon as you shut your eyes (in death). People do not have close relations, even so they do not go to Kashi just for the sake of their grandson. 'What will happen to my Haru?' There is a way out yet the fish does not escape. The silkworm dies in its own saliva it exudes. Thus the world is illusory, it is transitory.”

The Neighbour — Sir, how can I keep one hand at the Lord and the other in the world? If the world is transitory, why should I put even one hand in it?

Sri Ramakrishna — If you live in the world after knowing Him, the world is no longer transitory. Listen to this song -

O my mind, you do not know how to farm.

Such a human field is lying futile (uncultivated). Were you to cultivate it, it would have yielded gold.

O brother, your crop will not suffer if you fence it with the name of Kali.

The fence of the Mother with long flowing hair is very strong.

Not even Yama (god of death) can approach it.

Today or a hundred years later it will certainly be snatched from you.

Now reap your harvest with all your mind.

Sow the seed given to you by Guru and irrigate it with the water of bhakti.

O my mind, if you cannot do so by yourself take Rama Prasad with you.

Chapter Two

How to realize God in family life

Sri Ramakrishna — Did you hear the song? ‘O brother, your crop will not suffer if you fence it with the name of Kali.’ Take refuge in the Lord, you will get everything. ‘This fence of the Mother with long flowing hair is very strong. Not even Yama can approach it.’ It is a very strong fence. If one can attain God, the world will not appear to him of no import. He who knows God sees that He Himself has become the world, its creatures and all that. You will feed your boy as if you were feeding Gopal^[2]. You will see your father and mother as the Lord and His consort and will serve them. If you live in the family after knowing God, you generally don’t maintain any worldly relationship with your wife. Both of you being devotees will talk only of the Lord, on matters divine. You will serve the devotees. Knowing Him to be present in all existence, both of you will serve God.

The Neighbour — Sir, such husband and wife can be found nowhere.

Sri Ramakrishna — Such persons are there, only they are rather rare. Sensuous persons cannot recognize them. Even so, both of them should be good so that they can reach that state. This is possible only when both persons can derive divine joy out of it. Bhagavan’s special grace is essential. Otherwise, there is always some difference. One of them has to stay away. There is a lot of discord if the minds of both don’t harmonize. The wife may possibly complain night and day, ‘Father, why did you give me away in marriage here? Neither I have eaten well myself nor have I been able to feed my children. Neither have I good clothes to wear nor my children. Not a single piece of jewellery you have given me. What joy of life

have you put me to in this house? You keep on repeating Lord, Lord with eyes closed. Give up this type of madness.'

The Devotee — These obstacles are, of course, there. Then, maybe, the sons are disobedient. How troublesome then! But then what is the way, Sir?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is very difficult to practise spiritual discipline while living in the family. There are so many hindrances. I don't have to tell you about these - disease, sorrow, poverty, discord with wife; disobedient, ignorant and foolish sons.

“Even so, there is a way. At times, you should go to a solitary place and pray to God. You should try to attain Him.”

The Neighbour — Should one leave the family?

Sri Ramakrishna — Not in the least. Whenever you are free, go to a solitary place and live there for a day or two so that you are detached from the family matters and where you don't have to talk of worldly matters to any worldly person. **Either live in a solitary place or keep the company of sadhus.**

The Neighbour — How to recognize a sadhu?

Sri Ramakrishna — **The sadhu is he whose mind, *prana* and soul are merged in the Lord** - he who has renounced 'woman and gold' is a sadhu. He who is a sadhu doesn't see woman with a carnal eye - his mind is always drawn within. If he happens to be near women, he looks upon them as mother and worships them. The sadhu is always thinking inwardly of the Lord. He talks of nothing but Him. And knowing that God is present in all existence, he serves Him. Broadly speaking, these are the characteristics of a sadhu.

The Neighbour — Does one always have to live in a solitary place?

Sri Ramakrishna — You see the tree on the footpath? As long as it is a small plant, it has to be fenced on all sides. Otherwise, a goat or a cow may eat it up. However, when the plant develops a thick trunk no fence is needed. Even if an elephant is tied to it, the tree does not break. If you can develop the trunk, there is no worry, no fear. First try to gain discrimination. If you rub your hands with oil before you cut the jack fruit, its milky exudation will not stick to your hands.

The Neighbour — What is discrimination?

Sri Ramakrishna — Only God is *sat*, all else is *asat* - thinking this way is discrimination. *Sat* means eternal and *asat* means transitory. He who has attained discrimination knows that the Lord is the only reality, all else is unreal. When you have developed discrimination, you want to know the Lord. If you are inclined to *asat*, you like to have bodily comforts, name and fame, money and all these. You don't feel the need to know the Lord who is *sat* Himself. When you know the real and the unreal, only then you want to find out the Lord. Listen to this song -

Come, O my mind, let us go out for a walk.

Let us gather the four fruits^[3] at the foot of Kalpataru^[4], viz., Kali.

You have, O my mind, two wives *pravritti*^[5] and *nivritti*^[6]. Take *nivritti* on the way to the tree.

Ask - about the Lord - the son called *viveka* who knows the Real (God) from the unreal phenomenal world.

O, when shall you lie down in the abode of the blessed with purification and defilement alike by the side.

You shall see my Divine Mother as soon as all difference between the two co-wives ceases to exist.

Do you turn out your parents, egoism and ignorance.

Should mine-ness try to draw you into its hole do you cling to the post of patience.

Tie to a worthless post the two goats *dharma* and

adharmā.

Should they prove refractory, let them be killed before the altar of God with the sword of knowledge.

Admonish, O my mind, the children of your wife *pravritti* from a safe distance.

Should they not obey you, see that they are drowned in the sea of jnana.

Prasad says: If you go on like this, you shall be able to render satisfactory account of yourself to the Lord of death.

And I shall be glad to call you 'my child,' 'my darling,' the 'idol of my father' and other pet names; and you shall be indeed a mind after my mind.

“You attain discrimination only when non-worldliness comes to the mind. When you have attained discrimination, you begin to think of the essence. Then the mind has the desire to stroll under the Kalpataru (wish fulfilling tree) of Kali. When you go under this tree, when you are near the Lord, you effortlessly gather all the four fruits. You are only to pick them up - the four fruits of *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires) and *moksha* (liberation). On attaining Him, whatever a householder needs - *dharma*, *artha* or *kama* - he gets if he so desires.”

The Neighbour — Why is the world called maya?

Vishishtadvaitavada (qualified non-dualism) and Thakur Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna — So long as you don't realize the Lord you must renounce saying, 'Not this, not this.' They who have realized Him know that He has become all - Ishwara (the Lord), maya, *jiva* (the creatures) and *jagat* (the world). Then they perceive that the world and its beings are nothing but He. If you were asked to weigh the bel fruit after its shell, kernel and seeds are separated, will you throw away the shell and the seeds and weigh only the kernel? No, you will also have to take into account the shell and the seeds, all these, while weighing. You can tell the

weight of the bel fruit only when you weigh all of them. This world is the shell, the creatures are the seeds. While reasoning, they called the world and its creatures as *anatmam* (not the Atman). They called them unreal. While reasoning, you feel that only the kernel is the all important thing and not the shell and the seeds. In the next place, we reason that the shell and the seeds belong to the same substance to which the kernel belongs. Understand the illustration of the bel fruit and you will understand all.

“*Anulom* and *vilom* (evolution and involution). Butter goes with buttermilk and buttermilk goes with butter. If there is buttermilk, there is also butter. If there is butter, there is also buttermilk. If there is Atman, there is also *anatma* (non Atman).

“The *Nitya* (Absolute) belongs to the same Being to which the *leela* (phenomenal world) belongs and the *leela* belongs to the same Being to which the *Nitya* belongs. He who is perceived by the name of Ishwara has Himself become the *jiva* and the *jagat* (the world). He who has understood it knows that God Himself has become all - father, mother, son, neighbour, man and beast, good and bad, purity and impurity.”

Sense of sin and responsibility

The Neighbour — So, there is no sin and virtuous act?

Sri Ramakrishna — They are there and yet not there. If God retains your ego He also retains your sense of differentiation and the knowledge of virtuous action and sinful acts. However, in a person or two, God completely erases the sense of I-ness. Such persons go beyond virtue and vice, good and bad. So long as one does not realize the Lord, the sense of differentiation and the knowledge of the good and the bad are bound to persist. You may say that vice and virtue have become one for you, that you do only what He makes you do but within yourself you know that these are mere words. When you do evil deeds, your heart palpitates. However, even after God-realization if He

so wills He lets you retain the 'servant I'. In that state the devotee says: 'I am Thy servant, Thou art my Master.' Such a devotee likes to hear Godly talk, likes Godly work. He does not like the man opposed to God, he does not like the work other than that of the Lord. When this comes about, God lets even such a devotee retain his sense of differentiation.

The Neighbour — Great sir, you say that we should live in the world after knowing the Lord. Can one know Him?

The Unknown and the Unknowable

Sri Ramakrishna — He cannot be known by the senses or the mind. He can be known by the pure mind, the mind which has no worldly desires.

The Neighbour — Who can know the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — Who can know Him rightly? It is enough if one knows as much as one needs to know Him. Where is the need for us of a small water well? A jug of water is adequate for us. An ant went to a mount of sugar. What need had it for the whole mount? A grain or two makes it so happy.

The Neighbour — What can a single jug of water do for the *vikara* (aberrations) we have? I feel the desire that I should know the Lord fully.

The world - *vikara* (aberration) and its remedy - take shelter in Me

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, that is true. But there is also a remedy for the *vikara* (disease of the world).

The Neighbour — Sir, what is the remedy?

Sri Ramakrishna — Company of sadhus, chanting His name and glories, and constant prayer to Him. I had said, 'Mother! I don't want jnana. Take Your jnana

and take your ignorance. Mother! Kindly grant me only pure love at Your lotus feet. I want nothing else.’

“As is the disease, likewise is the remedy. The Lord says in the Gita, ‘O Arjuna, take refuge in Me, I shall free you from all your sins.’ Take refuge in God. He will grant you the right intelligence. He will take up your whole burden and then all your *vikara* (defects, aberrations) will be cured. Can you understand Him with this intellect of yours? Can a one seer jug contain four seers of milk? Besides, can anybody understand God unless He makes him understand? So I say, take refuge in God. Let Him do what He wills. He is *Ichhamaya* (He has His own way in everything). What power does the man have?”

[1] A person in *vairagya* (dispassion).

[2] Baby Krishna

[3] Four fruits: Dharma (good works), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires), *moksha* (liberation of the soul)

[4] Wish fulfilling tree of heaven

[5] Worldliness

[6] Non-worldliness

Section X

Festivity in Surendra's Garden

Chapter One

Thakur rejoices with bhaktas

Today Thakur has come to Surendra's garden. It is Sunday, 15 June, 1884, the sixth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Jaishtha. Thakur has been making merry with the bhaktas since 9 a.m.

Surendra's garden is in Kankurgachhi locality near Calcutta. Not far from there is Rama's garden^[1] where Thakur paid his benign visit some six months ago. Today, there is a festival in Surendra's garden.

Sankirtan^[2] has started since the morning. The devotional singers are singing Mathur^[3]. They describe the ecstatic love of the gopis and the sorry plight of Srimati (Radha) due to separation from Sri Krishna. Every now and then, Thakur gets surcharged with bhava. The bhaktas stand in the middle of the garden house all around in rows.

The sankirtan is going on in the bigger hall of the garden house. A white sheet has been spread on the floor of this room with bolsters at different places. The hall is flanked to its east and west by rooms, one on each side, and there is a verandah to the north and south of it. In front of the garden house, that is to the south, there is a beautiful tank with a specially built brick ghat. Between the hall and the ghat of the tank runs a garden path east-west. On both sides of this path are flower bushes and trees of crotons etc. Another path runs from the eastern edge of the garden house to the northern gate, covered over with red brick dust. On both sides there are various flower bushes and trees of crotons etc. Near the gate and to the east of the path there is another tank with a cemented ghat. The common men of this locality take their bath here and carry away the drinking water. On the western side of the garden house, there is a garden path. To the south-west of this very path is the kitchen. There is a lot of activity here today in preparation for a feast to serve Thakur and the bhaktas. Suresh and Rama supervise it regularly.

The bhaktas have assembled in the verandah of the garden house too. Some of them are strolling on the bank of the tank mentioned earlier either alone or with friends while others come to the cemented ghat for rest in between.

The sankirtan goes on. A crowd of bhaktas has assembled in the hall of the sankirtan. Bhavanath, Niranjana, Rakhala, Surendra, Rama, Master, Mahimacharan, Mani Mullick and many others are there. Many Brahmo bhaktas are also present.

The Mathur song goes on. The devotional singers start with Gaur Chandrika (lines in adoration of Chaitanya Deva). Gauranga has taken sannyasa, he is mad in the love of Krishna. The bhaktas of Navadvip are weeping in distress to see him. The chorus is singing the same: "Gaur, please come to Nadia once."

Thereafter, they are singing the state of separation of Srimati (Radha). Thakur is overwhelmed with bhava. He suddenly stands and adds lines full of pathos to the song, "Friend, either bring the Pranavallabha (beloved of my soul) to me or take me to him." Thakur goes into Radha's bhava (mood). He becomes speechless during the conversation; his body is still, his eyes half closed. He has lost all consciousness - Thakur has gone into samadhi.

After sometime he regains the normal state. Again in the same pathetic tone he says, '*Sakhi*^[4]! You purchase me by taking me to him. I shall become a maidservant of all of you. It is you who have taught me this love of Krishna. Pranavallabha (beloved of my soul)!

The chorus goes on singing. Radha says, "Friend, I shall not go to bring water from the holy Yamuna. I saw the beloved friend (Krishna) under the kadamba tree. When I go there, I become overwhelmed."

Thakur is again getting surcharged with bhava. Taking a long breath he heaves a sigh: "Aha! Aha!"

The kirtan continues. Srimati says:

Song:

I see so longingly in front of me the still limbs in total disarray.

In between the musicians are adding words: Perhaps he will become yours. Do please let me see him for once, O friend! The jewel of the jewels is gone. What need now of other jewels? My good days are over. I have fallen again on evil days. Haven't my evil days lasted too long?

Thakur adds this: "Has that time not yet arrived?"

The chorus adds in this way: So much of time has passed. Has that time not come even today?

Song:

O friend! I am surely going to die.

My Kanhai is a mine of qualities, whom shall I leave him to?

O Friend! Don't cremate Radha's body nor throw it in water.

This body has been enjoyed by Krishna, don't drop it in water.

When I die, place it on the tamal tree.

Keep it tied to the tamal tree so that it may go on getting its touch.

Krishna is dark and so is tamal. Let it remain in touch with the dark one.

Since my childhood, I have been very fond of the dark colour.

My Kanhai is of the same hue. See that my body be not separated from my Kanhai.

The tenth state of Srimati - she faints and falls down.

Radha has fainted and she has lost all consciousness.

How has this mart of joy vanished while chanting His name?

At this very moment the eyes of the most beloved friend are closed.

Why this has happened to Radha? Just now she was talking.

Someone smears Radha's body with sandal paste,

Some others cry in sorrow: 'Such a beloved soul is departing!'

Some pour water over Radha's body that she may revive somehow.

Can water save one, who is dying in the love of Krishna?

Seeing Radha in a swoon, her friends chant the name of Krishna. And lo!

Hearing the name of Shyam ^[5] she regains consciousness. Seeing the tamal tree in front she thinks perhaps Krishna himself has come to her.

Hearing the name of Shyam, Radha looks around.

Not finding the moonlike face of Krishna she begins to sob.

Says she, 'Where is Sri Dam¹ whose name you were chanting?

Bring him here but once that I may see him.'

She sees the tamal tree in front.

Examining it all over she says, 'There is my Krishna's plumage.'

Seeing the peacock on the tamal tree, she says, 'There, there you see His plume.'

The friends make a plan and send a woman messenger to Mathura. She goes and makes friends with a resident woman in Mathura.

Song -

A woman of the same age asks for her introduction.

Srimati's messenger friend says, "I shall not have to give him a call. He will himself come out." The messenger friend goes with the Mathura woman at the same place where Krishna is. She calls out weeping with a longing heart.

"Where are you, O Hari, the life of the gopis! The beloved of my soul! Radha's sweetheart, the allayer of shame come and show yourself for once. I have said with great pride that you will yourself grant your darshan."

Song -

The Mathura woman goes about laughing and saying,

'Alas, you the maiden gopi, how do you wish to see him in these poor clothes?

The king is seated beyond the seventh gate.

How will you, O woman, reach him?

I am ashamed to see your boldness. Tell me how you will reach there?

'Alas! Alas! you the life of gopis, the philanderer, where are you? Save the life of your maid by appearing before her.

Where are you the life of gopis, the philanderer!

O, the master of Mathura, save the life and heart of your maid by appearing before her.

Hari, alas! alas! The beloved of Radha.

Where are you the beloved of my heart, Hari, O Hari, the allayer of my shame? Give me your darshan, O Hari and save the pride of your maid.'

The messenger woman calls aloud, 'You the life and soul of the gopis, you the philanderer!'

Where are you, the life and beloved of the gopis! Hearing this Thakur goes into samadhi. At the end of the kirtan, the chorus sings aloud the name of the Lord. Prabhu (Thakur) stands up again. In samadhi! Regaining a little sense-consciousness, he says in an indistinct voice, "Kittan, Kittan (Krishna, Krishna)." He is absorbed in bhava. So he cannot pronounce the name (of Krishna) properly.

Radha meets Krishna. The chorus sings this topic.

Thakur adds his lines -

Lo, Radha stands up.

Radha turns round and stands.

To the left of Shyam stands Radha, I say.

Embracing the tamal tree Radha stands up.

Now they sing the name of the Lord. They sing with the drum and cymbals, "Victory to Radha Govinda! Victory to Radha Govinda!" All are seized with the madness of love for God.

Thakur dances. The bhaktas also dance forming a ring around him, uttering, "Victory to Radha Govinda, victory to Radha Govinda."

Chapter Two

Freedom from guile and God-realization - service of God and service of the world

After the kirtan Thakur sits for a while with the bhaktas. Niranjana comes in now and offers obeisance by prostrating himself on the ground. As Thakur sees him, he stands up. With eyes wide open he smiles joyfully and says, "So you have come!"

(To M.) "Look here, this boy is remarkably simple. Such openness and simplicity does not come unless a lot of austerity has been practised in the previous births. When a person is cunning and calculative, he cannot attain the Lord.

"Do you not see that wherever Bhagavan incarnated Himself as an avatara, there was guilelessness. How simple was Dasharath ^[6]! Nanda, Sri Krishna's father, was free from guile! So the saying goes, 'What a nature he has! Exactly like that of Nanda Ghosh (the milkman).'"

The bhaktas are free from guile. Is Thakur hinting that the Lord has again incarnated Himself?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Niranjana) — I say, it looks as if a dark shadowy film has spread over your face. This is because you work in the office. You have to keep accounts in the office and perform so many other duties there. So you are always worried.

"Like other men of the world you also do a job, yet there is a little difference. You have accepted the job for the sake of your mother.

"The mother is venerable, she is the very image of the All-Blissful Mother. If you had taken up a job for your wife or son, I would have said, 'Fie on you! You are accursed! A hundred times shame on you!'"

(To Mani Mullick) "Just see, this boy is absolutely free from guile. He has but one fault, he is untruthful at times. That day he said that he would come, but he did not turn up. (To Niranjana) That is why Rakhal asked you, why you did not see me in spite of coming to Ariadaha."

Niranjana — I came to Ariadaha just a couple of days ago.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Niranjana) — He is a headmaster. He went to see you. I had sent him. (To M.) Did you send Baburam to me the other day?

Chapter Three

Radha and Krishna - the ecstatic love of gopis

Thakur is conversing with three or four bhaktas in the western room. A number of chairs and tables have been placed together in this room.

Thakur is leaning on a table, half standing and half sitting.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Aha! What devotion the gopis had! They would get seized with the madness of love just on seeing the tamal tree. Such was the fire of separation burning in the heart of Srimati that tears from her eyes would dry up with its heat - they would just evaporate. At times people wouldn't even know of Radha's bhava. When an elephant enters a big lake, nobody comes to know of it.

M. — Yes sir, it was the same with Gauranga (Chaitanya Deva). On seeing a forest he thought that he was in Vrindavan, on seeing the ocean he thought it was Yamuna.

Sri Ramakrishna — Aha! If just a drop of this *prema* could fall to the share of a person! What a devotion! What a love! Not only sixteen annas (full complement) love but five *sikas*^[7] and five annas! This is called **love intoxication**. The basic thing is to love Him, to have longing for Him. Then you may take the path you like. Whether you believe in God with form or God without form, whether you believe that Bhagavan incarnates Himself as a man or not, it is enough if you have devotion for Him. He will then Himself tell you what He is like.

“If you must be mad, be not so with the things of this world. Be mad for the Lord?”

Chapter Four

Conversation on Hari (the Lord) with Bhavanath, Mahima and other bhaktas

Thakur returns to the hall. They have placed a bolster near his seat. While sitting down, Thakur touches the bolster uttering the sacred words, “Om Tat Sat^[8].” Worldly people often visit this garden. They all use this very bolster. This is perhaps why Thakur recites the sacred words to ward off its defilement. Bhavanath, M. and some others sit beside him. Though it is already dark they have not yet laid out the feast. Thakur has the nature of a child. Says he, “Why have you not given us meals? Where is Narendra?”

A Devotee (laughs and says to Thakur) — Sir! Rama Babu is the incharge. He is supervising all arrangements! (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Rama is the incharge, so the delay!

A Devotee — Sir, wherever Rama Babu is the incharge it is always so.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the bhaktas) — Where is Surendra?

“Aha! What a fine temperament Surendra has developed! He is so very frank - not afraid of anybody while talking. Besides, how generous he is! He never turns away anybody who asks him for help. (To M.) Did you go to Bhagavan Das? How did you find him?”

M. — Sir, I went to Kalna. Bhagavan Das is very old now. I saw him in the evening, he was lying on a cotton bedsheet. Somebody came and

began to feed him the prasād. He is able to hear only when one speaks to him aloud. On hearing your name he said, 'Where is the worry for you people now?'

"There is worship of the name of Brahman in that house."

Bhavanath (to M.) — You have not been to Dakshineswar for long. In Dakshineswar he was asking me about you. He said, 'M. has perhaps developed a distaste.'

Saying so, Bhavanath begins to laugh. Thakur has been listening to this dialogue between them. With eyes full of affection, he says to M., "Yes, yes. Why have you not been there for so long? Just tell me."

M. only stammers out some lame excuses.

Just then arrives Mahimacharan. Mahima-charan, a resident of Cossipore, has great reverence and bhakti for Thakur. He often visits Dakshineswar. He belongs to a brahmin family and has some ancestral property. He lives independently and has not taken a job under anybody. He mostly talks of scriptures and meditates on the Lord. He is also a man of some learning. He has studied a number of books in English and Sanskrit.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing, to Mahima) — I say, what is this! The ship has arrived here! (All laugh.) Here only a canoe could have come. But lo! this is a ship. (All laugh.) Even so one thing is there - it is the month of Ashadha (month of rains).

He converses for a long time with Mahimacharan.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahima) — Well, if you feed others, that too is a service in one way. What do you say? God is there in all beings in the form of fire (fire of hunger). Feeding someone means making an offering to Him.

"Even so one should not feed a wicked person. The place where persons who have committed adultery, fornication and such other vilest sins, where people who are drowned in sensuality sit to eat, the earth there is polluted more than seven cubits below.

"Once Hriday fed people in Seor, many amongst whom were wicked. I said to him, 'Look here Hriday, if you feed these people, I shall leave your house immediately.' (To Mahima) Well, I heard that you used to serve so much of meals to people earlier. Perhaps now it has become too expensive."

Chapter Five

With Brahmo bhaktas

The leaf plates are now being laid in the southern verandah. Thakur says to Mahimacharan, "Please go there once and see what they are doing. And I cannot say to you to help a little in serving meals." Mahimacharan says, "Let them bring first. I shall see what is to be done then." Saying so and making the sound of 'hum, hum' (as if tired) he goes a little towards the vestibule, but returns in a short while.

Thakur sits down for meals with the bhaktas. He is filled with supreme joy. After the meals he comes to the room to take rest. The bhaktas go to the

cemented ghat of the southern tank, wash their mouth and hands and again assemble near Thakur while still chewing beetle leaves. They all take their seats. Pratap comes after two o'clock. He is a Brahma devotee. As he comes, he salutes Thakur. Thakur salutes him back bowing down to him. He talks on various topics with Pratap.

Pratap — Sir, I went to the hills (Darjeeling).

Sri Ramakrishna — But you don't look that healthy. Did you fall ill?

Pratap — Sir, I am also suffering from the same disease as his (Keshab's).

Keshab also suffered from the same disease. Now they begin to talk on other matters concerning Keshab. Pratap says, "Keshab's *vairagya* ^[9] was apparent since his childhood. He was seldom seen enjoying himself and making merry. He was a student of the Hindu College. He became great friend of Satyendra at this time and thus he came in contact with Devendra Nath Tagore. Keshab had both yoga as well as bhakti. At times, due to excessive bhakti he would sometimes go into a swoon. The main aim of his life was to bring religion in family life."

Ego and esteem - 'I the doer,' 'I the guru' - signs of God-vision

The conversation turns on a lady from Maharashtra.

Pratap — Some women of this province have gone to the West. A lady from Maharashtra was very learned. She went to the West. But she has embraced Christianity. Sir, have you heard about her?

Sri Ramakrishna — No, but from what you say it appears that she had a desire for name and fame. Egotism of this kind is not good. 'I am the doer,' it comes out of ignorance. O Lord, You are the doer - this alone is jnana.

The Lord alone is the doer and all others are non-doers

"You come to such a bad pass if you say, 'I, I.' Consider the state of a calf, you can understand it. The calf bleats, 'Hamma, hamma.' See, what troubles befall it. Perhaps it is yoked to a plough from morning till evening alike in the sun and the rain. Or perhaps a butcher kills it so that people may eat its meat. And its skin will be tanned into a hide. This hide is used to make shoes and other things. People will put their feet into it and walk. Even then its troubles don't end. With its skin the drum is made. That drum is beaten constantly with a stick. In the end, its intestines are used to make gut. When this gut is used on the bow of the carder, it utters, 'Tuhum, tuhum.' Then it no longer says, 'Hamma, hamma.' Only the uttering of 'Tuhum, tuhum,' redeems, only this brings its liberation. Then it does not have to return to the field of activity.

"Similarly, when the *jiva* (embodied soul) says, 'O Lord! I am not the doer, you are the Doer; I am an instrument, you are the Being who uses the instrument,' his trials and tribulations in the world cease. Only then the *jiva* is liberated, he doesn't have to return to this field of activity."

A Devotee — How can a *jiva* get rid of his ego?

Sri Ramakrishna — It disappears only when one has realized the Lord. When a person is rid of his ego, he surely has had vision of the Lord.

A Devotee — Sir, how to know whether a person has seen the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — There are signs of the vision of the Lord. According to Srimad Bhagavata there are four signs of God's vision. One becomes: (1) Like a child (2) Like a *pishacha* (unclean spirit) (3) Like an insentient being (4) Like a mad man.

“He who has had the vision of the Lord develops the temperament of a child. He goes beyond the three *gunas* ^[10]. He does not get bound by any *guna* (quality). Besides, he seems to make no distinction between purity and impurity - thus he is like a *pishacha* (an unclean spirit). And then like a mad man he sometimes laughs, sometimes weeps, now he may dress himself like a gentleman but soon after he may strip himself naked and begin to roam about with his dhoti under his armpit. Thus, his is the state of a mad man. And sometimes he may sit quiet at one place like an insentient being - the condition of an inert, lifeless, material body.”

A Devotee — Does one get rid of one's ego totally after the vision of the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — Sometimes He completely erases one's ego, as in the state of *samadhi*. But generally He retains a trace of ego. However, there is no harm in this ego. It is like the ego of a child. A five years old child keeps on saying, 'I, I,' but he does not harm anybody.

“Iron becomes gold by touching the philosopher's stone. The steel sword becomes a sword of gold. It keeps the shape of a sword, but does not hurt anybody. You cannot cut or kill with the sword made of gold.”

Chapter Six

Worship of 'gold' in the West. Is aim of life work or God-realization?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Pratap) — You went abroad. What did you see there? Do tell me all about it.

Pratap — In the West people are worshippers of what you call 'gold.' Still there are some good people, those who are unattached to worldly life. However, generally speaking, from end to end *rajas* (worldly work, activity) reigns supreme there. It is the same in America.

The West and Karma Yoga - Karma Yoga or Bhakti Yoga, which one for the age of Kali?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Pratap) — That attachment to worldly work is only to be found in the West is not true. It is all over the world. Even so, do

you know what it is? *Karmakanda*^[11] is a mark of the earliest stages of life. Without the *sattvaguna* (devotion, discrimination, dispassion, kindness and so on) one cannot attain the Lord. In the *rajoguna* work occupies the chief place. So it brings *tamoguna* with it. Too much work makes one forget the Lord, leading to added attachment to 'woman and gold'.

"However, it is not possible to give up work all of a sudden. Your nature will lead you on to it, whether you want it or not. So, the instruction is: Work without attachment. Work without attachment means work without the expectation of any reward. For example, you take to worship, *japa* (recitation of the Name) and religious austerities not for name and fame, or for earning merit.

"Working unattached in this way is called Karma Yoga. But it is very difficult. On the one hand, you are in Kali Yuga - attachment creeps in so easily. You may resolve to work without attachment, but attachment enters from somewhere, you do not even come to know of it. Say, you have celebrated a big holy feast, or served a number of poor and paupers. You may have thought, 'I am doing all this without any attachment.' Yet the desire for name and fame enters from somewhere and you do not even come to know of it. Thus it is possible to be completely unattached only for those who have had the vision of the Lord."

A Devotee — What is the way for those who have not attained the Lord? Should they renounce all worldly work?

Sri Ramakrishna — For the age of Kali there is Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion), the path of bhakti enjoined by Narada - to chant the name and glory of the Lord and pray with a longing heart, 'O Lord, grant me jnana and bhakti, grant me Your vision.' Karma Yoga is very difficult. That is why you must pray to God, 'O Lord, lessen my work. Besides, whatever the work you have left for me, grant me that I should be able to perform it without attachment by Your grace. Moreover, grant that I may not have any desire to engage myself in more work.'

"It is not possible to give up work. I think I am meditating - this too is work. When you have gained bhakti, your worldly work decreases by itself. And then you begin to dislike it. Who would like to take water sweetened with molasses after having tasted water sweetened with ole sugarcandy?"

A Devotee — The Westeners are only exhorting to work more and more. Work, however, is not the aim of life.

Sri Ramakrishna — The aim of life is to attain the Lord. Work is only the first chapter of human life, it cannot be the aim of life. Even *nishkama karma* (selfless work) is only a means, not the end.

"Shambhu said, 'Please bless me now that the money I have may be spent in a good cause - in building hospitals, dispensaries, roads, wells and so on.' I said, 'It is good to do all this work unattached, but it is very

difficult. And you must remember by all means that the aim of your human life is to attain the Lord, not building hospitals and dispensaries. Suppose the Lord appears before you and tells you to ask for a boon. Will you then ask Him to build for you some hospitals and dispensaries, or will you say to Him: O Bhagavan, grant me somehow pure love at your lotus feet. And may I always see Your presence.' Hospitals, dispensaries and so on, all these are transitory things. **The Lord is the only Reality, all else is unreal.** When He is attained, one realizes that He alone is the doer and that we are non-doers. Why must I then give Him up and perish by increasing so much of work? When He is attained, a number of hospitals and dispensaries will come up if He so wills. So I say: Work is the first chapter of human life, it is not the end of life. Take to spiritual practice and advance. As you practise and advance further, you will in the end know that the Lord is the only Reality and all else is unreal, and that the aim of life is indeed to attain the Lord.

"A woodcutter went to the forest to cut wood. There he happened to meet a brahmachari ^[12]. The brahmachari said to him, 'I say brother, go ahead.' On returning home, the woodcutter began to think why the brahmachari had asked him to go ahead.

"Thus passed away some days. One day while he was sitting, he was reminded of the words of the brahmachari. So he said to himself, 'Let me go ahead today.' As he went deep into the forest he found numberless sandalwood trees there. Full of joy, he brought sandalwood. And by selling it in the market he became very rich.

"In this way some days passed when he was again reminded of the words of the brahmachari, 'Go ahead.' Now, as he went further into the forest he found a mine of silver near the bank of a river. This he could have never dreamt. Now he picked up only silver from the mine and began to sell it. He earned so much money that he became a very wealthy man.

"Some more days passed. One day as he was seated he said to himself, 'The brahmachari did not ask me to go only up to the silver mine. He asked me to go ahead.' This time he crossed the river and saw a gold mine. Said he then to himself, 'Nice indeed! That is why the brahmachari asked me to go ahead.'

"After a few days, he again went further and lo! he found heaps of diamonds and jewels lying there. Now he became as rich as Kuber ^[13].

"So I say, whatever you may be doing if you go ahead you will find something better. If you receive inspiration after reaching a particular stage, don't think that you have come to the end. Yet work is not the end of life. Go ahead, you will be able to work selflessly. But selfless work is very difficult. So pray to Him with a longing heart, 'O Lord, grant me bhakti at your lotus feet and reduce my work. And whatever work you leave for me to do, grant that I may be able to do it selflessly.'

"When you go further, you will find the Lord. You will have His vision and gradually you will have intimate talk with Him."

The conversation now turns on the controversy about the pulpit in the temple

after the demise of Keshab.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Pratap) — I hear that there has been some controversy over the pulpit with you. They who have started this controversy are Hare, Pela and Pancha (men of ordinary calibre)! (All laugh.)

(To the bhaktas) “You see, Pratap, Amrit and some others - they do blow on the conchshell. And the others which you hear do not produce any sound at all.”

Pratap — Sir, so far as the musical sound is concerned, a mango stone also gives sound.

Chapter Seven

Brahmo Samaj and Sri Ramakrishna - instruction to Pratap

Sri Ramakrishna (to Pratap) — Listen, on hearing the lectures of your Brahmo Samaj, one can very well know the bhava of the people there. Once they took me to a Hari Sabha. The preceptor there was a Pundit, Samadhyayi by name. He said, ‘The Lord has no *rasa* (sweetness), we have to make Him *saras* (succulent) with our loving devotion.’ I was flabbergasted on hearing this and was then reminded of a story. Once a boy said that his maternal uncle had a cowshed full of horses at his home. No horse can live in a cowshed, only the cows can. Hearing such absurdity what could one conclude? Just this that there are no horses or anything of the kind there. (All laugh.)

A devotee — Not that there is no horse there, there is not even a cow. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna— Just see that He who is *Rasaswaroop*^[14] was termed by him as *neeras*^[15]! It only shows that he has never experienced what the Lord is.

**‘I am the doer,’ ‘this is my house’ - all this is ignorance.
‘Diving deep’ is the aim of life**

Sri Ramakrishna (to Pratap) — Listen, I tell you that you are well read, intelligent as well as grave and serious. You and Keshab were two brothers like Gaur and Nitai. You have had enough of lecturing, discussions, quarrels, disputes and the rest. Do you still like all these? Gather your whole mind and concentrate it on the Lord - just jump into the Lord.

Pratap — Yes sir, there is no doubt about it. This indeed is the duty. Even so, I should do all this so that his (Keshab's) name may be preserved.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — You say that you are doing all this to

preserve his name. But after sometime even this spirit will not be there. Listen to a story.

“A person had his house on the top of a hill. It was a small thatched house. He had laboured hard to build it. After a few days there was a terrible storm. The thatched house began to shake. The man got very worried how to save the house. Said he, ‘O, Pavana Deva (the god of wind), please don’t break the house, O Father.’ But the god of wind turned a deaf ear to his words. The house began to shake violently. Then an idea came to his mind. He remembered that Hanuman was the son of Pavana Deva. As soon as this thought entered his mind, he cried out, ‘O Father! don’t break this house. It is Hanuman’s house. I beseech you.’ But the house was still shaking. Nobody was listening to him. When he had repeated ‘Hanuman’s house, Hanuman’s house’ so many times and nothing happened, he began to say, ‘Father, it is Lakshman’s house, it is Lakshman’s house.’ This too carried no weight. Then he began to call out, ‘Father, it is Rama’s house, it is Rama’s. I say Father, don’t break it. I beseech you.’ Even now nothing happened. The house began to crumble down. Now the question was to save his own life. So running out of the house the man said, ‘It is devil’s own house.’

(To Pratap) “You don’t have to save Keshab’s name. Take it that it all happened by the Lord’s will. It was there by God’s will and is coming to an end by His will. What can you do? Now your duty is simply to give your whole mind to the Lord, to dive deep into His sea of love.”

Saying so Thakur began to sing a sweet song in his divinely peerless voice.

Song -

Dive deep, dive deep, dive deep, O my mind into the sea of Beauty.
Make a search in the regions lower and lower down under the sea;
You will come by the jewel, the wealth of *prema* (intense love of God).
Within your heart is Vrindavan, the abode of God who is love.
Search and look; search and look; search and look. You will find it.
Then shall burn without ceasing the lamp of divine wisdom.
Who is that Being that does steer the boat on land - on land, on solid ground?
Kabir says, ‘Listen, listen, listen! Meditate on the hallowed feet of the Guru (Divine preceptor).’

(To Pratap) “Did you hear the song? Enough of lectures, quarrels and so on. Now dive deep. In diving into this sea there is no danger to life. It is the sea of immortality. Don’t think that it will turn your head and don’t also think that a person becomes mad by calling long on the Lord. I said this to Narendra.”

Pratap — Who is Narendra?

Sri Ramakrishna — He is a young man. I said to Narendra, ‘Look here, the Lord is the sea of *rasa* (nectar; liquid sweet). Don’t you want to dive into this sea? Well, just imagine there is a bowl of nectar. And you are a fly. Where will you sit to drink the nectar?’ Narendra said, ‘I will sit on the edge of the bowl and sip by projecting my mouth towards it.’ I asked,

‘Why? Why sit on the edge?’ He said, ‘If I go further, I shall be drowned and lose my life.’ I then said, ‘My boy, there is no such danger in the sea of Sachchidananda. It is the sea of *amrita* (immortality). By diving into this sea nobody dies. On the other hand, **one becomes immortal**. By going mad after the Lord one does not lose one’s head.’

(To the bhaktas) “I and mine this is what is called ignorance. Rasmani built the Kali Temple - everybody says this. Nobody says that the Lord has built it. So and so founded the Brahmo Samaj - everybody says so. Nobody says that it came into being only by the will of the Lord. I am the doer, this is called ignorance. O Lord, **You are the doer, I am the non-doer; You are the machine man, I am the machine, this is called jnana**. O Lord! Nothing is mine. This temple is not mine, the Kali Temple is not mine, the Samaj is not mine - these are all Yours. Wife, son, family - none of these is mine. They are all Yours, this is jnana.

“People say: ‘This is mine, it belongs to me. Loving all such things is called **maya** ^[16]. When you love all, that is **daya** ^[17]. I love only the members of the Brahmo Samaj, or I love only my family - this is **maya**. Only to love your compatriots is **maya**. To love people of all countries, to love followers of all religions, this results from kindness and bhakti.

“Maya binds man. It takes one away from Bhagavan. Kindness makes one attain the Lord. Sukadeva and Narada both had kindness.”

Chapter Eight

Instructions to Pratap - Brahmo Samaj and ‘woman and gold’

Pratap — Sir, those who come to you are they progressing gradually?

Sri Ramakrishna — I say, where is the harm in leading the family life? Even so, one must live in family like a maidservant.

Spiritual practice in the family

“The maidservant while talking of her master’s house says, ‘Our house.’ But perhaps she has her own home in some village. On seeing her master’s house, she says, ‘Our house.’ But in her mind she knows that this house is not her’s and that her own home is in the village. Again she rears her master’s son and says, ‘My Hari has become very naughty, my Hari doesn’t like to eat sweetmeats.’ Though she says, ‘My Hari,’ but she knows that Hari is not her’s and that he is her master’s son.

“Therefore, I ask those who come here, ‘Why do you not live a family life? There is no harm in it. Only you must **keep your mind in the Lord when you live in family**. Know it that the house or the family, nothing is mine. It is all God’s. My home is with the Lord.’ And I say, ‘Always pray earnestly for bhakti at His lotus feet.’ ”

Now the conversation again turns to the foreign countries. A devotee says,
”Sir, nowadays the learned men of the West don’t accept even the existence of the Lord.”

Pratap — One may be saying anything but none of them, as it seems to

me, is an atheist at heart. Many have admitted that there is some Supreme Power behind the affairs of the world.

Sri Ramakrishna — This is enough if they believe in Power. How are they atheist then?

Pratap — Besides, the western scholars also believe in a moral government (which rewards good actions and punishes evil ones).

After a long conversation Pratap rises to take his leave.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Pratap) — What more can I tell you! I only say, don't live amidst quarrels and controversies.

“And one thing more - it is ‘woman and gold’ which take a man away from the Lord. They don't let him go to Him. You see that everybody praises his wife. (All laugh.) Whether she is good or not, if you ask what kind of a wife he has, he will immediately say, ‘Sir, she is good indeed.’”

Pratap — May I now leave?

Pratap leaves. Thakur's nectarine words about renunciation of ‘woman and gold’ have not yet completed. The leaves of the trees in Surendra's garden are shaking and murmuring by the blow of the southern breeze. All these words get mixed up with their sound. They strike the hearts of the bhaktas just once and in the end lose themselves in the infinite space.

But have these words not resounded in Pratap's heart?

After sometime Manilal Mullick says to Thakur, “Sir, you must now depart for Dakshineswar. Keshab Sen's mother and other ladies of the house are going there to have your darshan. Not finding you there, they may go back disappointed.”

Many months ago Keshab departed from this mortal world. So his venerable mother, wife and other ladies of his household will visit Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani Mullick) — Wait a little, brother. I haven't had my nap and rest. Besides, I cannot do anything in a hurry. If those persons have gone there, what can I do about it? There they will stroll in the garden, and derive great enjoyment from it.

After a little rest Thakur is ready to leave for Dakshineswar. Before leaving he prays for the welfare of Surendra - he visits all the rooms one by one repeating sweetly the name of God. He does not want to leave anything unfinished. So he says as he stands, “I did not take *luchis* (fried bread) then. Bring me some now.”

He takes a small piece of *luchi*, eats it and says, “This has a lot of significance. On remembering that I had not eaten the *luchi*, I will again have the desire of coming here.”

Mani Mullick — It would have been nice since we too could have come with you.

All the devotees laugh.

[1] Now a Yogodyan has been formed in Rama's garden at Kankurgacchi

- [2] Community singing of hymns
- [3] Sport of Lord Krishna in Mathura
- [4] The milkmaid friend of Vraja
- [5] An appellation of Krishna
- [6] Father of Lord Rama
- [7] One *sika* equals four annas; sixteen annas make one rupee.
- [8] The Lord is the only Reality.
- [9] Non-attachment to the world.
- [10] The three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas.
- [11] Work, activity
- [12] A brahmachari is a holy man practising control over the mind and preparing for the next steps of life - that of the householder, or the ascetic.
- [13] The Hindu god of wealth.
- [14] Fountain of love and bliss
- [15] Totally devoid of sweetness, love, joy, bliss and other attributes.
- [16] Self-love
- [17] Charity; kindness

Section XI

Sri Ramakrishna's Meeting with the Pundit

Chapter One Visit to Ishan's House

[1]

Today is the Ratha Yatra . Wednesday, 25 June, 1884 – the second day of the bright fortnight of Ashadha. Sri Ramakrishna has arrived at Ishan's house in Calcutta in the morning at his invitation. Ishan has his own house in Thanthania. On reaching there Thakur came to know that Pundit Shashadhar was living close by in the College Street in the house of Chatterji. He is very keen to meet the Pundit. So, it is decided that he would go to him in the evening.

It is about ten in the morning. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting with the bhaktas in the ground floor parlour of Ishan. There are some brahmins of Bhattapada known to Ishan. One of them is a Bhagavata pundit. Hazra and some two bhaktas have come there with Thakur. Ishan's sons like Shresh are also there. There is also a bhakta who worships Shakti. He has applied a vermilion mark on his forehead. Thakur is a man of joy. On seeing the vermilion mark he laughs and says, "He is a branded fellow."

After a while Narendra and M. come there from their Calcutta house. Offering their pranam to Thakur they sit beside him. Thakur had told M., "I shall be going to Ishan's house on such and such date. You also come there and bring Narendra with you."

Thakur says to M., "The other day I wanted to go to your house; where do you live?"

M. — Sir, now in Telepada in Shyampukur, near the school.

Sri Ramakrishna — Didn't you go to the school today?

M. — Sir, today the school is closed for the Ratha.

After the demise of Narendra's father there are great problems in his house. He is the eldest son of his father –

he has small brothers and sisters. His father was a pleader. He did not save anything. Narendra is in search of a job for meeting the expenses of the family. Thakur has asked Ishan and some other bhaktas to find a job for Narendra. Ishan was a superintendent in the office of the Comptroller General. After hearing the problems of Narendra's house Thakur is always in worry.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — I have spoken to Ishan about you. Ishan was there (in Kali Temple of Dakshineswar) one day, I spoke to him then. He knows many people.

Thakur is in Ishan's house at his invitation. Ishan has also invited many of his friends on this occasion. Songs will be sung. Arrangements have been made for pakhavaja [2], [3] banya [4], tabla and tanapura . A member of the family brings very fine flour in a utensil for the pakhavaja. It is about eleven o'clock. Ishan wants Narendra to sing.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — Just fine flour! It appears the meals will take quite some time.

Ishan — No sir, it will not take that long.

Some of the bhaktas laugh. The Bhagavata Pundit also laughs as he recites a couplet, not written in any book . After reciting the couplet, the Pundit explains it –

“Kavya (poetry) pleases more than philosophy, i.e. when poetry is recited or heard, then Vedanta, Sankhya¹, Nyaya², Patanjali³ – all these philosophies look dry. More than poetry music attracts – even a stonehearted man melts at music. Though the music is so much attractive, yet if a beautiful woman passes before you the poetry is also left behind. Even the song loses its flavour. One's whole mind goes towards that woman. However, when there is a craving for food, when one is hungry, one needs neither poetry nor song nor woman. Wonderful is the thought of food!”

Sri Ramakrishna — He is witty indeed.

The pakhavaja having been tuned, Narendra begins to sing.

As he begins to sing the song, Thakur goes upstairs to rest in the drawing room. M. and Shresh accompany him. The drawing room overlooks the road. Kshetra Nath Chatterji, the father-in-law of Ishan, built it.

M. introduced Shresh. He said, “He is a learned man, very serene in temperament. He has been my classmate since childhood. He is a pleader.”

Sri Ramakrishna — For such a person to be a pleader!

M. — He has taken up this profession by mistake.

Sri Ramakrishna — I have seen pleader Ganesh. He at times goes (to Dakshineswar Kali temple) with some babus. Panna also goes there. He is not handsome but he sings well. He has great regard for me, a simple hearted man he is!

(To Shresh) “Have you known the essence?”

Shresh — The Lord exists and He alone is doing all. Even so, what we conceive of His attributes is not right. What can a man conceive of Him; He is infinite!

Sri Ramakrishna — How many trees there are in the garden and how many branches a tree has – what is the use of such calculations? You have come to the garden to eat mangoes, eat them and go. It is only for attaining love and devotion for Him that you have taken birth as a human being. Eat mangoes and go away.

“You have come to take wine. What use is it for you to know how many maunds of wine is there in the wine shop? Just a tumblerful of it is enough for you.

“What need is there for you to know His infinite affairs!

“If you look for His attributes even for millions of years, you will not be able to know even a fraction thereof.”

Thakur is silent for a while. He resumes again.
A brahmin from Bhattapada is also there.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — There is nothing in the household life. His (Ishan’s) household life is still better.

Had that not been so and if the boys had been womanizers, drug-addicts, drunkards, disobedient, there would have been no end to troubles. Everybody's mind is Godward, the household is permeated with *vidya* (spiritual knowledge); it is rarely to be seen. I have seen only a couple of such homes, otherwise there are only quarrels, wrangles, violence and then disease, sorrow and poverty. Seeing so I said, 'Mother, please give a turn just now.' Just see, what problems Narendra is facing! His father has died. The members of his family don't have food to eat. Job is so hard to be found. He is trying hard, but does not find any. Just see, how he is wandering about!

"M., earlier you used to go (to Dakshineswar) so often, now why have your visits become fewer? It appears, you have got too much attached to your family. It that so?

"This is not anybody's fault. All around there is 'woman and gold.' That is why I pray, 'Mother, if I shall ever have to take a human body, don't make a householder of me.'"

Brahmin of Bhattapada — But sir, the household life has been praised in the holy books.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, but it is very difficult.

Thakur changes the subject.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Have I done something wrong? They are singing – Narendra is singing –and we have all come away.

Chapter Two

Bhakti Yoga is for the age of Kali, and not Karma Yoga

At about 4 o'clock, Thakur gets into the carriage. He is very delicate, so one has to look after his body with great care. It is not at all convenient for him to walk on the road – without a carriage he cannot walk even a short distance. When he got into the carriage, he was absorbed in bhava samadhi. It is drizzling. It is rainy season, sky overcast and the road slushy. The bhaktas walk on foot behind the

carriage. It being the day of the Car Festival, they find children blowing their pipes of palm leaves.

The carriage stops at the entrance door. Thakur is warmly received by the host and his people.

There is a staircase leading upstairs taking one to the drawing room. As he goes up, Sri Ramakrishna sees Shashadhar coming to welcome him. The pundit appears to be middle-aged. His complexion is bright and fair, and he has a rosary of *rudraksha* beads around his neck. Very humbly he salutes Thakur with great reverence and leads him to the drawing room. Bhaktas follow him and take their seats.

Everybody is keen to sit near him and drink the nectar of the words that fall from his hallowed lips. Narendra, Rakhal, Rama, M. and many other bhaktas are present there. Hazra has also come with Sri Ramakrishna from the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar.

As he was looking at the Pundit, Thakur goes into bhava (semi-conscious state). After a while, in the same state, he smiles as he looks at the Pundit and says, "Very well, very well!" and adds, "well, what kind of lectures do you deliver?"

Shashadhar — Sir, I try to explain the scriptures.

Sri Ramakrishna — For the age of Kali it is Naradiya

[5]

bhakti that is enjoined. Where is the time to perform all those rituals mentioned in the scriptures? These days *dashamul pachan* (decoction of ten medicinal roots) does not help cure the fever. Before this decoction begins to show effect, the patient runs the risk of being carried off. Fever mixture is the medicine for the present age. If you ask them to perform the rituals, give them the fish minus its head and tail. I tell people that they don't

[6]

have to perform the sandhya and such other holy acts;

[7]

recitation of Gayatri is enough. If at all you have to talk of rituals, you may do so to a few like Ishan.

Lecture to worldly men

"You may lecture a thousand times, you will not be able to transform the worldly men. Can one drive a nail in a wall made of stone? It is the nail that will bend, but the

wall will remain as it is. What can a blow of sword do to

[8]

a crocodile? The *kamandala* of a sadhu goes round all the four *dhamas* (places of pilgrimage in India), yet it remains bitter as ever. Your lectures to the worldly men will be of no avail. You will know this gradually. The calf does not stand all at once. It falls at times and again stands on its legs. That is how it learns to stand and walk.”

[9]

***Nava-anuraga* and reasoning – karma falls off on
God-realization – yoga and samadhi**

“You cannot recognize who is a bhakta and who is a worldly person. This is not your fault. During a storm one cannot distinguish between a tamarind tree and a mango tree in the beginning.

“Before God realization one cannot suddenly give up karma. How long has one to perform sandhya and such other holy acts? So long as at God’s name tears don’t flow and hair don’t stand on their ends. If tears fill the eyes even once on uttering ‘Om Rama,’ but once know it for certain that your karmas are over – you will not have to perform sandhya and such other rituals any more.

“The blossom falls off as soon as the fruit appears. Karma is the blossom and bhakti is the fruit. The daughter-in-law of the house cannot work much when she is pregnant; the mother-in-law gradually frees her from work. During the tenth month she almost doesn’t let her work. When the infant is born, the mother only attends to it – she doesn’t have to attend to any other work. The sandhya merges into Gayatri and then Gayatri in Om. Om then gets merged into samadhi – as the sound of the bell tang...tom. Perceiving the sound (as proceeding from the Absolute) the yogi gets lost into Para Brahman. Sandhya and such karmas get lost in samadhi. It is in this way that the karma of the jnanis goes off.”

Chapter Three

Mere learning is of no use – sadhana and discrimination-dispassion

While talking of samadhi Sri Ramakrishna goes into bhava. A divine light begins to emerge from his moon-like face. Now he has no external consciousness. Not a word comes from his mouth, eyes still. Surely, he is having the darshan (vision) of the Lord of the Universe. After a long time, returning to his natural state, he says like a child, “I shall take some water.” Whenever he asked for water after samadhi, the bhaktas would know that he was gradually returning to sense-consciousness.

Thakur says in bhava, “Mother, the other day you showed me Ishwara Vidyasagar. Thereafter I had said, ‘Mother, I want to see an another Pundit.’ That is why You have brought me here.”

Then casting a glance on Shashadhar, he says, “Son, earn a little more of power. Practise sadhan and bhajan for some time more. Wishing for a bunch of fruit without climbing a tree! And then you are doing all this for the good of humanity.”

Saying so, Thakur salutes Shashadhar by bowing his head.

And he adds, “When I heard about you for the first time, I asked whether this pundit is just a learned man, or he also has *viveka* (discrimination) and *vairagya* (non-attachment).”

Without receiving the commandment one cannot become acharya (religious teacher)

“A pundit (man of learning) without discrimination is no pundit.

“If one has received the commandment, it is not wrong to teach mankind. When a person teaches after getting the commandment, nobody can defeat him.

“Even if a single ray comes from the goddess of speech (Saraswati), one attains such strength that even the most learned become like earthworms before him.

“When one lights a lamp, swarms of moths come to it by themselves – they don’t have to be called. Similarly, one who has received the commandment doesn’t have to invite people by announcing that a lecture will be delivered at such and such time – no news has to be

given. He has such attraction that people themselves rally round him. Then princes and babus come there in groups. And they ask again and again, 'What will you accept? I have brought mangoes, sandesh (a Bengali sweet), money, shawl etc. What will you accept?' I tell all those people, 'Keep them away. I don't like all this. I don't want any of these.'

"Does the magnet invite the iron: 'Come close to me?' It doesn't have to say, 'Come' – the iron itself runs to the magnet due to the attraction.

"Such a man may not be a pundit (scholar). For that reason don't think that he lacks knowledge. Can you acquire knowledge just by reading books? The knowledge of a person who has received commandment is inexhaustible. This knowledge flows from God – it is never ending.

"In that part of the country (Kamarpukur, where Sri Ramakrishna was born and brought up), at the time of weighing paddy, one person weighs the paddy while the other keeps on pushing heaps after heaps towards him. Similarly, he who has received the commandment can go on preaching as much as he likes. The Mother keeps on pushing heaps of knowledge towards me from behind. This knowledge never comes to an end. If the Mother but once casts a glance, does there remain any scarcity of knowledge then? That is why, I ask whether you have received the commandment or not."

Hazra — Yes, surely he has received the commandment. Isn't that so, Sir?

The Pundit — No, I haven't received such a commandment.

The Host — He may not have received the commandment but he lectures with a sense of duty.

Sri Ramakrishna — What will the lectures achieve if the preacher has not received the commandment?

"A person (a Brahmo) said while lecturing, 'Brethren, how much liquor I used to take! And I used to do this, I

used to do that.’ Hearing this people began to shout: ‘What is this rascal saying?’ ‘I used to take liquor,’ as he said this there was rather all confusion in the audience. So a lecture does not benefit if the speaker is not a good person.

“A sub-judge from Barishal said, ‘Sir, you begin to preach, and then I shall also get ready.’ I said: Brother, listen to a story. In the countryside (Kamarpukur) there is a pond known as Haldarpukur. A number of persons used to defecate on its bank. In the morning people coming to this pond would utter abuses in plenty. But such abusive language proved to be of no avail. The very next day they would see in the morning the bank littered with faeces again. After some days the Company (Municipality) sent a peon who stuck a notice near the pond. What a wonder! That defecation in the banks stopped immediately.

“So I say, a lecture by an unworthy person is of no use. **When you have the badge of authority, then alone people listen to you. Unless you receive God’s commandment, you cannot teach humanity.** He who has to preach must have sufficient spiritual powers. In Calcutta there are so many Hanuman Puris (wrestling clubs) – you will have to wrestle with them. These people (who are seated all around in congregation) are mere animals for sacrifice!

“**Chaitanya Deva is an avatara.** What is left of the work that even he did? Just tell me! And those who have not received the commandment – what good their lecture would do?”

How does one receive commandment?

Sri Ramakrishna — So I say, get absorbed in God’s lotus feet.

Saying so Thakur, intoxicated with the wine of divine love, begins to sing –

Dive deep, dive deep, dive deep, O my mind into the sea of beauty.

Make a search in the regions lower, lower down under the sea;

You will get the jewel, the wealth of *prema* (intense love for God).

“By drowning into this sea one does not die. It is an ocean of immortality.”

Instruction to Narendra – God is an ocean of immortality

“I said to Narendra, ‘God is an ocean of nectar. Tell me if you will dive into this sea or not? Well, imagine that there is a bowl full of sugar syrup and you are a fly. Where will you perch yourself and drink the syrup?’ Narendra said, ‘I’ll sit on the edge of the bowl, extend my mouth and sip from there; for if I go farther, I’ll get drowned.’ Then I said, ‘My son, this is the ocean of Sachchidananda. There is no fear of death in it. It is the ocean of immortality.’ Only the *ajnanis* say that one should not have excess of the nectar of God’s love and *prema*. Is there a limit to the love for God? So I say to you: Immerse yourself in the sea of Sachchidananda.

“Where is the worry when you have realized God? Then you will not only receive the commandment but also teach mankind.”

Chapter Four

Numberless paths for God-realization – Bhakti Yoga indeed is the law for this age

Sri Ramakrishna — Look here, there are numberless paths to reach the ocean of immortality. Whichever path you take, it is done if you even jump into this ocean. Imagine there is a reservoir of nectar. If somehow a small drop of it falls in to your mouth, you become immortal. Whether you yourself jump into it, or go inside it slowly by a staircase and take a drop of it, or you are pushed into it the result will be the same. Taste just a drop of this nectar and you become immortal.

“There are numberless paths: The path of *jnana* (knowledge), of *karma* (action) and of *bhakti* (devotion). You may take any path. You attain God when you become sincere for Him.

“There are three kinds of yogas: *Jnana* Yoga, *Karma*

Yoga and Bhakti Yoga:

“**Jnana Yoga.** The jnani wants to know Brahman (the Absolute). He says to himself, ‘Not this, not this.’ He reasons, ‘Only Brahman is real and the world unreal.’ He meditates on what is real and what is unreal. When his reasoning stops, he goes into samadhi and he gains the knowledge of the Absolute.

“**Karma Yoga.** To keep the mind in God by doing work – this is what you teach. The practice of pranayam (control of breath), dhyana, *dharana* (meditation and concentration) and so forth without attachment constitute Karma Yoga. **If the householders attend to their household duties with devotion for Him and surrender the result of their work to Him in an unattached way, it is also Karma Yoga.** To perform puja, japa and such other karmas and surrendering their result to God is also Karma Yoga. God-realization alone is the aim of Karma Yoga.

“**Bhakti Yoga.** It is fixing the mind in God by repeating His name and singing His glories. Bhakti Yoga is the easy path for the age of Kali. Bhakti Yoga indeed is the law for the present age.

“**Karma Yoga is very difficult.** In the first place, I told you earlier, too, you do not have time. Where is the time for performing the various karmas enjoined upon you in the holy books? Life is short in Kaliyuga. And then it is indeed very difficult to work without expectation of its reward and to work in an unattached manner. One cannot be truly unattached without having realized God. Attachment comes from nowhere, one does not even come to know of it.

“**Jnana Yoga is also very difficult** in this age. In the first place, human life is dependent on food. Secondly, the life is short. Thirdly, it is not possible to rid oneself of body consciousness. Moreover, unless one is free from body-consciousness jnana (spiritual knowledge) is absolutely impossible. The jnani says, ‘I am the same Brahman; I am not this body, I am beyond hunger, thirst, disease, grief, birth, death, pleasure, pain etc.’ If you are aware of disease, grief, pleasure, pain, etc. then how are you a jnani (man of knowledge)? Though your

hand is being scratched and torn by thorns, you are bleeding profusely, it is so very painful, yet you say – ‘No, my hand is not being scratched and torn. Nothing has happened to me.’

Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga – not the laws for this age

“That is why, for this age it is Bhakti Yoga. Through it one can approach God more easily than by any other path. One can reach God by way of Jnana Yoga or Karma Yoga and other paths, but all these are extremely difficult.

“Bhakti Yoga is the law for this age. This does not mean that a bhakta reaches at one place, while the jnani or the man of karma reaches elsewhere. It means that those who want Brahmajnana (knowledge of the Absolute), even if they adopt and tread the path of bhakti will reach there. By remembering the *Bhaktavatsala* (the gracious loving Lord of the bhakta), He can Himself grant the knowledge of the Absolute.”

Does a bhakta attain Brahmajnana? How does he perform karma and prayer?

“The bhakta wants to see God with form. He wants to converse with Him. Generally, he does not want the knowledge of the Absolute. Even so, God’s will is the law – if He wills, He can bestow on the bhakta all spiritual wealth. He gives not only bhakti but also jnana. If one can go and stay in Calcutta, one can also see the Fort Maidan, Society (Asiatic Society’s Museum), everything indeed.

“Now the question is how to reach Calcutta.

“If you reach the Mother of the Universe, you will get bhakti as well as jnana. When you are in Bhava Samadhi (a kind of trance), you see God with form; when you are in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, you see Akhanda Sachchidananda (the Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute). Then your I-ness, name and form – all disappear.

“The devotee says, ‘Mother, I am afraid of *sakama karma* (work with motive). In such a work there is

desire. This karma will yield some fruit. Besides, it is very difficult to work with detachment. By doing *sakama karma* I shall forget You. Therefore, there is no need for such a work. Until I attain You, may my works decrease. Whatever little I have to do, I may do without attachment and along with it I may gain great bhakti. And until I attain You, may my mind not engage itself in any new work. And then, when You command me I shall do Your work, otherwise not.’ ”

Chapter Five

Pilgrimage and Sri Ramakrishna – Three classes of acharyas (religious teachers)

The Pundit — Sir, how far did you go on your pilgrimage?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Yes, I did see some places. Hazra went farther and higher – he went to Rishikesh. (All laugh.) I didn’t go that far, nor so high. The kite and the vulture soar very high but their looks remain fixed on charnel pits (where carcasses of dead animals are thrown). (All laugh.). What do I mean by charnel pits, do you know? It is ‘woman and gold’.

“If you can cultivate bhakti sitting here, where is the need for going on pilgrimage? When I went to Kashi I saw that the trees were the same, the tamarind leaves too were the same.

“If you do not develop bhakti in places of pilgrimage, your visit to those places has not been of any use. **Bhakti alone is the essence** – the only thing needful. What do I mean by the kite and the vulture, do you know? So many people come here. They talk big and say – we have performed much of the karmas (rituals) which are enjoined by the holy books. But their mind remains attached to the world. They are busy with money, name and honour, bodily pleasures and so on.”

The Pundit — Yes, Sir. Going on pilgrimage is like searching for ordinary jewels throwing away

Kaustubhmani (jewel worn by god Vishnu).

Sri Ramakrishna — And you must also know that you may preach a thousand things they will be of no use unless it is the right hour. While going to bed the child says to his mother, ‘Mother, please wake me up when I have to answer the call of nature.’ The mother replies, ‘Child, its pressure will itself wake you up. You do not have to worry for that.’ (Laughter.)

“Similarly, longing for God comes on its own time.”

Preach only to the competent – Is God merciful?

“There are three classes of physicians.

“One class of physicians feel the pulse of the patient, prescribe medicine for him and leave the patient saying: ‘Take this medicine.’ Such physicians are of the lowest class.

“Similarly, some religious teachers give instructions but they don’t see whether these have done some good to the taught or not. They don’t care for that.

“The other class of physicians arrange for the medicine and ask the patient to take it. If the patient does not want to take it, they make him understand in so many ways. They are physicians of mediocre class. Likewise, there are mediocre class religious teachers. They preach and also explain people in many ways so that they follow the advice.

“And then there is the highest class of doctors. If their gentle persuasion fails to make the patient understand, they even use force. If need be, they put their knees on the chest of the patient and force the medicine down his throat. The same way, there is the highest class of religious teachers. They also use force to take their disciples on the way to God.”

The Pundit — Sir, even with religious teachers of the highest class how do you say that one does not gain knowledge till its right hour?

Sri Ramakrishna — That’s right. But just think, if the

medicine does not reach the stomach and is vomited out what can the physician do? Then even the doctor of the highest class is helpless.

“You should instruct only after judging the listener. You people do not instruct having examined the receptacle. When a boy comes to me, I ask him about his family members. Suppose his father is no more and he has left some debts, how can he give his mind to God? Do you hear what I am saying, brother?”

The Pundit — Yes sir, I am listening to everything.

Sri Ramakrishna — Once a number of Sikh soldiers came to the temple (at Dakshineswar). I met them in front of the Mother Kali’s shrine. One of them said, ‘God is very kind.’ I said, ‘Are you sure? How do you know?’ They said, ‘Why Maharaj, God gives us food. He cares so much for us.’ I said, ‘What is there to wonder at? God is the father of all. If the father does not look after his son, who else will? Will people of the locality do so?’

Narendra — So, should not the Lord be called merciful?

Sri Ramakrishna — Am I stopping you from calling Him merciful? **What I mean is that God is our own person. He is not a stranger.**

The Pundit — Precious words!

Sri Ramakrishna — I was listening to your song but I did not enjoy it. So I rose up and left. I said to myself, ‘Your condition is that of a person flattering (so that the work may be done).’ I found your song tasteless.

Narendra felt ashamed and his face slightly turned red. He remained silent.

Chapter Six

Departure

Thakur asks for some water to drink. A glass of water was lying close to him. He cannot drink that water. So he asks for another glass of water. It was later heard that some

very sensuous person had touched this water.

The Pundit (to Hazra) — You live with him night and day. You are in supreme joy.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is a great day for me today. I have seen the moon of the second (lunar day). (All laugh.) Why have I said the moon of the second (lunar day), do you know? Sita said to Ravana, ‘Ravana, you are the full moon and my Ramachandra is the moon of the second (lunar day).’ Ravana could not catch the sense, so he was very happy. Sita meant to say that Ravana had reached his maximum glory and now he would go down everyday like the full moon. Ramachandra being the moon of the second (lunar day), he would shine brighter and brighter day by day!

Thakur rises. The Pundit pays his obeisance reverently along with his friends and companions. Thakur and his disciples say goodbye.

Chapter Seven

Return to Ishan’s house

Thakur returns to Ishan’s house along with the bhaktas. It is not yet dusk. They come and sit in Ishan’s ground floor parlour. Some of the bhaktas are there. The Bhagavata Pundit, Ishan and Ishan’s sons are also present.

Sri Ramakrishna — I said to Shashadhar, ‘You want the cluster of fruit even before climbing the tree! Practise a little more of sadhan (devotional exercises) and bhajan (devotional hymns). Then you may preach others.’

Ishan — Everybody thinks that he instructs. The glowworm thinks that it is illuminating the world. Somebody said to it, ‘O, glowworm! What light can you give? O! you are only making darkness all the more evident.’

Sri Ramakrishna (smiles a little) — But he is not just a pundit (scholar). He also has some *viveka*

(discrimination) and *vairagya* (non-attachment).

Bhagavata Pundit of Bhattapada is still seated there. He is about seventy or seventy five years old. He is gazing at Thakur.

The Bhagavata Pundit (to Sri Ramakrishna) — **You are a mahatma (great soul).**

Sri Ramakrishna — You can say so about Narada, Prahlada or Sukadeva. I am like your child.

“But you can say so from another point of view. It is said that the bhakta is greater than Bhagavan because the bhakta carries Bhagavan in his heart. (Everybody is in joy.) ‘The bhakta takes Me smaller and himself great.’ Yashoda came to tie Krishna (with a rope). She believed that if she did not look after Krishna then who else would. Sometimes the Bhagavan is the magnet and the bhakta a needle. By His power of attraction, Bhagavan pulls the bhakta. But sometimes the bhakta becomes the magnet and Bhagavan the needle. The bhakta has so much attraction that enchanted by his ecstatic love Bhagavan Himself comes to him.”

Thakur will return to Dakshineswar. He goes and stands in the verandah to the south of the ground floor parlour. Ishan and the other bhaktas are also standing. Thakur is imparting so many instructions to Ishan during the conversation.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — The bhakta who lives in the household and calls upon God is a brave bhakta. Bhagavan says: ‘He who has come out of his family will naturally call upon Me, will serve Me. There is no bravery in it. If he does not call upon Me, others will fie upon him! And the man who while living in the household calls upon Me, looks after Me having pushed a twenty maund stone away, he is really blessed! He is brave, a hero indeed!’

Bhagavata Pundit — The holy books say the same. There is the story of Dharma Vyadha and the ‘chaste wife’. An ascetic thought that having burnt a crow and a crane to ashes, he had attained a very high state. He

went to the house of a chaste wife. She had so much bhakti for her husband that she served her husband day and night. When the husband would come home, she would give him water to wash his feet, she would even dry his feet with her hair. The ascetic had come as a guest. When he found that there was delay in giving him holy alms, he shouted, 'You will not come to any good.' The chaste woman at once replied from a distance, 'It is not like burning a crow or a crane to ashes. Wait a while, holy man. Let me finish my service to my husband. I shall then come and worship you.'

"He (the same ascetic) went to Dharma Vyadha (a butcher who practised religion) to attain Brahmajnana (the knowledge of the Absolute). The butcher used to sell meat, but would render service to his parents night and day taking them to be God in human body. The ascetic who had gone to him to receive Brahmajnana was wonderstruck on seeing him. Thought he, 'This butcher sells meat and is a worldly man. What knowledge of Brahman can he impart to me?' But the butcher was a perfect jnani (knower of the Absolute)."

Thakur enters into the cab. He stands at the entrance door of the nearby house (Ishan's father-in-law's house). Ishan and the bhaktas stand close to him to help him board the cab. Thakur again imparts instructions to Ishan during the conversation.

"Live in the world like an ant. You have *Nitya* (the Absolute; the Eternal) and the *anitya* (transitory) mixed up in this world. There is sand mixed with sugar. Be an ant and take sugar alone.

"Water and milk are mixed together, so are the spiritual joy and the worldly pleasures. Like a swan, you must take only the milk and leave the water.

"And be like the water bird. When the water touches its body, it flutters its wings and rids the water away. And become like the mud fish. It lives in the mud but look at its body, it is unsoiled and shining bright.

"In *gol-mal* (confusion) there is also *mal* (something useful). Give up *gol* and take up *mal*."

Thakur goes to Dakshineswar by the cab.

[1]

Car Festival

[2]

Indian tom-tom

[3]

Semi-circular instrument played along with tabla

[4]

Stringed musical instrument

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*Kavyam darshanam hanti, kavyen giten hanyate,
Gitancha istrivilasen, sarve hanti bubhukshuta.*

Upon obtaining this couplet it was later included in the footnote.

¹ Rationalism ² Logic ³ Compiled by philosopher Patanjali

[5]

Communion with God by love, devotion and self-surrender, as practised by Rishi Narada

[6]

Divine service three times a day

[7]

A short text from the Vedas, the repetition of which leads to meditation on God

[8]

Bowl made of gourd shell

[9]

The first love

Section XII

Another Visit to Sinti Brahmo

Section XIII

With Bhaktas in Dakshineswar

Chapter One

In Dakshineswar with Manmohan, Mahima and other bhaktas

Come on brother! Let us go again for his darshan. You will see the great man, the child who knows none but the Mother and who has come in a human body for us. He will tell how to solve the difficult problems of life. He will tell to the sannyasi, he will tell to the householder. His door is open. He is awaiting us in the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar. Come on, let us go to see him.

He is a man of infinite qualities, with happy looks, whose words bring tears to the eyes.

Let us go brother, let us realize the aim of human life by meeting Sri Ramakrishna who has a joyous face, who is intoxicated night and day with the love of the Lord, who is so sweet to look at and who is the ocean of motiveless grace.

It is Sunday, 26 October 1884 today, Hemant season (early winter). It is the 7th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik, time midday. The devotees are assembled in the same aforesaid room of Thakur. It has a semi-circular verandah to its west. The garden path runs north-south to the west of the verandah. There is a flower garden of Mother Kali to the west of the path. Next to it is the embankment, followed by the holy river Ganga flowing to the south.

A number of bhaktas are present. It is a mart of joy. Sri Ramakrishna is full of bliss and his love of God is reflected in the mirror of the faces of the devotees. What a wonder! This joy is not only in the mirror of the devotees' faces, it is also reflected outside in the garden among the leaves of the trees, amidst various kinds of flowers, on the vast bosom of the Ganga, on the blue sky lit up by the sun rays, in the cool breeze carrying the drops of Ganga water flowing from the feet of Murari (Sri Krishna). What a wonder! Verily, verily even the particles of dust in the garden are filled with sweetness! I wish I could roll about on the dust alone secretly or along with the bhaktas! I wish I could stand aside in this garden the whole day and keep gazing at the sweetly flowing waters of the Ganga. I wish I could embrace and converse with the creepers, bushes, shrubs and bright and beautiful trees decorated with leaves and flowers taking them as my own. Doesn't Thakur Sri Ramakrishna stroll on this dust? Doesn't he walk amidst these trees, creepers and shrubs day and night? I wish I could gaze constantly at this illuminated cup of the sky! Don't I see that the earth and the heaven are all swimming in the joy of love?

How is it that the priest, the doorkeeper and the attendants of the shrine all seem to be my very own? How is it that this place is looking as sweet as the native place seen after a long time? The sky, the Ganga, the temple of the deity, the garden path, the trees, the creepers, the bushes and shrubs, the attendants, the devotees seated there - it seems all are made of the same material. The material of which Sri Ramakrishna is made, it seems they will also be of the same material. It is like a garden of wax wherein the trees, the plants, the fruits, the leaves are all made of wax. The garden path, the gardener, the residents of the garden, the residential quarters in the garden - all are made of wax. Everything of this place has been molded with joy!

Manmohan, Mahimacharan and M. are already there. Then gradually enter Ishan, Hriday and Hazra. There are many other devotees too besides them. Balaram and Rakhal are in holy Vrindavan. Some new devotees make visits these days. Narayana, Paltu, the Younger Narendra, Tejachandra, Vinod, Haripada and Baburam come and stay here sometimes. Rama, Suresh, Kedar, Devendra and other bhaktas also frequent this place - some after a week, some after two weeks. Latu stays here permanently. Yogen has his house nearby. He comes almost everyday. Sometimes comes Narendra and then it turns into a mart of joy. Narendra sings the glory and the name of God in his rare sweet voice, rare even for gods, sending

Thakur immediately into various emotional moods and samadhi. It becomes as if a special festival. Thakur is very keen that some of the boys should stay with him night and day, for they are pure souls not bound by the worldly ties of marriage and worldly work. He asks Baburam (later Swami Premananda) to stay on and he does stay at times. Adhar Sen also comes frequently.

The devotees are seated in the room while Thakur Sri Ramakrishna stands there in a reflective mood like a child. The devotees glance at him.

The Undifferentiated and the Differentiated

Sri Ramakrishna (to Manmohan) — I see Rama (one of the incarnations of God) in all! You people are sitting here; I see Rama in all of you in different forms.

Manmohan — Rama has become all forms. But as you say ‘Apo Narayana’, water is Narayana; but some water is fit for drinking, the other is used for washing the face and yet another for washing utensils.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, but I see that He alone is everything. He has become the world and its creatures.

Saying so, Thakur sits down on his smaller cot.

Sri Ramakrishna’s firmness on truth and difficulty in accumulation

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — I say, am I now a fanatic in thinking that I have to speak only the truth? If I suddenly say that I shall not eat, I cannot eat even if I am hungry. If I say that so and so has to take my wash pot to the Jhautala, and if someone else accompanies, I have to send back that person. What has happened to me, brother? Is there no way out?

“And then I cannot carry anything with me. Neither a beetle-leaf nor any other eatable, for then it would mean accumulation. I cannot even carry a clod of earth in my hand.”

At this moment somebody comes and says, “Mahashay, Hriday [\[1\]](#) has come to the Yadu Mullick’s garden. He is standing at the gate and wishes to see you.” Sri Ramakrishna says to the devotees, “Please keep sitting here. Let me meet Hriday for a while.” Saying so he puts on the black varnished slippers and proceeds towards the eastern gate. Only M. is with him. The garden path has red brick dust over it. Thakur walks on this path facing east. The treasurer is seen standing on the path. He bows to Thakur. Now comes the gate of the southern courtyard. Here sits a special bearded gatekeeper. To the left is Kuthi - the rest house of the Babus. Formerly there was Neelkuthi here. So, it is called Kuthi. Beyond it are flowering trees on both sides of the path. Not far from there, to the south of this path is Gazitala and the ghat of Mother Kali’s pond beautified with steps. Then comes the eastern gate, the quarters of the gatekeepers to the left and the Tulasi platform to the south. Coming out of the garden he finds Hriday standing near the gate of Yadu Mullick’s garden.

Chapter Two

The attendant stands nearby

Hriday stands there with folded hands. As soon as he sees Sri Ramakrishna, he lies down to prostrate on the main road. Thakur asks him to stand up. Hriday folds his hands again and starts weeping like a child.

What a wonder! Thakur Sri Ramakrishna also begins to weep. One can see tears in

the corners of his eyes. He wipes them with his hands as if he never shed tears. How is it? This fellow Hriday had troubled him so much and he has come running to him and is crying!

Sri Ramakrishna — Why have you come now?

Hriday (weeping) — I have come to see you. To whom shall I tell my sorrows?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling, to console him) — In the household one has such problems. Happiness and sorrows are a part of the householder's life. (Pointing at M.) These people also come at times just for this reason. They come here to hear a word or two of God and get peace. What is your problem?

Hriday (still weeping) — I have lost your company, this is my grief.

Sri Ramakrishna — But you yourself said, 'You live with your bhava (state of mind) and let me live with mine.'

Hriday — Yes, I did say so. But what do I know?

Sri Ramakrishna — You may go back today. We shall sit and talk about it some other day. It is Sunday today. Many persons have come. They are waiting. What type of harvest did you have in the countryside this year?

Hriday — Yes, it has been not that bad.

Sri Ramakrishna — You may go today. Come again some other day.

Hriday again lies prostrate to offer his pranam. Thakur returns by the same path. M. is with him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — He served me, but also troubled me equally. When I was reduced to a skeleton because of my stomach trouble, when I could eat nothing, he used to say, 'Just see how I eat. You cannot eat because of the state of your mind.' And then he would add, 'Fool, had I not been here all your sainthood would have been knocked out.' One day he troubled me so much that I went to the embankment to drown myself in the water of the flood tide.

M. is speechless on hearing this. He perhaps wonders how he (Thakur) could be shedding tears for such a man!

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Well, he was serving me so much. How is it that he has come to such a pass? He has looked after me just as one brings up a child. I used to lie unconscious night and day. Besides, I was ill for so long. I used to live the way he wanted me to live.

What could M. say? He keeps silent. He is perhaps saying to himself: May be Hriday did not serve Thakur selflessly.

Thakur reaches his room while talking. The devotees are waiting. Thakur goes and sits upon the same smaller cot.

Chapter Three

With devotees - converses on varied topics - profound truths about bhava and mahabhava

Besides Mahimacharan and others a number of bhaktas of Konnagar have arrived. A

person discussed with Sri Ramakrishna for a long time.

A Bhakta from Konnagar — Sir, I heard that you go into bhava, that you experience samadhi. Why does it happen and how? Please tell me.

Sri Ramakrishna — Srimati (Radha) used to experience mahabhava. When a *sakhi* (friend) wanted to touch her, the other said, ‘Her body is in enjoyment with Krishna. Don’t touch her. Krishna is sporting within her person.’ One does not have bhava or mahabhava without experiencing God. When the fish comes out of the deep water, the water surges up in motion. The bigger the fish, the greater the motion. So in bhava the man laughs, weeps, dances and sings.

“One cannot remain in bhava for long. If [in that state] one just looks at himself in the mirror, he is taken as crazy.”

The Bhakta from Konnagar — Sir, we hear that you often have the vision of God. Please let us also see Him.

Vision of God not possible without karma and sadhan

Sri Ramakrishna — Everything is under God. What can a man do? While repeating His name tears flow out of the eyes at times, and sometimes they do not. While meditating on Him there is beautiful inspiration at times, and at other times nothing happens.

“One has to do karma. Only then one can have His vision. One day I saw Haldarpukur [\[2\]](#) in bhava. I saw that a person of low caste was taking water after removing the water plant from its surface. Each time he took water in his palm and examined it. It was as if he was telling me that you cannot see water unless you remove the water plant. Without karma (work for God) one cannot gain devotion, one cannot see God. Meditation and japa are all karma; singing His name and glory is also work. And then, charity and yajna are also work.

“If you want butter you have to make curd from milk and then keep it in a solitary corner. When the milk gets curdled, you have to make the effort to churn it and take out the butter.”

Mahimacharan — Yes Sir, no doubt one has to do karma. What can one gain without work? A lot of effort is needed. Then alone one achieves something. How much study is needed! Endless holy books are there!

What comes first: Study or God-realization

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — How much will you read holy books? What does it avail only to reason? Try first of all to attain Him. Putting your faith in the words of the Guru do some karma. If the Guru is no more, pray to Him (the Lord) with a longing heart. He will Himself tell you what He is like.

“What will you know by reading books? Till you have reached the market place, you can only hear noises like ‘ho-ho’ from a distance. It is quite different when you reach the market. Then you will clearly see, you will clearly hear, ‘Take these potatoes, pay for them.’

“From a distance there is a sound of ‘ho-ho’ from the sea. When you come near to it, you are able to see that so many ships are sailing, the birds are flying

and the waves are rising.

“One does not gain the right kind of experience by reading books. It is quite distant. After realizing Him books, scriptures, science all seem to be *‘khadkuto’* (dry straw, grass, twigs, etc.).

“You have to introduce yourself to the master of the house. Before that why are you so eager to know how many houses, gardens and scrips of companies he has? If you approach the servants, they will not even let you stand there. What information they will give you of the company shares? On the other hand, try somehow to meet the master even if you are pushed aside or you have to jump over the fence. Then he will himself tell you how many houses and gardens and shares he has. When you know the master, the servants, the doorkeeper and all others will salute you^{*}.” (Everybody laughs.)

The Devotee — Now, how to meet the master of the house? (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — That’s why karma is needed. It does not avail if you say, ‘God is’ and keep sitting where you are. You have somehow to approach Him. Call upon Him secretly, pray to Him, ‘Grant me Thy vision, grant please.’ Say this and cry with a longing heart. Just as you roam madly for ‘woman and gold’, be a bit crazy for Him too. Let people say that such and such person has gone mad for God. **Give up everything for some days and only call upon Him secretly.**

“What will it avail just to say ‘He exists’ and do nothing? There are big fish in Haldarpukur. Can you catch fish just by sitting on its bank? To attract it, you have to prepare its food and put it in the pond. The fish will come slowly from the deep water and agitate it. You will then feel happy. Maybe you are able to see a bit of a fish at times. A fish suddenly jumps up and you see it. You are then happier when you see it.

“Turn the milk into curds, churn it and only then you will get butter.

(To Mahima) “What a great trouble it is! Let somebody show him God while he keeps sitting at ease! Let somebody take butter and bring it to his mouth. (All laugh.) What a trouble! Let somebody else catch the fish and hand it over to him!

“Somebody wants to meet the king. The king is beyond the seven gates. He just passes through the first gate and asks, ‘Where is the king?’ The way is to pass through all the gates one by one.”

The way to attain God - long for Him

Mahimacharan — What should we do to attain Him?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is not that you can attain Him by doing this and not by doing that. It depends upon His grace. Yet you have to take to some action with a longing heart. Longing for Him brings His grace.

“One needs some right opportunity - company of sadhus, discrimination, or the meeting of a *sadguru* (divine preceptor). Maybe that one’s elder brother takes up the responsibility of the household, or the wife is *vidya* shakti and very religious, or maybe one hasn’t married, has not got entangled in the household. It comes about when there is a situation like this.

“There was somebody who was very ill in a man’s house - he was in a critical condition. Somebody said, ‘When it begins to rain in the *swati nakshatra* (a

particular conjunction of stars), and this water falls into a skull, and if a poisonous snake while chasing a frog pounces upon it and (in the process) the frog jumps away and the (snake's) poison falls into the skull, then if a medicine prepared with this poison is given to the patient, the patient can be cured. Now the person of the family of the patient set out for the journey after consulting for the right day, time and conjunction of stars. He began looking for the above situation with a yearning heart. He prayed to God in his heart: 'Lord, if You let me procure all these, my objective will be fulfilled.' Roaming about in this way he actually saw the skull of a dead body and then came a shower of rain in no time. The man then said, 'O Master, I have found the skull of a dead person and it has also rained during the *swati nakshatra*, the water of which has also fallen into the skull. Now, O Thakur, bestow Your grace and procure the rest of the articles too.' He was reflecting over it with a longing heart when he saw a poisonous snake coming there. The man was extremely happy. He was so excited that his heart began to thump. He said, 'O Master, now the snake has also come and so many articles have been procured. Now please get me the remaining articles too.' While he was praying thus, lo! there came a frog too. And the snake began to chase it. As soon as it approached the skull to pounce upon the frog, the latter jumped over and fell to the other side while the poison of the snake at once fell in the skull. The man then began to clap and dance in joy.

"So, I say that anything can happen if one has the longing for it."

Chapter Four

Sannyasa and household ashrama - God-realization and renunciation - who is real sannyasi?

Sri Ramakrishna — Till you have completely renounced in the mind, you cannot attain God. **The sadhu does not accumulate. The bird and the darvesh (sadhu) do not hoard.** The bird and the sadhu do not accumulate. As for me, I cannot carry even a clod of earth to clean my hands. I cannot carry the beetle-leaf in my bag (a small bag made of cloth). When Hriday was troubling me so much, I wanted to go to Kashi from here. I said to myself that I would be able to take a *dhoti* with me, but how to carry money. So I did not go to Kashi. (Everybody laughs.)

(To Mahima) "You people are householders, you have this as well as that - live in the household and also stick to the spiritual path."

Mahima — Is it possible to live with this as well as that?

Sri Ramakrishna — I threw money in the Ganga water at the bank of Ganga, near Panchavati, saying, 'Money and earth, earth is money, money is earth.' But then I felt a fright. I said to myself, 'Have I become a wretch given up by Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth)?' If Mother Lakshmi stops giving me food, what will happen to me? I then calculated like Hazra. I said, 'Mother, please dwell in my heart!' The Mother Bhagavati, happy with the austerity practised by a person, said to him, 'Ask for a boon.' He said, 'Mother, if you have to grant me a boon, grant that I may eat rice in a gold plate with my grandson.' Thus in one boon he asked for everything - grandson, prosperity and a gold plate! (Everybody laughs.)

"When you have renounced 'woman and gold' from the mind, your mind goes to God and gets absorbed in Him. They who are bound also attain liberation. One is bound when one is away from God. When does the lower needle not point at the upper needle of the goldsmith's scale? The moment there is load

of 'woman and gold' in one of its pans.

"Why does the infant cry after coming out of the womb? 'I was in the womb, in yoga.' After taking birth he cries and says, 'Where, where am I? Where have I come? I was meditating on God's lotus feet, and now where am I?'"

"For you people what is required is renunciation in the mind. Live in your family without attachment."

Is it necessary to renounce the world?

Mahima — When the mind has gone up to Him, does one then stay with the family any more?

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you saying? Where will you go if you don't stay in family? I clearly see that I am in Rama's Ayodhya wherever I may be. This family life, this worldly life is Rama's Ayodhya. Having received spiritual knowledge from his guru Ramachandra said, 'I will renounce the family life (world).' Dasharath called Vaishishtha to make Rama change his mind. Vaishishtha saw that Rama was under deep dispassion. He then said, 'Rama, first reason it out with me; you may renounce the world later. Well, tell me, is this world without God? If that be so, you may renounce it.' Rama understood that God Himself has become the world, its creatures - everything. It is because of His power that one perceives everything as real. Ramachandra became silent then.

"You have to fight against lust, anger and so on in the worldly life; you have to fight against various desires. You have to fight against attachment. If the fight is given from inside the fort, it is convenient - it is better to fight living in the household. Here you get food, the wife helps you in so many ways. In Kaliyuga life depends on food. It is better to be at one place than to roam about from place to place for food. This is as if fighting from inside the fort of household.

"And you should live in the world like a scrap leaf in a storm. The storm takes the scrap leaf sometimes inside the house, sometimes it is carried to a heap. The leaf is carried away in the direction of the wind - sometimes at a neat place and sometimes at a dirty place. He has kept you in the family life; it is good, you rather stay there. Again when He lifts you from there and carries to a better place, it will be what it may."

Resignation in family life - Rama's will

"What can you do if you are kept in the world? Resign (surrender) everything to Him. Then there will be no trouble. You will then realize that it is He who is doing all. Everything depends on Rama's will."

A Devotee — 'Rama's will' - what is that story?

Sri Ramakrishna — There was a weaver in a village. He was very religious. Everybody trusted him and loved him. The weaver would go to the market to sell *dhotis*. When the customer asked the price, he would say, 'By Rama's will, cotton thread costs one rupee; by Rama's will labour charges is four annas; by Rama's will, profit two annas. So, the price of the dhoti by Rama's will is one rupee six annas.' People had so much faith in him that they would immediately pay and buy the cloth. This fellow was a great devotee. After his

dinner he would sit in the *Chandi-mandap** till late in the night, meditate on God and sing His glories. One night it was very late but this fellow did not feel sleepy. He was smoking in between. Just then a group of dacoits was passing that way to commit dacoity. They needed a porter. So, they came to the weaver and said, 'Come along with us.' Saying so, they pulled him by the hand and took him along. Then they committed dacoity in a house. They placed so many articles on the weaver's head to carry. Just then the police arrived. The dacoits ran away but the weaver was caught with all those articles on his head. He was kept in the police lockup that night. The next day he was tried by a magistrate. When the villagers came to know of it, they all came there. They all said, 'Sir, this fellow can never commit a dacoity.' The magistrate then asked the weaver, 'I say, tell me how it all happened with you?' The weaver replied, 'Sir, by Rama's will, I took rice at night. By Rama's will, then I sat in the *Chandi-mandap*. By Rama's will, it was very late at night. By Rama's will I was meditating on Him and was singing His glories when by Rama's will a group of dacoits was going that very way. By Rama's will, they pulled me and took me along with them. By Rama's will, they committed dacoity in a house. By Rama's will, they placed a load on my head. Then by His will I was caught. By Rama's will, the police put me in the lockup. And now this morning by Rama's will I have been brought before you.'

"Seeing that the fellow was so religious, the magistrate discharged him. On the way the weaver said to his friends, 'By Rama's will, I have been discharged.'

"Whether one is living in the household or one has taken sannyasa, all is Rama's will. So, resign yourself to His will and do your duties living in the world.

"Except for this what can you do?

"A clerk is sent to jail. Period of his sentence ends, he is released from the jail. Now shall he dance joyfully to the beat of drum or would he return to his profession of clerkship?

"A person who is *jivanmukta* (liberated in this very life), may live the family life if he so wills. For a man who has attained jnana, there is nothing like 'here' and 'there'. It is all the same for him. Everything 'here' as well as 'there' belongs to Him."

The earlier story of his life - conversation with Keshab Sen - jivanmukta in the world

"When I saw Keshab Sen for the first time in the garden house, I said, 'He has cast off his tail.' Everybody in the assembly laughed. Keshab said, 'Please don't laugh. His words have some meaning. Let me ask him.' I said: So long the frog does not shed off its tail, it has to live only in water. It cannot climb the edge and roam about on dry land. As soon as it casts off its tail, it jumps up and comes to the dry land. Then it can live both in the water as well as on the land. Similarly, till the man sheds the tail of his ignorance, he lies in the water of worldliness. When he casts off the tail of ignorance, when he attains jnana he is liberated and can move about everywhere - and if he likes, he can live even in family."

Chapter Five

In the context of household life - the unattached householder

Mahimacharan and other devotees are sitting and drinking the nectar of the story of God from Sri Ramakrishna. His words are like jewels of varied colours. The devotees are picking up as much as they can. But the lap of their dhoti is already full. It is so heavy that they can't pick it up. Their capacity is limited, they cannot contain more. He is solving all the problems on diverse subjects that have risen since the creation of the world to this day in the hearts of men. Padmalochan, Narayana Shastri, Gauri Pundit, Dayananda Saraswati and such other scholars of scriptures sit silent in wonder. When Dayananda saw Sri Ramakrishna and witnessed him in the state of samadhi, he lamented, "We people have just studied so much of the Veda and Vedanta but in this great man we see its manifestation. On seeing him it is proved that the learned only take buttermilk when they churn the scriptures. Such great men as he only eat butter." Besides, learned men like Keshab Chandra Sen, educated in English, are also amazed at seeing Sri Ramakrishna. They think: What a wonder, how this illiterate person explains such matters. This is very much like Jesus Christ. Language rustic! He explains the same way by parables so that men, women and boys - all may understand easily. Jesus repeated, 'Father, Father' like a mad person. He is mad uttering, 'Mother, Mother.' He has not merely the inexhaustible treasure of spiritual wisdom, he is also spilling endlessly pots and pots of divine love and still it does not exhaust. He is also a man of renunciation like Jesus and also has the same burning faith. That is why his words are so powerful. When the worldly people talk, such conviction cannot be there because they have no renunciation, because they have no burning faith in them. The learned like Keshab Sen think further, "How has this illiterate person developed such broad-mindedness! What a wonder! There is no ill will in him. He respects followers of all religions, he does not quarrel with anybody."

Today, hearing Thakur's conversation with Mahimacharan some bhaktas say to themselves, "Thakur hasn't asked anybody to renounce the family life. On the other hand, he said that the household is like a fort; you can fight against lust, anger, etc. while staying in this fort." He also said, "Where else will you go if you do not live in family? The clerk only resumes clerkship when he is freed from the jail." In a way he says that a *jivanmukta* (liberated person) can live in the family also. Keshab Sen - the ideal. To him he said, "Only you have shed your tail, none else has." But Thakur has said something very special, "You have to live from time to time in solitude. You have to fence round the young plant otherwise, it will be eaten up by the goat or the cow. When the plant has grown a big trunk, you may or may not remove the fence. Even if an elephant is tied to it, the tree will not come to any harm. There is no danger if you live with family after having lived in solitude and after having attained jnana and bhakti." That is why he only talked of living in solitude.

The devotees are reflecting thus. After talking of Keshab, Sri Ramakrishna talks of one or two other devotees.

Devendra Nath Tagore - yoga and bhoga (sensory enjoyments)

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan and others) — I once went with Sejo Babu* to meet Devendra Tagore. I said to Sejo Babu, 'I have heard that Devendra Tagore meditates on God. I wish to see him.' Sejo Babu said, 'Alright baba (father), I shall take you to him. We were class fellows in the Hindu College. He has special affection for me.' After many days I had the opportunity of meeting him with Sejo Babu. Seeing Sejo Babu Devendra said, 'You have changed a bit. You have developed a ponch.' Sejo Babu introduced me to him saying, 'He has come to meet you. He is mad after God.' To see Devendra's trait I said to him, 'Well, let me examine your body.' Devendra took off his shirt. He was fair and his body (roughed) as if sprinkled with vermilion.

"Initially I noticed that there was some pride in him. And why not? He had so much wealth, so much learning, name and fame. Seeing his pride I said to Sejo Babu, 'Well, does pride come from jnana or ajnana? Does a person who has attained the knowledge of Brahman has the pride of learning, of jnana or

wealth?’

“Suddenly I went into that very state while talking to Devendra. When I am in that particular state, I can see what kind of person one is. A peculiar laughter, ‘Hee-hee’ arose within me on seeing him. When I am in such a state, I feel that the learned are just like pieces of straw - when I see that there is no discrimination and dispassion in a pundit, he appears to me just as dry pieces of grass and straw (unworthy person). I then see as though a vulture is flying high but its eyes are on charnel pits.

“I saw that he had both yoga and bhoga. He had many small children; the doctor had arrived. It is for this reason that though a man of knowledge, he had to lead the life of a householder. I said, ‘You are the ‘Janak’ of Kaliyuga. Janak was loyal to both matter and spirit and at the same time drank his cup of milk. You are living with your family keeping your mind on God. I heard about it, so I have come to see you. Please talk to me about God.’

“Then he narrated some portions from the Vedas. He said, ‘This world is like a chandelier and every being is a lamp in it.’ When I was meditating here in Panchavati I had seen exactly the same. Seeing that it resembles with Devendra’s words, I thought he was really a great man. I asked him to explain further what he had said. Then he said, ‘Who knew this world? God made men to proclaim His glory. If there is no light in the chandelier, it is all dark around. You cannot even see the chandelier.’ ”

**‘Uncivilized ways’ and Brahmo Samaj -
the Captain, a householder devotee**

“After a long conversation Devendra said to me in a happy mood, ‘You have to come in our celebrations.’ I said, ‘It is all God’s will. You can see what is the state of my mind. **I don’t know when would the Mother keep me in a particular state.**’ Devendra said, ‘No, no, you have to come, but please clad yourself in dhoti and upper cloth. Seeing you clad carelessly if somebody makes a remark, I would feel hurt.’ I said, ‘I shall not be able to do so. I cannot become a babu.’ Devendra and Sejo Babu both laughed.

“The very next day Sejo Babu received a note from Devendra asking me not to go to the festival. Reason? It would be uncivilized if I am not able to retain the upper cloth on my body. (All laugh.)

(To Mahima) “And then there is an another person, the Captain^{*}. Though a householder, he is a great devotee. You must talk to him.

“The Captain knows the Vedas, the Vedanta, Srimad Bhagavata, the Gita, the Adhyatma (Ramayana) - all these by heart. Just talk to him and see.

“He has great devotion! I was walking on the road from Barahnagar when he held his umbrella over my head. How hospitable he is when he takes me to his house - he fans me, massages my feet and serves various kinds of vegetables to me. One day I fell unconscious in his closet. Though he is so orthodox yet he went into the closet and made me sit on the defecation seat. He is so orthodox yet he did not feel any repulsion.

“The Captain has to spend a lot. His brothers live in Kashi, he has to send money to them. His wife was miserly and now she is so hard pressed that she cannot spend much on anything.

“The Captain’s wife told me that she does not like the household life. So she said to me once that she would leave her family life. She has been saying at times, ‘I shall leave, I shall leave.’

“He comes from the family of devotees. His father used to go to the battlefield. It is said that with one hand he used to worship Shiva and with the other he would fight with a bare sword.

“And this man (the Captain) is very orthodox. I used to go to Keshab Sen, so he did not come here for a month. Reason? Keshab Sen is non-orthodox - he eats with the English, he has married his daughter in another caste and he does not believe in caste. I said to him, ‘What does all this matter to me? Keshab repeats the name of Hari, I go to see this. I go to him to hear of God. I take cherries, I am not concerned with thorns.’ Even then he did not leave me. He asked me, ‘Why do you go there to Keshab Sen?’ Then feeling a little bit irritated I said, ‘But I don’t go to him for money. I go to him to hear of God. And why do you go to the Governor’s house? He is a *malechha* (non Hindu). How do you stay with him?’ When I said so much, he stopped for a while.

“But he has a lot of devotion. During puja he performs arati with camphor and sits on his asana (seat of worship) and sings the hymns. At that time he is quite a different man - as if he is completely lost (in devotion).”

Chapter Six

The doctrine of maya in Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — According to the Vedanta philosophy the world is all maya, like a dream - all illusory. He who is Parmatman is there as a witness - He is the witness in all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. All these conform to your way of thinking. The waking state and the dreaming state are both equally true. Listen to a story. It conforms to your thinking.

“There lived a peasant in a village. Spiritually he was very wise. He did farming. He had a wife from whom he had a son after a long period. He named him Haru. Both the parents loved this boy. Why not? He was the precious bright jewel of the family. The peasant was religious minded. Everybody in the village liked him. One day he was working in his farm when somebody came to inform him that Haru had the attack of cholera. The farmer went home and gave him good treatment but the boy died. Everybody in the family was sorrow-stricken. But the farmer was as if nothing happened to him. On the top of it, he consoled others saying that it was no use to sorrow. And he went back to his field for farming. On his return to the home he saw that his wife was weeping more bitterly. She said to him, ‘How hardhearted you are! You have not shed a tear for your son.’ The farmer then said calmly, ‘I tell you why I am not weeping. Yesterday I had a great dream. I dreamt that I was a king and the father of eight sons. I was in all happiness when I woke up. Now I am in great confusion - whether I should sorrow for those eight sons or for this one son of yours.’

“The farmer was a man of spiritual wisdom. So, he could see that the state of waking is as illusory as the state of dream. Only the Atman is one thing eternal.

“I accept all. The state of *turiya* and also of waking, dream and deep sleep. I accept all the three states. I accept Brahman as well as maya, the jiva and the world - all. If I do not accept all, it loses weight.”

A Devotee — How does it lose weight? (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — Brahman is qualified by the *jiva* (embodied soul) and the

world. In the beginning, while saying 'Not this, not this,' one should leave out the jiva and the world. So long as one has the feeling of I-ness one feels that He Himself has become everything. He indeed has become all the twenty four categories.

“When one talks of the essence of the bel fruit, one only understands that it means the kernel - its seeds and shell have to be thrown away. But to be able to tell the weight of the bel fruit simply weighing the kernel alone will not do. One has to take the kernel, the seeds and the shell together to weigh it. The kernel belongs to it and so do its seeds and shell.”

**The Nitya (Absolute) belongs to Him and
so does the leela (phenomenal world)**

“So, I take the Nitya as well as the leela. I don't do away with the world by calling it maya. If I do so, it will lose weight.”

The doctrine of maya and Vishishtadvaitavada - Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

Mahimacharan — Beautifully harmonized! From the Nitya to the leela and again from the leela to the Nitya.

Sri Ramakrishna — The jnanis see all like a dream. The bhaktas accept all the states. The jnani yields milk in driplets. (All laugh.) Some cows are very choosy while grazing, so they yield milk in driplets. They who do not discriminate so much and eat everything give streams of milk. The highest class devotee [\[3\]](#) accepts both the Nitya and the leela. So he can enjoy Him even when his mind comes down from the Nitya. The highest class devotee yields milk in streams. (All laugh.)

Mahima — That is why this milk has a particular smell. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Yes, it has. But it has to be boiled a bit. You must heat it a little on fire. You should heat this milk on the fire of jnana. It will not smell then.

Omkar and the communion of Nitya and leela

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahima) — You people explain Omkar just by 'a', 'u', 'm'.

Mahimacharan — 'A' for creation, 'u' for preservation and 'm' for dissolution.

Sri Ramakrishna — I explain it with the sound 'tam' of the brass bell - t...a...m. Merging into the Nitya from the leela; merging into the Great Cause from the gross, the subtle and the causal; merging into the state of turiya from the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Then the bell rings as if something big has fallen into the ocean giving rise to its waves. The leela thus starts from the Nitya; the gross, the subtle and the causal forms start appearing out of the Great Cause. All the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep come out of turiya. And again the wave of the great ocean loses itself into the great ocean. Reach leela holding on to the Nitya and then reach the Nitya holding on to leela*, I have been shown this. I use the simile of the sound 'tam'. I have precisely seen all this. I was shown the sea of consciousness, it is limitless. All this leela rose from it and then merged into it. Millions of brahmandas (universes) come into existence into the space of

consciousness and then they lose themselves into it. I do not know what your books say.

Mahima — They who have seen have not written the scriptures. They remained absorbed in their bhava. Where was the time for them to write? To be able to write, one needs analytical mind. The others heard from them and wrote.

**How long remains attachment of the world?
Till the attainment of the bliss of Brahman**

Sri Ramakrishna — The worldly people ask why the attachment to ‘woman and gold’ does not vanish. The attachment goes when God is attained [\[4\]](#). If you once taste the bliss of Brahman, your mind does not run after sensual pleasures, wealth and honour.

“If the insect of the rainy season (moth) sees the light once, it does not go to the darkness again.

“Ravana was asked, ‘You take so many different forms for Sita with the help of maya. Why don’t you once assume the form of Rama and go to her?’ Ravana replied, ‘*Tuchham Brahmapadam paravadhusangah kutah* - when I think upon Rama even the seat of Brahma appears to be too low, what to talk of another’s wife. How can I assume that form of Rama?’

**More one develops devotion, the less becomes one’s attachment to the world -
Chaitanya’s devotees are unattached**

“All the sadhan and bhajan (spiritual practices) are for attaining Him. The more you meditate on Him, the less you have attachment for enjoying the ordinary things of the world. The more devotion you have for His lotus feet, the less of desire for sensory objects you will have and the lesser your mind will concern itself with the bodily comforts. Someone else’s wife will appear to you as mother. Your own wife will be your helper in the religious life. She will appear to you like a friend. You will be freed from your animal instincts and divine qualities will develop within you. You will be completely detached from the world. Then even if you live in the world, you will move about as *jivanmukta*. The devotees of Chaitanya Deva lived in the world without attachment.”

Deep secret of the jnani and the bhakta

(To Mahima) “You may talk of Vedanta a thousand times to a genuine bhakta and call the world like a dream before him, his devotion will not vanish. He may shed it a little for a while. A pestle was lying in a field of willows, it resulted in *musalam kulanashnam* (the pestle destroying the dynasty).

“One becomes a jnani when one is born of Shiva. His mind always goes to this knowledge - ‘only Brahman is the reality, the world an illusion’. If one is born of Vishnu, one possesses *prema* bhakti (loving devotion). This *prema* bhakti does not leave you easily. Upon reasoning even if this *prema* bhakti is diluted, it returns gushing forth after a time just as the pestle destroyed the dynasty of the Yadus.”

Service to mother and Sri Ramakrishna - Hazra Mahashay*

Hazra is performing japa sitting in the verandah to the east of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna's room. He is 46/47. He belongs to the same region as that of Thakur. He has developed dispassion for quite a long time. He remains away from his house and visits home only occasionally. He has a piece of land in his village. He supplies the needs of his wife, son, daughter and others with its income. Even so, he has incurred a debt of about a thousand rupees. So, he remains always worried. How to pay back this debt is his constant concern. He often visits Calcutta. Ishan Chandra Mukhopadhyay, who resides in Thanthania, has great respect for him and serves him like a sadhu. Sri Ramakrishna is keeping him by his side with great care. When his dhoti wears out, he gets him a new one. He always enquires after him and constantly talks of God to him. Hazra Mahashay is very argumentative. During conversation he is often carried away by his argument. Sitting on the asana in the verandah he is always performing japa on his rosary.

The news of the illness of Hazra's mother has been received. When Ramalal was coming from his village, she held his hand and requested him insistently, "Carry this humble request of mine to your uncle (Thakur) that he may please send Pratap (Hazra) here somehow. Let him see me once." Thakur conveyed this to Hazra saying, "Go to your home once, see your mother and return. She repeatedly said so to Ramalal. Can one ever call upon God after hurting one's mother? Go there once and then you may come back."

When the meeting of the devotees is over, Mahimacharan comes to Thakur with Hazra. M. is also present there.

Mahimacharan (smiling, to Sri Ramakrishna) — Sir, I have to say something to you. Why have you asked Hazra to go home when he does not want to go to his family?

Sri Ramakrishna — His mother expressed great grief to Ramalal. So I said, 'You may go only for three days. Come after meeting her once.' Can one practise sadhana for the Lord after hurting one's mother? I was going to Vrindavan to stay there when all of a sudden I remembered my mother. I said to myself, 'Mother would weep.' Then I returned here with Sejo Babu.

"And then what fear a jnani has in going to his family?"

Mahimacharan (smiling) — But Sir, provided one has attained jnana.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Hazra has attained all. Only a little of his mind is in the household - he has sons and has incurred some debt. 'The aunt has completely recovered, only a bit of sickness remains.' (Everybody laughs.)

Mahima — But Sir, when has he gained jnana?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — No brother, you don't know. Everybody says that Hazra is the only devotee who is living in Rasmani's temple. They only talk of Hazra. They never talk of this (pointing to himself). (All laugh.)

Hazra — You are unmatched. You cannot be compared with anyone. So, none understands you.

Sri Ramakrishna — That is why the matchless one cannot help anybody. Why should then one talk of this?

Mahimacharan — Sir, what does he know? He will just do what you instruct him to do.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why? Just ask him. He says to me, ‘I have nothing to do with you.’

Mahima — He is very argumentative.

Sri Ramakrishna — And then he also lectures me from time to time. (All laugh.) During a discussion I perhaps abused him. After the discussion I lay inside the mosquito net. Then I remembered what language I had used. I went to offer my obeisance to Hazra. Only then my mind was at peace.

Vedanta and the pure atman

(To Hazra) “Why do you call the pure Atman as Ishwara (the Lord)? The pure atman is beyond all action. It is only a witness to all the three states. When I think of creation, preservation and dissolution I call Him Ishwara. What is a pure soul like? It is like the magnet lying at a distance. But the needle still moves, the magnet itself remains unmoved - actionless.”

Chapter Eight

Evening music and conversation with Ishan

It is almost evening. Thakur is strolling. On seeing Mani sitting all alone and meditating Thakur suddenly addresses him lovingly and says, “Look here, please bring one or two *markeen* (a coarse white fabric) shirts. I cannot wear shirts procured from everybody. I was thinking of asking Captain, but now you may bring them. Mani had stood up. He says, “At your service.”

It is twilight hour. The incense is burnt in Sri Ramakrishna’s room. He pays obeisance to the deities and having repeated the *beeja mantra** is singing the Name. There is unique splendour outside the room. It is the seventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik. The pure rays of the moon falling on Thakur Bari make it smile. On the other hand, the ripples on the Bhagirathi (Ganga) are heaving sweetly like the sleeping babe’s chest. The tide is over. The sound of the arati mixing with the melodious murmuring sound produced by sweet, white current of the Ganga loses itself afar into the distance. Three aratis are being performed in three shrines at the same time in Thakur Bari - in the Kali Temple, in the Vishnu Temple and in the Shiva Temple. Twelve aratis in twelve Shiva temples one by one! The priest goes from one temple to the other.

The gong in the left hand, *pancha pradip* (lamp with five wicks) in the right, an attendant with cymbal in his hand. The arati is being performed. Along with it, the sweet sound of the *roshan chowki*:^[5] from the south-west corner of the shrine is being heard. The Nahabat Khana (drum room) is there. The evening *raga ragini* (the modes of Indian music) is being played. The perpetual festival of the All-Blissful Mother is as if reminding the jiva never to be unhappy. The joys and sorrows of the world are there, let them be so. The Mother of the Universe, our Mother, is there. Rejoice. The son of the maid of the house has not enough to eat, has not enough to wear, no house, no hearth. Even then there is courage within, he has his mother. He is fearless in the lap of his mother. She is not a step-mother, She is the real mother. Who am I, from where have I come, what will happen to me, where will I go - all this the Mother knows. Why rake the brain so much? My Mother knows - my Mother who has made me with a body, mind, life and atman. I don’t even want to know. If it is necessary, She will tell me. Why rake the brain so much? You all the children of Mother, rejoice!

The world outside bathed in moonlight is smiling. Inside the room Sri Ramakrishna is seated filled with the joy of love of Hari. Ishan has come from Calcutta. More conversation of God takes place. Ishan has great faith. He says, “Shulapani (Shiva) with a trident in his hand accompanies one who goes on a journey with Durga’s name on his lips. What is there to fear of misfortunes when Shiva Himself guards?”

**Attainment of God through faith -
instructions on Karma Yoga to Ishan**

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — You have firm faith, but I do not have that much. (All laugh.) One attains Him by faith alone.

Ishan —Yes Sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — You perform japa, daily puja, observe fast, perform *purushcharan*, and rituals (repetition of the holy mantra, etc. for the fulfillment of some task as laid down in the scriptures). This is very good. God gets all these karmas done from him who has the sincere attraction for Him. If one is able to perform all such karmas without desire for fruit, one surely attains Him.

**Vaidhi bhakti and raga bhakti -
when do karmas fall off?**

“The scriptures instruct to perform numerous karmas, so I perform them - this is called *vaidhi* (ritualistic) bhakti. The other is *raga* bhakti. It comes out of a special deep love - love for God, as was that of Prahlada. When one develops this bhakti, there is no longer the need for *vaidhi* karmas.”

Chapter Nine

In the heart of the disciple

Before evening Mani is strolling as he recalls: Rama's will. This is indeed very beautiful! It solves all the confusion between predestination and freewill, between liberty and necessity. “I was captured by the dacoits because of Rama's will; I was smoking, that too by Rama's will; I committed a dacoity by Rama's will; I was held by the police also by Rama's will. I have become a sadhu by Rama's will. I pray, ‘O Lord, may my intellect be not impure. May you not goad me on to dacoity.’ This too is Rama's will. The right desire and the wrong desire are both given by Him. Even so, there is a special point: Why should He give the wrong intellect? Why should He give the desire to commit dacoity? In answer to this Thakur said, ‘Just as He has made the lion, the tiger and the snake among animals, just as He has made the poisonous tree among trees, similarly He has also made thieves and dacoits among men.’ Why has He made them, who can tell? Who can understand God's ways?”

But then if God has made everything, the sense of responsibility ends there. But why would it end? Unless you have realized God, unless you have had His darshan, you cannot understand Rama's will a hundred per cent. So long as you don't have full faith, you will certainly have the feeling of vice and virtue, and the feeling of responsibility. Thakur has explained what ‘Rama's will’ is. Repeating ‘Rama's will’ like a parrot won't do. As long as you don't know God, as long as ‘my’ will and His will don't become one, as long as you don't rightly understand, ‘I am an instrument,’ so long He retains the knowledge of vice and virtue, joy and sorrow, purity and impurity, good and bad, and sense of responsibility. Otherwise, how can His world of maya go on?

The more I think of Sri Ramakrishna's bhakti, the more I am wonderstruck. Keshab Sen repeats the name of Hari, meditates on God, so he (Thakur) immediately ran to meet him - Keshab at once became his own. He then did not listen to the Captain. That Keshab went to a foreign land, ate with white men, gave his daughter in marriage in a different caste - all these matters vanished.

“I take only cherries. I have nothing to do with thorns.” In the bond of bhakti the believers in God with form and believers in God without form become the same; the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians - all become one and also the four *varnas**. Bhakti be victorious! Blessed you are Sri Ramakrishna! Victory to you! You have embodied the universal view of *sanatana dharma* (the eternal religion). It is perhaps for this reason that you have such an attraction! You embrace the followers of all religions as your own without any difference! You have but one test - it is that of

bhakti. You only see whether a person has love for God within, whether he has bhakti or not. If that is there, he immediately becomes your very own. If you see bhakti in a Hindu, he is at once your own. And if a Muslim has bhakti for Allah, he is also your own. If a Christian has the love for Jesus, he is also your near and dear one. You say that all rivers coming from different directions, from different regions fall into the same one ocean.

Thakur does not consider this world as a dream. If that be so, it will lose weight. It is not *mayavada* [6] it is Vishishtadvaitavada. This is because he does not consider the jiva and the world as imaginary. He doesn't think them to be an illusion. God is real, so are men and the world. Brahman is qualified with jiva and the world. You cannot get the whole of the bell fruit if you take away seeds and its shell.

It is said that this universe manifests itself in the *Mahachidakasha* [7] and then merges into Kala [8]. The wave rises in the Great Ocean and then loses itself in the Kala. On the waters of the ocean of joy there are infinite waves of leela! Where is the beginning of this leela and where is its end! It cannot be told by the word of mouth. It cannot be thought upon in mind. How much is the man and how much intelligence he has? It is said that spiritually great men have had the darshan of this Eternal Supreme Person in the state of samadhi - they have witnessed the Nitya (Absolute) and the sporting Hari. This they have surely done because Sri Ramakrishna also says so. But they did not do so with these bodily eyes, they did it perhaps with what is known as the divine eye. Getting this divine eye Arjuna saw the Universal Form of the Lord. With this divine eye the rishis realized the Atman and with this divine eye Jesus saw his heavenly Father day and night. How to gain that divine eye? We have heard Thakur say that one can get it by the yearning of the heart. **Now, how to have such a yearning?** Does one have to renounce the world? No, today he didn't say so.

[1] Hriday Mukherji

was the son of Ramakrishna's cousin sister. He has his house in Seor village near Kamarpukur. For almost twenty four years Hriday stayed with Thakur, served him and carried out the worship of Mother Kali in Dakshineswar Temple. Later, he lost the confidence of the proprietor of the garden and therefore was not allowed to enter it.

[2] Sri Ramakrishna has his house in Kamarpukur village in Hooghly district. In front of his house there is a big pond called Haldarpukur.

* Seek ye

and first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)

* A roofed place usually with four sides open

* Sejo Babu - Mathur Nath Biswas, Rani Rasmani's son-in-law. From the very beginning he served Sri Ramakrishna with extreme bhakti like a disciple.

* The Captain - Vishwanath Upadhyay, a resident of Nepal. The emissary of the king of Nepal and his representative in Calcutta. A very orthodox brahmin and a great devotee.

[3] The highest class devotee -

Yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati
iti

Tasya aham na pranashyami sa cha me na pranashyati. (Gita 6:30)

[He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, he never becomes lost to Me, nor do I become lost to him.]

* Holding on to Nitya and reach the leela - from the Absolute to the relative, from the Infinite to the finite; from the Undifferentiated to the differentiated; from the Unconditioned to the conditioned and again from the relative to the Absolute.

[4] *Rasavarjam rasah api asya param drishtva nivartate.* (Gita 2:59)

[The longing (of sense objects) also ceases when he intuits the Supreme.]

* The native village of Hazra Mahashay is Madagod near Kamarpukur, the native village of Sri Ramakrishna. He passed away in the month of Chaitra in his own village in 1306 B.Y. (1900 A. D.). His extraordinary faith and devotion for Thakur showed itself at the time of his death. He was then sixty three or

sixty four years old.

* - A mystic word or words to be recited silently.

[5] A symphony of shahnai and other instruments.

* - Varnas - the four castes of Hindu society: Brahmin, kshatriya, vaishnava and shudra.

[6] Illunism

[7] The great space of Consciousness

[8] God of Death

Samaj

Instructions to Vijaykrishna and other Brahmos and happy moments with them

Chapter One

Sri Ramakrishna in Samadhi

The Brahmo bhaktas have again assembled in the Sinti Brahmo Samaj. It is 19 October 1884, the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik, the day next to Kali Puja. This is the time for the Sharat Festivity (Autumn Festival). In the beautiful garden house of Veni Madhava Pal a session of Brahmo Samaj is being held again. The morning worship is over. The Paramahansa Deva reaches at half past four. His carriage stops in the middle of the garden. Immediately groups of devotees come and stand all around him encircling him. The pulpit of the Samaj has been set in the first room. In front of it is the vestibule. Thakur comes and sits in the vestibule. Immediately the devotees come and sit all around him. They include Vijay, Trailokya and some others. A former member of the Brahmo Samaj, a sub-judge, is also present.

The Samaj house has been beautifully decorated for the great celebration. One can see multi-coloured festoons at places. Some parts of the building and the ledges of the ventilators have been decorated with foliage giving illusion of beautiful and attractive trees. In front, the blue autumnal sky is casting its reflection in the clear water of the lake mentioned earlier. On both sides of the red brick dust pathways of the garden are rows of the plants of same flowers and fruits as already mentioned. Today again the devotees would hear the chant of the Vedas coming from the holy lips of Thakur - the chant which had once emanated from the mouths of the Aryan rishis in the form of Vedas; the chant which was once more heard by the unlettered twelve fishermen disciples from the mouth of Jesus - the supreme sannyasi in a human form, his mind and soul fixed in Brahman, solicitous for the sufferings of mankind, the gracious loving Lord of the bhaktas, the God-incarnate and surcharged with the love of Hari; the chant which came out of the mouth of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the form of Srimad Bhagavata Gita in the holy field of Kurukshetra. The nectarine words Gudakesha (an appellation of Arjuna), the son of Kunti, the humbly earnest had heard amidst sounds of thunder from the mouth of Guru Sachchidananda who had come down in human form and served as his charioteer -

Kavim puranam anushasitaram

anor aniyamsam anusmared yah.

Sarvasya dhataram achintya rupam,

adityavarnam tamasah parastat. (Gita 8:9)

Praynakale manasa achalena

bhaktya yukto yogabalena cha eva.

Bhruvor madhye pranam aveshya samyak

sa tam praram purusham upaiti divyam. (Gita 8:10)

Yad aksharam vedavido vadanti

vishanti yad yatayo vitaragah.

Yad icchanto brahmacharyam charanti

tat te padam samgrahena pravaksye. (Gita 8:11)

[The Omniscient, the Ancient, the Ruler, Minuter than an atom, the Supporter of all, of Form inconceivable, Effulgent like the sun, and Beyond all darkness; he who meditates on this Resplendent, Supreme Purusha, at the time of death, with a steady mind, devotion and strength of yoga, well fixing the entire Prana in the middle of the eye-brows, he reaches Him.

That which the knowers of Veda call the Imperishable, and into which enter the sannyasins, self-controlled and freed from attachment, and desiring which they lead a life of continence, that I shall declare to you with brevity.]

As Thakur Sri Ramakrishna takes his seat, he sees the beautifully decorated pulpit of the Samaj and bows to pay his obeisance. Since they talk of God from this platform, so he feels that it is a holy spot. He sees that they talk of the Imperishable from here, so all the holy places meet here. As on seeing the courtroom one thinks of the lawsuit and the judge, similarly on seeing the spot of the story of the Lord one is inspired of God.

Trailokya sings songs. Sri Ramakrishna says, "Yes, you sing that song so beautifully, 'O Mother, make me mad'... Please sing that very song."

Trailokya sings -

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love.

What need is there for knowledge or reason?

Make me drunk with the wine of Thy love.

O Mother, who steals the hearts of the bhaktas! Drown me in the sea of Thy love.

In Thine mad house of the world some laugh, some weep, some dance filled with joy;

Jesus, Moses, Sri Chaitanya, O Mother, are all dead drunk with Thy love.

When, O Mother, shall I be blessed by merging in You?

It is the fair of the mad in heavens, the Guru and the disciple both the same.

Who can understand this play of love?

O Mother, Thou art mad in love. Nay, Thou art the glory of the mad.

O Mother, make me rich with the wealth of love, this slave is so poor in love.

As Sri Ramakrishna hears the song, there is a change in his bhava (mood). He at once goes into samadhi - 'disregarding the great essence, disregarding the twenty four categories on seeing the Essence beyond all essences within himself.' It is as if all his organs of action, organs of senses, mind, intellect and ego have vanished. His body is there as if in a picture. One day on seeing such a state of the Lord of Pandavas (Sri Krishna) Yudhishtira, the chief Pandava, with his soul completely merged in Sri Krishna cried. At that time Bhishma Deva, the pride of the dynasty of the Aryans, was lying on the bed of arrows deeply meditating on Bhagavan in his last moments. The Kurukshetra battle had just ended. It was the day when one cried in spite of oneself. Not been able to understand this state of samadhi of Sri Krishna, he began to weep. He thought that Sri Krishna had perhaps left his body.

Chapter Two

Talk on spiritual matters - formless God of the Brahmo Samaj

After some time, Sri Ramakrishna regains somewhat normal state and instructs the Brahmo bhaktas in the state of bhava. This divine bhava is quite intense so much so that the speaker is speaking as if intoxicated. This bhava (mood) is gradually diminishing. At last he returns to the normal state as before.

'I shall eat siddhi' - Gita and the eight siddhis (occult powers) - what is God-realization?

Sri Ramakrishna — Mother! I don't want *karanananda* (the joy of causal). I

shall eat *siddhi*.

“Siddhi, i.e. the attainment of the Essence - not a siddhi out of the eight siddhis. Krishna spoke of that siddhi to Arjuna. Said he, ‘Brother, listen. If a person has even one of the eight siddhis then know that he cannot attain Me.’ Because this siddhi will bring him pride and when there is even a trace of pride in a person, he cannot reach God.

“And there are the *pravartakas* (beginners), *sadhakas* (the practitioners), the *siddhas* (spiritually matured ones) and the *siddha* of the *siddhas* (the most perfect among the *siddhas*). He who has just taken to the worship of the Lord belongs to the class of the *pravartakas*. A *pravartaka* makes marks of sandalwood paste or so on his forehead, applies the tilak* and uses the rosary - he shows lot of such external signs. The *sadhaka* is more advanced. His tendency to show off gets reduced. He has yearning to seek the Lord and calls upon Him sincerely. He repeats His Name and prays to Him with a guileless heart. And who is a *siddha*? He who has the firm conviction that God is there and that He is doing everything; such a person has had God’s vision. And who is ‘the *siddha* of the *siddhas*’? He who has conversed with God - not just seen Him but talked to Him as a son to his father, or as a mother to her child, or as a friend to a friend (in *sakhya bhava*), or as a lover (in *madhura bhava*).

“There is one thing to have faith that wood has fire within itself and it is another to make fire with it, cook rice and feel filled and satisfied by eating it.

“There is no end to a divine state. There is always one state higher than the other.”

God of the worldly men - yearning and realization - be firm

(In spiritual mood) “These people are Brahmajnanis and believe in God without form. This is very good.

(To Brahma bhaktas) “Believe firmly in one - either in God with form or God without form. You will realize Him only then, not otherwise. A man with firm faith in God with form will attain Him and also he who have firm faith in God without form. Whether you eat sugared bread straight or awry, it will taste sweet both ways. (All laugh.)

“But one has to be firm, one has to call upon Him with a yearning heart. Do you know what the God of the worldly man is like? It is like the children imitating the quarrel between the younger aunt and the elder, and saying each other, ‘I swear by God.’ It is also like the well-dressed babu who chewing a beetle leaf and holding a stick in his hand, plucks a flower as he strolls and says to his companion, ‘What a beautiful* flower God has made!’ But this bhava of such a worldly man is only momentary like a drop of water on red-hot iron.

“You have to firm in one. Dive. Without diving you cannot reach the gems below in the sea. It avails nothing if you swim on the surface.”

Saying this Thakur Sri Ramakrishna begins to sing in his sweet voice the same song that had charmed Keshab Sen and other devotees. All those present there feel as if they are in heaven or in Vaikuntha (abode of Lord Vishnu).

Dive, dive, dive, O my mind, into the Sea of Beauty.

Make a search in the regions lower and lower down under the sea.

You will find the jewel, the wealth of *prema* (intense love of God) within your heart.

Search, search and search you will find Vrindavan within your heart.

Then shall lighten forever the lamp of divine wisdom.

Who is that Being that steers a boat on land - on land, on solid ground?

Says Kabir, 'Listen, listen, listen! Meditate on the hallowed feet of the Guru.'

Chapter Three

In the company of Brahma bhaktas - Brahma Samaj and talk on glory of God

Sri Ramakrishna — Dive. Learn to love the Lord. Forget yourself in His prema. Look here, I have heard your worship. But why do you talk so much of the glory of the Lord in your Brahma Samaj? 'O Lord! You have made the sky, You have made big oceans. You have created the regions of the moon, of the sun, of the stars and so on.' What is the need of all this?

"People begin to wonder just on seeing the babu's garden - what beautiful trees, what flowers, what a lake, what a drawing room, what beautiful pictures therein. Seeing all these they stand speechless in wonder. But who looks for the babu, the owner of the garden? Only one or two persons do so. While looking for God with a longing heart you can see Him, you can know Him, you can talk to Him the way I am talking to you. I tell you truly you can see Him.

"For whom do I speak these words - who even believes in it!"

Scriptures and revelation - the Law of Revelation

"Can one reach God by reading scriptures? At the most by reading scriptures you may know that He exists. But unless you yourself dive deep you cannot see God. Only when you have dived deep and He lets you know Him all your doubts get cleared. You may read a book a thousand times, you may chant a thousand verses, you cannot hold God without earnestly diving into Him. Mere learning will confuse you, it can never make you catch Him.

"What use is of scriptures or other holy books alone? Without His grace nothing will happen. Search Him with a longing heart. By His grace you will see Him. He will talk to you."

Brahma Samaj and equality - God's guilt of inequality

The Sub-judge — Does He shower His grace more on one and less on the other? If that be so, God is guilty of creating inequality (amidst His creation).

Sri Ramakrishna — What do you say! Take the two words 'ghora-ta' and 'sara-ta'*. Both have 'ta' (as suffix). Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar also said the same as you are saying. He said, 'Mahashay, has God given more power to one and lesser to the other?' I replied, 'He is present in every being as Vibhu (omnipresent). So he is in everything. As He is in me, He is in ant too. But there is special power in some. If everybody is equal, why have we come to see you on hearing your name, Ishwara Vidyasagar? Have you two horns that we have come to see? That is not so. You are generous, you are learned. You have more of these qualities than others. So, you are well known. You know there

are persons who can defeat a hundred men single handedly while there are others who run away in fear of a single person.’

“If there was no special power, why would people consider Keshab so great?

“The Gita says: If a person is considered great by many, whether it is because of his learning, or ability to sing, or play on musical instruments, or his oratory, or anything else, know it for certain that he has special power of God within.”

A Brahma Bhakta (to the sub-judge) — Please accept what he says.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Brahma devotee) — What sort of a man you are! Merely accepting without conviction! It is deception. I see you as an image of deception.

The Brahma devotee feels very much ashamed of himself.

Chapter Four

Brahma Samaj - Keshab and non-attachment in family life - renunciation of world The earlier story of his life - instructions to Keshab - spiritual practice in a solitary place - signs of spiritual knowledge

The Sub-judge — Sir, must one renounce the family?

Sri Ramakrishna — No, why should you have to renounce the family? You can do it even while living in family. Even so you must live for sometime in a solitary place. You should practise sadhana on the Lord in solitude. You should build a place near your house where you can retire after taking your meals at home. Keshab Sen, Pratap and others told me, ‘Sir, we have the same conviction as Raja Janak.’ I said to them, ‘You cannot become Raja Janak just by saying so. Raja Janak had first practised so many austerities in a solitary place with his head down and legs up! You people must do something, only then you can become Raja Janak. Such and such person can write English very fluently; could he do so all of a sudden? He was the son of a poor man. He used to live in the house of somebody, cooked food for him, ate a little himself and learnt to read and write with great difficulty. That is how he is able to write so fluently now.’

“I also said something else to Keshab Sen: Without going to a lonely place how can you get rid of a serious disease? You are a patient of delirium and the room in which you are living you have pickles, tamarind and a pitcher of water. How can you then get rid of the disease? Just see, by only talking of pickles and tamarind my mouth has begun to water. (All laugh.) You all know what happens when you live amidst them. Women are like these pickles and tamarind for men. Sensual desires are like the pitcher of water. There is no end to the thirst of sensual desires. And all such things are there in the patient’s room. Can the disease of delirium be cured this way? One should live at a different place for a few days, at a place where there are no pickles, tamarind and the pitcher of water. Later, when one is cured, one can return to his family without running any risk. After attaining Him, if you come and live in the family, ‘woman and gold’ can do no harm. You can then remain unattached like Janak. But in the beginning you have to be cautious. Live in solitude and carry out long spiritual exercises. When the Aswattha (peepal) tree is a small plant, it has to be protected by a fence all around it so that the ox or the goat may not destroy it. However, when it has grown a thick trunk,

no fence is needed. Even if you tie an elephant to it, no harm can come to it. If you practise sadhana in a solitary place, develop devotion at the lotus feet of God, gain strength and then go home and live the family life 'woman and gold' will not harm you at all.

"Make curds in a solitary corner and churn it to bring out butter. When the butter of jnana and bhakti is taken out of the milk of the mind, it will float unattached on the water of the household. But if you keep the immature mind, which is in the state of milk, on the water of the household it will not be able to float.

"To attain God, hold on to His lotus feet with one hand and do your work with the other while living in family. When you are free from work, hold His lotus feet with both the hands, live in solitude, meditate on Him alone and serve Him."

The Sub-judge (joyfully) — Sir, very beautiful indeed! There is nothing other than this. What else is required other than sadhana in a lonely place? But this is what we forget. We think that we have become Raja Janak at once. (Sri Ramakrishna and all others laugh). **There is no need to leave the family life. One can attain the Lord even while living in family.** Hearing this too my mind is happy and at peace.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why do you people have to renounce? If you have to fight, it is better to fight from within the fort. You have to fight against your senses, against hunger and thirst, against all these. This fight is best fought while living in the household. Moreover, in the age of Kali life depends on food. May be you do not find food (outside the family). That being so, all talk of God would be knocked out of your brain. A person said to his wife, 'I am going to leave the family.' The wife was somewhat spiritually wise. She said, 'Why do you have to wander about? If you do not have to beg your bread from ten homes, you may then go. When you would have to do this, it is better to do it from this home?'

"Why do you have to renounce? It is so convenient at home. You will not have to worry about food. And there is no harm in living together with your wife. In family, all your bodily needs are easily met. If you fall ill, you will have persons who can nurse you.

"Janak, Vyasa and Vaishishtha lived in family after attaining jnana. They wielded both the swords - one of jnana and the other of karma (action)."

The Sub-judge — Sir, how to know that one has attained jnana?

Sri Ramakrishna — When you have attained jnana, you no longer see God at a distance from you. He is no longer 'He' for you - He becomes 'this'. He is seen in the heart. God is within everybody. He who seeks Him, finds Him.

The Sub-judge — Sir, I am a sinner. How can I say that God is within me?

Brahmo Samaj, Christianity and the doctrine of sin

Sri Ramakrishna — You people harp only on sin! Perhaps this is so in Christianity. Somebody gave me a book (the Bible). I made somebody read out to me a few portions. It was all about one thing only - sin, and sin. I have uttered His name. I have chanted Ishwara, or Rama, or Hari. How can there be sin in me? You must have such a faith. You must have faith in the power of

Name.

The Sub-judge — Sir, how to have such a faith?

Sri Ramakrishna — Love Him. In a song, which you people sing, says, 'Lord! Can one ever know You by performing yajna without loving You?' Pray, cry, weep aloud to Him in a solitary corner so that you may gain such attraction for Him, such love for the Lord. People shed pitcherfuls of tears when their wives are ill, or they lose money, or for job. Who weeps for the Lord? Just tell me, I would like to know.

Chapter Five

Give God the power of attorney - for how long have you duties towards family

Trailokya — Sir, he has no time. He has to work for the British.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the sub-judge) — Well, give Him the power of attorney. If you give your burden to a good person, can he ever do you wrong? Give Him all your burden with a sincere heart and be at peace. Do the work He has assigned to you.

“The kitten does not have a calculative mind. It just calls out, ‘Ma, ma’ (mew, mew). If its mother keeps it in the kitchen, it remains lying there - it only mews for its mother from there. And when the mother puts it on a bed in some home, it still has the same state of mind - it repeats, ‘Ma, ma.’ ”

The Sub-judge — We are householders. For how long have we to attend to these duties?

Sri Ramakrishna — What else do you people have other than duties? To bring up the sons, to provide for your wife and to save money for the upkeep of your wife when you are no more. In case you don't do these, you are a heartless fellow. Sukadeva and other sages had retained kindness. He who has no kindness is not at all a human being.

The Sub-judge — How long must one look after one's children?

Sri Ramakrishna — Till they reach adulthood. When a bird grows up to be able to look after itself, its mother hits it out with its beak - it does not let it come near it. (All laugh.)

The Sub-judge — What is one's duty towards the wife?

Sri Ramakrishna — During your lifetime you have to instruct her in religion, you have to provide for her. If she is chaste, you will make arrangement for her upkeep when you are no more.

“However, when a person is surcharged by spiritual knowledge, he is not left with any duties to perform. Then it is God who looks after when you are not able to do so. When a zemindar dies leaving behind a minor son, the guardian takes the whole responsibility for the boy. It is the matter of law. You know it all quite well.”

The Sub-judge — Yes, Sir.

Vijay Goswami — Aha! How beautiful! He who meditates on Him with a fixed

mind, he who is mad in His ecstatic love, God Himself takes up his burden. A minor at once gets a 'guardian'. Aha, when will such a state come? He who has such a state is lucky indeed!

Trailokya — Sir, can one gain true knowledge while living in the household? Can one attain the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — But why? You are already completely absorbed in Him. (All laugh.) You have already given your mind completely to God while living in the household. Then why is it not possible in the household? Certainly, it will be.

Signs of a jnani in household - signs of God-realization - jivanmukta

Trailokya — What are the signs that one has attained jnana while living in the household?

Sri Ramakrishna— Tears from the eyes and horripilation at the name of Hari. No sooner does one hears His sweet Name, one's hair on the body stand on end and a stream of tears flows from the eyes.

“So long as there is attachment for sensory objects, so long as there is attraction for 'woman and gold', body consciousness doesn't leave you. The lesser the attachment for sensory objects, the nearer you are to the *atmajnana* (knowledge of the Self) and to the same extent the body consciousness becomes less. One attains *atmajnana* when attachment to the sensory objects has completely disappeared. Then one begins to feel that the soul is one and the body another. It is difficult to separate the kernel of the coconut from its shell on cutting it with a heavy knife till the water in it has dried up. When water is dried up you have just to strike and shake it and the kernel gets detached. This is called a dry coconut.

“The signs of God-realization are that a man becomes like a dry coconut, gets rid of the identification of the body with the self. Pleasure and pain of the body are no longer his concern. He does not want bodily conveniences. He roams about as *jivanmukta* (liberated in this very life).

“**Kali's devotees are jivanmuktas. They are full of unending joy.** When you see that at the very name of the Lord tears begin to flow and hair on the body stand on end, know it that attachment towards 'woman and gold' has disappeared, that one has attained God. If the matchstick is dry, rub it just once and it will ignite. And if it is wet, you may rub it fifty times, it will not ignite; then you have only to throw away the wooden sticks. If your mind is immersed in the liquid of sensory pleasures, is wet in the liquid of 'woman and gold,' inspiration for God will not come to your mind. Try you may a thousand times, all your efforts go in vain. It is only when the liquid of sensory pleasures dries up, there is instantaneous inspiration of God.”

Yearning is the way - He is your very own Mother

Trailokya — How to dry up the liquid of sensory pleasures?

Sri Ramakrishna — Call on the Mother with a longing heart. The liquid of sensory pleasures dries up on seeing Her - your attachment to ‘woman and gold’ will fully disappear. When you realize that He is your own Mother, it happens at that very moment. He is not your stepmother. He is your own Mother! Be earnest and even stubborn with Her! The boy holds up his mother’s sari while asking her for money to buy a kite. The mother is perhaps busy talking to other women. Initially, the mother refuses outright, saying, ‘No, your father does not want this. I’ll ask him when he comes. You may not do something wrong.’ But when the boy starts crying and does not leave her, the mother says to the women, ‘Just wait for a while sisters. Let me once pacify this boy and return.’ Saying so, she opens her box with a key and throws a paisa at the boy. You also become stubborn with the Mother. She will certainly grant you Her darshan. I said the same to the Sikhs. They had come to the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. We conversed in front of the Mother Kali’s shrine. They said, ‘God is all kindness.’ I said, ‘How is He all kindness?’ They said, ‘Because Maharaj, He is always looking after us. He gives us *dharma* (religion), *artha* (money) - all these. He gives us food.’ I said, ‘When somebody has children, doesn’t he take up the responsibility of feeding them, do the brahmins of the locality take up this duty?’

The Sub-judge — Sir, so is He not all kindness?

Sri Ramakrishna — Why should He be so? The one thing I told them was that **He is our very own**. We can force Him! To our near and dear ones we can even say, ‘Won’t you give, you rascal ...?’

Chapter Six

Ego and the Sub-judge

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Sub-judge) — Well, do pride and ego come from *jnana* or from *ajnana* (ignorance)? Pride is a *tamoguna* and results from ignorance. As this pride is a veil, so one cannot see God. When ‘I’ is dead, all problems vanish. Pride is of no use. Neither this body nor this wealth is going to last. A crazy fellow once saw the image of Durga. Seeing the decoration and ornamentation he said, ‘Mother, You may decorate Yourself as much as You like. After two or three days I shall pull You out and throw into the Ganga.’ So I tell everybody that whether it be a judge or anybody else, all are for two days (transitory). So, one should give up pride and ego.”

The Brahma Samaj and equality - people have different natures

“The natures of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are different from each other. The signs of tamoguna are pride, sleep, overeating, lust, anger and so on. A rajoguni person has the tendency to increase one’s work and to dress up well. He keeps his house clean and tidy. He also keeps the photo of the queen in the drawing room. When he meditates on God, he puts on pure silk cloth and a string of *rudraksha* beads round his neck with a gold bead in between. When somebody comes to see the shrine, he accompanies him, saying, ‘Come this way, there is more of it. See the white marble floor, see the nata mandir (the concert room) with sixteen openings.’ And then he gives away charity in the presence of others. A *sattva* guni person is very calm and well-behaved, any clothes do for him, earns only to live, never flatters anybody for money. The house remains in want of repairs, he doesn’t care whether his children have sufficient clothings or not, makes no efforts for name or fame. He

meditates and gives away in charity secretly - so that nobody comes to know of it. He meditates inside the mosquito net. People think that the gentleman could not have sleep at night, so he is now sleeping till so late. The sattvaguna is the last step of the staircase - the roof comes only after it. After sattvaguna God-realization does not take long. Just a little more advancement and he will attain Him. (To the sub-judge) You said that all people are equal. Just see, how many different natures there are.

“And then there are so many classes (of human beings): The *nitya* jivas (ever free), the *mukta* jivas (liberated ones), the *mumukshu* jivas (aspirants) and the *baddha* jivas (bound). There are so many different types. Narada and Sukadeva are *nitya* jivas (ever free). They are like a steamboat which not only crosses over but also takes along with it big animals, even an elephant. They are like a *tehsildar* (sub-divisional revenue officer). Having governed one *taluka* (region) he goes to govern the other. Then there are the *mumukshu* jivas (seekers after liberation) who try earnestly with their heart and soul to free themselves from the net of the world. Only one or two of them can free themselves from the net. They become the *mukta* jivas (liberated ones). The *nitya* jivas are like the clever fish, they never get entangled in the net of the world. As for the *baddha* jivas, the worldly people, they do not get awareness. They are in the meshes of the net, rather bound by it, yet do not even know of it. These people when they see God’s glory being narrated before them, they leave that place, saying, ‘The name of the Lord is repeated at the time of death. Why just now?’ And when he is lying on the deathbed, he says to his wife and children, ‘Why is the lamp burning so brightly? Lower the wick a little, otherwise so much oil will be consumed.’ And thinking of his children and wife he weeps saying, ‘Alas, what will happen to them when I am gone?’ The bound person repeats those very actions that made him suffer so much. He is like the camel who bleeds profusely on eating thorny bushes, yet does not give up eating them. His son has died leaving him in grief, yet he produces children year after year. All is spent in the daughter’s marriage, yet he will go on begetting daughters every year. He says, ‘I can’t help it! It is my destiny.’ If he goes on pilgrimage, he does not find time to meditate on God. He tires himself out just by carrying the bundles of his wife and children. In the temple all he does is to get *charanamrita* for his son to drink and make him bow to the Deity and so on. The bound soul takes up service under others to earn for the upkeep of himself, his wife and children. He earns money by telling lies, deceit and flattery. Such a person looks down upon those who call upon the Lord and meditate on Him, saying that they are mad. (To the sub-judge) There are so many kinds of men, you see! And you said that they are all the same! How many different natures! Some possessing more power and the others less!”

**The bound soul does not take the name of the Lord
at the time of death**

“The bound soul, attached to worldliness, talks only of the world at the time of death. What use is it to count the beads superficially, take bath in the Ganga or visit holy places? If within oneself one has attachment for the world, the world alone comes before the eyes at the time of death. What nonsense he talks (just before dying)! Perhaps in delirium he cries out, ‘Turmeric powder, five seasoned spices and cassia leaf.’ Normally the parrot repeats ‘Radha Krishna’ but when a cat seizes upon it, the only sound that comes out of his throat is ‘tan-tan’. The Gita says the same: You will carry with you to your next life what you think at the time of your death. Raja Bharat left his body

uttering, 'Deer, deer.' So he was reborn as a deer. If you think of the Lord at the time of death, you attain Him and then you don't have to return to this world.

The Brahma Bhakta — Sir, say one has meditated on the Lord at other times but not at the time of death, does it mean that one will have to come to this world of pleasures and pains again? But why, had he not been meditating on the Lord earlier?

Sri Ramakrishna — A man does meditate on God, but he does not have faith in Him. So, he forgets Him time and again, and gets attached to world. It is like the elephant who has just been washed. It again soils itself with mud and dust. *Manamattakari**. But if the elephant is taken to its stable soon after the wash, it cannot rub mud and slush on its body. If one thinks of God at the time of death, one's mind is purified; such a mind does not again get a chance to become attached to 'woman and gold'.

“One has no faith in God, that is why one suffers so much from the consequences of one's actions. People say that when you are taking a dip in the Ganga, your sins leave you and perch themselves on the tree at the bank of the river. As soon as you come back to the bank after the bath, all your sins again fly back and sit firmly on your shoulders.(All laugh.) You must devise means beforehand so that your mind is in God at the time of death. The way is - *Abhyasa Yoga* (constant sincere practice). You will then remember Him in your last moments too.”

The Brahma Bhakta — We had a fine conversation. Very fine indeed!

Sri Ramakrishna — O, I have been talking impertinent! But do you know what is my bhava (state of mind): 'I am the tool and He the mechanic; I am the dwelling and He is the dweller; I am the carriage, He is the engineer; I am the chariot, He is the charioteer; I move as He makes me move; I do as He makes me do.'

Chapter Seven

Sri Ramakrishna in the joy of singing God's name

Trailokya sings again. The drum and the cymbal are being played upon. Sri Ramakrishna is dancing mad in the love of God. While dancing he has gone into samadhi a number of times. Now he stands in samadhi - his body motionless, eyes fixed, face smiling, he is leaning on the shoulder of a dear devotee. And when he comes out of his bhava (deep emotion), he dances like an intoxicated elephant. When he gains external consciousness, he adds his own lines to the song -

Mother, dance round your devotees,

Don't dance alone, make them dance too.

O, my Mother, dance once on the lotus of my heart.

O Mother, Brahmamayi, dance in the same world-bewitching form of Yours.

It is a rare sight - the dance of this divine child maddened with love, his soul merged in the Mother! Brahma bhaktas dance all around him like iron fillings around the magnet. They all utter the name of Brahman in frenzy (of love). They again call out, "Mother, Mother," the sweet name of Brahman. Many people weep like children as they repeat, "Mother, Mother."

At the end of the kirtan (community singing of hymns) all take their seats. The evening worship of the Samaj has not yet been performed. In the joy of the singing of

hymns, it seems, all rules have been brushed aside - God knows where. Vijaykrishna Goswami will take the pulpit after dusk - such is the arrangement. It is about eight p. m.

Everybody takes his seat. Sri Ramakrishna has also taken his seat. In front is Vijay. A message comes that the old mother-in-law of Vijay and some other women bhaktas will have darshan of Sri Ramakrishna and talk to him. So, Thakur goes into a room to meet them.

He returns after a while and says to Vijay, "You see, what a great bhakti your mother-in-law has! She says, 'I will not talk on worldly matters now - a wave goes and then another wave arrives.' I said, 'What does it matter to you? You have already attained jnana.' At this, your mother-in-law said, 'What knowledge have I gained? I have not gone yet beyond *vidya* maya (the power of knowledge) and *avidya* maya (power of nescience).' It is not sufficient to go beyond *avidya*. You have to go beyond *vidya* - then alone jnana (spiritual knowledge) will be gained. You yourself say so."

While this conversation is going on, enters Veni Pal.

Veni Pal (to Vijay) — Mahashay, please rise. It is already very late. Let us start the worship.

Vijay — Mahashay, what is the need of worship now? There is provision of *payas* (pudding made with rice and milk) first and then lentils and such other eatables after it!

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — As is the bhakta, so is the provision made by him. The *sattvaguni* devotee provides payas, the *rajoguni* offers fifty kinds of eatables to the deity while the *tamoguni* bhakta sacrifices a goat or some such animal.

Vijay ponders whether he should go up to the podium for worship or not.

Chapter Eight

Lectures in the Brahma Samaj - duties of a religious teacher - God alone is the Guru

[Instructions to Vijay]

Vijay — If you permit, I may speak from the pulpit.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is enough if one gives up pride. 'I am lecturing, you listen' - if you do not have this pride, it is enough. Does pride result from knowledge or from ignorance? He who has no pride can alone attain jnana. The rainwater stands on a lower level, it flows down from the higher one.

"So long as you have pride, you cannot gain jnana and also you cannot attain liberation. You have to come again and again to this world. The calf bleats *hamba hamba* (I, I), so it has to undergo so much of suffering. The butcher cuts it; its skin is used for making shoes. And then it is used to make drums and tom-toms. How much beating does this drum take! There is no end to its sufferings! Last of all, gut is made with its intestines. This gut is then used in the bow of the carder. When the sound *tuhun tuhun* (you, you) comes out of the carder's string, it is freed. It no longer utters, 'I, I.' It only says *tuhun tuhun* (you, you), in other words - Lord, you are the doer, I do nothing. You are the machine man, I am the machine. Indeed, You are all."

“Guru, father and doer - these three words prick my body like thorns. I am His son, His eternal child. How can I then be the father? God is the doer, I am a non-doer; He is the machine-man, I am the machine.

“**If anybody calls me guru**, I say to him, ‘What guru? Get away, you rascal.’ There is no guru other than Sachchidananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute). Except for Him there is no way. He alone is the pilot to take one across the sea of the world.

(To Vijay) “It is very difficult ‘to be a religious teacher.’ It is harmful when a person sees that a dozen men accept him as guru. Putting his one leg across the other he says, ‘Listen to what I say.’ **This is a very bad state of mind.** Such a person can go only that far, gets only this much respect. People will at the most say, ‘Aha, how well Vijay Babu speaks! He is a great man of knowledge.’ I say, ‘Don’t think so.’ As for me, I say to the Mother, ‘Ma, You are the mechanic, I am Your instrument. I work as you make me work, I speak as you make me speak.’”

Vijay (humbly) — I shall go up (the podium) and sit only when you ask me to do so.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — What should I say? The moon is everybody’s uncle. Why don’t you ask Him? If you are sincere, there is no danger.

When Vijay requested Sri Ramakrishna again and again, he said, “Go up and follow the custom. It is enough if you have sincere devotion for Him.”

Vijay climbs up the podium and offers worship according to the Brahmo custom. He utters, “Ma, Ma” during his prayer. It moves everyone.

After the worship meals are being arranged for serving the devotees. All the cotton carpets and the thick woollen ones are being removed. Leaf plates are placed on the ground (for serving the meals). All the devotees sit down to eat. Thakur Sri Ramakrishna has also been given a seat. He sits down and offers the tasty items of the meals given by Veni Pal - puris, kachouris, papad, various kinds of sweets, curd, rice pudding etc. - to God and also takes the prasad full of joy.

Chapter Nine

Mother Kali and Brahman are one when one gains full jnana

After the meals everybody is getting ready to return home while chewing beetle leaf. Sri Ramakrishna sits in a corner and talks to Vijay before his departure. M. is also present.

Brahmo Samaj and the Motherhood of God

Sri Ramakrishna — You prayed to Him calling, ‘Ma, Ma.’ This is very good. They say, one is attracted more by the mother than by the father. You can force your mother but you cannot do so with your father. Cartfuls of money was being brought from the farming estate of Trailokya’s mother with so many men in red turbans guarding it with rods in their hands. Trailokya was standing with some persons on the roadside. He forcibly took away the whole treasure. You can use greater force on your mother’s treasure. Don’t they say that you cannot go to law against your son?

Vijay — If Brahman is the Mother, is He with form or without form?

Sri Ramakrishna — **Brahman is the same as Kali** (the Primeval Power).

When It is inactive, I call It Brahman. When It is creating, preserving and dissolving I call It Shakti (Power). Still water can be an illustration of Brahman. When water is in motion, it is like Shakti or Kali. Kali, i.e. who sports with Mahakala (Brahman). Kali 'is with form, has a shape and is without form.' If you believe in the Formless, you will meditate on Kali taking Her formless. Be firm on one. When you meditate on It, She will Herself make you understand what She is like. When you reach Shyampukur, you will also know Telepada. You will then know that He not only exists but also comes and speaks to you the way I am speaking to you. Have faith, it will all come about. And there is one thing more. If you believe in the formless be firm in your belief. But don't take to dogmatism, don't emphasize about Him that God can only be this and not that. Say, 'I believe that God is formless. **What else God is, only He knows.** I don't know and I also can't understand.' Can a person with his ounce of intellect know the nature of God? Can a one seer utensil contain four seers of milk? If He in His grace grants darshan and makes one understand Himself then alone one can understand, not otherwise.'

"He who is Brahman is also Shakti and the Mother. Says Rama Prasad:

O mind, understand just from the hints the one upon whom I meditate as the Mother.

Otherwise, should I break the pitcher of Her mystery on the terrace before all?

Upon whom I meditate, in other words is none else but the Mother I am calling upon.

"And then Rama Prasad again repeats -

After understanding the mystery of Kali and Brahman, I have given up both dharma and *adharma*.

"*Adharma* means engaging in unrighteous acts. Dharma means the prescribed duties - so much charity, so much feeding of the brahmins, all this is dharma."

Vijay — What remains after one has given up both dharma and adharma?

Sri Ramakrishna — **Pure devotion.** I said to the Mother: Here is your dharma and here is your *adharma*, take them and give me pure bhakti. Here is your piety and here is your sin, take them and grant me pure bhakti. Here is your jnana and here is your ajnana, take them and grant me pure bhakti.

"Just see, I didn't even ask for jnana, nor did I ask for worldly name and fame. When one has given up dharma and adharma, that which remains is pure bhakti - *amla*^[1], *nishkama*^[2], *ahuteki*^[3] devotion.

Brahmo Samaj and Brahman ascertained by Vedanta - the Primeval Power

The Brahmo Bhakta — Is He different from His Power?

Sri Ramakrishna— After one has attained *purna* jnana (the Ultimate knowledge), both are one and the same. Like the jewel and its lustre are inseparable. As soon as the lustre of a jewel comes to the mind, one thinks of the jewel itself. It is like milk inseparable from its whiteness - think of one and you think of the other. But this oneness does not come about till one has attained *purna* jnana. When one has *purna* jnana, one goes into samadhi. Then all the twenty four elements leave you including the *aham* element (ego). How does one feel in samadhi, one cannot tell by the word of the mouth. When one comes down a little, one can give some hint of it. When I utter 'Oon,

oon' after samadhi, I have already come down a hundred cubits. Brahman is beyond the Vedic doctrine - one cannot speak of It. There is no 'I' or 'You' there.

“As long as there is 'I' and 'You', as long as there is the knowledge, 'I pray or I meditate,' so long 'You (the Lord) listens to my prayer' - this awareness also persists. Then one also thinks of God as a person. 'You are the Master, I am Your servant; You are the whole, I am Your portion; You are the Mother, I am Your son' - this awareness remains within. There is a feeling of duality, I am one and You are also one. This feeling of duality He Himself gives. That is how one is aware of being a male or a female. One feels that here is light and there is darkness and so on. So long as one is aware of duality, one has to believe in Shakti (Personal God). He Himself has kept this 'I-ness' within us. Reason a thousand times, this 'I' does not leave you. And then He also manifests Himself as a person.

“So long as there is 'I', so long as you are conscious of duality, you should not take Brahman as attributeless. Till then you must accept Brahman with attributes. This very Brahman with attributes has been called Kali or Primeval Power in the Vedas, the Puranas and the Tantras.”

Vijay — How to have darshan of this Primeval Power? How to have this knowledge of Brahman?

Sri Ramakrishna — Pray to Him with a yearning heart and weep. This will purify your mind. In clear water you will be able to see the reflection of the sun. In the mirror of the 'I' of the devotee you will be able to see Brahman with attributes, the Primeval Power. But the mirror must be very clean. If it is stained, it will not catch the correct image.

“So long as there is 'I', you should see the sun in the water of 'I'. There is no other way at all for seeing the sun. Moreover, so long as you have no means to see the real sun other than the reflected sun, only the reflected sun is the real sun - sixteen *annas* (hundred percent) real. As long as 'I' is real, the reflected sun is also real - sixteen annas real. This reflected sun is the Primeval Power.

“If you want to attain the knowledge of Brahman, take up that reflection and proceed towards the real sun. The Brahman with attributes who listens to your prayers, pray to Him; He will Himself grant you Brahmajnana (the knowledge of Brahman). This is because He who is Brahman with attributes is Himself the attributeless Brahman. He who is Shakti is Himself Brahman. After *purna* jnana (the Ultimate knowledge) there is no duality.

“The Mother grants Brahmajnana too, but generally a pure devotee does not want Brahmajnana.

“And there is an another path, that of Jnana Yoga, a very difficult path indeed. You people of Brahmo Samaj are not jnanis, you are bhaktas. Those who are jnanis believe that Brahman is true and the world an illusion - like a dream. I, you, all are like a dream.”

Ill-will in Brahmo Samaj

“God is *antaryamin* (knower of one's mind). Pray to Him innocently with a pure mind. He will make you understand all. Give up egoism and take refuge in Him. You will get everything.

O my mind, live by yourself,

Don't go to any other's house.

Search within yourself,
You will find there all you are looking for.
I say brother, He Himself is the philosopher's stone, the supreme wealth,
He can give you all you want.
At the door of *Chintamani* (wish fulfilling gem; God) there are heaps and heaps of
gems.

“When you meet people outside, you should be affectionate to all of them, be one with them - you will not have any grudge against anyone. Whether a person believes in God with form and does not believe in the formless, whether someone accepts the formless and does not believe in God with form; so an so is a Hindu, so and so is a Muslim, or a Christian - saying so, do not turn away and show your contempt. God has made them understand in different ways. Know that people have different natures. Know this and mix in their company as much as it is possible for you and love them. You will then go home and enjoy peace and happiness. ‘Lighting the lamp of jnana in your house, see the face of the Divine Mother.’ You will be able to see your own real Self in the home. When the cowherd boys come out to graze their cows all the cows mix together in the field and form one single herd. When they return home at dusk, they again separate from each other. Each one remains by itself in the home.”

The sannyasi does not accumulate - right use of wealth by Veni Pal

After 10 p.m. Sri Ramakrishna enters the carriage to return to the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. He is accompanied by one or two attendant bhaktas. It is very dark, the carriage is standing under a tree. Veni Pal comes to put puris, sweets etc. in the carriage for Ramalal.

Veni Pal — Sir! Ramalal has not been able to come.
I would like to send some food for Ramalal with him. Kindly permit.

Sri Ramakrishna — I say, Babu Veni Pal! Please don't send all this with me!
It is harmful to me.
I must not carry anything with me to accumulate. Please don't take it ill.

Veni Pal — As you please. Do bless me.

Sri Ramakrishna — It has been very enjoyable today. See, he is a man indeed who holds his wealth as his slave. They who do not know how to make the right use of money are not men though they are born as such. They only have the looks of a human being but their conduct is that of the beast! Blessed you are! You have given joy to so many devotees.

* — A sectarian mark painted on the body

* — Sri Ramakrishna actually used this word in English

* — The two words *ghora* (horse) and *sara* (clay plate) both have the suffix 'ta'. The power of horse is different and that of clay plate different. Because they both end in 'ta', they don't become equal. The horse has more power than the clay plate.

* — The mind is like a mad elephant

[1] Love without alloy

[2] Love for God untainted by desires

[3] Love for God that wells up unbidden out of the depths of the immortal soul

Section XIII

With Bhaktas in Dakshineswar

Chapter One

In Dakshineswar with Manmohan, Mahima and other bhaktas

Come on brother! Let us go again for his darshan. You will see the great man, the child who knows none but the Mother and who has come in a human body for us. He will tell how to solve the difficult problems of life. He will tell to the sannyasi, he will tell to the householder. His door is open. He is awaiting us in the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar. Come on, let us go to see him.

He is a man of infinite qualities, with happy looks, whose words bring tears to the eyes.

Let us go brother, let us realize the aim of human life by meeting Sri Ramakrishna who has a joyous face, who is intoxicated night and day with the love of the Lord, who is so sweet to look at and who is the ocean of motiveless grace.

It is Sunday, 26 October 1884 today, Hemant season (early winter). It is the 7th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik, time midday. The devotees are assembled in the same aforesaid room of Thakur. It has a semi-circular verandah to its west. The garden path runs north-south to the west of the verandah. There is a flower garden of Mother Kali to the west of the path. Next to it is the embankment, followed by the holy river Ganga flowing to the south.

A number of bhaktas are present. It is a mart of joy. Sri Ramakrishna is full of bliss and his love of God is reflected in the mirror of the faces of the devotees. What a wonder! This joy is not only in the mirror of the devotees' faces, it is also reflected outside in the garden among the leaves of the trees, amidst various kinds of flowers, on the vast bosom of the Ganga, on the blue sky lit up by the sun rays, in the cool breeze carrying the drops of Ganga water flowing from the feet of Murari (Sri Krishna). What a wonder! Verily, verily even the particles of dust in the garden are filled with sweetness! I wish I could roll about on the dust alone secretly or along with the bhaktas! I wish I could stand aside in this garden the whole day and keep gazing at the sweetly flowing waters of the Ganga. I wish I could embrace and converse with the creepers, bushes, shrubs and bright and beautiful trees decorated with leaves and flowers taking them as my own. Doesn't Thakur Sri Ramakrishna stroll on this dust? Doesn't he walk amidst these trees, creepers and shrubs day and night? I wish I could gaze constantly at this illuminated cup of the sky! Don't I see that the earth and the heaven are all swimming in the joy of love?

How is it that the priest, the doorkeeper and the attendants of the shrine all seem to be my very own? How is it that this place

is looking as sweet as the native place seen after a long time? The sky, the Ganga, the temple of the deity, the garden path, the trees, the creepers, the bushes and shrubs, the attendants, the devotees seated there - it seems all are made of the same material. The material of which Sri Ramakrishna is made, it seems they will also be of the same material. It is like a garden of wax wherein the trees, the plants, the fruits, the leaves are all made of wax. The garden path, the gardener, the residents of the garden, the residential quarters in the garden - all are made of wax. Everything of this place has been molded with joy!

Manmohan, Mahimacharan and M. are already there. Then gradually enter Ishan, Hriday and Hazra. There are many other devotees too besides them. Balaram and Rakhal are in holy Vrindavan. Some new devotees make visits these days. Narayana, Paltu, the Younger Narendra, Tejachandra, Vinod, Haripada and Baburam come and stay here sometimes. Rama, Suresh, Kedar, Devendra and other bhaktas also frequent this place - some after a week, some after two weeks. Latu stays here permanently. Yogen has his house nearby. He comes almost everyday. Sometimes comes Narendra and then it turns into a mart of joy. Narendra sings the glory and the name of God in his rare sweet voice, rare even for gods, sending Thakur immediately into various emotional moods and samadhi. It becomes as if a special festival. Thakur is very keen that some of the boys should stay with him night and day, for they are pure souls not bound by the worldly ties of marriage and worldly work. He asks Baburam (later Swami Premananda) to stay on and he does stay at times. Adhar Sen also comes frequently.

The devotees are seated in the room while Thakur Sri Ramakrishna stands there in a reflective mood like a child. The devotees glance at him.

The Undifferentiated and the Differentiated

Sri Ramakrishna (to Manmohan) — I see Rama (one of the incarnations of God) in all! You people are sitting here; I see Rama in all of you in different forms.

Manmohan — Rama has become all forms. But as you say ‘Apo Narayana’, water is Narayana; but some water is fit for drinking, the other is used for washing the face and yet another for washing utensils.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, but I see that He alone is everything. He has become the world and its creatures.

Saying so, Thakur sits down on his smaller cot.

Sri Ramakrishna's firmness on truth

and difficulty in accumulation

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — I say, am I now a fanatic in thinking that I have to speak only the truth? If I suddenly say that I shall not eat, I cannot eat even if I am hungry. If I say that so and so has to take my wash pot to the Jhautala, and if someone else accompanies, I have to send back that person. What has happened to me, brother? Is there no way out?

“And then I cannot carry anything with me. Neither a beetle-leaf nor any other eatable, for then it would mean accumulation. I cannot even carry a clod of earth in my hand.”

At this moment somebody comes and says, “Mahashay, Hriday [\[1\]](#) has come to the Yadu Mullick’s garden. He is standing at the gate and wishes to see you.” Sri Ramakrishna says to the devotees, “Please keep sitting here. Let me meet Hriday for a while.” Saying so he puts on the black varnished slippers and proceeds towards the eastern gate. Only M. is with him. The garden path has red brick dust over it. Thakur walks on this path facing east. The treasurer is seen standing on the path. He bows to Thakur. Now comes the gate of the southern courtyard. Here sits a special bearded gatekeeper. To the left is Kuthi - the rest house of the Babus. Formerly there was Neelkuthi here. So, it is called Kuthi. Beyond it are flowering trees on both sides of the path. Not far from there, to the south of this path is Gazitala and the ghat of Mother Kali’s pond beautified with steps. Then comes the eastern gate, the quarters of the gatekeepers to the left and the Tulasi platform to the south. Coming out of the garden he finds Hriday standing near the gate of Yadu Mullick’s garden.

Chapter Two

The attendant stands nearby

Hriday stands there with folded hands. As soon as he sees Sri Ramakrishna, he lies down to prostrate on the main road. Thakur asks him to stand up. Hriday folds his hands again and starts weeping like a child.

What a wonder! Thakur Sri Ramakrishna also begins to weep. One can see tears in the corners of his eyes. He wipes them with his hands as if he never shed tears. How is it? This fellow Hriday had troubled him so much and he has come running to him and is crying!

Sri Ramakrishna — Why have you come now?

Hriday (weeping) — I have come to see you. To whom shall I tell my sorrows?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling, to console him) — In the household one has such problems. Happiness and sorrows are a part of the householder's life. (Pointing at M.) These people also come at times just for this reason. They come here to hear a word or two of God and get peace. What is your problem?

Hriday (still weeping) — I have lost your company, this is my grief.

Sri Ramakrishna — But you yourself said, 'You live with your bhava (state of mind) and let me live with mine.'

Hriday — Yes, I did say so. But what do I know?

Sri Ramakrishna — You may go back today. We shall sit and talk about it some other day. It is Sunday today. Many persons have come. They are waiting. What type of harvest did you have in the countryside this year?

Hriday — Yes, it has been not that bad.

Sri Ramakrishna — You may go today. Come again some other day.

Hriday again lies prostrate to offer his pranam. Thakur returns by the same path. M. is with him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — He served me, but also troubled me equally. When I was reduced to a skeleton because of my stomach trouble, when I could eat nothing, he used to say, 'Just see how I eat. You cannot eat because of the state of your mind.' And then he would add, 'Fool, had I not been here all your sainthood would have been knocked out.' One day he troubled me so much that I went to the embankment to drown myself in the water of the flood tide.

M. is speechless on hearing this. He perhaps wonders how he (Thakur) could be shedding tears for such a man!

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Well, he was serving me so much. How is it that he has come to such a pass? He has looked after me just as one brings up a child. I used to lie

unconscious night and day. Besides, I was ill for so long. I used to live the way he wanted me to live.

What could M. say? He keeps silent. He is perhaps saying to himself: May be Hriday did not serve Thakur selflessly.

Thakur reaches his room while talking. The devotees are waiting. Thakur goes and sits upon the same smaller cot.

Chapter Three

With devotees - converses on varied topics - profound truths about bhava and mahabhava

Besides Mahimacharan and others a number of bhaktas of Konnagar have arrived. A person discussed with Sri Ramakrishna for a long time.

A Bhakta from Konnagar — Sir, I heard that you go into bhava, that you experience samadhi. Why does it happen and how? Please tell me.

Sri Ramakrishna — Srimati (Radha) used to experience mahabhava. When a *sakhi* (friend) wanted to touch her, the other said, 'Her body is in enjoyment with Krishna. Don't touch her. Krishna is sporting within her person.' One does not have bhava or mahabhava without experiencing God. When the fish comes out of the deep water, the water surges up in motion. The bigger the fish, the greater the motion. So in bhava the man laughs, weeps, dances and sings.

"One cannot remain in bhava for long. If [in that state] one just looks at himself in the mirror, he is taken as crazy."

The Bhakta from Konnagar — Sir, we hear that you often have the vision of God. Please let us also see Him.

Vision of God not possible without karma and sadhan

Sri Ramakrishna — Everything is under God. What can a man do? While repeating His name tears flow out of the eyes at times, and sometimes they do not. While meditating on Him there is beautiful inspiration at times, and at other times nothing happens.

"One has to do karma. Only then one can have His vision.

One day I saw Haldarpukur^[2] in bhava. I saw that a person of low caste was taking water after removing the water

plant from its surface. Each time he took water in his palm and examined it. It was as if he was telling me that you cannot see water unless you remove the water plant. Without karma (work for God) one cannot gain devotion, one cannot see God. Meditation and japa are all karma; singing His name and glory is also work. And then, charity and yajna are also work.

“If you want butter you have to make curd from milk and then keep it in a solitary corner. When the milk gets curdled, you have to make the effort to churn it and take out the butter.”

Mahimacharan — Yes Sir, no doubt one has to do karma. What can one gain without work? A lot of effort is needed. Then alone one achieves something. How much study is needed! Endless holy books are there!

What comes first: Study or God-realization

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — How much will you read holy books? What does it avail only to reason? Try first of all to attain Him. Putting your faith in the words of the Guru do some karma. If the Guru is no more, pray to Him (the Lord) with a longing heart. He will Himself tell you what He is like.

“What will you know by reading books? Till you have reached the market place, you can only hear noises like ‘ho-ho’ from a distance. It is quite different when you reach the market. Then you will clearly see, you will clearly hear, ‘Take these potatoes, pay for them.’

“From a distance there is a sound of ‘ho-ho’ from the sea. When you come near to it, you are able to see that so many ships are sailing, the birds are flying and the waves are rising.

“One does not gain the right kind of experience by reading books. It is quite distant. After realizing Him books, scriptures, science all seem to be *‘khadkuto’* (dry straw, grass, twigs, etc.).

“You have to introduce yourself to the master of the house. Before that why are you so eager to know how many houses, gardens and scrips of companies he has? If you approach the servants, they will not even let you stand there. What information they will give you of the company shares? On

the other hand, try somehow to meet the master even if you are pushed aside or you have to jump over the fence. Then he will himself tell you how many houses and gardens and shares he has. When you know the master, the servants, the doorkeeper and all others will salute you^{*}.” (Everybody laughs.)

The Devotee — Now, how to meet the master of the house? (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — That’s why karma is needed. It does not avail if you say, ‘God is’ and keep sitting where you are. You have somehow to approach Him. Call upon Him secretly, pray to Him, ‘Grant me Thy vision, grant please.’ Say this and cry with a longing heart. Just as you roam madly for ‘woman and gold’, be a bit crazy for Him too. Let people say that such and such person has gone mad for God. **Give up everything for some days and only call upon Him secretly.**

“What will it avail just to say ‘He exists’ and do nothing? There are big fish in Haldarpukur. Can you catch fish just by sitting on its bank? To attract it, you have to prepare its food and put it in the pond. The fish will come slowly from the deep water and agitate it. You will then feel happy. Maybe you are able to see a bit of a fish at times. A fish suddenly jumps up and you see it. You are then happier when you see it.

“Turn the milk into curds, churn it and only then you will get butter.

(To Mahima) “What a great trouble it is! Let somebody show him God while he keeps sitting at ease! Let somebody take butter and bring it to his mouth. (All laugh.) What a trouble! Let somebody else catch the fish and hand it over to him!

“Somebody wants to meet the king. The king is beyond the seven gates. He just passes through the first gate and asks, ‘Where is the king?’ The way is to pass through all the gates one by one.”

The way to attain God - long for Him

Mahimacharan — What should we do to attain Him?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is not that you can attain Him by

doing this and not by doing that. It depends upon His grace. Yet you have to take to some action with a longing heart. Longing for Him brings His grace.

“One needs some right opportunity - company of sadhus, discrimination, or the meeting of a *sadguru* (divine preceptor). Maybe that one’s elder brother takes up the responsibility of the household, or the wife is *vidya* shakti and very religious, or maybe one hasn’t married, has not got entangled in the household. It comes about when there is a situation like this.

“There was somebody who was very ill in a man’s house - he was in a critical condition. Somebody said, ‘When it begins to rain in the *swati nakshatra* (a particular conjunction of stars), and this water falls into a skull, and if a poisonous snake while chasing a frog pounces upon it and (in the process) the frog jumps away and the (snake’s) poison falls into the skull, then if a medicine prepared with this poison is given to the patient, the patient can be cured. Now the person of the family of the patient set out for the journey after consulting for the right day, time and conjunction of stars. He began looking for the above situation with a yearning heart. He prayed to God in his heart: ‘Lord, if You let me procure all these, my objective will be fulfilled.’ Roaming about in this way he actually saw the skull of a dead body and then came a shower of rain in no time. The man then said, ‘O Master, I have found the skull of a dead person and it has also rained during the *swati nakshatra*, the water of which has also fallen into the skull. Now, O Thakur, bestow Your grace and procure the rest of the articles too.’ He was reflecting over it with a longing heart when he saw a poisonous snake coming there. The man was extremely happy. He was so excited that his heart began to thump. He said, ‘O Master, now the snake has also come and so many articles have been procured. Now please get me the remaining articles too.’ While he was praying thus, lo! there came a frog too. And the snake began to chase it. As soon as it approached the skull to pounce upon the frog, the latter jumped over and fell to the other side while the poison of the snake at once fell in the skull. The man then began to clap and dance in joy.

“So, I say that anything can happen if one has the longing for it.”

Chapter Four

Sannyasa and household ashrama - God-realization and renunciation - who is real sannyasi?

Sri Ramakrishna — Till you have completely renounced in the mind, you cannot attain God. **The sadhu does not accumulate. 'The bird and the *darvesh* (sadhu) do not hoard.'** The bird and the sadhu do not accumulate. As for me, I cannot carry even a clod of earth to clean my hands. I cannot carry the beetle-leaf in my bag (a small bag made of cloth). When Hriday was troubling me so much, I wanted to go to Kashi from here. I said to myself that I would be able to take a *dhoti* with me, but how to carry money. So I did not go to Kashi. (Everybody laughs.)

(To Mahima) “You people are householders, you have this as well as that - live in the household and also stick to the spiritual path.”

Mahima — **Is it possible to live with this as well as that?**

Sri Ramakrishna — I threw money in the Ganga water at the bank of Ganga, near Panchavati, saying, ‘Money and earth, earth is money, money is earth.’ But then I felt a fright. I said to myself, ‘Have I become a wretch given up by Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth)?’ If Mother Lakshmi stops giving me food, what will happen to me? I then calculated like Hazra. I said, ‘Mother, please dwell in my heart!’ The Mother Bhagavati, happy with the austerity practised by a person, said to him, ‘Ask for a boon.’ He said, ‘Mother, if you have to grant me a boon, grant that I may eat rice in a gold plate with my grandson.’ Thus in one boon he asked for everything - grandson, prosperity and a gold plate! (Everybody laughs.)

“When you have renounced ‘woman and gold’ from the mind, your mind goes to God and gets absorbed in Him. They who are bound also attain liberation. One is bound when one is away from God. When does the lower needle not point at the upper needle of the goldsmith’s scale? The moment there is load of ‘woman and gold’ in one of its pans.

“Why does the infant cry after coming out of the womb? ‘I was in the womb, in yoga.’ After taking birth he cries and says, ‘Where, where am I? Where have I come? I was meditating on God’s lotus feet, and now where am I?’

“For you people what is required is renunciation in the

mind. Live in your family without attachment.”

Is it necessary to renounce the world?

Mahima — When the mind has gone up to Him, does one then stay with the family any more?

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you saying? Where will you go if you don't stay in family? I clearly see that I am in Rama's Ayodhya wherever I may be. This family life, this worldly life is Rama's Ayodhya. Having received spiritual knowledge from his guru Ramachandra said, 'I will renounce the family life (world).' Dasharath called Vaishishtha to make Rama change his mind. Vaishishtha saw that Rama was under deep dispassion. He then said, 'Rama, first reason it out with me; you may renounce the world later. Well, tell me, is this world without God? If that be so, you may renounce it.' Rama understood that God Himself has become the world, its creatures - everything. It is because of His power that one perceives everything as real. Ramachandra became silent then.

“You have to fight against lust, anger and so on in the worldly life; you have to fight against various desires. You have to fight against attachment. If the fight is given from inside the fort, it is convenient - it is better to fight living in the household. Here you get food, the wife helps you in so many ways. In Kaliyuga life depends on food. It is better to be at one place than to roam about from place to place for food. This is as if fighting from inside the fort of household.

“And you should live in the world like a scrap leaf in a storm. The storm takes the scrap leaf sometimes inside the house, sometimes it is carried to a heap. The leaf is carried away in the direction of the wind - sometimes at a neat place and sometimes at a dirty place. He has kept you in the family life; it is good, you rather stay there. Again when He lifts you from there and carries to a better place, it will be what it may.”

Resignation in family life - Rama's will

“What can you do if you are kept in the world? Resign (surrender) everything to Him. Then there will be no trouble. You will then realize that it is He who is doing all. Everything depends on Rama's will.”

A Devotee — ‘Rama’s will’ - what is that story?

Sri Ramakrishna — There was a weaver in a village. He was very religious. Everybody trusted him and loved him. The weaver would go to the market to sell *dhotis*. When the customer asked the price, he would say, ‘By Rama’s will, cotton thread costs one rupee; by Rama’s will labour charges is four annas; by Rama’s will, profit two annas. So, the price of the dhoti by Rama’s will is one rupee six annas.’ People had so much faith in him that they would immediately pay and buy the cloth. This fellow was a great devotee. After his dinner he would sit in the *Chandi-mandap** till late in the night, meditate on God and sing His glories. One night it was very late but this fellow did not feel sleepy. He was smoking in between. Just then a group of dacoits was passing that way to commit dacoity. They needed a porter. So, they came to the weaver and said, ‘Come along with us.’ Saying so, they pulled him by the hand and took him along. Then they committed dacoity in a house. They placed so many articles on the weaver’s head to carry. Just then the police arrived. The dacoits ran away but the weaver was caught with all those articles on his head. He was kept in the police lockup that night. The next day he was tried by a magistrate. When the villagers came to know of it, they all came there. They all said, ‘Sir, this fellow can never commit a dacoity.’ The magistrate then asked the weaver, ‘I say, tell me how it all happened with you?’ The weaver replied, ‘Sir, by Rama’s will, I took rice at night. By Rama’s will, then I sat in the *Chandi-mandap*. By Rama’s will, it was very late at night. By Rama’s will I was meditating on Him and was singing His glories when by Rama’s will a group of dacoits was going that very way. By Rama’s will, they pulled me and took me along with them. By Rama’s will, they committed dacoity in a house. By Rama’s will, they placed a load on my head. Then by His will I was caught. By Rama’s will, the police put me in the lockup. And now this morning by Rama’s will I have been brought before you.’

“Seeing that the fellow was so religious, the magistrate discharged him. On the way the weaver said to his friends, ‘By Rama’s will, I have been discharged.’

“Whether one is living in the household or one has taken sannyasa, all is Rama’s will. So, resign yourself to His will and do your duties living in the world.

“Except for this what can you do?”

“A clerk is sent to jail. Period of his sentence ends, he is released from the jail. Now shall he dance joyfully to the beat of drum or would he return to his profession of clerkship?”

“A person who is *jivanmukta* (liberated in this very life), may live the family life if he so wills. For a man who has attained jnana, there is nothing like ‘here’ and ‘there’. It is all the same for him. Everything ‘here’ as well as ‘there’ belongs to Him.”

**The earlier story of his life - conversation with Keshab Sen -
jivanmukta in the world**

“When I saw Keshab Sen for the first time in the garden house, I said, ‘He has cast off his tail.’ Everybody in the assembly laughed. Keshab said, ‘Please don’t laugh. His words have some meaning. Let me ask him.’ I said: So long the frog does not shed off its tail, it has to live only in water. It cannot climb the edge and roam about on dry land. As soon as it casts off its tail, it jumps up and comes to the dry land. Then it can live both in the water as well as on the land. Similarly, till the man sheds the tail of his ignorance, he lies in the water of worldliness. When he casts off the tail of ignorance, when he attains jnana he is liberated and can move about everywhere - and if he likes, he can live even in family.”

Chapter Five

In the context of household life - the unattached householder

Mahimacharan and other devotees are sitting and drinking the nectar of the story of God from Sri Ramakrishna. His words are like jewels of varied colours. The devotees are picking up as much as they can. But the lap of their dhoti is already full. It is so heavy that they can’t pick it up. Their capacity is limited, they cannot contain more. He is solving all the problems on diverse subjects that have risen since the creation of the world to this day in the hearts of men. Padmalochan, Narayana Shastri, Gauri Pundit, Dayananda Saraswati and such other scholars of scriptures sit silent in wonder. When Dayananda saw Sri Ramakrishna and witnessed him in the state of samadhi, he lamented, “We people have just studied so much of the Veda and Vedanta but in this great man we see its manifestation. On seeing him it is proved that the learned only take buttermilk when they churn the scriptures.

Such great men as he only eat butter.” Besides, learned men like Keshab Chandra Sen, educated in English, are also amazed at seeing Sri Ramakrishna. They think: What a wonder, how this illiterate person explains such matters. This is very much like Jesus Christ. Language rustic! He explains the same way by parables so that men, women and boys - all may understand easily. Jesus repeated, ‘Father, Father’ like a mad person. He is mad uttering, ‘Mother, Mother.’ He has not merely the inexhaustible treasure of spiritual wisdom, he is also spilling endlessly pots and pots of divine love and still it does not exhaust. He is also a man of renunciation like Jesus and also has the same burning faith. That is why his words are so powerful. When the worldly people talk, such conviction cannot be there because they have no renunciation, because they have no burning faith in them. The learned like Keshab Sen think further, “How has this illiterate person developed such broad-mindedness! What a wonder! There is no ill will in him. He respects followers of all religions, he does not quarrel with anybody.”

Today, hearing Thakur’s conversation with Mahimacharan some bhaktas say to themselves, “Thakur hasn’t asked anybody to renounce the family life. On the other hand, he said that the household is like a fort; you can fight against lust, anger, etc. while staying in this fort.” He also said, “Where else will you go if you do not live in family? The clerk only resumes clerkship when he is freed from the jail.” In a way he says that a *jivanmukta* (liberated person) can live in the family also. Keshab Sen - the ideal. To him he said, “Only you have shed your tail, none else has.” But Thakur has said something very special, “You have to live from time to time in solitude. You have to fence round the young plant otherwise, it will be eaten up by the goat or the cow. When the plant has grown a big trunk, you may or may not remove the fence. Even if an elephant is tied to it, the tree will not come to any harm. There is no danger if you live with family after having lived in solitude and after having attained jnana and bhakti.” That is why he only talked of living in solitude.

The devotees are reflecting thus. After talking of Keshab, Sri Ramakrishna talks of one or two other devotees.

Devendra Nath Tagore - yoga and bhoga (sensory enjoyments)

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan and others) — I once went with Sejo Babu* to meet Devendra Tagore. I said to Sejo Babu, ‘I have heard that Devendra Tagore meditates on God. I wish to see him.’ Sejo Babu said, ‘Alright baba (father), I shall take you to him. We were class fellows in the Hindu College. He has special affection for me.’ After many days I had the opportunity of meeting him with Sejo Babu. Seeing Sejo Babu Devendra said, ‘You have changed a bit.

You have developed a ponch.’ Sejo Babu introduced me to him saying, ‘He has come to meet you. He is mad after God.’ To see Devendra’s trait I said to him, ‘Well, let me examine your body.’ Devendra took off his shirt. He was fair and his body (roughed) as if sprinkled with vermilion.

“Initially I noticed that there was some pride in him. And why not? He had so much wealth, so much learning, name and fame. Seeing his pride I said to Sejo Babu, ‘Well, does pride come from jnana or ajnana? Does a person who has attained the knowledge of Brahman has the pride of learning, of jnana or wealth?’

“Suddenly I went into that very state while talking to Devendra. When I am in that particular state, I can see what kind of person one is. A peculiar laughter, ‘Hee-hee’ arose within me on seeing him. When I am in such a state, I feel that the learned are just like pieces of straw - when I see that there is no discrimination and dispassion in a pundit, he appears to me just as dry pieces of grass and straw (unworthy person). I then see as though a vulture is flying high but its eyes are on charnel pits.

“I saw that he had both yoga and bhoga. He had many small children; the doctor had arrived. It is for this reason that though a man of knowledge, he had to lead the life of a householder. I said, ‘You are the ‘Janak’ of Kaliyuga. Janak was loyal to both matter and spirit and at the same time drank his cup of milk. You are living with your family keeping your mind on God. I heard about it, so I have come to see you. Please talk to me about God.’

“Then he narrated some portions from the Vedas. He said, ‘This world is like a chandelier and every being is a lamp in it.’ When I was meditating here in Panchavati I had seen exactly the same. Seeing that it resembles with Devendra’s words, I thought he was really a great man. I asked him to explain further what he had said. Then he said, ‘Who knew this world? God made men to proclaim His glory. If there is no light in the chandelier, it is all dark around. You cannot even see the chandelier.’ ”

**‘Uncivilized ways’ and Brahmo Samaj -
the Captain, a householder devotee**

“After a long conversation Devendra said to me in a happy mood, ‘You have to come in our celebrations.’ I said, ‘It is all God’s will. You can see what is the state of my mind. **I don’t**

know when would the Mother keep me in a particular state. Devendra said, 'No, no, you have to come, but please clad yourself in dhoti and upper cloth. Seeing you clad carelessly if somebody makes a remark, I would feel hurt.' I said, 'I shall not be able to do so. I cannot become a babu.' Devendra and Sejo Babu both laughed.

"The very next day Sejo Babu received a note from Devendra asking me not to go to the festival. Reason? It would be uncivilized if I am not able to retain the upper cloth on my body. (All laugh.)

(To Mahima) "And then there is an another person, the Captain*. Though a householder, he is a great devotee. You must talk to him.

"The Captain knows the Vedas, the Vedanta, Srimad Bhagavata, the Gita, the Adhyatma (Ramayana) - all these by heart. Just talk to him and see.

"He has great devotion! I was walking on the road from Barahnagar when he held his umbrella over my head. How hospitable he is when he takes me to his house - he fans me, massages my feet and serves various kinds of vegetables to me. One day I fell unconscious in his closet. Though he is so orthodox yet he went into the closet and made me sit on the defecation seat. He is so orthodox yet he did not feel any repulsion.

"The Captain has to spend a lot. His brothers live in Kashi, he has to send money to them. His wife was miserly and now she is so hard pressed that she cannot spend much on anything.

"The Captain's wife told me that she does not like the household life. So she said to me once that she would leave her family life. She has been saying at times, 'I shall leave, I shall leave.'

"He comes from the family of devotees. His father used to go to the battlefield. It is said that with one hand he used to worship Shiva and with the other he would fight with a bare sword.

"And this man (the Captain) is very orthodox. I used to go to Keshab Sen, so he did not come here for a month. Reason? Keshab Sen is non-orthodox - he eats with the English, he has married his daughter in another caste and he does not believe in caste. I said to him, 'What does all this matter to me? Keshab repeats the name of Hari, I go to see this. I go

to him to hear of God. I take cherries, I am not concerned with thorns.' Even then he did not leave me. He asked me, 'Why do you go there to Keshab Sen?' Then feeling a little bit irritated I said, 'But I don't go to him for money. I go to him to hear of God. And why do you go to the Governor's house? He is a *malechha* (non Hindu). How do you stay with him?' When I said so much, he stopped for a while.

"But he has a lot of devotion. During puja he performs arati with camphor and sits on his asana (seat of worship) and sings the hymns. At that time he is quite a different man - as if he is completely lost (in devotion)."

Chapter Six

The doctrine of maya in Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — According to the Vedanta philosophy the world is all maya, like a dream - all illusory. He who is Parmatman is there as a witness - He is the witness in all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. All these conform to your way of thinking. The waking state and the dreaming state are both equally true. Listen to a story. It conforms to your thinking.

"There lived a peasant in a village. Spiritually he was very wise. He did farming. He had a wife from whom he had a son after a long period. He named him Haru. Both the parents loved this boy. Why not? He was the precious bright jewel of the family. The peasant was religious minded. Everybody in the village liked him. One day he was working in his farm when somebody came to inform him that Haru had the attack of cholera. The farmer went home and gave him good treatment but the boy died. Everybody in the family was sorrow-stricken. But the farmer was as if nothing happened to him. On the top of it, he consoled others saying that it was no use to sorrow. And he went back to his field for farming. On his return to the home he saw that his wife was weeping more bitterly. She said to him, 'How hardhearted you are! You have not shed a tear for your son.' The farmer then said calmly, 'I tell you why I am not weeping. Yesterday I had a great dream. I dreamt that I was a king and the father of eight sons. I was in all happiness when I woke up. Now I am in great confusion - whether I should sorrow for those eight sons or for this one son of yours.'

“The farmer was a man of spiritual wisdom. So, he could see that the state of waking is as illusory as the state of dream. Only the Atman is one thing eternal.

“I accept all. The state of *turiya* and also of waking, dream and deep sleep. I accept all the three states. I accept Brahman as well as maya, the jiva and the world - all. If I do not accept all, it loses weight.”

A Devotee — How does it lose weight? (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — Brahman is qualified by the *jiva* (embodied soul) and the world. In the beginning, while saying ‘Not this, not this,’ one should leave out the jiva and the world. So long as one has the feeling of I-ness one feels that He Himself has become everything. He indeed has become all the twenty four categories.

“When one talks of the essence of the bel fruit, one only understands that it means the kernel - its seeds and shell have to be thrown away. But to be able to tell the weight of the bel fruit simply weighing the kernel alone will not do. One has to take the kernel, the seeds and the shell together to weigh it. The kernel belongs to it and so do its seeds and shell.”

**The Nitya (Absolute) belongs to Him and
so does the leela (phenomenal world)**

“So, I take the Nitya as well as the leela. I don’t do away with the world by calling it maya. If I do so, it will lose weight.”

**The doctrine of maya and Vishishtadvaitavada - Jnana Yoga
and Bhakti Yoga**

Mahimacharan — Beautifully harmonized! From the Nitya to the leela and again from the leela to the Nitya.

Sri Ramakrishna — The jnanis see all like a dream. The bhaktas accept all the states. The jnani yields milk in driplets. (All laugh.) Some cows are very choosy while grazing, so they yield milk in driplets. They who do not discriminate so much and eat everything give streams of milk. The highest class devotee^[3] accepts both the Nitya and the leela. So he can enjoy Him even when his mind comes down from the Nitya. The highest class devotee yields milk in streams. (All laugh.)

Mahima — That is why this milk has a particular smell. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Yes, it has. But it has to be boiled a bit. You must heat it a little on fire. You should heat this milk on the fire of jnana. It will not smell then.

Omkar and the communion of Nitya and leela

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahima) — You people explain Omkar just by ‘a’, ‘u’, ‘m’.

Mahimacharan — ‘A’ for creation, ‘u’ for preservation and ‘m’ for dissolution.

Sri Ramakrishna — I explain it with the sound ‘tam’ of the brass bell - t...a...m. Merging into the Nitya from the leela; merging into the Great Cause from the gross, the subtle and the causal; merging into the state of turiya from the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Then the bell rings as if something big has fallen into the ocean giving rise to its waves. The leela thus starts from the Nitya; the gross, the subtle and the causal forms start appearing out of the Great Cause. All the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep come out of turiya. And again the wave of the great ocean loses itself into the great ocean. Reach leela holding on to the Nitya and then reach the Nitya holding on to leela^{*}. I have been shown this. I use the simile of the sound ‘tam’. I have precisely seen all this. I was shown the sea of consciousness, it is limitless. All this leela rose from it and then merged into it. Millions of brahmandas (universes) come into existence into the space of consciousness and then they lose themselves into it. I do not know what your books say.

Mahima — They who have seen have not written the scriptures. They remained absorbed in their bhava. Where was the time for them to write? To be able to write, one needs analytical mind. The others heard from them and wrote.

**How long remains attachment of the world?
Till the attainment of the bliss of Brahman**

Sri Ramakrishna — The worldly people ask why the attachment to ‘woman and gold’ does not vanish. The attachment goes when God is attained^[4]. If you once taste the bliss of Brahman, your mind does not run after sensual pleasures, wealth and honour.

“If the insect of the rainy season (moth) sees the light once, it does not go to the darkness again.

“Ravana was asked, ‘You take so many different forms for Sita with the help of maya. Why don’t you once assume the form of Rama and go to her?’ Ravana replied, ‘*Tuchham Brahmapadam paravadhusangah kutah* - when I think upon Rama even the seat of Brahma appears to be too low, what to talk of another’s wife. How can I assume that form of Rama?’

More one develops devotion, the less becomes one’s attachment to the world - Chaitanya’s devotees are unattached

“All the sadhan and bhajan (spiritual practices) are for attaining Him. The more you meditate on Him, the less you have attachment for enjoying the ordinary things of the world. The more devotion you have for His lotus feet, the less of desire for sensory objects you will have and the lesser your mind will concern itself with the bodily comforts. Someone else’s wife will appear to you as mother. Your own wife will be your helper in the religious life. She will appear to you like a friend. You will be freed from your animal instincts and divine qualities will develop within you. You will be completely detached from the world. Then even if you live in the world, you will move about as *jivanmukta*. The devotees of Chaitanya Deva lived in the world without attachment.”

Deep secret of the jnani and the bhakta

(To Mahima) “You may talk of Vedanta a thousand times to a genuine bhakta and call the world like a dream before him, his devotion will not vanish. He may shed it a little for a while. A pestle was lying in a field of willows, it resulted in *musalam kulanashnam* (the pestle destroying the dynasty).

“One becomes a jnani when one is born of Shiva. His mind always goes to this knowledge - ‘only Brahman is the reality, the world an illusion’. If one is born of Vishnu, one possesses

prema bhakti (loving devotion). This *prema* bhakti does not leave you easily. Upon reasoning even if this *prema* bhakti is diluted, it returns gushing forth after a time just as the pestle destroyed the dynasty of the Yadus.”

Chapter Seven

Service to mother and Sri Ramakrishna - Hazra Mahashay*

Hazra is performing japa sitting in the verandah to the east of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna's room. He is 46/47. He belongs to the same region as that of Thakur. He has developed dispassion for quite a long time. He remains away from his house and visits home only occasionally. He has a piece of land in his village. He supplies the needs of his wife, son, daughter and others with its income. Even so, he has incurred a debt of about a thousand rupees. So, he remains always worried. How to pay back this debt is his constant concern. He often visits Calcutta. Ishan Chandra Mukhopadhyay, who resides in Thanthania, has great respect for him and serves him like a sadhu. Sri Ramakrishna is keeping him by his side with great care. When his dhoti wears out, he gets him a new one. He always enquires after him and constantly talks of God to him. Hazra Mahashay is very argumentative. During conversation he is often carried away by his argument. Sitting on the asana in the verandah he is always performing japa on his rosary.

The news of the illness of Hazra's mother has been received. When Ramalal was coming from his village, she held his hand and requested him insistently, “Carry this humble request of mine to your uncle (Thakur) that he may please send Pratap (Hazra) here somehow. Let him see me once.” Thakur conveyed this to Hazra saying, “Go to your home once, see your mother and return. She repeatedly said so to Ramalal. Can one ever call upon God after hurting one's mother? Go there once and then you may come back.”

When the meeting of the devotees is over, Mahimacharan comes to Thakur with Hazra. M. is also present there.

Mahimacharan (smiling, to Sri Ramakrishna) — Sir, I have to say something to you. Why have you asked Hazra to go home when he does not want to go to his family?

Sri Ramakrishna — His mother expressed great grief to Ramalal. So I said, ‘You may go only for three days. Come after meeting her once.’ Can one practise sadhana for the Lord after hurting one's mother? I was going to Vrindavan to stay there when all of a sudden I remembered my mother. I said to myself, ‘Mother would weep.’ Then I returned here with Sejo Babu.

“And then what fear a jnani has in going to his family?”

Mahimacharan (smiling) — But Sir, provided one has attained jnana.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Hazra has attained all. Only a little of his mind is in the household - he has sons and has incurred some debt. ‘The aunt has completely recovered, only a bit of sickness remains.’ (Everybody laughs.)

Mahima — But Sir, when has he gained jnana?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — No brother, you don’t know. Everybody says that Hazra is the only devotee who is living in Rasmani’s temple. They only talk of Hazra. They never talk of this (pointing to himself). (All laugh.)

Hazra — You are unmatched. You cannot be compared with anyone. So, none understands you.

Sri Ramakrishna — That is why the matchless one cannot help anybody. Why should then one talk of this?

Mahimacharan — Sir, what does he know? He will just do what you instruct him to do.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why? Just ask him. He says to me, ‘I have nothing to do with you.’

Mahima — He is very argumentative.

Sri Ramakrishna — And then he also lectures me from time to time. (All laugh.) During a discussion I perhaps abused him. After the discussion I lay inside the mosquito net. Then I remembered what language I had used. I went to offer my obeisance to Hazra. Only then my mind was at peace.

Vedanta and the pure atman

(To Hazra) “Why do you call the pure Atman as Ishwara (the Lord)? The pure atman is beyond all action. It is only a witness to all the three states. When I think of creation, preservation and dissolution I call Him Ishwara. What is a pure soul like? It is like the magnet lying at a distance. But the needle still moves, the magnet itself remains unmoved - actionless.”

Chapter Eight

Evening music and conversation with Ishan

It is almost evening. Thakur is strolling. On seeing Mani sitting all alone and meditating Thakur suddenly addresses him lovingly and says, "Look here, please bring one or two *markeen* (a coarse white fabric) shirts. I cannot wear shirts procured from everybody. I was thinking of asking Captain, but now you may bring them. Mani had stood up. He says, "At your service."

It is twilight hour. The incense is burnt in Sri Ramakrishna's room. He pays obeisance to the deities and having repeated the *beeja mantra*^{*} is singing the Name. There is unique splendour outside the room. It is the seventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik. The pure rays of the moon falling on Thakur Bari make it smile. On the other hand, the ripples on the Bhagirathi (Ganga) are heaving sweetly like the sleeping babe's chest. The tide is over. The sound of the arati mixing with the melodious murmuring sound produced by sweet, white current of the Ganga loses itself afar into the distance. Three aratis are being performed in three shrines at the same time in Thakur Bari - in the Kali Temple, in the Vishnu Temple and in the Shiva Temple. Twelve aratis in twelve Shiva temples one by one! The priest goes from one temple to the other.

The gong in the left hand, *pancha pradip* (lamp with five wicks) in the right, an attendant with cymbal in his hand. The arati is being performed. Along with it, the sweet sound of the *roshan chowki*^[5] from the south-west corner of the shrine is being heard. The Nahabat Khana (drum room) is there. The evening *raga ragini* (the modes of Indian music) is being played. The perpetual festival of the All-Blissful Mother is as if reminding the jiva never to be unhappy. The joys and sorrows of the world are there, let them be so. The Mother of the Universe, our Mother, is there. Rejoice. The son of the maid of the house has not enough to eat, has not enough to wear, no house, no hearth. Even then there is courage within, he has his mother. He is fearless in the lap of his mother. She is not a step-mother, She is the real mother. Who am I, from where have I come, what will happen to me, where will I go - all this the Mother knows. Why rake the brain so much? My Mother knows - my Mother who has made me with a body, mind, life and atman. I don't even want to know. If it is necessary, She will tell me. Why rake the brain so much? You all the children of Mother, rejoice!

The world outside bathed in moonlight is smiling. Inside the room Sri Ramakrishna is seated filled with the joy of love of Hari. Ishan has come from Calcutta. More conversation of God takes place. Ishan has great faith. He says, "Shulapani (Shiva) with a trident in his hand accompanies one who goes on a journey with Durga's name on his lips. What is there to fear of misfortunes when Shiva Himself guards?"

**Attainment of God through faith -
instructions on Karma Yoga to Ishan**

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — You have firm faith, but I do not have that much. (All laugh.) One attains Him by faith alone.

Ishan — Yes Sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — You perform japa, daily puja, observe fast, perform *purushcharan*, and rituals (repetition of the holy mantra, etc. for the fulfillment of some task as laid down in the scriptures). This is very good. God gets all these karmas done from him who has the sincere attraction for Him. If one is able to perform all such karmas without desire for fruit, one surely attains Him.

**Vaidhi bhakti and raga bhakti -
when do karmas fall off?**

“The scriptures instruct to perform numerous karmas, so I perform them - this is called *vaidhi* (ritualistic) bhakti. The other is *raga* bhakti. It comes out of a special deep love - love for God, as was that of Prahlada. When one develops this bhakti, there is no longer the need for *vaidhi* karmas.”

Chapter Nine

In the heart of the disciple

Before evening Mani is strolling as he recalls: Rama's will. This is indeed very beautiful! It solves all the confusion between predestination and freewill, between liberty and necessity. “I was captured by the dacoits because of Rama's will; I was smoking, that too by Rama's will; I committed a dacoity by Rama's will; I was held by the police also by Rama's will. I have become a sadhu by Rama's will. I pray, ‘O Lord, may my intellect be not impure. May you not goad me on to dacoity.’ This too is Rama's will. The right desire and the wrong desire are both given by Him. Even so, there is a special point: Why should He give the wrong intellect? Why should He give the desire to commit dacoity? In answer to this Thakur said, ‘Just as He has made the lion, the tiger and the snake among animals, just as He has made the poisonous tree among trees, similarly He has also made thieves and dacoits among men.’ Why has He made them, who can tell? Who can understand God's ways?”

But then if God has made everything, the sense of responsibility ends there. But why would it end? Unless you have realized

God, unless you have had His darshan, you cannot understand Rama's will a hundred per cent. So long as you don't have full faith, you will certainly have the feeling of vice and virtue, and the feeling of responsibility. Thakur has explained what 'Rama's will' is. Repeating 'Rama's will' like a parrot won't do. As long as you don't know God, as long as 'my' will and His will don't become one, as long as you don't rightly understand, 'I am an instrument,' so long He retains the knowledge of vice and virtue, joy and sorrow, purity and impurity, good and bad, and sense of responsibility. Otherwise, how can His world of maya go on?

The more I think of Sri Ramakrishna's bhakti, the more I am wonderstruck. Keshab Sen repeats the name of Hari, meditates on God, so he (Thakur) immediately ran to meet him - Keshab at once became his own. He then did not listen to the Captain. That Keshab went to a foreign land, ate with white men, gave his daughter in marriage in a different caste - all these matters vanished.

"I take only cherries. I have nothing to do with thorns." In the bond of bhakti the believers in God with form and believers in God without form become the same; the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians - all become one and also the four *varnas**. Bhakti be victorious! Blessed you are Sri Ramakrishna! Victory to you! You have embodied the universal view of *sanatana dharma* (the eternal religion). It is perhaps for this reason that you have such an attraction! You embrace the followers of all religions as your own without any difference! You have but one test - it is that of **bhakti**. You only see whether a person has love for God within, whether he has bhakti or not. If that is there, he immediately becomes your very own. If you see bhakti in a Hindu, he is at once your own. And if a Muslim has bhakti for Allah, he is also your own. If a Christian has the love for Jesus, he is also your near and dear one. You say that all rivers coming from different directions, from different regions fall into the same one ocean.

Thakur does not consider this world as a dream. If that be so, it will lose weight. It is not *mayavada*^[6] it is Vishishtadvaitavada. This is because he does not consider the jiva and the world as imaginary. He doesn't think them to be an illusion. God is real, so are men and the world. Brahman is qualified with jiva and the world. You cannot get the whole of the bel fruit if you take away seeds and its shell.

It is said that this universe manifests itself in the *Mahachidakasha*^[7] and then merges into Kala^[8]. The wave rises in the Great Ocean and then loses itself in the Kala. On the waters of the ocean of joy there are infinite waves of leela! Where is the beginning of this leela and where is its end! It cannot be told by the word of mouth. It cannot be thought upon in mind. How much is the man and how much intelligence he has? It is said that spiritually great men have had the darshan of this Eternal Supreme Person in the state of samadhi - they

have witnessed the Nitya (Absolute) and the sporting Hari. This they have surely done because Sri Ramakrishna also says so. But they did not do so with these bodily eyes, they did it perhaps with what is known as the divine eye. Getting this divine eye Arjuna saw the Universal Form of the Lord. With this divine eye the rishis realized the Atman and with this divine eye Jesus saw his heavenly Father day and night. How to gain that divine eye? We have heard Thakur say that one can get it by the yearning of the heart. **Now, how to have such a yearning?** Does one have to renounce the world? No, today he didn't say so.

[1] Hriday Mukherji

was the son of Ramakrishna's cousin sister. He has his house in Seor village near Kamarpukur. For almost twenty four years Hriday stayed with Thakur, served him and carried out the worship of Mother Kali in Dakshineswar Temple. Later, he lost the confidence of the proprietor of the garden and therefore was not allowed to enter it.

[2] Sri Ramakrishna has his house in Kamarpukur village in Hooghly district. In front of his house there is a big pond called Haldarpukur.

* Seek ye

e therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)

* A roofed place usually with four sides open

* Sejo Babu - Mathur Nath Biswas, Rani Rasmani's son-in-law. From the very beginning he served Sri Ramakrishna with extreme bhakti like a disciple.

* The Captain - Vishwanath Upadhyay, a resident of Nepal. The emissary of the king of Nepal and his representative in Calcutta. A very orthodox brahmin and a great devotee.

[3] The highest class devotee -

Yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati.

Tasya aham na pranashyami sa cha me na pranashyati. (Gita 6:30)

[He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, he never becomes lost to Me, nor do I become lost to him.]

* Holding on to Nitya and reach the leela - from the Absolute to the relative, from the Infinite to the finite; from the Undifferentiated to the differentiated; from the Unconditioned to the conditioned and again from the relative to the Absolute.

[4] *Rasavarjam rasah api asya param drishtva nivartate.* (Gita 2:59)

[The longing (of sense objects) also ceases when he intuits the Supreme.]

* The native village of Hazra Mahashay is Madagod near Kamarpukur, the native village of Sri Ramakrishna. He passed away in the month of Chaitra in his own village in 1306 B.Y. (1900 A. D.). His extraordinary faith and devotion for Thakur showed itself at the time of his death. He was then sixty three or sixty four years old.

* A mystic word or words to be recited silently.

[5] A symphony of shahnai and other instruments.

* Varnas - the four castes of Hindu society: Brahmin, kshatriya, vaishnava and shudra.

[6] Illunism

[7] The great space of Consciousness

[8] God of Death

Section XIV

Sri Ramakrishna's arrival at a Bhakta's House Conversation and joy with Narendra, Girish, Balaram, Chunilal, Latu, M., Narayana and other bhaktas

Chapter One

In the company of devotees in a devotee's house

It is the 10th day of the dark fortnight of Falgun. Purva Ashadha *nakshatra*, Wednesday, March 11, 1885, 29th of Falgun. Today at about ten o'clock Sri Ramakrishna took the prasad of Sri Jagannath in Basu Balaram's *mandir*, the home of a devotee, on coming from Dakshineswar. With him are Latu and other devotees.

Blessed you are Balaram! Today your home has become the main centre of Thakur's work. He has bound devotee after devotee by the ties of divine love! How much he has danced and sung along with the devotees as if Sri Gauranga has established a mart of ecstatic love in the house of Srivasa.

Sitting in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar he weeps yearningly to see his intimate disciples. He has sleepless nights. He says to the Mother, "Mother, he has so much of devotion. Please pull him to this place. Mother, do please bring him here. If he cannot come here, then Mother take me to him so that I may see him." So, he comes running to Balaram's house. To others he says, "Sri Jagannath is worshipped in Balaram's house. The food there is so pure." When he comes, he immediately sends Balaram to invite them. Says he, "Please go and invite Narendra, Bhavanath and Rakhal. Please invite Purna, the Younger Naren, Narayana - all these devotees. **Feeding them is like feeding Narayana (God)**. They are not ordinary. They are parts of divinity manifest in the flesh. You will be greatly benefited if you feed them."

It was in Balaram's house that he first met Girish Ghosh. A merry *kirtan* (community singing of hymns) was also held at this very place at the time of the Ratha (Car Festival). So many times 'a festivity of joy in the court of love' has been held at this very place.

Looking at your way - the Younger Naren

M. teaches in a nearby school. He had come to know that Sri Ramakrishna would arrive at Balaram's house today at ten o'clock. He has found time to go there during the school hours. He arrives in the afternoon, has darshan and pays obeisance. After his meals Sri Ramakrishna is resting for a while in the visitor's room. He takes out some powdered spices and cubeb from a small pouch every now and then and chews it. Young devotees are seated all around him.

Sri Ramakrishna (affectionately) — So, you have come now. Don't you have your school?

M. — I am coming from the school. Not much work is there now.

A Devotee — No sir, he has played truant. (All laugh.)

M. (to himself) — Oh! It is as if somebody has pulled me here.

Sri Ramakrishna looks as if a bit worried. Then he makes M. sit near him and talks to him on various subjects. And he says, "I say, please wring this hand towel of mine and spread my shirt in the sun. My foot is twitching a little. Can you softly massage it?" M. does not know how to render service. That is why Thakur teaches this to him. Rather confused M. performs all these actions one by one. He is softly stroking his feet while Sri Ramakrishna imparts him so many instructions during the conversation.

Sri Ramakrishna and the highest point of renunciation - the real sannyasi

Sri Ramakrishna(to M.) — I say, this has been happening to me for quite some days. Can you tell me the reason? I cannot touch anything metallic. Once I put my hand to a metallic cup and felt as if I had been bitten by the thorn of a fish's fang. My whole hand began to twitch. And you know, one cannot do without touching the wash pot.

So I thought to cover it with a piece of cloth and see whether I could pick it. No sooner did my hand touch it than it started twitching. I felt acute pain. So, I prayed to the Mother, 'Mother, I shall not do it again, please pardon me this time.'

"I say, the Younger Naren comes here. Will they object to it in his family? He is very pure and absolutely free from carnality."

M. — He is a 'receptacle' of great capacity.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, he also says that he remembers everything he hears even once about God. He tells me that he used to weep during his early years for the reason that he could not see God.

Sri Ramakrishna talks such things to M. about the Younger Naren for quite sometime. Suddenly one of the devotees present there says, "Master Mahashay! Are you not going to the school?"

Sri Ramakrishna — What is the time?

A Devotee — Ten to one.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — You may go, you are getting late. You have already left behind some work and come here. (To Latu) Where is Rakhal?

Latu — He has gone back home.

Sri Ramakrishna — Without seeing me?

Chapter Two

In the afternoon with bhaktas - incarnation and Sri Ramakrishna

On coming back after school hours M. sees that Thakur is seated in an assembly of bhaktas in Balaram's drawing room. There is a sweet smile on Thakur's face and the same is reflected on the faces of the devotees. Seeing M. coming again, Thakur beckons him to come and sit near him after M. has offered his pranam. Girish Ghosh, Suresh Mitra, Balaram, Latu, Chunilal and other devotees are there.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish) — Just talk to Narendra for some time and see what are his views.

Girish (smiling) — Narendra says that God is infinite. All that we see and hear whether it is a person or a thing, even that we can't describe, are all His portions. What can be the portions of infinity? Infinity cannot be split.

Sri Ramakrishna — God may be Infinite, He may be big to any extent; if He wills, His essence can percolate into man - and it does. That He comes as God Incarnate cannot be explained by any simile. One has to experience it. One has to see it by himself. Analogy may give some idea. If you touch the horn of the cow, you have touched the cow. And if you touch its foot or tail, you have still touched the cow. But for us the principal thing is the cow's milk. This milk comes from the udders of the cow.

"Similarly, God assumes a human body from time to time and appears on earth to teach us prema and bhakti."

Girish — Narendra says, 'Can one comprehend Him completely? He is Infinite.'

Perception of the Infinite*

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish) — Who can comprehend God fully? One can know neither the whole nor a portion of His aspect. And then what need is there to know Him fully? It suffices if one has a vision of God. **Seeing His incarnation is seeing**

Him. If somebody goes to the Ganga and touches its water and says, 'I have seen and touched the Ganga,' it doesn't mean that he had to touch the whole of Ganga from Hardwar to Gangasagar with his hand. (All laugh.)

"If I touch your feet, I have touched you. (Laughter.)

"If you go to the sea and touch a little of its water, you have touched the sea itself. Element of fire is present in everything, but it is more in wood."

Girish (laughing) — I want the place where I can get fire.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Element of fire is more in the wood. If you are looking for the essence of God, you have to find it in man. He is more manifest in man. If you see *urjita* bhakti (deep devotion) and *prema* bhakti (loving devotion) gushing out of a man, if you see him mad for God, crazy in His love, know it for certain that He has manifested in him.

(Looking at M.) "God is indeed present, but then His power manifests more in some and less in others. His power manifests more in the avatara. Sometimes this power is in its fullness. **It is Shakti (Power) that becomes the avatara.**"

Girish — Narendra says, 'He is beyond word and intellect.'

Sri Ramakrishna — No, He may be beyond this mind, but He is known by the pure mind - He is not seen with this intellect, but He is seen with pure intellect. **As soon as one is freed from the attachment to 'woman and gold', one's mind and intellect become pure.** Then the pure mind and the pure intellect become one. He is visible to the pure mind. Haven't the sages seen Him? They saw Consciousness with the help of consciousness.

Girish (smiling) — Narendra was defeated in the argument with me.

Sri Ramakrishna — No. He said to me, 'Girish Ghosh has so much faith in God-incarnation, what could I say? One should not contradict such a faith.'

Girish (smiling) — Mahashay, we are all talking so loudly but M. is sitting so tongue-tied. What is he thinking? Mahashay, what do you say?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — '*Mukhahalsa bhetarbunde, kantulse, dighal ghomta nari, pana pukerer sheetal jala manda kari.*' (All laugh.)

(Smiling) "But he is not like that. He is a very deep soul." (All laugh.)

Girish — Mahashay, what does this *sloka* mean?

Sri Ramakrishna — Beware of these different types of people. First, *mukhahalsa* - of him whose words flow like water. And then *bhetarbunde* - of him the door of whose heart is closed to you. Then *kantulse* - of the devotee who shows off to the world his devotion by the sacred tulasi (a sacred plant) leaf stuck into the ear. Of *dighal ghomta* woman - of the woman who wears a long veil, seeing whom people think that she is a very chaste woman but in fact she is not. And of *panapukur* water - water of the tank covered with scum; the water of which causes disorder of the three humours of the body if a bath is taken therein. (Laughter.)

Chunilal — He (M.) is the subject of conversation. The Younger Naren and Baburam are his pupils, and so are Narayana, Paltu, Purna and Tejachandra. It is being said that he has brought them here and thus their studies are being neglected. He is being blamed.

Sri Ramakrishna — Who will believe them?

Such is the trend of conversation. Now comes Narayana and pays obeisance to Thakur. Narayana is of fair complexion, 17/18 years old. He is studying in a school. Sri Ramakrishna is very fond of him. He is always eager to see and feed him. He often cries for him in Dakshineswar. He sees in Narayana the very presence of Narayana (God).

Girish (to Narayana) — Who sent you the message?

I see that it is M. himself who has shot this arrow. (Everybody laughs.)

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Stop, keep quiet! He (M.) is already getting a bad name.

Wonderful is the worry for food - result of a brahmin's acceptance of gifts

The topic of conversation again turns to Narendra.

A Devotee — Why doesn't he come so often now?

Sri Ramakrishna — **'Wonderful is the worry for food! It made even Kalidasa lose his wits.'**

Balamam — He frequently visits Annada Guha, the boy of the house of Shiva Guha.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes. Narendra, Annada Guha, all these boys go to the house of an office clerk. They hold meetings of Brahma Samaj there.

A Devotee — His (office clerk's) name is Tarapada.

Balamam (laughing) — The brahmins say that Annada Guha is very conceited.

Sri Ramakrishna — Don't listen to the brahmins in such matters. You know them well. If you don't give them (gifts) you are bad and if you give, you are good. I know Annada. He is a good man.

Chapter Three

Enjoying hymns in the company of bhaktas

Sri Ramakrishna expresses a desire to hear some songs. The drawing room in Balamam's house is full of people. They are all looking at him (Sri Ramakrishna) to see what he says and what he does.

Tarapada sings -

O Keshab, have mercy on my miserable self, you who used to roam in groves.

Madhava, the charmer of the mind; Mohan with flute in hand.

(Utter the name of Hari! Hari! Hari! O my mind.)

You the boy of Vraja who subjugated Kaliya, the serpent.

You the remover of the fear of the distressed with slanting loving eyes.

With the peacock's feather on your forehead, the beloved of the heart of Radhika.

The holder of the mount Govardhan, you the flower ornament of the forest.

Damodar, you who humbled the pride of Kansa.

You of dark complexion who enjoyed the company of your great devotees, the gopis.

O my mind, utter the name of Hari! Hari! Hari!

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish)— O, what a beautiful song! Have you yourself composed all these songs?

A Devotee — Yes. He himself has composed all the songs of 'Chaitanya Leela' (Lord Chaitanya's divine play).

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish)— This song has come up so well!

(To the singer) “Can you sing the song of Nitai?”

Then he sings a song sung by Nitai

If you wish for the love of the young girl (Radha), come here, the tide of love is on.

A hundred waves of love are rising.

One takes as much of it as one desires.

This girl of love is willingly doling out love.

Utter Hari, Hari, Hari in the name of Radha.

This love makes the life-breath dance maddened with love.

Come on, come, let us all utter Hari, Hari in the love of Radha,

Come on, Come on.

Now he sings the song of Sri Gauranga -

O my life breath, rest at peace like Gaur in your particular state of mind.

A storm is raging in the sea of love erasing all idea of pride, birth and family. (Drown your mind in Gaur.)

You grazed the cows in Vraja becoming a cowherd boy.

You stole the hearts of the gopis with the sweet flute in your hand.

Holding the Mount Govardhan you saved Vrindavan.

You held the feet of the gopis to save their honour.

Then your moonlike face as if got drowned.

(O man, drown your mind in Gaur.)

Everybody persuades M. to sing a song too. M. is somewhat shy. In a low voice he wishes to be excused.

Girish (smiling to Thakur) — Mahashay, there is no way to make M. sing.

Sri Ramakrishna (irritated) — He will show his teeth in the school but is feeling so shy in singing a song.

M. feels ashamed and sits silently for a while.

Suresh Mitra is seated at some distance. Casting a loving glance on him and pointing at Girish Ghosh, Sri Ramakrishna talks happily.

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you! He (Girish) is ...

Suresh — Yes, Sir. He is my elder brother. (All laugh.)

Girish (to Thakur) — Well, Mahashay! I did not study anything in my childhood. Even then people call me learned.

Sri Ramakrishna — Mahima Chakraborty has read and heard so many scriptures. He is a good ‘receptacle’! (To M.) What is your opinion?

M. — Yes, Sir.

Girish — What? Studying! I have seen so much of it. Now I am not going to be misled by it.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — What is the bhava (spirit) here, do you know? **Books, scriptures etc. show only the way to attain God.** When you know the way, the means, what is the need of books and scriptures? Then one should act oneself.

“A person received a letter in which he was asked to send a few things to his

relatives - it contained what articles were to be sent. At the time of buying these articles he could not find the letter. The master was very confused and he began to look for it. For a long time many persons were searching for it. At last the letter was found. There was no end to his happiness. The master took the letter very carefully and began to read it eagerly to see what was written in it. It said, 'Send five seers of sandesh, a dhoti, and what not.' Now the letter was of no use to him. He put away the letter and began arranging for sandesh, dhoti and other articles. For how long was the letter needed? So long as one did not know about sandesh, dhoti and so on. It had to be followed by one's efforts.

"In the scriptures you will find ways to realize Him. But after knowing all about it, you have to get to work. Then alone you will attain the goal!

"What use is mere learning? A pundit may know a number of couplets, a number of scriptures. But he who is attached to the world, who has love for 'woman and gold' in his mind, he has not internalized the contents of holy books - his study is in vain. The almanac says that it will rain 20 *adas* (units). Press the almanac but not a drop will come out! Even a drop should fall - but not a single one comes out." (All laugh.)

Girish (smiling) — Mahashay, will not a drop fall when the almanac is pressed? (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — The pundits talk tall. But where are their looks? On 'woman and gold', on sensual pleasures and on money.

"The vultures soar high up but their eyes remain fixed on the charnel pits. (All laugh.) They only look at where the dead animal is, where the charnel pit is and where the corpse is.

(To Girish) "Narendra is a very good boy. He is good at singing, at playing on musical instruments, at reading and writing, and at studies. Besides, he has conquered his senses - he has discrimination and dispassion. He is truthful and has a number of qualities.

(To M.) "I say, what do you think? Isn't he very good?"

M. — Yes sir, he is very good.

Sri Ramakrishna (aside to M.) — See, how much love and faith he (Girish) has.

M. looks at Girish with wonder. Girish has been coming to Thakur for sometime. But M. feels as if they have been knowing each other for a long time - that they are very close to each other - like one of the shining gems strung together with one and the same thread.

Narayana — Sir, won't you sing?

Sri Ramakrishna sings the Name and glory of the Mother in his same sweet voice -

Keep carefully the revered Mother Shyama in your heart.

May you behold Her and may I behold Her, and none else! ...

Thakur sings pridefully to the Mother assuming the state of mind of the worldly people scalded in the three fires.

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,

Do not deprive me of bliss.

My mind knows nothing but Thy lotus feet.

The king of Death scolds me.

Tell me Mother what shall I say to him.

My only desire was that I may cross the sea of the world with the name of 'Bhavani' on my lips.

I did not even dream, O Mother!

That you will drown me in this shoreless, fathomless sea.

I am swimming night and day in the name of Durga.

Even so, there is no end to my sorrow.

If I die this time, O the Beloved of Shiva!

Nobody will ever repeat Thy name, O Durga.

Then he sings the story of the Mother, ever joyful in the joy of Brahman -

The Mother is always lost in the ecstasy of joy in the company of Shiva

Though drunk with nectar She reels but does not fall.

Erect She stands on Shiva's bosom and the earth trembles under Her steps.

More than mad, both are indifferent to fear and shame.

The devotees listen to the songs in deep silence. They are gazing at Thakur who is in such a wonderful self-forgetful mad mood.

The song ends. After a while Thakur Sri Ramakrishna says, "I could not sing well today. I have a slight cold."

Chapter Four

At the advent of evening

Evening has set in slowly. It is as if the blue shadows of infinity have fallen on the ocean breast. Whether he be in a deep forest, or on the top of the summit of a hill reaching the sky, or at the bank of a river with its water trembling with the touch of wind, or in a vast plain touching the ends of the earth, the little human being easily feels a change in his mood. The sun was illuminating the universe, living as well as inert. "Where has it gone?" - wonders the child as well as the childlike saintly person. It is evening. What a wonder! Who has made it thus? The birds sheltering amidst the branches of the tree are chirping. Men who are spiritually awake are also repeating the name of the Primeval Poet, the Supreme Being, the Cause of all causes.

It is already evening as they converse. The devotees keep on sitting at their places. Sri Ramakrishna utters the sweet Name. Everybody listens to him with his head raised and ears agog. They have never heard such a sweet Name - it is as if nectar is raining. They have never heard and seen a child calling his mother so lovingly, saying, "Mother, Mother!" What need is there now to gaze at the sky, or the hills, or the ocean, or the open spaces, or the forest? Now what is the use of seeing the horns or the feet or other limbs of the cow? Am I seeing with my eyes in this very room the udders of the cow, which the compassionate Guru has been talking to me? How has the restless mind of everyone become peaceful! How has this joyless earth got filled with joy? Why am I seeing the bhaktas so much at peace and joy? Is this loving sannyasi the infinite God in a beautiful form? Is it the place where the thirst of a person eagerly desirous of having milk be quenched. Whether he is God-incarnate or not, my heart is sold out at the feet of this man and it cannot be withdrawn. I have made him the pole star of my life. Let me see how the Primeval Supreme Soul is reflecting Himself in the lake of his heart!

Some of the devotees are reflecting thus and feel blessed on hearing the name of the Mother and the name of the Lord coming out of the holy lips of Sri Ramakrishna. After the singing of the Name and glory of God, Thakur prays as if Bhagavan Himself assuming a body of love is instructing the jiva how to pray. Says he -

Mother, I surrender myself at Your lotus feet. Mother, I have given myself up to You.

Mother, I don't ask for bodily comforts, I don't ask for name and fame, nor do I ask for the eight occult powers.

Only grant that I may have pure devotion at Your lotus feet.

That I may have selfless, motiveless and pure devotion.

And grant, O Mother, I may not be bewitched by Your world-bewitching maya.

May I never have love for 'woman and gold'. In Your world of maya, Mother, there is none else but You as mine.

I know not how to chant Your name, I am devoid of Your devotion, knowledge and bhakti.

Be compassionate and grant me bhakti at Your lotus feet.

Mani reflects thus: What is sandhya for him who repeats the Name at morning, midday and

evening uninterruptedly like the flow of oil; from whose holy lips issues forth the Ganga of Name? Mani later realizes that Thakur has assumed a human body for imparting instruction to mankind -

“Hari Himself came in the guise of a yogi and sang the glory of the Name.”

Girish has invited Thakur. He has to go to him this very evening.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you not think that it will be late?

Girish — No, you may come when you like. I have to go to theatre today. I have to settle some dispute.

Chapter Five

Sri Ramakrishna in a wonderful spiritual mood on the main road

It is Girish's invitation, so he has to go in the night itself. It is 9 p.m., Thakur has to take his dinner. So, Balaram has also arranged a dinner for him. Lest Balaram should feel hurt later on, it appears, Thakur says while going to Girish's house, “Balaram, you may also send the meals.”

As he comes down from the second level, he gets filled with divine emotion; he looks as if he is drunk deep! Narayana and M. are with him. Rama, Chuni and many others follow. A devotee asks, “Who will go with him?” Sri Ramakrishna says, “Just one person will do.” As he climbs down, he is surcharged with emotion. Narayana goes to hold his hand lest he should fall. Thakur expresses his displeasure. After a while, he says to Narayana with great tenderness, “If you hold my hand, people will think that I am intoxicated. I shall walk myself.”

The three way crossing of Bosepara is being negotiated. Girish's house is only at some distance from here. Why is he walking so fast? The devotees are left behind. Who knows what divine emotion has taken possession of his heart? Is Sri Ramakrishna walking like a mad man thinking of that Being whom the Vedas say 'beyond mind and speech'? Only a short while ago he said at Balaram's house that the Supreme Being is not beyond mind and speech. He is realized by the pure mind, the pure intellect and the pure soul. So, it appears that at the present moment he is beholding that Supreme Being! Is he realizing “Whatever is, it is You (God)?”

Behold! Narendra is coming. He goes mad shouting, “Narendra, Narendra.” And see, now Narendra has appeared before him, but Thakur is silent. People say, “This is bhava (God-consciousness).” Did Gauranga (Chaitanya Deva) experience this very state?

Who can understand this bhava? Thakur has now arrived at the street from which one enters Girish's house. The devotees are with him. He now talks to Narendra.

Says he to Narendra, “Are you keeping well, my child? I could not speak at that time.” Every word of his is marked with tenderness. He has not yet reached the entrance door. He suddenly stops.

He looks at Narendra and says, “One word - this (the human soul) is one of the two and that (the world) is another.”

The living beings and the world! Was he seeing all this in bhava? Only he knows what he was seeing in that speechless manner. He spoke a word or two like a phrase from the Veda, as if a god word, or as if he has gone at the infinite sea shore and stands there mute! And as if one or two echoes of the *anahat* ^[1] rising from the never ending waves have entered his ears.

Chapter Six

Thakur in the shrine of a bhakta - newspapers - Nityagopal

At the door stands Girish. He has come to greet Sri Ramakrishna. As soon as Thakur approaches him with his devotees, Girish lies prostrate before him. He rises at Sri Ramakrishna's bidding, takes the dust of his feet and leads him to the sitting room on the second level and makes him sit there. The devotees quickly take their seats. Everybody wants to be near him and drink the sweet nectar of his words.

While sitting down Thakur notices a newspaper lying there. The newspapers have to do with worldly-minded men, worldly matters, gossip and running down others. So newspaper is something unholy for Sri Ramakrishna. He makes a sign that it should be removed from

there.

When the newspaper is taken away, he takes his seat. Nityagopal pays his obeisance.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Nityagopal) — What about that place?

Nitya — Yes, sir, I did not go to Dakshineswar. I was not well. I had pains.

Sri Ramakrishna — How are you doing now?

Nitya — Not well.

Sri Ramakrishna — You should better remain one or two notes below (the highest scale)!

Nitya — I don't have interest in people. They say so many things, I feel afraid. At times I feel a lot of courage.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is but natural. Who stays with you?

Nitya — Tarak^[2]. He is always with me. At times, even he does not agree with the state of my mind.

Sri Ramakrishna — Nangta (Totapuri) used to say that he had at his monastery a person who had acquired some miraculous powers. He used to go about gazing at the sky. His companion, Ganesh Garji, left him and he became disconsolate!

While saying so Sri Ramakrishna goes into bhava. In what mood does he remain speechless? After a while he says, "You have come, I too have come."

Who will understand these words? Is this the language of gods?

Chapter Seven

With an intimate disciple - discussion on God-incarnation

Many devotees are seated near Sri Ramakrishna. Narendra, Girish, Rama, Haripada, Chuni, Balaram, M. - many of them are there.

Narendra does not believe that God comes down in a human body as an avatara (incarnation). On the other hand, Girish has a burning faith that He comes as avatara in every age - He assumes human body and comes down to this mortal world. Thakur is very keen that the two discuss this matter. Sri Ramakrishna says to Girish, "Discuss this for a while in English, I would like to listen."

The discussion starts. But not in English, in Bengali with a few words in English in between. Narendra says, "God is infinite. It is not possible for us to comprehend Him. He is present within everybody, not that He appears in one human body."

Sri Ramakrishna (affectionately) — I agree with him. He is everywhere. But this is also true that there is difference in manifestation of divine energy. He manifests Himself somewhere as *avidya shakti* (that leads away from God) and at other places as *vidya shakti* (that leads Godward). In some 'receptacles' there is greater power of His and in others there is lesser. So, all men are not equal.

Rama — What is the use of this idle discussion?

Sri Ramakrishna (sharply) — No, no. It has a special significance.

Girish (to Narendra) — How do you know that He does not appear in a human body?

Narendra — He is beyond speech and mind.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, He can be realized by the pure intellect. The pure intellect and the pure atman are indeed the same. The rishis realized the pure Atman with their pure intellect, pure atman.

Girish (to Narendra) — If God does not appear in a human body as the avatara, who will teach mankind? He assumes a human body to teach jnana and bhakti to man. If it is not so, who will teach?

Narendra — Why? He will teach from within the heart.

Sri Ramakrishna (affectionately) — Yes, yes. He will teach as *antaryamin*.

And now a heated discussion issues forth: “Can the Infinite have portions? What does Hamilton say? What does Herbert Spencer say? What have Tyndal and Huxley said?” They talk thus.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — See, I don’t like such conversation. I see all as Him. Then what is there I have to reason? I see that He is all, that He has become all. He is this as well as that. In one state the mind and the intellect are lost in the Absolute. When I see Narendra my mind gets lost in the Absolute.

(To Girish) “What do you say to this? Just tell something.”

Girish (laughing) — I have almost understood everything except this. (Everybody laughs.)

Ramanuja and the doctrine of Vishishtadvaitavada (Qualified Non-dualism)

Sri Ramakrishna — And then I cannot talk unless I come down two steps. What Sankra has understood of Vedanta is true and then Vishishtadvaitavada of Ramanuja is also true.

Narendra — What is meant by Vishisht-advaitavada?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — Vishishtadvaitavada is Ramanuja’s doctrine, i.e. the Absolute is qualified by the *jiva* (finite soul) and the *jagat* (phenomenal world). The three of them form one.

“Let us take a bel fruit. Somebody separated its shell, seeds and kernel. And now you want to know the weight of the bel fruit. Will you be able to weigh it by weighing the kernel alone? The shell, the seeds and the kernel will have to be weighed together. Initially neither the shell nor the seeds seem to be of any importance. Only the kernel seems to be all-important. But when you think over it, you realize that the kernel belongs to the same substance (fruit) to which the shell and the seeds belong. In the beginning you have to proceed saying, ‘Not this, not this.’ One must reason thus: The *jiva* is not (permanent), nor is the world. Only Brahman is real, all else is unreal. Later, you realize that the kernel belongs to the same substance to which the shell and seeds belong. The Absolute is the identical substance from which you derive the conception of the *jiva* and the world. Leela (relative) must be traced to that very Being to which the *Nitya* (Absolute) must be traced. So, Ramanuja says that the *jiva*, the world and Brahman are one. This is called Vishisht-advaitavada.

Chapter Eight

God-vision - avatara is perfect in revelation

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — I see Him before my eyes - what more should I reason? I am seeing that He Himself has become all, that He Himself has become the *jiva* and the world.

“Without awakening of the spirit within you cannot realize the Universal Spirit. For how long one reasons? So long as one does not attain Him. Mere talking will not do. I see that He indeed has become all. One should gain awakening by His grace. When your spirit awakens, you gain samadhi. Sometimes you forget the body; your attachment to ‘woman and gold’ vanishes; you don’t like anything except talk on God; you feel troubled on hearing worldly talk.”

Revelation - instruction to Narendra - Kali indeed is Brahman

“The spirit within being awakened, the next step is the realization of the Universal Spirit.”

At the end of the discussion Thakur Sri Ramakrishna says to M. -

“I have observed that you can know Him in one way by reasoning and in another way by meditation - this is another way. And when He reveals Himself, it is yet different. And when he reveals what is God-incarnate - when He shows His human leela, you don’t have to reason any more, nobody has to make you understand. Do you know how it is? It is like striking a matchstick and suddenly it illumines that place. Similarly, if He suddenly gives you light, all doubts vanish. Can He be known by reasoning?”

Thakur calls Narendra and makes him sit near him. He enquires about him and caresses him so much.

Narendra (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Alas! I meditated on Kali for three or four days. Yet nothing at all has happened.

Sri Ramakrishna — It will come about gradually. Kali is none other but Brahman. The One who is Brahman is Kali. Kali is the Primeval Power. When It is inactive, I call it Brahman. When It creates, preserves and destroys, I call It Shakti, I call It Kali. To whom you call Brahman ^[3], I call Kali ^[4].

“Brahman and Kali are one and the same. They are like the fire and its burning power. If one thinks of fire, its burning power immediately comes to the mind. When one accepts Kali, one has to accept Brahman. Similarly, by accepting Brahman one has to accept Kali.

“Brahman and Shakti are one and the same. I call Him Shakti and the same Being I call Kali.”

It is already dark. Girish must go to the theatre. Girish says to Haripada, “Brother, please call a cab. I have to go to the theatre.”

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Look here, you must bring one.

Haripada (laughing) — I am going to bring it, why shall I not bring one?

God-realization and work - Rama and work

Girish (to Sri Ramakrishna) — I have to leave you and go to the theatre.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, you have to serve both the parties. Raja Janak was loyal to both matter and spirit and at the same time drank his cup of milk. (All laugh.)

Girish — I am thinking of leaving theatre and all else to the younger fellows.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, no. This is all very good. It is doing a lot of good to many.

Narendra(in a low voice) — Just a moment ago he was harping on God, on God-

incarnate, and now the theatre is attracting him.

Chapter Nine In samadhi - Sri Ramakrishna fully drunk deep in God

Seating Narendra by his side Sri Ramakrishna gazes at him. Suddenly he creeps still nearer to him. Narendra does not accept avatara, what does that matter? Thakur's love for him is as if knowing no bounds. Touching his person he says to Narendra, "Do you feel that your dignity is being wounded? Be it so; we, too, are of the same mind with you (and feel for you).^{*}

One reasons till one realizes God

(To Narendra) "So long as there is reasoning, you cannot attain Him. You were reasoning, I didn't like it.

"How long is there din in the feast hall? So long as people don't sit down to eat. As soon as *puris* and vegetables are served, twelve annas (seventy five per cent) of the bustle is over. (All laugh.) When other articles of food are served, it further quiets down. When curds are served on the leaf plates, one can only hear the sound of 'sup-sup' (sound of sipping). And when the feast is over, one sleeps.

"The nearer you come to God, the lesser remains the reasoning. When He is attained no word, no reasoning remains there. Then it is sleep - samadhi."

Speaking thus, he gently strokes Narendra's person, touches his face and caresses him saying, "Hari Om, Hari Om, Hari Om."

Why is he doing thus and saying so? Is Sri Ramakrishna seeing in Narendra the very presence of Narayana (God)? Is this what is known as seeing God in man? What a wonder, in no time Thakur is losing outward sense-consciousness. See, he is losing all awareness of the outside world. Perhaps this is what is called half outer-consciousness that Sri Gauranga (Chaitanya) had experienced. Even now he has his hand on Narendra's feet as if he is deceivingly pressing the feet of Narayana. Again he moves his hand on his body. Why so much caressing the body and pressing the feet? Is he serving Narayana, or is he infusing Power in him (that comes from above)?

In no time his mental state is changing. And now what does he say to Narendra with folded hands? He says, "Sing a song and I shall be restored. How shall I be able to stand on my legs? O! He (my Nityananda) is deep drunk in the love of Gauranga (an incarnation of God)."

He is silent again for a while and sits speechless like a figure in a picture. Then overwhelmed with emotion he says further, "Beware Radha lest you should fall into Yamuna, you who are mad in the love of Krishna."

Overwhelmed with still more emotion, he says -

"Friend, how far is that wood where my Shyam Sunder is? (I smell Krishna here!) (I can walk no further.)"

Now he has lost all consciousness of the world - he remembers none - Narendra is seated before him but he does not know where Narendra is sitting. He has no awareness of the outside world as if his mind and soul have merged in God. *Madgat antaratma*^[5].

"Drunk deep in the love of Gaur" - saying so he stands up having uttered a sudden *humkar* (roar). He sits down again. Having seated says he -

"Yonder is a light coming. I see it but from which side it is coming, even now I cannot make it out."

Now Narendra sings -

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.

Sri Ramakrishna is losing all consciousness of the external world as he listens to the song. His eyes are closed and body still. He is in samadhi.

Just as a child not finding his companion sees all darkness, in the same way, he says at the end of samadhi, "Who will take me?"

It is late at night, the tenth day of the dark fortnight of Falgun - it is a dark night. Thakur will go to the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. He will get into the carriage. The devotees stand near the carriage. Sri Ramakrishna gets in - he is helped very carefully by the devotees. He still remains 'deep drunk'.

The carriage leaves and the devotees go each to his own home.

Chapter Ten

In the disciple's heart

Above the head there is the starry night sky, upon the canvas of the heart is the wonderful image of Sri Ramakrishna, the remembrance is of the assembly of devotees, like a pleasant dream the eyes are completely filled with that love - the bhaktas are going homeward on the main road of Calcutta. Some of them enjoying the pleasant breeze of the spring are singing the same song as they go -

By giving Your vision You have rid me of all sorrows, and have charmed my soul.

Mani walks down saying to himself: Does God actually assume a human body and come to the earth? Is it that the avatara is real? How does the infinite God become a man three and a half cubits tall? Can the Endless have an end? I have reasoned enough but what have I understood? I have known nothing by reasoning.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna has beautifully said, "As long as there is reasoning, you have not attained your goal, you have not attained God." This is also true that I have only an ounce of intellect. How can I know of God with it? Can a one seer pan contain four seers of milk? But how to have faith in avatara? Thakur said, "If God in His mercy shows it to you, it is understood in a moment." Goethe said lying on his deathbed, "Light! More light!" If God in His compassion strikes the light and shows it to you, then all doubts vanish.

The way the illiterate fishermen of Palestine recognized Jesus or the devotees like Srivasa recognized Gauranga as the perfect God-incarnate.

And if God does not reveal in His grace, what is the way out? Why, when Sri Ramakrishna has said it

I shall put my faith in God-incarnation. He himself has taught, "Faith, faith, faith! Faith in the word of the Guru." And -

I have made Thee the polestar of my life, never shall I lose my way in this sea of the world.

By God's grace I have developed faith in his (Sri Ramakrishna's) words. I shall continue this faith. Let others do what they like. Why should I give up such a faith that is rare even amongst gods? I set aside all reasons. Have I to become another Faust by intellectual discussions? And then in the deep darkness of the night a ray of moon is entering through the window and Faust is lying alone in the room.

'Alas, I have not been able to understand anything. The study of philosophy and science went in vain. Shame on my life!' Saying so, will I then like him take up a phial of poison to commit suicide? Or else like another person Alastor, not being able to bare the burden of ignorance, shall I place my head upon a rock stone and wait for death? No, I have no need to go and pierce this mystery with an ounce of intelligence like all these tragic savants. And a vessel of one seer is not able to contain four seers of milk, for this reason there is also no need to go and commit suicide. A wonderful word - 'Faith in the word of the Guru.' O God! Give me that faith and let me not wander from here to there for nothing. 'That what is not bound to happen,' don't send me out to find that. And what Thakur has instructed, 'May I gain pure devotion at Thy lotus feet - *amla* and *ahetuki* devotion. And may I not be enchanted by Your world- bewitching Maya.' Bless me with this, I pray.

Reflecting over Sri Ramakrishna's such unheard love, Mani is returning home by the main road in that dark night and says to himself, "What a love he has for Girish! Even when Girish has to go to theatre, he must visit his house. Not only this, he does not even ask him to renounce - to forsake home, relatives, worldly activities, all, for him and embrace sannyasa. I understand - it has a meaning. Unless the time is ripe, unless one has developed deep dispassion, renunciation will be hurtful. Thakur himself says that if you remove the scab from a wound before the wound is dried, it will bleed and will be painful. But when the wound has dried, the scab will fall off by itself. The ordinary men who have no insight ask you to renounce the world immediately. This *sadguru* (real preceptor), the sea of motiveless grace, is the ocean of love. His care night and day is to see how he can do good to mankind.

"And also what a faith Girish has! It was just two days after he had seen him (Thakur) when he said, 'Lord, you are God indeed, You have come in a human body for my salvation.' Girish

is right in saying, 'How can God instruct like a member of the family without taking up a human body?' Who will make us realize that only God is real and all else unreal? Who will lift the weak child fallen on earth by holding his hand? Who will make the man attached to 'woman and gold' and of the nature of the animal eligible again for eternal life as before? And if He does not give them company as a human being, how will they whose inmost Self has become one with Him and who do not like anything but God will spend their lives? That is why -

Paritranaya sadhunam vinashaya ca dushkritam,

Dharma sansthanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge. (Gita 4:8)

[For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of the dharma I take birth age after age.]

"What a love! He is mad for Narendra, weeps for Narayana. He says, 'These and the other boys - Rakhal, Bhavanath, Purna, Baburam and so on - are Narayana (God) Himself. They have come to the earth in a human body for my sake.' I say, this love is not born of human intellect. It is divine love, I see it. These boys are pure souls, they have not even touched women with other intentions. They have not developed greed, pride, violence and so on by engaging in worldly work. So there is greater manifestation of God in these boys. But who has such a vision! Thakur has the insight; he sees all - who is involved in worldly matters, who is simple, who is magnanimous, who is a devotee of God! So, on seeing such devotees he serves them taking them as Narayana Himself. He helps them take a wash, puts them to bed, weeps to see them and rushes to Calcutta for them. He beseeches others to bring them from Calcutta by some cab. He often asks the householder devotees, 'Invite them to a meal. This will do you good.' Is it worldly love or pure divine love? One worships God, serves Him in all the sixteen ways, in an earthen image. Can't He then be worshipped in a pure human body? Besides, are they not the helpers in every leela of God, the intimate companions in every incarnation?

"As he gazes at Narendra, he forgets the external world - gradually he forgets Narendra in bodily form. He forgets the apparent man, he only sees the real man. His mind merges into Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, seeing whom he sometimes becomes mute, motionless or sometimes utters, 'Om, Om' or at times repeats, 'Mother, Mother' like a child. He sees more of His manifestation in Narendra. He is mad repeating, 'Narendra, Narendra.'

"Narendra does not believe in God incarnation. But what does that matter? Thakur has divine eyes. He has seen that it could only be the pride of personality in him. God is very much our own, He is our own Mother, not the adopted one. Why will He not make us understand? Why will He not strike the light in compassion, and show (the reality)? That is why, it seems, Thakur said:

Do you feel that your dignity has been wounded? Be it so. We too are of the same mind with you and feel for you.*

"If one cannot be difficult with one's dearest of dearest ones, with whom can one be so? Blessed you are Narendra Nath. For you this supreme person has so much love. On seeing you he so easily gets inspiration of God."

Reflecting thus the devotees return home in that deep night with Sri Ramakrishna in their minds.

* - Compare discussion about the order of perception of the Infinite and of the Finite in Max Muller's Hibbert Lectures and Gifford Lectures.

[1] Anahat sound is produced on its own without two material objects being struck together.

[2] Taraknath Ghoshal - Swami Shivananda

[3] The Unconditioned, the Absolute.

[4] God in His relations to the conditioned.

* - These words were addressed by gopis of Vrindavan to Radha.

[5] Madgatena antaratmana. Gita (6:47)

His inmost self merged in Me.

* - These were the words addressed by her companions, the gopis of Vrindavan, to Radha, the greatest lover of God-incarnate Sri Krishna.

Section XV

Sri Ramakrishna's Conversation and Merry Making in the House of Shyampukur with Ishan, Doctor Sarkar, Girish and other Bhaktas

Chapter One

On householder ashrama

The fourteenth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Aswin. Celebrations of the worship of Mahamaya for three days – the seventh, eighth and ninth days – are over. The tenth day is the Vijaya. Loving exchanges on this occasion are already over. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna is living in the Shyampukur locality in the city of Calcutta along with the bhaktas. He is suffering from a serious disease – he has cancer of the throat. Kaviraj (the Ayurvedic physician) Ganga Prasad used to treat him when he was in Balaram's house. Thakur asked him whether his disease was curable or not. Kaviraj did not reply to this question. He just remained silent. The allopathic doctors also hinted that the disease was incurable. Now Doctor Sarkar is treating him.

It is Thursday, 22 October, 1885 today. A bed has been made in the first floor room of the two storeyed house in Shyampukur. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on it. In front and all around are sitting Doctor Sarkar, Ishan Chandra Mukhopadhyay and other devotees. Ishan is a very charitable person. Though he is on pension, he gives away in charity and always contemplates on God. Hearing of Sri Ramakrishna's illness he has come to see him. Though Doctor Sarkar comes for treatment, he stays here for six or seven hours. He has great love and reverence for Sri Ramakrishna and he takes the devotees as his very dear ones.

It is about 7 p.m. There is moonlight outside. It seems as if the full moon, the lord of the night, is raining nectar all around. Inside there is light of the lamp. There are many people inside. They have come to have darshan of this great man. All are gazing at him. They are keen to listen what he says and see what he does. Looking at Ishan Sri Ramakrishna says –

**Unattached worldly man –
the way to be unattached**

“Blessed is the worldly man who attends to his worldly work keeping bhakti for God’s lotus feet. He is brave indeed! For example, there is a man carrying a load of two maunds on his head, and there is a procession of a bridegroom. The man has a load on his head, yet he sees the bridegroom. Unless one has great strength, this is not possible. As a mud fish lives in the mud, yet not a speck of mud soils its body. The waterfowl is ever diving into the water, but when it once flutters its wings no water stays on its body.

“But to be able to live unattached in the world, some sadhana (spiritual practice) is necessary. You have to live in solitude for some days. Let it be for one year, or six months, or three months or for a month. You have to meditate on God in this solitude. You should always pray to Him earnestly to grant you bhakti. And you should say to yourself, ‘There is none in this world who is my own. Those whom I call my own are just for two days. Only God is my own person. He alone is my all. Alas! how to attain Him?’

“You can live in the world after gaining bhakti. It is like smearing your hands with oil before cutting the jackfruit. Then its milky exudation will not soil your hands. The world is like water and the man’s mind is like milk. If you keep milk in water, the milk and water will become one. That is why one has to curdle the milk in a solitary corner. When the milk is curdled, one has to take butter out of it. This butter when placed in water does not get dissolved in it; it floats on the surface unattached.

“The members of the Brahmo Samaj said to me, ‘Sir, our attitude is like that of Raja Janak. We will attend to the worldly affairs in an unattached manner as he did.’ I said, ‘It is very difficult to attend to the worldly affairs in an unattached manner. One does not become Raja Janak just by saying so. Raja Janak practised penance for so long standing with his head down and feet up.’ You people will not have to stand on your heads.

“But you have to carry out sadhana. You have to live in solitude. Having attained jnana and bhakti in solitude, you may then go and live in the world. Curds have to be

made in a solitary corner. If you disturb the milk it can't be curdled.

“Janak was unattached. That is why he is known by another name as Videha (bodiless) because he had no consciousness of the body. Though he lived in the world, he would roam about like a *jivanmukta* (liberated in this very life). But to remain unaware of the body is a distant thing. It needs a lot of spiritual practice.

“Janak was a great hero. He wielded two swords – one of jnana and the other of *karma* (work).”

Jnana in household ashrama and sannyasa ashrama

“If you ask whether there is a difference between the jnani of the household ashrama and that of the sannyasa ashrama, the answer is that both are the same. The former is a jnani and so is the latter – just the same. But there is some risk for the householder jnani. Living amidst ‘woman and gold’ there is some risk in it. Living in a room of soot, howsoever clever one may be, one cannot escape a black stain on the body.

“Having taken out butter, if you keep it in a new earthen pot, there is no risk of its getting spoiled. But if you keep it in the pot of buttermilk, it is risky. (All laugh.)

“When parched rice is roasted, a few grains jump out of the frying pan producing the sound ‘pat-pat’. They are like the jasmine flower having no stain on it. The parched rice in the pot are also good but they are not like this flower, there remains a little stain on them. When a renouncer of household, or a sannyasi gains spiritual knowledge, he becomes stainless just like the jasmine flower. And after gaining spiritual knowledge, if he lives in the pail of the world, there can be some red stain on his body. (Everybody laughs.)

“A *bhairavi* (female ascetic) came to the court of Raja Janak. On seeing a woman, Raja Janak lowered his face with his eyes downwards. Seeing this the Bhairavi said, ‘O Janak, you are still afraid of a woman!’ When one has attained *purna jnana* (complete spiritual knowledge), one's nature becomes that of a five year old child. Then one does not distinguish between a male and a female.

“Whatever it may be, there can be a stain on the body of a householder jnani but this stain does not do any harm. Though the moon has stains but they do not obstruct moonlight.”

Karma on attaining jnana – for the welfare of humanity

“Some people take to *karma* after attaining jnana for teaching mankind, for example Janak, Narada and others. For imparting instruction to mankind one must have (spiritual) power. The rishis were engaged in attaining jnana for themselves. But religious teachers like Narada roamed about for the good of mankind. They were heroes.

“When *habate* wood (an old, dry piece of wood) floats, it sinks even if a bird sits on it. But when *bahaduri* wood (superior and heavy log) floats it can take across a cow, a man, and even an elephant. The steamboat itself goes across and also takes so many people across.

“Narada and such other teachers are like the *bahaduri* wood (heavy log), like the steam boat.

“Some people eat, wipe their mouth with a hand towel and sit down quietly lest others should know that they have eaten. (All laugh.) And then there are others who having got a mango cut it into pieces and also share it with others.

“Narada and such other religious teachers retained bhakti for the welfare of others even after attaining jnana.”

Chapter Two

The law for the age – Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

The Doctor — When one has attained jnana (knowledge) one becomes speechless, eyes get closed and tears flow from it. Then there is the need for bhakti.

Sri Ramakrishna — Bhakti is a woman. So she has access to zenana (inner apartments). Jnana can go only up to the visitor’s room. (Everybody laughs.)

The Doctor — But everybody cannot be permitted to go inside the zenana. The public women cannot go. So jnana is needed.

Sri Ramakrishna — A man does not know the right path. But he has love of God within and wants to know Him — such a person attains God by sheer dint of his bhakti. A great devotee set out to have the darshan of Lord Jagannath. He did not know any way to Puri. Instead of going south he went towards the west. Though he had lost his way, he earnestly enquired about it from others. They told him, 'Not this way, go that way.' This devotee at last arrived Puri and had darshan of Lord Jagannath. Just see, even if you don't know somebody else tells you.

The Doctor — But he did go astray.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, he did go astray but at last reached the goal.

Somebody asks, "Is God with form or without form?"

Sri Ramakrishna — He is with form and also without form. A sannyasi went for the darshan of Jagannath. After the darshan a doubt rose in his mind whether God is with form or without form. He had a stick in his hand. He began to examine with it whether it touches Jagannath's body or not. First he moved his stick from this side to that and felt that it did not touch Jagannath's body. He saw that there was no idol of the deity! And when he moved the stick back from that side to this, it touched the deity's body. The sannyasi then understood that God is with form as well as without form.

"But it is very difficult to realize this. How can He who is without form be with form? This doubt arises in the mind. And if He is with form, why then He has so many forms?"

The Doctor — He who has made forms is Himself with form. And when He willed, He became without form. He can indeed be everything.

Sri Ramakrishna — Unless one realizes God one cannot comprehend all this. For the aspirant He manifests Himself in many forms, in many ways. Somebody had a tub for dyeing. Many people used to visit him to get their clothes dyed. That person would ask, ‘Which colour do you want it to be dyed in?’ Someone perhaps said, ‘I want to get it dyed red.’ That person immediately puts that cloth in his tub and having dyed it says, ‘Here is your cloth dyed red.’ And another perhaps says, ‘I want to get it dyed yellow.’ Having dipped the cloth immediately in the same tub, that person says, ‘Here is your yellow cloth. Take it.’ When asked to dye it blue, he again dips the cloth in the same tub and says just the same, ‘Here is your cloth dyed blue.’ In this way he dyed everybody’s cloth dipping in the same tub in the colour he was asked. A person was seeing this strange affair. The owner of the tub asked, ‘How have you come brother? What colour do you want?’ He said, ‘Brother, please give me the colour in which you are dying.’ (Everybody laughs.)

“Somebody went to defecate (in a field). There he saw a beautiful bird on a tree. Later he said to another person, ‘Brother, I saw a special red colour bird on a certain tree.’ That person said, ‘I have also seen it. But it is not red. It is green.’ Yet another person said, ‘No, no. It is not green, it is yellow.’ Others also spoke in the same way. One said, it was violet, another blue, another black and so on. This led to a quarrel. Then they all went under the tree. They saw a person sitting there. When asked he said, ‘I live under this tree. And I know this particular bird very well. You are all telling the truth – it is sometimes red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, sometimes blue and what not! And at times I see that it has no colour at all.’

“He who always meditates on God can only know what is His real Self. Only he knows that God grants His darshan in various forms. He is seen in different states. He has attributes and then He is without attributes. Only he who lives under the tree knows that this quick change bird has different colours, and at times he has no colour at all. The others only discuss, quarrel and

trouble themselves.

“He is with form and He is formless. What He is like, do you know? Suppose there is an ocean of Sachchidananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss) –boundless one. With the cool of bhakti the water of this ocean freezes at places just as water freezes in the shape of ice. In other words, He takes a concrete form for the devotee. Sometimes He is seen in a body. And when the sun of jnana rises, this ice melts.”

The Doctor — When the sun rises, ice melts into water. And then you know, it again becomes formless as vapours.

Sri Ramakrishna — That is to say, when one realizes that only Brahman is the Reality and the world an illusion, one attains samadhi and all His forms vanish. Whether God is a person, one is not aware of. What He is cannot be said by the word of mouth. And who will tell? Those who are to tell are themselves not there. Their ‘I’ cannot be found even if you search for it. Then Brahman becomes attributeless and one can have His *bodhebodha* (intellectual conception and realization). He cannot be known through the mind and the intellect.

“That is why they say that bhakti is the moon while jnana is the sun. I hear that very much towards the north as well as towards the south are oceans. It is so cold there that water freezes and becomes icebergs at certain places. A ship cannot sail there. It cannot go farther.”

The Doctor — One stops on the path of bhakti.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, one does stop. But it does not do any harm. It is that very water of the ocean of Sachchidananda that freezes into ice. If you further reason out and say that ‘Brahman is real while the world an illusion,’ even in this there is no harm. The ice will melt by the heat of the sun of jnana. Then what remains is the same ocean of Sachchidananda.

The ripe ‘I’ and the unripe ‘I’ –

the 'I' of a bhakta and the 'I' of a child

“When you have reasoned it out and attained samadhi, your 'I' or such like thing vanishes. But to attain samadhi is very difficult. This 'I' never wants to disappear, and since it does not wish to leave you, you again have to return to this world.

“The bullock bleats, 'Hamba, hamba' (I, I). That is why there is so much of misery for it. The whole day it is pulling the plough, come rain or summer season. Moreover, the butcher cuts it. Even now it is not left out. The tanner tans leather, and shoes are made. And last of all they make string of its intestines. When it falls in the hands of the carder and utters, 'Tunhun, tunhun' (you, you), it is only then that it is released.

“When the jiva says, 'Naham, naham, naham (not I, not I, not I), I am nothing, O Lord. I am the servant, You are the Master,' it is only then that he is released, he is liberated.”

The Doctor — But one must fall into the hands of the carder. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — If 'I' simply refuses to go, let the rascal remain as the 'servant I'. (All laugh.)

“Some persons retain their 'I' even after samadhi as 'the servant I,' 'the devotee I.' Sankracharya retained the 'I' of knowledge to instruct the mankind. 'The servant I,' 'the devotee I,' the 'I' of knowledge, are all 'ripe I'. What is 'unripe I,' do you know? I am the doer, I am the son of such a big man, I am so learned, I am wealthy, how dare you talk to me in this manner – such kind of all attitudes. If somebody steals in his house and he is caught, first of all he snatches all the articles from him. Then he gives him a good beating and then hands him over to the police saying, 'Don't you know whom you are robbing?'

“After you have realized God, your nature becomes that of a five year old child. The 'I' of a child and the ripe 'I'. The child is not subject to any guna – is beyond the three gunas. He is not subject to any of the gunas:

Sattva, rajas or tamas. See, the child is not governed by tamoguna. He may just now quarrel and fight with somebody, but immediately he puts his arm around his neck, shows him love and plays with him. He is also not under the influence of rajas. He makes a toy house with so much of labour. But soon after he leaves it there and runs to his mother. He may roam about wearing a pretty dhoti and it falls off in the dust the next moment. He may forget the dhoti completely or he may be roaming about with the dhoti under his armpit! (Laughter.)

“If you ask this boy, ‘You have a pretty dhoti, to whom does it belong?’ He replies, ‘It is mine. My father has given it to me.’ If you say to him, ‘Dear little one, give me your dhoti,’ he replies, ‘It is mine, my father has given it to me. No, I shall not give it to you.’ Later on if you can make him forget by giving him a doll or a flute, he may give you his five-rupee worth dhoti and depart. And a five year old child is also not attached to the sattvaguna. Now he is so fond of his companions of the neighbourhood that he cannot bare their separation even for a moment. But when he goes to some other place with his parents, he makes new friends and showers all his love on them. He forgets his old companions altogether. And then he has no pride of his caste. His mother has told him that so and so is your elder brother, he would take him to be his real brother a hundred per cent. Then maybe that one is the son of a brahmin, or that of a potter, he would eat with him in the same plate. And then he has no idea of purity or impurity. He may start eating without having washed his bottom after defecation! He also has no feeling of shame. After defecating he may ask anybody whether he has had a full evacuation.

“And then there is the ‘I’ of an old man. (The Doctor laughs.) The old people have a number of bondages – of caste, of pride, of shame, of contempt, of fear, of worldly intellect, of calculation and of cunningness. If he has any grudge and ill will towards someone, he cannot shake it off easily. Perhaps he can’t do it till he is alive. Then there is the pride of learning and the pride of wealth. The old man’s ‘I’ is the unripe ‘I.’”

Who does not gain jnana?

(To the Doctor) “Four or five persons don’t gain jnana (spiritual wisdom). He who has the ‘T’ of learning, the ‘T’ of knowledge, or the ‘T’ of wealth does not attain jnana. If you tell these people that there is a nice sadhu at such and such place and ask them whether they would like to go to see him, they immediately offer a number of excuses and do not go. They say to themselves in their mind, ‘I am such a big man. Why should I go?’

The three gunas – sattva quality leads one to God – the way to discipline the senses

“The nature of tamoguna is pride. Pride is generated by ignorance, by tamoguna.

“The Puranas say that Ravana had rajoguna, Kumbhakaran tamoguna and Vibhishana sattvaguna. This is the reason why Vibhishana could attain Ramachandra. Anger is another characteristic of tamoguna. In anger one loses the sense of right and wrong. Hanuman had set fire to Lanka. He lost the consciousness that fire could destroy Sita’s cottage too!

“Then there is another characteristic of tamoguna, i.e. lust. Girendra Ghosh of Pathuraghat said, ‘One cannot get rid of enemies like lust, anger etc. So turn their direction.’ Desire for God. Have intercourse with Sachchidananda. And if you cannot get over anger, bring the tamas of bhakti. What! I have repeated the name of Durga, shall I not to be liberated? There is no sin for me, no bondage. Thereafter, have greed for God realization. Fall in love with God’s form and say, ‘I am the servant of God. I am His son. If you have to be proud, be proud of this. In this way you can turn the direction of all the six enemies.’”

The Doctor — It is very difficult to control the senses. Put blinkers on both the eyes of the horse. In case of some horses, you may have to close both the eyes completely.

Sri Ramakrishna — There is no fear if He once bestows His grace, if the Lord grants you His darshan, if you once have vision of the Atman. Then the six enemies can do no harm.

“The ever perfect saints like Narada and Prahlada don’t have to do so much to put blinkers on their eyes. The boy who himself holds his father’s hand while walking on the ridge of the field may release the father’s hand and fall into a ditch when he is a little uncareful. But the boy whose hand the father holds can never fall into the ditch.”

The Doctor — But it is not right for the father to hold the boy’s hand.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is not so. Spiritually advanced persons have the nature of a child. Before God they are always like a child and their ego vanishes. They derive all their strength from God. It is the strength of the Father, nothing is their own. This is their firm conviction.

**The path of reason and the path of joy –
Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga**

The Doctor — Will the horse move unless blinkers are put on its eyes? Unless the enemy is subjugated can one realize God?

Sri Ramakrishna — That what you are saying, they call it the path of reason – they call it Jnana Yoga. One can attain God by this way too. The jnanis say that you must purify your conscience first. First sadhana is needed, then you will attain jnana.

“You can attain Him by the path of bhakti too. If you once develop bhakti at the lotus feet of the Lord, if you begin to enjoy chanting His name and glories, you don’t have to try to control your senses any more. The enemy gets subjugated automatically.

“Can he who loses his son quarrel with anybody on that day? Or can he join a feast and eat there? Can he walk about with his head high or enjoy sensory pleasures?

“If the insect of rainy season sees light but once, can it live in the darkness then?”

The Doctor (smiling) — So I have to burn myself to death! Well, I accept it!

Sri Ramakrishna — No, but the devotee does not burn himself to death like the moth. It is the light of the jewel towards which the devotee rushes. The light of the jewel may be very bright but it is cool and comforting. This light does not burn the body, this light generates peace and joy.

Jnana Yoga is very difficult

“You can attain Him by the path of reasoning, by the path of Jnana Yoga. But this path is very difficult. ‘I am not the body, nor the mind, nor the intellect, neither disease, nor sorrow, nor restlessness. I am the Self of Sachchidananda, beyond pleasure and pain, not subject to the senses’— it is very easy to say all this by the word of mouth. But it is very difficult to practise it, to internalize it. The hand is scratched and pierced by thorns. It is bleeding profusely, yet you say, ‘Where? My hand is not scratched and pierced by the thorns. I am all right.’ It is not proper to say so. First you have to burn the thorns in the fire of jnana.”

Knowledge and learning by reading books – Thakur’s system of education

“Most people think that without reading books perhaps one cannot learn, one cannot attain knowledge. But it is better to listen than to read, and it is better to see than to listen. There is a great difference between hearing of Kashi and visiting Kashi.

“And then he who plays chess does not understand his move so much. But those who do not play and suggest the move from outside, their move is much better than that of the player. Worldly people think that they are very intelligent. But they are attached to the world – they are themselves playing the game. So they cannot

understand their move well. But the sadhus who have renounced the world are unattached to worldly things. They are more intelligent than the worldly people. They are not playing themselves, so they can tell the move better from outside.”

The Doctor (to the devotees) — He (the Paramahansa) could not have gained so much jnana by reading books. Faraday communed with nature. So he was able to discover such great scientific truth. He could not have attained all this by knowledge derived from reading books. Mathematical formulae only throw the brain into confusion. They are a great obstacle in the way of original inquiry.

Divine wisdom and book learning

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — When I used to lie on the ground in the Panchavati calling upon the Mother, I said to Her, ‘Mother, please show me that the *karmis* (doers) have achieved through karma, the yogis have achieved through yoga and what the jnanis have known through reasoning.’ And I used to say much more. How to tell you all that?

“Aha, what states I have passed through! I had lost my sleep.”

Saying so, the Paramahansa says in a song –

I have lost my sleep, now how to sleep anymore?

I am awake in the yajna of yoga.

In this sleep of yoga granted by You

Even sleep has been put to sleep.

“I have read no books. But you see, I repeat the Mother’s name, so they all show me consideration. Shambhu Mullick said to me: You have no shield, no sword, you are just a soldier of peace.” (All laugh.)

Now the talk turns on Girish Chandra Ghosh’s play – ‘Buddha Charita’. He had invited the Doctor to see the play. The Doctor enjoyed it very much.

The Doctor (to Girish) — You are a very bad man! Shall I have to visit the theatre daily?

Sri Ramakrishna(to M.) — What is he saying? I have not understood.

M. — He has liked the play very much.

Chapter Three

Conversation on avatara – the avatara and the jiva

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — You have said nothing. This man (the Doctor) does not believe in the avatara.

Ishan — Sir, I can't discuss any more. I don't like discussion.

Sri Ramakrishna — But why? Why not speak out what is right?

Ishan (to the Doctor) — Because of our ego we people have little faith. Kak Bhushundi (a crow) did not accept Ramachandra as the avatara in the beginning. At last when it wandered through the region of the moon, the region of gods and the region of Kailash, it saw that there was no way to free itself from Rama and it surrendered itself unto Rama taking shelter in him. Rama then took it in his hand and swallowed it. Bhushundi then saw that it was still perched on its tree. His pride having fallen, Kak Bhushundi then understood that though outwardly Ramachandra was a human being like others, yet he had the whole universe in his belly. The sky, the moon, the stars, the sun, the planets, the ocean, the hills, the men, the beasts, the trees and so on – all these are inside his belly.

Limited powers of the conditioned

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — It is very difficult to understand even this much that He is both limitless and limited. The Nitya (Absolute) belongs to the same Being to which the leela (phenomenal world) belongs. How can we force ourselves with our little intelligence to say that He cannot become a man? Can our little intelligence

realize all these things? Can a one seer pail contain four seers of milk?

“So, you have to put your faith in the words of those sadhus and mahatmas (spiritually advanced persons) who have realized God. The sadhu is ever engaged in thinking of God just as an advocate remains involved with his law suit. Can you put your faith in the tale of Kak Bhushundi?”

The Doctor — I have faith in what is right. And once I have faith, I don't doubt. How can I call Rama an avatara? First take the murder of Bali. He felled him dead with his arrow hiding himself like a thief. This is a man's work, not of God.

Girish Ghosh — Mahashay, only God could do it.

The Doctor — And then consider his forsaking of Sita.

Girish — Mahashay, this too could be done by God, not by man.

Science, or the words of saints

Ishan (to the Doctor) — Why don't you accept the avatara? You yourself have just said that He who has made forms is with form, He who has made the mind is without form. You have just said that anything is possible with God.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — That God can become avatara is not said in their science (books of western science). So, how can one believe? (All laugh.)

“Listen to this story. Somebody came and said, ‘I say brother, I have just been to such and such locality where I saw a house falling down with a terrible crash.’ The listener was an English educated person. He said, ‘Wait a little. Let me see if it is in the newspaper.’ However, he did not find the news of the house falling in the paper. Then he said, ‘I say brother, I cannot trust your word. You see, this news is not in the paper. It is a lie.’” (All laugh.)

Girish(to the Doctor) — You will have to accept Sri Krishna as God. I shall not allow you to take Him as a man. You will have to call him either demon or God.

Simplicity of heart and faith in God

Sri Ramakrishna — Unless you are simple at heart you cannot promptly have faith in God. God is very far from worldly intellect. Because of worldly intellect a number of doubts crop up and different kinds of arrogance make appearance – the arrogance of learning, the arrogance of wealth and so on. But he (the Doctor) is simple at heart.

Girish (to the Doctor) — Mahashay, what is your opinion? Can a hunchman ever attain jnana (spiritual knowledge)?

The Doctor — O Lord! Can he ever attain (spiritual knowledge)?

Sri Ramakrishna — How simple was Keshab Sen! One day he came there (to the Kali Temple of Rasmani). Seeing the guesthouse he asked at four o'clock, 'I say, when the guests and the poor are going to be fed?'

"The more you have faith, the more you will gain spiritual wisdom. The cow which is choosy in fodder does not give much milk. But the cow which gulps all you give it – vegetable leaves, vegetable skins, straw – yields streams of milk. (Everybody laughs.)

"Unless you have faith of a child, you cannot attain God. The mother says, 'He is your elder brother.' The child has such a faith that he takes him as his brother without the least doubt. The mother says, 'There it is a hobgoblin.' The child hundred percent believes that there is a hobgoblin in the room. God bestows His mercy on him who has the faith of a child. You cannot attain God with your worldly intellect."

The Doctor (to the devotees) — It is not right for the cow to eat up all sorts of things and yield milk. We used to give our cow anything as its feed. Later on, I fell very ill. I then thought what was the reason. After a lot of enquiry I found that it had been eating anything besides

what we gave it. Then it created a lot of problem. I had to go to Lucknow and at last lost (spent) twelve thousand rupees! (Roars of laughter.)

“Well, it is not easy to see the relation between cause and effect. How misfortune befalls one, one cannot tell. A seven month girl fell ill in the family of Paikpara babus. She had whooping cough. I went there to treat her. I could not unearth the cause of her illness. At last I found that she had taken the milk of a she-ass which had gone wet in the rain.” (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — What do you say! My cab had passed under a tamarind tree. So I suffered from acidity. (The Doctor and all other laugh.)

The Doctor (laughing) — The captain of a ship had a bad headache. The doctors after consultation had a blister applied to the ship. (All laugh.)

Company of sadhus and renunciation of sensory enjoyments

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — It is always necessary to keep the company of sadhus. One is always suffering from the disease. One should act on what the sadhus say. Only listening to them won't do. One has to take the medicine as well as control one's diet. The diet prescribed by the doctor is to be taken.

The Doctor — The prescribed food is the most important.

Sri Ramakrishna — There are three kinds of physicians – superior physicians, mediocre physicians and inferior physicians. The physician who comes, feels the pulse and goes away saying, ‘You must take the medicine,’ is an inferior physician. He doesn't care to know whether the patient has taken the medicine or not. And the physician who makes the patient understand in so many ways to take the medicine, talks to him nicely, saying, ‘Brother, how can you get well unless you take the medicine? Dear brother, do take it. I will myself put it in your mouth,’ is a mediocre physician. And the physician who puts his knees on the chest of the patient and forces

the medicine down his throat when he sees that the patient refuses to take it is the superior physician.

The Doctor — And there are medicines for which you don't have to put your knees on the patient's chest. For example, homeopathic medicines.

Sri Ramakrishna — There is no danger if the superior physician puts his knees on the patient's chest.

“Like physicians, there are also three kinds of *acharyas* (religious teachers). They who don't keep contact with their disciples after imparting instructions to them are the inferior ones. They who convince their disciples again and again for their good so that they can assimilate their instructions, they who implore and insist them lovingly are mediocre ones. And they who even use force finding that the disciple doesn't listen to them by any means are known as superior *acharyas*.”

Woman and monk – hard rules for the monk

(To the Doctor) “The monk has to eschew ‘woman and gold’. He will not even see the picture of a woman. Do you know what women are like? They are like pickles and tamarind. The moment you think of them, your mouth begins to water. Pickles and tamarind should not be brought before the sight.

“But this is not for you people – it is for the monk. As far as possible you people will live unattached amidst women. In between you will go to a solitary place and meditate on God. None else should be there! When you have gained faith and bhakti for Him, you will be able to live unattached to a fair extent. After having one or two children both husband and wife must live together as brother and sister. And they must pray to the Lord that the mind may not go in sensual enjoyment – there be no more children.”

Girish (laughing, to the Doctor) — You have been here for three or four hours, won't you go to treat your patients?

The Doctor — The practice and the patients are no more for me now? My meeting this Paramahansa has deprived me of everything! (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — Look here, there is a river called *karmanasha* (that puts an end to all activities). A great problem arises when you take a plunge into this river. Your activity is over when you once dive into it – one cannot take to any work after it. (The Doctor and all others laugh.)

The Doctor (to M., Girish and other devotees) — Look here, I am your very own. But not if you want me for the treatment. If you accept me as your own, I am your kith and kin.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor)— There is one *ahetuki* bhakti (selfless devotion). It is very good if one attains it. Prahlada had this selfless devotion. Such a devotee says, ‘O Lord, I want neither wealth nor name nor bodily pleasures and so forth. Only grant that I may have pure bhakti at Thy lotus feet.’

The Doctor — Yes, I have seen people bowing in the Kali Temple. They have nothing but some desire within – grant that I may get some employment, or grant that I be cured and so on.

(To Sri Ramakrishna) “You should not converse with people in this disease of yours. But when I come, you will talk to me.” (Everybody laughs.)

Sri Ramakrishna — Please cure me of this disease. I cannot repeat His name and sing His glories.

The Doctor — Meditation alone is enough.

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you saying? How can I be narrow and one-sided? I eat fish cooked in several different forms – sometimes fish in curry, sometimes spiced, sometimes with tamarind and at times fried or baked. Sometimes I carry out worship, sometimes japa, sometimes meditation and at other times sing His name

and glories. And sometimes I dance repeating His name.

The Doctor — I am also not narrow and one-sided.

What is the harm in not accepting the avatara?

Sri Ramakrishna — Your son Amrita does not believe in avatara. What is the harm in it? You can attain Him by believing in God without form and then you can also attain Him by believing in God with form. What is essential is that you should have faith in Him and that you should surrender yourself to Him. Man is ignorant, he can make mistakes. Can you put four seers of milk in one seer of jug? Therefore, whatever the path you choose you should call upon God with a longing heart. He is *antaryamin* (knower of heart within). He will surely listen to your inner call. You will reach Him alone whether you take the path of God with form or God without form with a longing heart.

“Whether you take the sugared *roti* (Indian bread) straight or oblique, it will taste equally sweet. Your son Amrita is a very good boy.”

The Doctor — He is your disciple.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling, to the Doctor) — No fellow is my disciple. Rather I am everybody’s disciple! We are all children of God! We are all His servants – I am also the child of God. I am also His servant.

“Uncle moon is everybody’s uncle.”

Everybody present enjoys it and laughs.

Section XVI

Vijay, Narendra, M., Doctor Sarkar and other Bhaktas Converse and Make Merry with Sri Ramakrishna

Chapter One

M. with the Doctor to inform him of Thakur's illness

Sunday today, 25 October 1885, 10th of Kartik, the second day of the dark fortnight. Sri Ramakrishna is living in the house in the Shyampukur locality of Calcutta. He has cancer of the throat. So he has come here for treatment. Doctor Sarkar is treating him these days.

M. is sent daily to the Doctor to inform him of the condition of the Paramahansa Deva. This morning at half past six M. paid obeisance to Sri Ramakrishna and enquired, "How are you feeling?"

Sri Ramakrishna said, "Tell the Doctor that in the wee hours my mouth is full of water. I have cough and so on. Ask him whether I can take bath."

M. sees the Doctor after 7 o'clock and tells him all about him. Present with the Doctor are his one or two friends and an old teacher. The Doctor says to the old teacher, "Mahashay, I began worrying about the Paramahansa since 3 o'clock in the night and could not have sleep later. The Paramahansa is still in my mind." (All laugh.)

A friend of the Doctor says to him, "Mahashay, I hear that some people call the Paramahansa as avatara. You do see him daily, what do you think of him?"

The Doctor — As a man I have the greatest regard for him.

M. (to the Doctor's friend) — The Doctor examines him with great kindness.

The Doctor — Kindness!

M. — Not to the Paramahansa but to us.

The Doctor — No brother, no! You do not know what is my actual loss. I miss two or three calls daily. The next

day I go to the patients' houses on my own and I don't charge them fees. How can I charge them fees when I go to them on my own?

Now the talk turns to Mahima Chakraborty. On Saturday when the Doctor came to see the Paramahansa, Chakraborty was present there. On seeing the Doctor he said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Mahashay, it is to feed the vanity of the doctors that you have taken up the disease."

M. (to the Doctor) — Mahima Chakraborty used to visit you earlier. You used to lecture on Medical Science in your house. He used to come to hear it.

The Doctor — O, is that so? How much tamas this fellow has! You see, I offered him namaskar as 'God's Lower Third'. God has all the three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas) in Him. Did you mark his words, 'You have taken up the disease to feed the vanity of the doctors?'

M. — Mahima Chakraborty believes that if the Paramahansa wants, he can cure him himself.

The Doctor — Oh, how is it possible? How can he cure himself? We are medical men. We know what cancer is. Yet we cannot cure it. He knows nothing about it, how will he cure it? (To the friends) You see, though the disease is incurable they all are serving him as great devotees.

Chapter Two

Sri Ramakrishna with his sevak (attendant)

M. requested the Doctor to visit Sri Ramakrishna and then returned. At 3 o'clock after lunch he again went to Sri Ramakrishna and humbly told him everything. Said he, "The Doctor today humiliated me a lot."

Sri Ramakrishna — What happened?

M. — He heard yesterday when he came here that you had taken up the disease to add to the vanity of the wretched doctors.

Sri Ramakrishna — Who said so?

M. — Mahima Chakraborty.

Sri Ramakrishna — Then?

M. — He calls Mahima Chakraborty as 'God's Lower Third'. The Doctor now says, 'God has all the three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas).' (The Paramahansa Deva smiles.) He also said to me, 'My sleep broke off at 3 a.m., I was worried for the Paramahansa.' At 8 o'clock he said, 'Even now the Paramahansa is in my mind.'

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — He is an English educated person. One can't say to such persons to meditate on me. He himself is doing it.

M. — And then he said, 'As a man I have the greatest regard for him.' It means that he does not take you as avatara. But as far as it is possible among men, he has reverence for you.

Sri Ramakrishna — Did you have any other talk?

M. — I asked him what arrangement is to be made for the patient today? The Doctor said, 'Arrangement, my foot! I shall have to go to him today too. What else to be arranged for him!' (Sri Ramakrishna laughs.) And he added, 'You people don't know how much money I am losing everyday. Everyday I have to miss two or three visits.'

Chapter Three

Sri Ramakrishna enjoys in the company of Vijay and other devotees

After a while Vijaykrishna Goswami comes to see the Paramahansa Deva. A number of Brahma bhaktas are with him. Vijaykrishna was in Dhaka for several days. He has now returned to Calcutta after having visited the centers of pilgrimages in west (Punjab and Uttar Pradesh). He prostrates to offer obeisance to Sri Ramakrishna. A number of persons are there - Narendra, Mahima Chakraborty, Navagopal, Bhupati, Latu, M., the Younger

Narendra and many other bhaktas.

Mahima Chakraborty (to Vijay) — Mahashay, you have been to pilgrimage and visited a number of places. Please tell us what you have seen there.

Vijay — What can I tell? I see that everything is here where I am sitting. It is no use roaming about. At some places there is one or two annas ^[1] of him, four annas at other places, that's all. Only here I see full sixteen annas.

Mahima Chakraborty — Quite right. And again it is he who sends you around. And it is he who makes you stay back.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — See, what a state of mind Vijay has developed. All his characteristics are changed as if he has been boiled. Just by examining the shoulder, the neck and the forehead I can recognize a paramahansa - I can tell whether one is a paramahansa or not.

Mahima Chakraborty — Mahashay, you are taking less of food.

Vijay — Yes, it seems so. The quantity has gone down. (To Sri Ramakrishna) I heard of your disease, so I came to see you. And then from Dhaka...

Sri Ramakrishna — What?

Vijay did not answer. He kept quiet for a while.

Vijay — Unless one is helped in catching hold of Him it is very difficult to do so. Only here it is sixteen annas (hundred per cent).

Sri Ramakrishna — Kedar ^[2] says that at other places one does not get any food but here I have got to my fill.

Mahima Chakraborty — To one's fill! It is oozing out.

Vijay (to Sri Ramakrishna with folded hands)— I have now recognized who you are! You have not to tell me any more.

Sri Ramakrishna (in bhava) — If that is what you have seen then that is right.

Vijay — I have known now.

Saying so, he falls at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna and takes his feet on his chest. Sri Ramakrishna sits unaware of the outer world like a statue.

Witnessing this wonderful scene and the flood of divine love some devotees sitting there begin to weep. Some others sing a hymn of praise. Everybody is gazing at Sri Ramakrishna in his own bhava. Some of them see him as a great devotee, others as a sadhu and yet some others as avatara, God assuming a human body - all according to their own bhava.

Mahimacharan begins to sing, his eyes filled with tears: 'Behold, behold the image of love.' And side by side he is as if having a glimpse of Brahman. He says, "The Transcendental, Beyond the One and the many, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute."

Navagopal is weeping. Bhupati, another devotee, sings -

Victory, victory to Para Brahman! Infinite,
incomprehensible Thou art. Higher than the highest, the
essence of all essences.

Thou art the light of truth, the fount of love and its ground.
Thou art the main support of all-good.

This solemn creation of Yours is impregnated with various
rasas (modes). It is full of splendour.

Thou art the Poet, great and primeval. The sun and the
moon are born of Your poetry. And in Thy poetry again,
they move towards the Mount Ast^[3] to set there.

With the golden brush of the stars Thou have written songs
with beautiful words of clouds on the expanse of skies.

The six seasons of the year and the whole creation filled
with happiness are singing Thy glory.

The flowers reveal Thy beauty and the waters Thy serenity.

Thou art the terrific Rudra^[4] in the thunderclap.

Thy mystery is so deep. What can a fool know of it? Infinity
has been worshipping Thee since ages.

Millions of suns, moons and stars filled with joy bow at Thy feet.

Seeing Thy creation men and women overwhelmed in bhava wonder and shed tears from their eyes.

Gods, men and supermen worship Thy pervading divinity; Thou, the home of all-good.

Pray bestow knowledge and love, bestow devotion and grant preservation. Grant, do grant shelter at Thy feet.

Bhupati sings again -

Jhijhit (an Indian musical mode) - community singing

The waves of love and bliss are rising high in the sea of Chidananda (Knowledge and Bliss Absolute). How enthrallingly sweet is the play of *mahabhava*!

So many waves of new bhavas are rising as a mark of various plays of love. They fall and they rise and they take new shape every time. (Repeat the name of Hari.)

The whole world has become one in the mahayoga (great communion). The distinction between time and place has vanished; so has vanished the very existence of distinction.

(I say, my wishes have been fulfilled. All my desires have disappeared.)

Now, O my mind, raise both hands and repeat Hari Hari in joy.

Jhamp Tal (an Indian musical measure)

Delusion, fear, righteous action, good work, piety - all have vanished. The pride of race and caste has vanished.

Where am I and where is Hari (the Lord)! You, friend, have stolen my heart and soul and fled away.

(Why did I come to this shore of the sea of love?)

It is already dawn while I am in bhava (spiritual emotion). Not yet has my heart regained its consciousness.

Says Premadasa as he laughs, 'Hear sadhu, hear all denizens of the world! Such is this new system.'

(No fear! Fear not!)

After a long while Thakur Sri Ramakrishna regains outer-consciousness.

Brahmajnana and 'strange arithmetic' - purpose of avatara

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — I do not know what happens to me when I am emotionally surcharged. Now I am feeling ashamed. It is as if possessed by a ghost. And both ‘my’ and ‘mine’ vanish in that state.

“All calculations vanish after attaining this state. One counts one, seven, eight - in this manner.”

Narendra — All is one, isn’t it?

Sri Ramakrishna — No, beyond one and two. [\[5\]](#)

Mahimacharan — Yes sir, beyond the *dvaita* (duality) and *advaita* (non-duality).

Sri Ramakrishna — All calculations begin to rot. One can’t attain Him through learning. He is beyond the scriptures - Vedas, Puranas and Tantras. When I see even a jnani holding a book in his hands, I call him a rajarshi [\[6\]](#). No outer mark can be found in a

Brahmarishi [\[7\]](#). Do you know what is the use of scriptures? Somebody wrote a letter asking for five seers of sandesh (a kind of sweetmeat) and a dhoti. The addressee read the letter, remembered about ‘five seers of sandesh and a dhoti’ and threw away the letter. What use of the letter now?

Vijay — ‘Sandesh’ has been sent, I understand.

Sri Ramakrishna — God incarnates taking up a human body. He is certainly present in all places, in all things, but unless He comes as an avatara the man’s desire is not fulfilled. His needs are not met with. Do you know how is it? Touch the cow anywhere on its body, you have touched the cow. Even if you touch its horn, you have touched the cow. But you can take the milk only from its udders. (All laugh.)

Mahima — If you want milk, what will it avail if you suck the horn of the cow? You have to suck the udders. (All laugh.)

Vijay — But in the beginning the calf does jostle its mouth here and there.

Sri Ramakrishna — And then perhaps seeing the calf doing so, someone helps its mouth on to the udders. (All laugh.)

Chapter Four

Merriment with the devotees

Such like conversation was going on when the Doctor came in to see Thakur and sat down. Says he, "I suddenly woke up last night at 3 a.m.; I was thinking only of you. I thought you may not catch cold. And I also thought of many other things."

Sri Ramakrishna — I had cough and sore throat. In the later part of the night my mouth was full of water. I feel as if a thorn is pricking me.

The Doctor — I got this news in the morning.

Mahimacharan goes on talking about his visit to different places in India. He says, "In the Island of Lanka (Sri Lanka now) there are no 'laughing men'." Doctor Sarkar says, "There must be one. I shall have to enquire about it."

Doctor's profession and Sri Ramakrishna

Now the topic of conversation is profession of the doctors.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — Many people think of the doctor's profession as very high. Only if they were to treat their patients without charging any fees and only out of compassion for the sufferings of others, it is the highest of the high professions. But one becomes hardhearted by charging fees in such a profession. To examine faeces and urine etc. in a profession is mean.

The Doctor — If one does only that, it is certainly bad. Talking of myself before you is egotism.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes. If one practises the doctor's profession in a selfless manner to help others, it is very

good.

“Even so, whatever work man may do he must keep the company of sadhus from time to time. If a man has devotion for the Lord, he himself looks and finds out the sadhu’s company. I usually give this illustration - the smoker of hemp keeps the company of hemp smokers. On seeing others he lowers his face and leaves, or hides himself. But seeing another hemp smoker he is full of joy. (All laugh.) And again, the vulture keeps the company of vultures.”

Sadhu has compassion for all living beings

The Doctor — And the vulture flees in fear of the crow. I say, ‘Why man alone? One should serve all living beings.’ I often throw little pills of fine wheat flour to sparrows. And flocks of sparrows come to the roof.

Sri Ramakrishna — Good! This is very good. They who feed other living beings are sadhus. Sadhus feed ants with sugar.

The Doctor — Will there be no song today?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — Do please sing a little.

Narendra sings in accompaniment with the tanapura.
Besides some other musical instruments are also played upon.

Sweet is Thy name, O refuge of the lowly! It rains like nectar in our ears and comforts us,
O the beloved of our souls!

The treasure of Thy name is the abode of immortality. He who chants Thy name becomes immortal.

The deep anguish of our hearts is instantly erased, when the nectar of Thy name touches our ears.

The sweet music of Thy name fills our heart with sweetness. O, the Master of our hearts, the Soul of our souls.

Narendra sings another song —

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love (the All-Blissful Mother). What need have I of knowledge or reason? (The All-Blissful Mother, make me mad.)

(O Mother) the wine of Your love makes one mad. O Mother, You steal the hearts of the bhaktas!

Drown me in the sea of Thy love. In Your mad house of the world some laugh, some weep, some dance full of joy.

Jesus, Buddha, Sri Chaitanya, O Mother, are all dead drunk with Thy love. When, O Mother, shall I be blessed by joining their company?

It's the fair of the mad in heavens, the Guru and the disciple both the same. Who can understand this play of love?

Thou art mad with love. Nay, Thou art the glory of the mad. Mother, make me rich with the wealth of love, this slave is so poor in love.

And another amazing sight after the song! All are mad surcharged with bhava. Shaking their pride of scholarship the pundits (scholars) stand up. They say, "Mother, make me mad with Thy love. What need have I of knowledge or reason?" Vijay is the first to rise from his seat and stands there intoxicated in bhava. After him rises Sri Ramakrishna. He forgets the serious incurable pain of his body in a moment. In front of him is the Doctor. He also stands there. He is not conscious of the patient (Thakur) even. The Younger Narendra is also in the state of bhava-samadhi. So is the case with Latu. The Doctor has been a student of science but he stands there wonder-struck with this amazing scene. He sees that those who are in bhava have no awareness of the outside world. They are all still, motionless. As their bhava subsides some cry and some laugh. It seems as if it were a group of so many drunkards.

Chapter Five

With the bhaktas - Sri Ramakrishna and controlling anger

Everybody takes his seat after this event. It is 8 p.m. The conversation resumes.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor)— The bhava you have seen just now, what do they call it in your science? Do you think that it is all pretence?

The Doctor (to Sri Ramakrishna) — When so many persons are in this state, it appears to be natural, not a pretence. (To Narendra) When you were singing, 'O Mother, make me mad with Thy love. What need have I

of knowledge or reason?' I too could not control myself. I at last stood up. How could I help it? It was with great difficulty that I could control my bhava. I thought that one must not make a display of it.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — You are firm, immovable like the mount Sumeru. (Everybody laughs.) You are a deep soul. None could recognize the depth of Rupa Sanatana's bhava. If an elephant goes into a small pond, everything goes topsy-turvy. But if it goes into a deep pond, there is no topsy-turvy. Nobody perhaps even comes to know of it. Srimati (Radha) said to her *sakhi*, 'Sakhi, you are weeping so bitterly because of your separation from Krishna. But see, how hard I am! There is not a tear in my eyes.' Then Vrinda said, 'You have no tears in your eyes - it has many meanings. A fire of separation is always burning in your heart. As soon as there is a tear in your eyes, it dries up with the heat of that fire.'

The Doctor — I cannot beat you in arguments.
(Laughter.)

Gradually they talk of other things. Sri Ramakrishna begins to describe his first ecstasy and how to control lust, anger and so on.

The Doctor — You were lying in bhava. A wicked fellow came and kicked you. I have heard all this.

Sri Ramakrishna — You must have heard it from M. This man was Chandra Haladar of Kalighat. He often visited Sejo Babu (Mathur Babu). I was lying on the ground emotionally surcharged with God. It was dark. Chandra Haladar thought that it was all my habitual pretence. To win the favour of the Babu he came in that darkness and began to kick me. My body got scars. Everybody said that Sejo Babu should be told about it. I forbade it

The Doctor — This too is the Lord's sport. People will learn from it too how to overcome anger. People will learn what is forgiveness.

Vijay and Narendra have a glimpse of God's form

In the meanwhile the devotees have a long talk with Vijay in the presence of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna.

Vijay— Somebody is always, ever, with me. Even if I am far away, he tells me what is happening at a particular place.

Narendra — Like a guardian angel.

Vijay — In Dhaka I saw him (the Paramahansa Deva) and touched his body.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — He must be somebody else.

Narendra — I have myself seen him a number of times too. (To Vijay) So how can I say that I don't believe you.

[1] Sixteen annas make one hundred percent.

[2] Keda

math Chatterji was in Dhaka for many days. His eyes would wet with tears on reading the story of the Lord. He was a great bhakta. His house was in the city of Hali.

[3] Ast - An imaginary mountain behind which the sun goes down while setting.

[4] Manifestation of Shiva as destroyer.

[5] Beyond one and two - the Absolute is distinguished from the Relative.

[6] A royal ascetic sage

[7] One who has attained Brahman

Section XVII

Sri Ramakrishna with Bhaktas in Shyampukur House

Chapter One

Sri Ramakrishna with Girish, M., the Younger Narendra, Kali, Sarat, Rakhal, Doctor Sarkar and other bhaktas

The next day Monday, 26 October 1885, 11th of Kartik, the third day of the dark fortnight of Aswin. Sri Sri Paramahansa Deva is staying in the same Shyampukur house in Calcutta for treatment.

Doctor Sarkar is his physician. He visits almost every day. Bhaktas go to him regularly to inform him of his (Thakur's) painful condition.

Winter season. The Saradiya Durga Puja has been celebrated a few days ago. Sri Ramakrishna's bhaktas have celebrated this festival with joy mixed with sadness for their Gurudeva has been suffering from a serious disease for the last three months. He has cancer of the throat. 'It is an incurable disease' - hearing this the unfortunate devotees shed tears sitting silently alone in a corner. These days they are living in this very Shyampukur house. They are nursing Sri Ramakrishna with their heart and soul. With this great service Narendra and other unmarried young disciples, full of dispassion, are learning to climb the steps of renunciation of 'woman and gold'.

Sri Ramakrishna has so much pain, yet crowds are coming for his darshan. They feel peace and joy while coming to Sri Ramakrishna. He is the sea of motiveless grace. No end to his compassion. He talks to all so that they may somehow be elevated. Later on the doctors, particularly Doctor Sarkar, told him not to talk at all. But the Doctor himself stays there for six or seven hours. He says, "You will not talk with anybody, you will talk only with me."

The Doctor is simply enchanted by drinking the nectar of the words of Sri Ramakrishna. So he remains there for such a long period.

M. will go to the Doctor at ten o'clock to inform him of Sri Ramakrishna's condition, so he is talking to Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — I have much less pain.
I feel much better. Well is it because of the medicine? Then why should I not take the same medicine?

M. — I am going to the Doctor. I shall tell him everything. He will prescribe whatever is right.

Sri Ramakrishna — Look here, Purna ^[1] has not been here for two or three days. My mind is not at ease!

M. — Kali Babu, why don't you go and call Purna.

Kali — I leave immediately.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — The Doctor's son is a very good boy. Ask him to come here once.

Chapter Two

Conversation between M. and the Doctor

Reaching the Doctor's house M. found him seated with two or three friends.

The Doctor (to M.) — I was just talking of you a minute ago. You said that you would come at ten o'clock. I have been sitting here for an hour and a half. I was wondering what had happened? How he (Thakur) must be doing! (To a friend) Brother, do please sing that song.

The friend sings -

As long as there is life, sing His name and glories whose splendour illumines the universe, O brother!

The stream of the nectar of love is flowing, which brings joy to all, O brother!

The moment you remember His compassion, the hair of the body stand on end. What can words express It whose grace ends all sorrows in an instant!

O brother, He dwells in the upper and lower regions - in water and in sky. Brother, where is His limit, where is His end? This everybody is ever asking.

He is the dwelling of consciousness, He is the philosopher's stone, He is the ever-wakeful eye, He is the stainless One whose glimpse leaves not a trace of sorrow.

The Doctor (to M.) — Isn't it a beautiful song? Particularly at this point, 'Where is His limit, where is His end? This every body is ever asking.'

M. — Yes sir. It is indeed very beautiful here! A beautiful conception of the Limitless!

The Doctor (affectionately) — It is quite late. Have you taken your meals? I take my meals by ten o'clock and then I come out to give consultation. I fall ill if I go to work without taking meals. O yes, I was thinking of inviting you all to a meal.

M. — It is good, sir.

The Doctor — Well, should it be here or there? As you prefer.

M. — Sir, whether it is here or there, everyone would partake it with loving joy.

Now the topic of conversation is Mother Kali.

The Doctor — Kali is just a Santhali^[2] woman. (M. laughs loudly.)

M. — Sir, where did you get it from?

The Doctor — I have heard so. (M. laughs.)

The previous day Vijaykrishna and other devotees were in bhava samadhi (ecstasy). The Doctor was also present there. The conversation is about this.

The Doctor — I have seen bhava. Is it right to have so much of bhava?

M. — Paramahansa Deva says that the bhava that comes by meditation on God does not do any harm even if it is very deep. He says, 'The gem that gives light and soothes the body does not burn the body.'

The Doctor — The lustre of the gem - it is but the reflected light.

M. — He also says, 'By drowning into the sea of immortality the man does not die. God is the lake of immortality. Drowning in it does not do any harm to man. He surely becomes immortal provided he has faith in God.'

The Doctor — Yes, that of course is true.

The Doctor gets into his carriage. After examining three or four patients he will go to see the Paramahansa Deva. On the way he talks to M. on different matters. The Doctor takes up the topic of 'Egotism of Chakraborty.'

M. — He visits the Paramahansa Deva. Even if he has egotism, it will fall off in a few days. One's egotism vanishes when one sits beside him - it gets crushed. He has

no egotism, you see, that is why. If you come to a non-egotist, your pride flees away. Just see, what a great person Vidyasagar Mahashay is! What modesty and humility he showed to him. The Paramahansa Deva went to see him. It was 9 p.m. when Thakur said goodbye to him in his Badurbagan house. Vidyasagar himself showed him the way with a light in his hand from the library room till Thakur sat in the carriage. And he kept standing there with folded hands till the carriage left.

The Doctor — Well, what does Vidyasagar think of him?

M. — That day he met him with great devotion. Even so, we have felt from his talk that he does not like what the Vaishnavas call bhava - just like you think.

The Doctor — I don't like folding hands, or touching somebody's feet with one's head. There is no difference between the head and the foot. Yet if one considers feet as something different, one may do so.

M. — You do not like bhava or anything like that. The Paramahansa sometimes calls you '*gambhir atman*' (a deep soul). Perhaps you remember this. Yesterday he told you that when an elephant goes into a small pond its water shakes violently. But when it goes into a lake, its water shows no movement. When the elephant of bhava enters into a gambhir atman, it cannot affect him in any way. He says that you are a gambhir atman.

The Doctor — I don't deserve the compliment. What is bhava? It is a feeling, bhakti. And then there are other feelings too. When they are deep some can suppress them, others cannot.

M. — Some can give an explanation in one way or the other and the others cannot. But sir, bhava or bhakti is something different, something unique. I have seen in your library Stebbing's book on 'Darwinism'. Stebbing says, whether the human mind is the result of evolution or God Himself has created him sitting aside, it is equally wonderful. He has illustrated it with the theory of light. Whether you know the undulatory theory of light or not, light in either case is equally wonderful.

The Doctor — Yes. And did you see that Stebbing accepts 'Darwinism' as well as God?

They again talk of the Paramahansa Deva.

The Doctor — I see that he (the Paramahansa Deva) is a worshipper of Kali.

M. — He means something different for Kali. He who is described as Param Brahman (the Supreme Brahman) in the Vedas, he calls Him Kali. Whom the Mohammedans call Allah, the Christians as God, he calls Him Kali. He does not see many Gods - he sees only One. Whom the ancient knowers of the Absolute called Brahman, whom the yogis call Atman, or the bhaktas call Bhagavan, Him the Paramahansa Deva calls Kali.

"We have heard this from him. A person had a tub of colour. Anybody who wanted his cloth to be dyed would go to him. He would ask which colour the fellow wanted. If the latter said green colour, he would dip the cloth in the tub and return it to him, saying, 'Here is your cloth dyed green.' If anybody asked him for red colour, he would dye his cloth in the same tub and say, 'Here is your cloth dyed red.' He would dye the cloth green, blue, yellow - all colours in the same tub. Seeing this amazing affair a person said to him, 'Babu, do you know which colour I want? Please give me the colour in which you yourself are dyed.' It is the same with the Paramahansa Deva - he has all the bhavas in him. People of all religions gain peace and joy from him. Who can comprehend what is his bhava or what deep state he is in?"

The Doctor — All things to all men! This too is not right although Saint Paul says it.

M. — Who can fathom the state of the Paramahansa Deva? We have heard from him that unless you deal in thread, you cannot distinguish between thread number 40 and thread number 41. Unless you are a painter, you cannot appreciate the painter's art. Highly spiritual persons are men of deep bhava. Unless you become like Christ, you cannot understand wholly the bhava of Christ. Perhaps the Paramahansa Deva has the same deep bhava as Christ would tell: 'Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.'

The Doctor — Well, how do you look after him in his illness?

M. — At present an elderly person supervises his nursing everyday. On someday it is Girish Babu, someday Rama Babu, some day Balaram Babu, some day Suresh Babu, some day Nava Gopal and some other day Kali Babu. It is this way.

Chapter Three

With bhaktas - what can mere learning do?

While they were talking thus the Doctor's carriage comes and stops before the Shyampukur House where Thakur Paramahansa Deva is staying for treatment. It is one o'clock. Thakur is sitting in a room on the first floor. Many bhaktas are sitting in front of him including Girish Ghosh, the Younger Narendra, Sarat and others. They are all gazing at this everjoyful great yogi. They are all seated like the snake spellbound before its charmer or like the guests in a marriage procession making merry with the bridegroom. The Doctor and M. come in, offer pranam and take their seats.

Seeing the Doctor, Sri Ramakrishna laughs and says, "I am feeling much better today."

In due course there is conversation with the devotees on God.

The earlier story - Doctor Rama Narayana - conversation with Bankim

Sri Ramakrishna — What can mere learning do if one has no discrimination and dispassion? I go into a particular state when I meditate at the lotus feet of the Lord. Then even the cloth on my body drops down. And I feel something climbing up with a hiss from my feet to the head. Then everything appears to me like a straw (insignificant). When I see that a pundit is without discrimination and that he has no love for God, he appears to me just like a dry piece of straw.

"Doctor Rama Narayana was reasoning with me when I suddenly went into that state. Thereupon I said to him, 'What are you saying? What can you understand of Him with your reason? Or what can you understand of His creation? You have the intelligence a lot similar to that of a weaver.' Seeing me in that state he began to cry and stroke my feet."

The Doctor — You see, Doctor Rama Narayana is a Hindu. Besides, he believes in sandal-paste and flowers. A true Hindu he is!

M. (to himself) — The Doctor had said earlier that he had nothing to do with the gong and conch-shell.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — Bankim^[3] is one of your pundits. I met him once. I asked him, 'What is the duty of a man?' He replied, 'Eating, sleeping and procreating.' Hearing him say so he fell in my estimation. I then said, 'What are you saying? You are so knave! Whatever you think night and day, whatever you do all the time is coming out of your mouth. One belches radish when one eats radish.' Then there was a long conversation on God and sankirtan (community singing of hymns) was also held in the house. And I danced. Bankim then said to me, 'Sir, please once visit me in my house too.' I replied, 'If God so wills.' Then he said, 'You will find devotees there too. You may meet them.' I laughed and said, 'My dear, what kind of devotees do you have there? Are they like him who said, 'Gopal, Gopal?'

The Doctor — ‘Gopal, Gopal!’ What does it mean?

Sri Ramakrishna — There was a goldsmith’s shop. The proprietor and others were great devotees - true Vaishnavas with rosary round their neck, holy mark on their forehead and a rosary of the name of the Lord in their hand. Everybody would go to that shop with a lot of trust thinking that the people there were great devotees and would not cheat. Seeing a party of customers one craftsman would say, ‘Keshab, Keshab’ and after a while the other would recite the name, ‘Gopal, Gopal.’ After sometime the third one would say ‘Hari, Hari!’ And then some other would utter ‘Har-Har.’ Hearing so many names of God in the course of work the customer would naturally say to himself, ‘This goldsmith is a man of very high character.’ But do you know what was the reality? The fellow who said, ‘Keshab, Keshab’ meant to ask what are they like? He who said, ‘Gopal, Gopal’ would mean that he had examined them and found that they were a herd of cows (fools). (Laughter.) He who said, ‘Hari, Hari’ meant to ask whether he should rob them if they were just a herd of cows. (Laughter.) He who said, ‘Har, Har’ would mean ‘Yes, yes, do so - they are indeed a herd of cows.’ (Laughter.)

“I went with Sejo Babu (Mathur) at some other place. A number of pundits had come to reason with me. And I a fool! (All laugh.) Seeing me in that very state and after having a talk with me, they said, ‘Mahashay, all we read earlier, all we learnt or wrote, all knowledge etc. have gone waste after talking to you. We now understand that when God’s grace is granted, there is no lack of jnana. A fool becomes learned and the dumb begins to speak.’ This is the reason why I say that one does not become a pundit just by reading books.”

The earlier story - first instance of samadhi - avirbhava^[4] and Saraswati^[5] seated in the throat of a fool

“Yes, when you have His grace can there be any lack of knowledge? Just see, I am a fool. I know nothing then who speaks all this? Besides, the stock of this jnana is inexhaustible. The other day I saw them weigh heaps of paddy in Kamarpukur (the birth place of Thakur). As they did so, they uttered, ‘Rame Rama, Rame Rama.’ One person was weighing and the other was pushing the heap of paddy towards him when the first heap was about to exhaust. His job was to push more of heap before it got exhausted. It is the same in my case when I am talking. Before I finish, my Mother pushes more of it from Her inexhaustible store of jnana.

“During my boyhood I experienced *avirbhava* of God. I was eleven and I was going across a field. What I saw something above! They say I was completely unconscious, not aware of anything. I became a different person ever since. I began seeing another person within me. When I went to worship the deity, the hand instead of going on the deity would come to my own head and I would offer flowers at my head. The boy who was living with me stopped coming to me. He would say, ‘I see a strange light on your face. I am afraid of coming nearer to you.’”

Chapter Four

Free will or God’s will

Yantra rudanni mayaya. (Gita 18:6)

[All beings revolve as though mounted on a machine by His Maya.]

Sri Ramakrishna — I am a fool, I know nothing. Then who speaks all this? I say, ‘Mother, I am a machine, You are the machine man; I am the house, You are the dweller; I am the chariot, You are the charioteer; I do what You make me do; I speak what You make me speak; I move the way You make me move.’ ‘Not I, not I. You, only You.’ She is ever victorious. I am merely an instrument. When Srimati was carrying a pitcher with a thousand holes and not a drop of water was flowing out of it, everybody began to praise her saying that such a *sati* (faithful wife, pure woman)

is rare to come across. Then Srimati said, 'Why do you praise me? Instead you say: Victory to Krishna, victory to Krishna! I am merely His maidservant.' In that very state I had put my foot on Vijay's chest. Though I have such great respect and reverence for him, I put my foot on his chest! What would you call it?

The Doctor — You should be careful after that.

Sri Ramakrishna (folding his hands) — How can I help it? In that particular state I become unaware of everything. I don't know at all what I am doing.

The Doctor — You must be careful. It is no use folding your hands.

Sri Ramakrishna — Can I do anything in that state? But what do you think of this state of mine? If you think it as pretence then all your science is less than nothing.

The Doctor — Mahashay, if I think that way why do I come so often? Just see, I come here leaving all my work behind. I miss so many visits to the patients and here I stay for six or seven hours.

I shall not fight - the Bhagavata Gita - only God is the doer, Arjuna an instrument

Sri Ramakrishna — I said to Sejo Babu, 'Don't think that I feel blessed that though a big man you believe me and show me regard.' You may believe it or not but this is certainly a fact that man cannot do anything. Only He makes one believe the other. Before God's power man is merely a straw.

The Doctor — Do you think that I accept you because some fisherman^[6] believes you? I have respect and regard for you in the manner men regard others.

Sri Ramakrishna — Am I asking you to have regard for me, brother?

Girish Ghosh — Is he asking you to have regard for him?

The Doctor (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Are you saying that it is all God's will?

Sri Ramakrishna — What else am I saying? What can man do before God's power? Arjuna said in the battle of Kurukshetra, 'I shall not fight the battle, I shall not kill my kith and kin.' Sri Krishna said, 'Arjuna, you will have to fight. Your nature will compel you^[7].' Sri Krishna showed him everything, that these persons had already been slain^[8] (by Him). Some Sikhs came to the temple. They believe that even the leaf of a peepal tree shakes by the will of God; not a single leaf can flutter without His will.

Liberty or necessity - influence of motives

The Doctor — If it is the will of God, why do you talk? Why do you talk so much to impart jnana to others?

Sri Ramakrishna — He makes me talk, so I talk. I am an instrument, He is the Person who uses the instrument.

The Doctor — You say that you are the instrument. Say so if you are thus, otherwise keep quiet. Everybody is God.

Girish — I say brother, do what you like. But it is He who makes you do. Can one take a single step against the Almighty?

The Doctor — But He Himself has given free will. If I like, I can meditate on God and if I don't like, I cannot.

Girish — If you like meditation on God or any other good work, you take to it. It is not you who do it, the likeness for it makes you do it.

The Doctor — Why? I do it as a duty.

Girish — You do it because you like to do your duty.

The Doctor — Suppose a boy is burning. One goes to save him with the sense of duty.

Girish — You feel pleasure in saving the boy. That is why you enter the fire. It is that feeling of joy that takes you there. You take a bitter pill in the hope of having *chat* (spiced food) later. (All laugh.)

Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower are the threefold impulse to action

Sri Ramakrishna — You must have a special kind of faith before you take up some work. You remember your object and derive pleasure out of it. Then you take to work. There is an earthen pot full of gold coins hidden under the earth. You must first have this knowledge and this assurance. When you think of the pot, you feel pleasure. Then you begin to dig the earth. As you dig, the metallic sound (of the pot) makes you happy. Then the side of the pitcher becomes visible. You are now happier. In this way your happiness goes on increasing gradually. I myself have seen while standing on the verandah in the temple sadhus enjoying as they prepare their smoke of hemp.

The Doctor — But the fire emits both heat and light. Though you are able to see in light but your feet burn in the heat. When you do your duty, it is not that you only have pleasure out of it. It also brings some trouble.

M. (to Girish) — When your stomach is filled with food, your back can bear the load. There is pleasure even in trouble.

Girish (to the Doctor) — Duty is something dry.

The Doctor — Why?

Girish — Then it must be pleasant. (All laugh.)

M. — Very good! Beautiful! One has to take the bitter pill in the hope of something sweet.

Girish (to the Doctor) — You feel it sweet, otherwise why should you do your duty?

The Doctor — For such is the inclination of mind.

M. (to Girish) — 'My nature pulls me to it.' (Laughter.) If it is the inclination, where does free will come in?

The Doctor — I don't say that one is absolutely free. A cow tied to a post is free only as far as the cord allows. The pull of the cord ...

Sri Ramakrishna and free will

Sri Ramakrishna — Yadu Mullick also gave this illustration. (To the Younger Narendra) Is it available in English?

(To the Doctor) “Look here, it is God who is doing everything. ‘He is the operator and I am the instrument’; if one has this faith, one becomes *jivanmukta* (liberated in this very life). ‘You are doing Your work, people say that they are doing.’ Do you know how it is? There is a beautiful illustration in the Vedanta. Rice is being cooked in a cooking pot. Potatoes and brinjals have been put in the same rice. After some time potatoes and brinjals begin to jump up as if feeling proud of themselves - ‘I am moving, I am jumping up and down.’ Young children when they see it think, ‘Potatoes, rice and brinjals are as if alive, so they are jumping up and down.’ But they who know explain that potatoes, brinjals, rice etc. are not animate - they are not jumping up and down by themselves. The moment you pull out the (burning) log, they no longer move. ‘I am the doer’ - this pride of man is the result of his ignorance. All are powerful by God’s power. Pull the burning log and it is all quiet. Marionettes dance beautifully when the string is in the hands of the marionette master. The moment the string falls from his hands, they can’t move and jump a bit. “So long as you do not have God’s vision, so long as you do not touch the philosopher’s stone, you remain under the delusion that you are the doer - that you are doing right or that you are not doing right. Such awareness persists. This feeling of distinction is God’s maya. He has made it this way to run His world of maya. By taking refuge in *vidya maya*, by taking the road of truth you can attain Him. He who attains God, he who gets His vision, can alone cross His maya. ‘Only He is the doer and I am non-doer,’ he who has this faith becomes *jivanmukta* (liberated in this very life) - I said it to Keshab Sen.”

Girish (to the Doctor) — Free will, how do you know this?

The Doctor — Not by reason. I feel it.

Girish — Then others and I feel it otherwise. (All laugh.)

The Doctor — There are two elements in duty. One, I go to work because of duty. Two, because I find pleasure in it. But in the initial stage one doesn’t perform one’s duty in the hope of pleasure. When I was a child, I used to notice that the priest felt greatly worried on seeing ants on *sandesh* (a sweetmeat). The priest did not feel any pleasure initially just by thinking of the sandesh. (Smiling) On the other hand, it worried him a lot initially.

M. (to himself) — It is very difficult to say whether pleasure comes later on or it starts at the very thought of it. Where is ‘Free Will’ when pleasure forces action?

Chapter Five

Ahetuki bhakti (selfless devotion) - earlier story of his life: Sri Ramakrishna’s bhava of being a servant of God

Sri Ramakrishna — What he (the Doctor) is saying is called *ahetuki bhakti* (devotion without motive). I do not want anything from Mahendra Sarkar - I want nothing, I only like to meet him. This is indeed called *ahetuki bhakti*. If I derive some pleasure out of it, then what shall I do?

“Ahalya said, ‘Rama, even if I am born a pig I do not mind. But what I wish for is that I may have pure bhakti at Your lotus feet. I want nothing else.’

“Narada went to see Sri Ramachandra at the holy Ayodhya to remind him of his slaying of Ravana. Having had the darshan of Sita and Rama he began to chant their praise. Being happy with the praise Ramachandra said, ‘Narada, I am happy with your chant, please ask for a boon.’ Narada said, ‘Rama, if you must grant me a boon, pray, grant that I may have pure devotion at your lotus feet. May your world-bewitching maya not enchant me.’ Rama said, ‘Ask for another boon.’ Narada replied, ‘I want nothing more. I only want pure love at Your lotus feet.’

“It is just the same with him (the Doctor). He only wants to see God. He doesn’t want wealth, honour and bodily comforts - he wants nothing at all. This alone is called pure devotion.

“It does give some pleasure but it is not the pleasure of the senses. It is the pleasure of bhakti, of prema. Shambhu Mullick said when I visited him occasionally, ‘You come here and surely you feel pleasure in talking to me. That’s why you come.’ Just this much happiness one gets.

“But there is a state higher than this - one moves about aimlessly like a child perhaps just to catch a moth.

(To the bhaktas) “Do you know what is his (the Doctor’s) bhava? Praying to God, ‘O God, grant me the right desire so that my intellect may not be tempted into any unjust act.’

“I also had exactly this state. It is called the attitude of a servant. I used to cry uttering, ‘Mother, Mother’ in such a way that people would stand to watch me. At this state of mine someone brought a prostitute and made her sit in my room to tempt me and to cure me of my madness. She was a pretty woman with attractive eyes. I ran out of the room uttering, ‘Mother, Mother.’ And shouting for Haladhari, I said, ‘Brother, come and see who has entered in my room.’ I told about it to Haladhari and all others. In this state I used to weep uttering, ‘Mother, Mother’ and say to Her crying, ‘Mother, save me. Mother, purify me so that my mind may not go from the right to the wrong.’ (To the Doctor) This bhava of yours is good. It is exactly the *bhakti-bhava* (feeling of bhakti), the bhava of a servant.”

Doing good to mankind and the ordinary man - selfless work and pure sattva

“If somebody has pure sattva, he only meditates on God. He likes nothing else. Some people are born with pure sattva as a result of their *prarabdha*, by trying to act with a motiveless mind one attains pure sattva at the end. When the sattva is mixed with rajas, the mind runs gradually in different directions. Then one is possessed by the vanity of doing good to mankind. But doing good to mankind is very difficult for the ordinary man. However, if one takes to selfless work just to do good, there is no harm in it. This is called *nishkama karma* (motiveless, selfless work). It is very good if one tries to work in this way but it is not possible for all. It is very difficult. Everybody indeed has to do some work. Only a few can renounce altogether. It is in very few that one finds pure sattva. When one takes to selfless work, one’s sattva mixed with rajas gradually gets transformed into pure sattva.

“It is only when one has pure sattva that one realizes God by His grace.

“An ordinary man cannot appreciate the state of pure sattva. Hema said to me, ‘I say, Bhattacharya Mahashay, isn’t it the aim of life to earn name and fame in the world? Don’t you think so?’”

[1] Purna Chandra is 14/15 years old

[2] Santhal - An aboriginal tribe of India.

[3] Bankim Chandra Chatterji is a resident of Benetola locality of Calcutta - a deputy magistrate and a great bhakta. Sri Sri Paramahansa Deva met him at Adhar Sen’s house. This was the only one meeting that Bankim Babu had with him. Bankim was the celebrated writer of Bengal. He wrote ‘Vande Mataram’ in Bengali.

[4] Manifestation of God within something

[5] Goddess of knowledge

[6] The Doctor here is referring to Mathur Babu (Sejo Babu). He was fisherman by caste.

[7] Gita 18:59

[8] *Mayai vaita nihatah purvam eva nimittamatram bhava savyasachin*

(Gita 11:33). [By Me have they been verily slain already. You be merely an outward cause, O Savyasachin.]

Section XVIII

Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra, Doctor Sarkar, Girish Ghosh and other Bhaktas Conversation and joy

Chapter One

In samadhi during the joy of devotional music

Next day, half past five, Tuesday, 27 October, 1885.
Narendra, Doctor Sarkar, Shyam Basu, Girish,
Doctor Dacouri, the Younger Narendra, Rakhal, M. and
others have come today. The Doctor feels Sri
Ramakrishna's pulse and prescribes the medicine.

Thakur talks about his pain and takes the medicine. After
that the Doctor says, "Now you may talk to Shyam Babu
while I leave."

Sri Ramakrishna and another bhakta suddenly speak up,
"Would you like to hear some song?"

The Doctor — You become emotional so easily - you
have to control your bhava.

The Doctor sits down again. Narendra begins to sing in a
sweet voice. Side by side *tanapura* (a stringed musical
instrument) and *mridanga* (drum) are being played upon
beautifully. He sings -

Song 1

Wonderful and infinite is the world created by You. This
universe of Yours is the storehouse of beauty.

Thousands of stars shine like a gold necklace of gems.
Innumerable are the moons and suns.

The earth is adorned with wealth and corn, full indeed is
your storehouse.

O the Great Lord, innumerable people sing this song
ceaselessly saying, 'Hail, hail.'

Song 2

O my Mother! Thy formless beauty shines in dense
darkness. So the yogi meditates in the mountain cave.

In deep infinite darkness, on the waves of *maha-nirvana*
float incessantly eternal peace and joy.

Assuming the form of Mahakala draped in darkness O
Mother, who art Thou seated alone in samadhi?

At the lotus of Thy protecting feet flashes the lightning of
love intense. And boisterous laughter adorns Thy face
divine.

The Doctor says to M., "It is dangerous for him. It is not
right to sing this song. If he goes into bhava, it can be
dangerous for him."

Sri Ramakrishna asks M. what the Doctor is saying. M.
replies, "The Doctor is afraid lest you should go into bhava
samadhi later on." While he says so, Sri Ramakrishna goes
a little into bhava. Seeing towards the Doctor and folding
his hands says he, "No, no. Why should I go into bhava?"
However, while saying so he goes into bhava samadhi - his
body still, eyes fixed, no speech. He looks like a wooden
statue, unaware of the external world. His mind, intellect,
ego and consciousness - all looking inward. He is no longer
the same person. Narendra continues singing the sweet
song with his melodious throat -

What an enchanting beauty, what a charming face I see!

The Lord of my soul has entered my humble hut. The
spring of my love is welling forth.

O, the beloved Lord of my heart, say what treasure shall I
offer You?

O, accept my soul, my life; what more can I say? Accept
whatever I have, accept everything from me.

Song -

O gracious Lord, what happiness can there be in life if the
bee of the soul is not lost in Your lotus feet forever?

What can I gain from wealth limitless if I don't try to find
the supreme gem?

I don't wish to look at the tender face of the child if I can't
find a glimpse of Your moonlike loving face.

Moonlight has no meaning for me. I see it complete dark if I
don't see Your loving moonlike face in that moonlight.

Even the pure love of the chaste wife is stained if the gold of
her love is not set with the peerless gem of Your love.

O Lord! Doubt bites me continuously like the deadly
poisonous snake diluting my love for You.

O Lord, what more can I say to You? You are the precious
jewel and gem of my heart, the abode of joy.

Hearing this piece of song, 'The pure love of the chaste wife,' the Doctor exclaims with tearful eyes "Aha! Aha!"

Narendra sings another song —

Oh, how long will it take to be mad with that ecstatic love, when wishing for nothing else I shall chant the name of Hari and tears will stream down my eyes?

When shall my *prana* (life breath) and mind be pure. When shall I visit the Vrindavan of love, when shall the bonds of the world break and the collyrium of knowledge will drive away the darkness from my eyes.

When shall this iron body turn into gold by the touch of touchstone divine?

When shall I have the vision of a universe permeated with God and wallow on the path of bhakti?

O, when shall I be free from ritual worship? When shall the pride of family and caste go?

O, when shall I be free from fear and shame? When shall I be free from the pride of customs of society?

With the dust of the feet of bhaktas rubbed all over my body and with the bag of perpetual dispassion around my shoulders, when shall I drink the water of love from the Yamuna river of divine love with the palms of my hands?

Maddened with love when shall I now weep, now laugh and now swim in the sea of Sachchidananda?

Intoxicated myself when shall I intoxicate others and constantly roam about at the feet of the Lord?

Chapter Two

Discussion on jnana and vijnana - vision of Brahman

In the meanwhile Thakur Sri Ramakrishna regains outer-consciousness. The song has ended. Now starts a very interesting talk for the common man, the scholar and the fool, the child and the old, man and woman, elder and small, high and low. All in the assembly are spellbound. All are gazing at the beautiful face in front. Where is that terrible pain now? His face is still like a blooming lotus as if a divine light is emitting from it. Now addressing the Doctor, Thakur says, "Give up shyness; what is there to be ashamed of repeating the name of God? 'Shame, hatred and fear do not let one attain Him.' That I am a big man and I dance uttering 'Hari, Hari.' When big people hear of it, what will they think of me? It would be a shame if they were to say, 'I say brother, the Doctor was dancing uttering Hari, Hari,' please give up such an idea."

The Doctor — I don't think that way. I don't care what others say.

Sri Ramakrishna — You have too much of it. (All laugh.) Listen, go beyond knowledge and ignorance. Then alone you will be able to know Him. Knowledge of various kinds is ajnana. The pride of learning is also ajnana. 'God pervades in all' - this conviction is jnana. Knowing Him intimately is called vijnana. Say, a thorn has pricked into your foot. You need another thorn to take it out. When you have taken out the pricked thorn, you throw away both the thorns. To remove the thorn of ajnana (ignorance) you have to first bring in the thorn of knowledge. Then both the thorns of knowledge and ignorance have to be thrown away. He is beyond jnana and ajnana. Lakshman said to Rama, 'How strange!

Vaishishtha Deva^[1] is such a jnani (great man of knowledge). Even he wept inconsolably at the death of his son.' Rama said, 'Brother, he who has knowledge also has ignorance. He who has knowledge of one kind has also knowledge of various kinds. He who is aware of light also knows darkness. Brahman is beyond knowledge and ignorance, beyond vice and virtue, beyond *dharma* (righteous action) and *adharma* (unrighteous works), beyond purity and impurity.'

Saying so Sri Ramakrishna repeats a song of Rama Prasad

—

Come, O my mind, let us go out for a walk.

Let us gather the four fruits at the foot of Kalpataru, viz., Kali.

You have, O my mind, two wives *pravritti*^[2] and *nivritti*^[3].

Take *nivritti* on the way to the tree^[4].

Beyond speech and mind - the real nature of Brahman can not be described

Shyam Basu — What will remain when both the thorns are thrown away?

Sri Ramakrishna — *Nitya-shuddha-bodha-rupam*⁴.

Now how can I explain it to you? If somebody asks you how *ghee* (clarified butter) tastes, how will you explain it? At the most you may say, 'What is *ghee* like, it is what it is.' A girl asked her friend, 'Your husband has come. Well, tell me what joy do you feel on his coming?' The friend said, 'Sister, you will know it only when you have a husband. How can I tell it to you?' The Purana says that when Bhagavati (Mother Goddess) took birth in the house of Himalaya, She showed Herself to him in various forms. When Giriraj (the Lord of mountains, Himalaya) had seen Her in all forms, he said to Her, 'Mother, may I now have the vision of the Brahman talked of in the Veda?' Bhagavati replied, 'Father, if you want to see Brahman, have the company of sadhus.'

"What Brahman is cannot be explained by the word of mouth. Somebody said, 'Everything has been defiled by the touch of the tongue but Brahman alone has not been defiled.' It means that the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras and other scriptures, one may say, have been defiled because they are recited by the tongue. But what Brahman is, nobody has yet been able to express by the word of mouth. So, Brahman has not yet been defiled. 'And what is the play with Sachchidananda, intercourse with Him' - can also not be described by the word of mouth. Only he knows who has experienced it."

Chapter Three

The pride of a pundit - vice and virtue

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna addressing the Doctor again says, "Look here, one cannot attain jnana till one is rid of pride. When shall I be free? When 'I' cease to be. 'My' and 'mine' both are ajnana. 'You' and 'Yours' constitute jnana. He who is a bhakta says, "God, only You are the doer - You alone are doing all. I am only an instrument. I do what You make me do. And all this splendour, this universe is Yours. This house, this family, is Yours - nothing is mine. I am Your servant. I only have the right to serve You the way You command."

"Anybody who has read even a small portion of a book, or anything like it at once begins to take air. I had a talk with Ka-Thakur on spiritual matters. He said, 'All this I know.' I said, 'Does he who visits Delhi brag

about it and take air? Does he who is a babu say that he is a babu?

Shyam Basu — He (Ka-Thakur) has great faith in you.

Sri Ramakrishna — What can I say, brother? In the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar there is a woman sweeper - so puffed up! She had some jewellery on her body. Once while she was walking on the path, she saw a few persons on the same path. The woman sweeper said to them, 'I say, get away from my path.' If she could be so arrogant, what can I say about others?

Shyam Basu — Mahashay! There is punishment for sin. Then how can you say that God is doing everything?

Sri Ramakrishna — You indeed have the intellect of a goldsmith.

Narendra — The goldsmith's intellect means a calculating intellect.

Sri Ramakrishna — I say, you eat mangoes! What is it to you how many hundred trees there are in the orchard, how many thousands are branches there, how many millions are leaves there - why calculate all this? You have come to eat mangoes. Eat them. (To Shyam Basu) You have got human birth in this world so that you may practise spiritual disciplines. Try how you can gain bhakti at the lotus feet of God. What need is there for other things? What will you gain by philosophizing? See, you can get intoxicated with a quarter of wine. What need have you to know how many maunds of wine there is in the wine shop?

The Doctor — Besides, God intoxication is infinite. This intoxication has no end.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Shyam Basu) — And then, give general power of attorney to God. Leave the whole burden on Him. If you give responsibility to a good fellow, will he deceive you? Whether He will punish you for your sins or not, it is for Him to see.

The Doctor — Only He knows what is in His mind.
What can a man tell by calculation? He is beyond all
calculation!

Sri Ramakrishna (to Shyam Basu) — You people have
only this to say. The residents of Calcutta say that God
is partial because He has kept one in happiness and the
other in sorrow. Whatever these rascals have in their
mind, the same they see in God.

Is earning name and fame the aim of life?

“Hema used to visit Dakshineswar. Whenever he would
meet me, he would say, ‘Well, Bhattacharya Mahashay,
isn’t earning a name in the world the main thing?’ You
see, very few people say that the aim of human life is
God-realization.”

Chapter Four

The gross, the subtle, the causal and the great cause

Shyam Basu — Can anyone show the subtle body? Can
anyone demonstrate that this very subtle body departs
outside?

Sri Ramakrishna — Those who are bhaktas in the true
sense, what need is there for them to demonstrate it.
What does he care whether some rascal believes it or
not? He doesn’t feel the desire of making friends with
some big fellow.

Shyam Basu — Well, how the gross body, the subtle
body and others differ from each other?

Sri Ramakrishna — The body that is made of five
elements is gross body. The mind, the intellect, the ego
and consciousness - these constitute the subtle body.
That which brings the joy of God, makes you enjoy Him
is the *karana*^[5] (causal body). It is called ‘*Bhagavati*
tanu^[6]’ in the Tantra. Last of all is the *Mahakarana*^[7]
(Turiya) which cannot be described by the word of

mouth.

**The need for practising spiritual discipline -
devotion to God alone is the basic thing**

“What use is it just hearing all this? You have to do something.

“What use is it to shout, ‘Hemp, hemp?’ This cannot give you any intoxication.

“You cannot have intoxication even if you grind hemp and apply it on your body. You have to eat some. Which is number 41 grade yarn and which is number 40 - this cannot be explained unless you enter this trade. For those who are in this trade it is not at all difficult to pick out yarn of a particular grade. So, I say, ‘Practise some sadhana.’ Then you will know all - what are the gross, the subtle, the *karana* and the *Mahakarna*. Whenever you pray to God, you must only pray for devotion at His lotus feet.

“After Ahalya was freed from the curse, Ramachandra said to her, ‘Ask for a boon from me.’ Ahalya said, ‘Rama, if you wish to grant me a boon do grant that even if I am born as a pig it won’t matter; but, O Rama, may my mind always dwell at your lotus feet.’

“I asked Mother only for bhakti. Offering flowers at the feet of the Mother and folding my hands, I said: Mother, here is Your ajnana, here is Your jnana just grant me pure devotion. Here is Your purity, here is Your impurity just grant me pure devotion. Here are Your virtuous acts, here are the vice just grant me pure devotion. Here is Your dharma (righteous work), here is Your adharma (unrighteous work) just grant me pure devotion.

“*Dharma*, i.e. charitable work etc. If you take *dharma*, you will also have to take *adharma*. If you accept pious virtue, you will also have to accept vice. If you believe in jnana, you will have to believe in ajnana too. If you take purity, you will also have to take impurity. He who is aware of light is also aware of darkness. If you have the knowledge of one, you also have the knowledge of many. He who has the knowledge of right also has the

knowledge of wrong.

“He who has bhakti at the lotus feet of the Lord, even though he may be eating pork is blessed. On the other hand if even taking *havishya* (boiled rice with clarified butter) one’s mind is attached to the world ...”

The Doctor — Then it is not right. I tell you here one thing that Buddha took pork. He took pork and also suffered from colic. Because of this disease Buddha used to take opium. Do you know what is Nirvana and all that? Taking opium and remaining sedated. He would lose all external consciousness. This was his Nirvana.

Hearing such an elucidation of Buddha’s Nirvana everybody laughs. The conversation goes on.

Chapter Five

Household and selfless work - Theosophy

Sri Ramakrishna (to Shyam Basu) — There is no harm in leading the life of a householder. But you must do your work selflessly fixing your mind at the lotus feet of the Lord. Just see, if a person has a boil on his back he talks to everybody and perhaps attends to his work too. But his mind remains tied to the boil. It is the same way.

“You will live in the world like an unchaste wife. Her mind remains drawn towards her lover though she performs her household duties. (To the Doctor) Did you understand?”

The Doctor — Without such bhava (attitude) how can I understand?

Shyam Basu — You do understand somewhat. Don’t you? (Everybody laughs.)

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — He has been in this trade for quite some time. Isn’t it? (All laugh.)

Shyam Basu — Mahashay, what do you think of Theosophy?

Sri Ramakrishna — The main thing is that those who make disciples are people of the lower class. Also they who wish to acquire siddhi, i.e. occult powers, they too are of the lower class. For example, the power to walk across the Ganga on foot; to be able to tell what a person is talking of in a distant region - it is also (an occult) power. It is indeed very difficult to have pure bhakti for the Lord.

Shyam Basu — But they (Theosophists) are trying to re-establish Hinduism.

Sri Ramakrishna — I don't know much about them.

Shyam Basu — Where does the *jivatman* (embodied soul) go after death - whether in the region of the moon, or that of some planet and so on is all explained in Theosophy.

Sri Ramakrishna — Let it be so. Do you know how I feel? Somebody asked Hanuman, 'What day and date is today?' Hanuman said, 'I don't know the day, nor the date, nor the position of the planets - nothing. I only meditate on Rama.' My bhava (attitude) is exactly like this.

Shyam Basu — They say that all are *mahatmas* (spiritually great). Do you agree?

Sri Ramakrishna — If you have faith in my words, I say, 'Yes.' Now leave these matters alone. Come here when I am a little better. If you trust me, you will find some way to peace. Don't you see that I do not accept money, nor do I accept clothes. No offering has to be made here. That is why so many persons visit me. (All laugh.) (To the Doctor) I have been talking to you all this. Please don't take it ill. You have done all these things - earning of money and name, and lecturing. Now fix your mind for sometime on the Lord. And come here now and then. Talks on God inspire one."

After sometime the Doctor rises to depart. Just then enters Girish Ghosh and having taken the dust of the feet

of Sri Ramakrishna takes his seat. The Doctor is happy to see him and takes his seat again.

The Doctor — When I was here, he (Girish Babu) didn't come. As I rose to leave, he has arrived. (All laugh.)

The Doctor and Girish begin to talk of the Science Association.

Sri Ramakrishna — Will you take me there sometime?

The Doctor — If you go there, you will fall unconscious - seeing all the wonderful acts of the Lord!

Sri Ramakrishna — Are you sure?

Chapter Six

Adoration of the Guru

The Doctor (to Girish) — Do anything you like. But do not worship him as God. You trouble this nice man no end.

Girish — How can I help it, sir? What can I call him who has made me cross the ocean of the world and the ocean of doubts, tell me? Does his excreta look like excreta?

The Doctor — It is not so with excreta. It does not repel me either. A shopkeeper's son came to me and defecated there. Everybody covered his nose with cloth. I sat beside him for half an hour and didn't bring my handkerchief to my nose, not till the sweeper came and cleaned the place.

I know that I am the same as he is. Why feel repulsion from him? Can't I take the dust of his (Sri Ramakrishna's) feet? See, I take it. (He takes the dust of Sri Ramakrishna's feet.)

Girish — The angels are ringing bells at this moment.

The Doctor — What is strange about taking dust of his feet? I can take dust of anybody's feet. See! See, I am

taking! (He takes the dust of the feet of all.)

Narendra (to the Doctor) — We consider him as Godlike. Do you know how? Like there is a point somewhere between the vegetable creation and the animal creation where it is most difficult to distinguish whether it is animate or inanimate. It is the same with man-world and God-world. Between these two there is a particular spot where it is difficult to say whether a man is human or God.

The Doctor — I say brother, illustrations do not apply to God.

Narendra — I am not saying that he is God. I am only saying that he is a Godlike man.

The Doctor — One should keep such ideas within oneself. It is not right to bring them to light. Nobody understands my feelings. Even my best friends think of me as hard and cruel. Perhaps, you people too will turn me out with insults.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — What do you say? These people have great affection for you. They await your arrival so eagerly.

Girish — Everyone has the greatest respect for you.

The Doctor — Even my son and my wife believe that I am hard hearted because my fault is that I don't give expression to my feelings before others.

Girish — In that case sir, it is better that you open the doors of your heart out of pity for your friends.

The Doctor — How can I tell you? Like you my feelings too get worked up (I go in bhava). (To Narendra) I shed tears in solitude.

**Great men and atonement of mankind -
avatara and the like and Narendra**

The Doctor (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Well, in bhava you place your foot on others' person. This is not right.

Sri Ramakrishna — But, do I know that I am placing my foot on someone's person?

The Doctor — But you know that this is not right.

Sri Ramakrishna — How to tell you what happens to me in the state of bhava? After that state is over, it comes to my mind that perhaps I have this disease because of it. I become mad in God's bhava. All this happens in (the state of) madness. How can I help it?

The Doctor — He agrees. He expresses regret for what he does. He knows that such act is sinful.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — You have so much penetration. Why don't you speak and make him understand?

Girish (to the Doctor) — Mahashay, you have misunderstood. He is not sorry for this. His body is pure, sinless. He touches people for their good. There is a great possibility of his catching the disease by taking up their sins. That is why at times he thinks this way. When you had an attack of colic, didn't you feel regret for having kept awake at night and studying? Is it, therefore, wrong to keep awake and study at night? You can have regret for the disease. So, please don't think that touching someone's person for his welfare is not right.

The Doctor (put out of countenance, to Girish) — I stand defeated. Give me, give the dust of your feet. (He takes the dust of Girish's feet.) (To Narendra) At least I have to concede to his intellectual power.

Narendra (to the Doctor) — And think of this too. You can devote your life for a scientific discovery without caring for the physical hardship and so forth. But can he not risk his health for God, the greatest of all sciences?

The Doctor — All religious reformers - Jesus, Chaitanya, Buddha and Mohammed - were filled with arrogance at the end and had said, 'Only whatever I have said is right.' How is this?

Girish (to the Doctor) — Mahashay, even you are now guilty of the same fault. You have the arrogance of all of them combined. When you point out this wrong, you yourself are guilty of that.

The Doctor is silent.

Narendra (to the Doctor) — We offer him worship bordering on divine worship.

Thakur Sri Ramakrishna is laughing like a child in joy.

[1] Rama's preceptor and a holy sage

[2] Worldliness

[3] Non-worldliness

[4] [For the complete song, see Section 2, Chapter 6 of this volume.](#)

[5] The body of ecstasy; the body made of joy

[6] The body derived from the Mother of Universe

[7] The Great Cause as the Unconditioned

Appendix

Barahnagar Math

Chapter One

Today Monday, 9 May, 1887. Jaishtha, the second day of the dark fortnight. Narendra and other bhaktas are in the Math. Sarat, Baburam and Kali have gone to Sri Kshetra[1]. Niranjan has gone to see his mother. M. has arrived.

After the midday meals the brothers of the Math are taking some rest. The Elder Gopal is copying a song in the music notebook.

It is afternoon. Ravindra enters like a mad man - barefoot, wearing a half dhoti with black border. Like the mad man's eyes the pupils of his eyes are rolling. They all ask him, "What has happened?" Ravindra says, "Wait a moment. I shall tell you everything a little later. I shall now not return home. I shall stay here itself with you. She is a traitor. Mahashay, what do you say? The habit of five years liquor, I have given it up for her sake - eight months have passed. (Not a drop.) What a big traitor she is!"

The brothers of the Math say, "Cool down please. How did you come here?"

Ravindra — I have come here walking barefoot from Calcutta.

The devotees ask, "Where is the other half of your dhoti?" Ravindra says, "She tugged at it when I was coming here and so it got torn."

The devotees say, "Please come back after a dip in the Ganga. Come and cool down. Then we'll talk."

Ravindra belongs to a respectable Kayastha family of Calcutta. He is 20/22 years old. He has had the darshan of Sri Ramakrishna in the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar and was recipient of his special grace. Once he spent three nights with Thakur. He is a man of very gentle and sweet temper. Thakur showed him great affection and said, "But it will take you sometime. There is still some desire for sensory enjoyments in you. Nothing is possible just now. When dacoity takes place, the police cannot do anything at that very moment. When it quietens down a little, the police comes in and arrests the guilty." Today Ravindra stands infatuated by a public woman. But he has all other virtues - feeling of kindness for the poor, meditation on God, all this he has. Knowing the public woman a traitor he has arrived in the Math in half dhoti. He has made a resolve that he would not now return to family life.

Ravindra is going for a dip in the Ganga. He will go to Paramanik Ghat. A devotee is accompanying him. He is very keen that the **company of sadhus enlightens the boy**. After the bath he takes Ravindra to the cremation ground near the ghat. He shows him a dead body and says, "At times brothers of the Math come here alone at night and meditate. It is good for us to meditate here. One realizes very well that this world is transitory." Hearing this Ravindra sits down to meditate. However, he cannot meditate for long. His mind is restless.

Both of them return to the Math and offer pranam to Thakur in his room. The devotee tells him that the brothers of the Math meditate in this very room. Ravindra also sits there to meditate for some time. But he could not meditate for long.

Mani — Why? Is your mind very restless? Probably that is why you have got up. It appears that you could not meditate properly.

Ravindra — Now I am not going to return to family life. I have decided this even if the mind does not settle down.

Mani and Ravindra are standing at a solitary spot in the Math. Mani is narrating a story of Buddha Deva, "Mahatma Buddha first attained spiritual awareness on hearing a song from celestial girls." These days there is a continuous discussion in the Math on 'Buddha Charita' and 'Chaitanya Charita[2]'. Mani sings that very song -

I want peace, but from where to get it? Where do I come from, where I roam and where I go?
Again and again I come back. How much I cry, how much I laugh! I always wonder where should I go?

At night Narendra, Tarak and Harish return from Calcutta. On arriving they say, "O, what a feast we had!" They were invited for food at a devotee's house in Calcutta.

Narendra, the brothers of the Math, M., Ravindra and some others - they too are seated in the room of the demons. On returning to the Math Narendra hears all (about Ravindra).

People in sorrow and Narendra's instruction

Narendra sings. He is as if instructing Ravindra through this song -

I say, give up attachment. Don't listen to the wrong advice. You will be freed from your pain when you have known Him.

Narendra sings again as if to advise Ravindra —

O Avadhoot[3]! Drink the rasa (bliss) of Hari from the cup of love and get intoxicated.

One spends one's childhood in play, when one is adult one is infatuated with woman.

When one is old, one falls a prey to phlegm and flatulence, and keeps lying in bed from morning till evening.

There is musk in the lotus of the navel. How can the animal realize and get over the illusion?

Without Sadguru one makes a vain search like the stag roaming about in the wood.

After sometime the brothers of the Math are seated in the room of Kali Tapasvi. Two new books by Girish 'Buddha Charita' and 'Chaitanya Charita', have just come in the market. Narendra, Shashi, Rakhal, Prasanna, M. and some others are there. Ever since Shashi has come to this new Math (Barahnagar Math), he has been worshiping Thakur night and day with heart and soul. All are wonderstruck on seeing his worship. The way he served Thakur night and day during his illness, today too he is worshiping him in the same manner single-mindedly with deep devotion.

One brother of the Math reads from 'Buddha Charita' and 'Chaitanya Charita'. He reads 'Chaitanya Charita' in a slight lighter mood. Narendra snatches the book. Says he, "This way you spoil every good thing."

Now Narendra himself reads about Chaitanya Deva's dispensing love all around.

A Brother of the Math — I say, nobody can give love to others.

Narendra — But Paramahansa Mahashay gave love to me.

Brother of the Math — Well, have you got it?

Narendra — What will you understand? You belong to the servant (God's servant) class. Everybody will serve and stroke my feet. Even Sarat, Mitir and Deso will do so. (All laugh.) You think as if you have understood everything. (Laughter.) Go and prepare a smoke for me. (All laugh.)

Brother of the Math — No... I will... not...

M. (to himself) — Thakur Sri Ramakrishna has infused mettle in many of the brothers of the Math, not only in Narendra. Without such mettle is it possible for one to renounce 'woman and gold'?

Sadhana of the brothers of the Math

The next day, Tuesday, 10 May. It is the weekday of Mahamaya. Narendra and other brothers are offering special puja to the Mother of the Universe. A triangular *yantra* (figure) has been made in front of the Math of Thakur's shrine. They will perform a yajna followed by animal sacrifice. According to the Tantra both yajna and sacrifice have to be performed. Narendra reads from the Gita.

Mani goes for a dip in the Ganga. Ravindra is pacing the roof all alone. He hears Narendra chanting musically -

Om, I am not the mind, the intellect, the ego, or the consciousness,

Nor I am the ear, the tongue, the nostrils, nor the eyes.

I am not the sky, nor land, nor light, nor air.

I am pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the all-good.

I am neither prana, nor *pancha vayu* (the five vital airs), nor the seven metals, nor *pancha kosha* [4] (the five sheaths).

Nor speech, nor hands, nor feet, nor genital, nor anus.

I am pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the all-good.

I have neither attachment, nor enmity. Neither have I greed nor infatuation.

I have neither vanity nor spite. I am not *dharma* (righteous works), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires) and *moksha* (salvation).

I am pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the all-good.

Neither am I virtue, nor vice, nor happiness, nor sorrow. I am not mantra, nor place of pilgrimage, nor Veda, nor *yajna*.

I am not the food, nor an edible article, nor the eater. I am pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the all-good.

Ravindra returns after his bath from the Ganga. His dhoti is wet.

Narendra (secretly to Mani) — He (Ravindra) has just taken his bath. Right time to initiate him into sannyasa. (Mani and Narendra laugh.)

Prasanna asks Ravindra to change his wet dhoti and gives him an ochre coloured dhoti.

Narendra (to Mani) — Now he will have to wear the clothes of a *tyagi* (renouncee).

Mani — Which renunciation?

Narendra — Renunciation of 'woman and gold'.

Ravindra puts on the ochre cloth and goes into the room of Kali Tapasvi and sits there alone. It seems he is going to practise some meditation.

Chapter Two

Sri Ramakrishna with Ashwini Kumar and other bhaktas
Keshab Sen (1881), Devendra Nath Thakur, Achalananda, Shivanath, Hriday, Narendra and Girish

Brother M., the beloved of my soul, I have finished today the fourth part of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita sent by you, on the day of Kojagar Purnima, the second day of the lunar month. Blessed you are. You have showered so much nectar in the whole country.

Well, many days ago you wanted to know what conversations I had with Thakur. I am making some effort to tell you about it. But I am not lucky as M. that I should be able to write down the day, the date, the position of planets of seeing his holy feet and the account of all the words that issued forth out of his holy lips. I write what I remember. It is possible that I mistake the date of conversation with another. Besides, I do not remember many other facts.

I remember that I met Thakur for the first time during the winter vacation of 1881. Keshab Babu was expected on that day. I went to Dakshineswar by boat. On reaching the ghat I asked somebody where the Paramahansa was. Pointing towards a person seated in the northern verandah and resting against a bolster, he said, "He is the Paramahansa." Seeing Thakur clad in a black-bordered dhoti and resting against a bolster, I said to myself, "What kind of a paramahansa he is!" But then I saw that he was half laid resting against the big pillow with his legs raised and hands around them. I said to myself, "He doesn't know at all how to rest against a pillow like babus, so it seems that he must be a paramahansa." I saw a gentleman sitting to his right very near the pillow. I was told that the gentleman was Rajendra Mitra who later became the assistant secretary to the Bengal Government. There were many others sitting on the right side. After a short while he said to Rajendra Babu, "Just see whether Keshab is coming or not?" Only a short while ago someone had come to tell him that Keshab was not there. Hearing some sound he again said, "Just see, find it out again." This time too a person came and said, "No." The Paramahansa at once smiled and said, "A leaf falls on another leaf and Radha says, 'It seems that he has arrived, the master of my soul.' Yes, you see Keshab has been doing so for a long time. He is coming, coming. No, he hasn't come." After some time the evening approaches. It is now that Keshab arrives along with his group. On reaching there Keshab offered his pranam to Thakur by lying prostrate on the ground. Thakur also did exactly the same and raised his head after a while. He was in samadhi then. Said he, "You have brought here, as it were, all the residents of Calcutta as if I am going to deliver a lecture. I shall not be able to do that. You may do so if you like. I shall not be able to do all that."

With some divine smile says he in that very state, "I shall eat, I shall drink, I shall stay in your house. I shall eat, sleep and defecate in your house. I shall not be able to do all that." Keshab Sen keeps looking at him and is getting surcharged with bhava. Says he again and again in bhava, "Aha, Aha."

Seeing this state of Thakur I thought, "Is he pretending? Nowhere else have I seen so." And then 'what faith I have,' you know well.

After the samadhi was over he said to Keshab Babu, "Keshab, one day I went there to your house. I heard you saying: Having dived into the river of bhakti I will reach the sea of Sachchidananda. I then looked up (where Keshab Babu's wife and other ladies were sitting) and said to myself: 'Then what would happen to them?' You people are householders. How will you fall so suddenly into the sea of Sachchidananda? Like the mongoose you have now a brick tied to your back. Hearing just a little noise it climbs up the niche, but how can it stay there? The brick pulls and it falls down in no time. You people can also practise a little meditation and so on but the brick of wife and son would pull you down to the earth again. You people will dive into the river of bhakti for a while but will soon come out. It will go on like this. How can you get drowned permanently?"

Keshab Babu says: Is it not possible in the household? What about Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore?

The Paramahansa Deva utters 'Devendra Nath Thakur, Davendra, Davendra' twice or thrice, offers him pranam and says, "You know this well that there was a person who used to celebrate the festival of Durga and from morning till evening goats were slaughtered there as sacrifice to the goddess. Many years later there was no festivity of sacrifice. Somebody asked, 'Mahashay, how is it that there is no longer any hustle and bustle of sacrifice in your house?' He replied, 'I have lost my teeth, you see.' Now Devendra also practises meditation and perception. Naturally he would do it now. But otherwise he is a good man."

"Look here, so long as man is under *maya* (delusion), he is like a raw green coconut. So long as the coconut is green, a piece of its shell also comes out along with its thick juice. And when delusion is gone, one becomes the hard shell. Then the kernel and the shell can easily be separated - the kernel gives the sound of a dry ball inside. The soul and the body become separate in that state. There is no feeling of oneness with the body.

"It is the 'T' which is the cause of big troubles. Will this rascal 'T' not go? In a dilapidated house a peepal plant sprouts. Even if you pull it out and throw it away, the next day you see another branch shooting up. It is the same with this 'T'. Wash the saucer of onion any number of times, can you free it from its smell?"

While talking thus, he said to Keshab Babu, "Yes Keshab, what do your Calcutta babus say: 'There is no God!' A babu is climbing up the stairs. He takes a step and as he takes another, he suddenly exclaims: 'Ooh! What is this?' And saying so he falls unconscious. Please call the doctor, call him at once. And before the doctor comes, the gentleman expires. Yet they say, 'There is no God.' "

After an hour or an hour and a half, starts the community singing of hymns. What I saw then I feel I shall never forget even after many lives. Everybody begins to dance, I saw even Keshab dancing - Thakur was in the middle and all others were dancing around him. While dancing Thakur stops all of a sudden - he has gone into samadhi. He remains in this state for quite some time. The more I saw him and the more I heard him, I realized he is truly a paramahansa.

And one day, perhaps in 1883, I took a number of young men of Rampur to see him. Seeing them Thakur said "What has brought them here?"

I — To see you.

Thakur — What will they see of me? Let them see the buildings etc.

I — They have not come to see the buildings. They have indeed come to see you.

Thakur — So, they are flints - there is fire within. You may keep the flint in water for a thousand years. It will still generate fire no sooner it is rubbed. These young men are possibly of the same species. As for me, you may rub hard no fire comes out.

We laughed on hearing these last words. As for other talks on that day I don't remember exactly. But there was some talk on 'the smell of I-ness does not disappear' and renunciation of 'woman and gold'.

Yet another day I visited him, offered him pranam and sat down. He said, "Can you bring me that something which fizzes when you open its cork, something that is somewhat sour, somewhat sweet?" I said, "Lemonade?"

Thakur said, "Do bring one." I remember I did bring one.

As far as I recall we were alone there. I asked him many questions: "Do you believe in the distinction of caste?"

Thakur — How is that? I took *charchari* (a mixture of many cooked vegetables) at Keshab Sen's house. But listen what happened one day. Somebody with a long beard brought me ice. I didn't like to eat it at all. But later when some other person brought ice from him only, I ate it with gusto. From this you can make out that distinction of caste falls off by itself, like leaves fall from the coconut tree, or palm tree when it becomes big. Caste distinction also falls like this. Don't pull it out; let it fall out by itself.

I asked — What kind of person is Keshab Babu?

Thakur — I say brother, he is a divine personality.

I — And Trailokya Babu?

Thakur — He is a good man, sings very well.

I — Shiva Babu?

Thakur — A good man. But he argues.

I — What is the difference between a Hindu and a Brahmo?

He said — What difference? Here *roshan chowki* (shahnai) is played upon. A person keeps on playing a particular note on it. And another person plays various moods of songs on it like 'My Radha is sulking.' The Brahmos keep on playing just one note of the Formless. And Hindus produce various kinds of moods.

"Water and ice - one is without form, the other with form. That which is water becomes ice in cold. With the heat of jnana the ice again melts into water. In the cold of bhakti water becomes ice.

"He is one and the same Being. Different people give Him different Names. It is like this - there are four bathing points on four sides of a pond. Some persons are taking water from one point. On asking them they may say that they are taking '*jal*'. Those taking water at the other point may say that they are taking '*pani*'. At the third point they say it is 'water' and at the fourth they call it 'aqua'. But it is the same water everywhere."

When I told him that I had met Achalananda Tirtha Avadhoot in Barishal, he said, "The same

Ramakumar of Kotaranga?"

I said — Yes, sir.

Thakur — Well, what do you think of him?

I — A very nice man.

Thakur — Well, is he nicer or I?

I — How can you be compared with him? He is a pundit, a learned man. But are you a pundit, a jnani?

Hearing this he was taken aback a little and kept quiet. After a minute or so, I said, "He may be a pundit but you are a pleasant person, full of joy. There is a lot of pleasure in you."

At this he smiled and said, "Well said. You have said it rightly."

He asked me, "Have you seen my Panchavati?" I answered, "Yes, sir."

He also told me a little about what all he would do there. He told me of various *sadhanas* (spiritual disciplines) and also about the Nangta (the Naked one; Tota Puri). I asked him, "How to attain God?"

Answer — I say brother, He is pulling us the way magnet pulls iron. If there is mud over the iron, it is not pulled. When this mud is washed away by weeping (for Him), one immediately sticks to Him."

I was recording Thakur's sayings as I listened to him. He said, "Look here, it will not do just shouting, 'Hemp, hemp.' Bring hemp, grind it and then drink it."... Then he said to me, "You people are to live in household. So live a little inebriated. Let this inebriation be there even when you are engaged in work. You people, however, will not be able to be like Sukadeva that you can lie naked after intoxication."

"While living in the world you should write out a general power of attorney, give your power to the pleader. He will do whatever is possible. As for you, you will live like a maidservant of a rich household. How much she loves the children of her master! She gives them bath, cleanses them and feeds them as if they are her own. But in her mind she knows that they are not hers. As soon as her services are terminated, all contact is lost.

"As you smear your hands with oil before cutting the jack fruit. Similarly, smear yourself with that oil which would not let you entangle in the world, will not attach you to it."

Till now we were talking seated on the floor. Now he went up his cot and lay there on his back. He said to me, "Fan me."

I began to fan him. He kept quiet. After sometime he said, "It is very hot brother, moisten the fan with water." I said, "And you are fond of good living too, I see." He smiled and said, "Why not? Why not there be good living?" I said, "Let it be so, more of it and still more." The pleasure I had that day with his proximity cannot be expressed.

The last time, the day you have talked of in the third volume (in section 16), I went to him with the headmaster of my school. It was just after he had passed his B. A. It was on this day that he met you.

As soon as he saw him, he said, "Where have you found him? He is a very fine person."

"I say, brother, you are an advocate. Oh! you are so intelligent! Can you give me some of your intelligence? Your father came here the other day. He was here for three days."

I asked — How did you find him?

He said — He is a good man but at times he talks nonsense.

I said — Knock off his nonsense when he meets you next time.

He smiled a little. I said, "Tell me something special."

He said — Do you know Hriday (Hriday Mukhopadhyay)?

I said — Your nephew? I do not know him.

Thakur — Hriday used to say, 'Uncle, why don't you speak out all that you have to say all at once? Why do you repeat the same thing again and again?' I said, 'What does it matter to you, O rascal? These are

my words. I may repeat them a million times. What is it to you?

I smiled and said — Quite right, quite right.

After sometime he sat down and while repeating, 'Om, Om' he began to hymn a song.

Dive, dive O my mind, dive deep into the sea of His beauty.

Singing a couplet or two, and repeating, 'Dive, dive,' he himself dived deep.

The samadhi over, he began to pace up and down. He was wearing a dhoti. Pulling it up with both hands, he brought it right up to his waste. An end of it trailed on the ground while the other dangled a little. My companions and I began to make signs and whisper to each other, "He was wearing the dhoti nicely!" But after a while, saying, "Away, away you rag of a dhoti," he threw it away and began pacing up and down naked. Bringing an umbrella and a walking stick from the northern side he asked us, "Are these yours - this umbrella and the walking stick?" I replied, "No, Sir." He immediately said, "I already knew that these are not yours. Just by looking at umbrella and walking stick I can know a man. Surely these belong to that fellow who had swallowed so much like a demon."

After a while he sat to the north of his cot facing west (just as naked) as he was. As he sat, he asked me, "I say, do you consider me uncivilized?"

I said — No, you are very civilized. But why are you asking this?

Thakur — You see, Shivanath and others like him take me as uncivilized. When they come, I have to somehow wrap myself in this dhoti. Do you know Girish Ghosh?

I — Which Girish Ghosh? The one who runs a theatre?

Thakur — Yes.

I — I have never seen him but I know him by name.

Thakur — He is a good man.

I — I hear he takes liquor. Doesn't he?

Thakur — Maybe he drinks, but how long will he drink?

He says — Do you know Narendra?

I — No, sir.

Thakur — I would like you to meet him. He has passed his B.A. and he does not marry.

I — As you please, I shall meet him.

Thakur — There is *kirtan* (community singing of devotional songs) in Ram Dutta's house today. You will find him there. Go there in the evening.

I — As you please.

Thakur — Will you go? You must definitely go.

I — Shall I disobey your order? I shall certainly go.

He showed me a number of pictures in the room. Then he asked me, "Is a picture of the Buddha Deva available?"

I — I hear, it is available.

Thakur — Bring me one picture of his.

I — As you say, I shall bring it next time when I come.

I could never meet him again. I was not lucky enough to sit again at his holy feet.

I went to Rama Babu's house in the evening that day. I saw Narendra. Thakur was sitting and resting against a bolster in a room with Narendra to his right. I was in front. He asked

Narendra to talk to me.

Narendra said — I have bad headache today. I don't feel like talking.

I said — Never mind, we will talk some other day.

This talk we had in Almora in the month of May or June 1897.

Thakur wish had to be fulfilled though it took twelve years. Aha! What happy time I passed for some days in Almora with the same Swami Vivekananda. At times it was in his house, at other times in mine. And one day I was with him alone on the top of a hill. After this meeting I did not meet him. It was to fulfill Thakur's will that I was able to meet him at that time.

With Thakur, too, I met only for four or five days. But even during that short time, I felt as if Thakur and I had been classmates. How frankly we talked! The moment I left him, I said to myself, "O my God, what a man I have visited." Whatever I saw, whatever I got from him during these few days have sweetened my life. With enormous effort I have preserved that soft smile, that showering of divine words in a box. Brother, it is the inexhaustible wealth of the wealthless one. The drops of the nectar falling from those smiling lips are filling even America with nectar. Thinking thus I feel overwhelmed again and again. If it is so with me, how much lucky you are!

[1] Jagannath Puri - An ancient place of pilgrimage in the Orissa state.

[2] On the lives of Buddha and Chaitanya

[3] A hermit who worships Shiva

[4] The stages of existence of a created being viz., *an*

nmaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijnanamaya kosha and anandamaya kosha.

"You will have to do a little of Divine Mother's work; you will have to speak out the Bhagavata to people. You are my own, of the same substance as father and son. You are one of those who trade in the jewellery of the Spirit. Mother, you have endowed him only with one kala (one-sixteenth part of Divine Energy)! O, I see this will suffice to carry out Your mission."

– Sri Ramakrishna to the Author

GLOSSARY

A

acharya : Religious teacher

adharma : Unrighteousness

Advaitavada : Non-dualism

Adya Shakti : Primeval Divine Energy

agnimantra : A mantra that makes one determined to achieve an extremely difficult and daunting task

ahetuki bhakti : Love for God that wells up unbidden out of the depths of the immortal soul

Akhanda Sachchidananda : The Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute

amla bhakti : Love without alloy

amrita : Immortality

anahat : This sound is produced on its own without two material objects being struck together

anna : Sixteen annas make one hundred percent

antaryamin : The knower of the heart within.

anulom and vilom : Evolution and involution

arati : Singing forth the devotional songs along with waving of lights before the sacred images

asana : Seat

atmajnana : Knowledge of the Self

Atmaram : Rejoicing in that Companionship

Avadhoot : A hermit who worships Shiva

avidya maya : Power of ignorance

avidya shakti : Leading to darkness and away from God

avirbhava : The Divine presence infilling the images of the Deity;

manifestation of God

B

bahaduri wood : Superior and heavy log

Bankim Chandra : He was a resident of Benetola locality of Calcutta — a deputy magistrate and a great bhakta. Sri Paramahansa Deva met him at Adhar Sen's house. This was the only one meeting that Bankim Babu had with him. Bankim was the celebrated writer of Bengal. He wrote 'Vande Mataram' in Bengali.

banya : A semi-circular percussion instrument played along with tabla

beeja mantra : A mystic word or words to be recited silently having great power within

Bhagavan : Personal God with divine attributes; the beloved Lord

Bhagavata : Divine word

Bhagavati tanu : The body derived from the Mother of Universe

Bhagirathi : Another name for the Ganga, after the name of Bhagirath who brought it to earth from heaven after great penance

bhajan : Singing forth devotional hymns

bhakta : Dualist; an aspirant who seeks to attain God through love, self surrender and devotion

Bhakta-vatsala : The gracious loving Lord of the bhakta

bhava : God-consciousness; mood, feeling, emotion

Bhavatarini : Saviour of mankind from bonds of the world

bhoga : Sensory enjoyments; food offering to gods

bhoga arati : Worhip performed after offering of meals to the deities

bodhebodha : It is the intellectual, literal, imaginative, inner feeling of the real nature of Brahman (Atman, Bhagavan). The Vedanta illustrates it in this way (taken from Vol. III of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, 24 August, 1882): A babu is lying in a room in the dark. Somebody gropes in the dark to reach him. His hand touches a couch and he says, 'No, this is not he.' Then he touches the window. This too is not he. Then he touches the door and again says to himself, 'No, not he.' 'Not this, not this, not this.' At last his hand does touch the babu. Then he says, 'That's it. He is the babu' - it means that he has realized that 'the babu is'. He has reached the babu but hasn't known him intimately.

brahmachari : A brahmachari is a holy man practising control over the mind and preparing for the next steps of life — that of the householder, or the ascetic.

Brahmajnana : Knowledge of the Absolute

Brahmajnani : Monist; the knower of Brahman

Brahman : The Unconditioned, the Absolute

brahmanda : Universe

Brahmarishi : One who has attained Brahman and teaches Its essence to others

C

chakor : A red-legged partridge which enjoys moonbeam

Chandi-mandap : A roofed place usually with four sides open

chanvar : A fan made of the white hair from the tail of the cow called Chamari

charanamrita : Nectar of divine feet

charchari : Dry fish with spiced vegetables soaked in oil

chidakasha : Firmament of divine consciousness

Chidananda : Bliss and Consciousness

Chintamani : Wish fulfilling gem; God

D

Dakinis : The spirits of destruction

Dakshina Mother Kali : Bestower of happiness and bliss

dama : Self control over sense organs

dashamul pachan : Decoction of ten medicinal roots

Dasharath : Father of Lord Rama

daya : Charity; kindness

dham : Place of pilgrimage

dharana : Meditation and concentration

dharma : Righteousness; religion

F

faras : The temple attendant who arranges the lights

four fruits : Dharma (good works), artha (wealth), kama (desires), moksha (liberation of the soul)

G

gandharvas : Class of demi-gods proficient in music and war

Gayatri : The Vedic mantra (sacred text) that the brahmins and other twice-born Hindus repeat everyday while meditating on the Supreme Being

Gopal : Baby Krishna

Guru : Divine preceptor and teacher

H

habate wood : Old, dry and worn out wood

Haldarpukur : Sri Ramakrishna had his house in Kamarpukur village in Hooghly district. In front of his house there was a big pond called Haldarpukur.

Hari : Lord, the Preserver

havishya : Boiled rice with clarified butter

Hazra : The native village of Hazra Mahashay is Madagod near Kamarpukur, the native village of Sri Ramakrishna. He passed away in the month of Chaitra in his own village in 1306 B.Y. (1900 A. D.). His extraordinary faith and devotion for Thakur showed itself at the time of his death. He was then sixty three or sixty four years old.

homa : Sacrificial fire

Hriday : Hriday Mukherji was the son of Ramakrishna's cousin sister. He had his house in Seor village near Kamarpukur. For almost twenty four years Hriday stayed with Thakur, served him and carried out the worship of Mother Kali in Dakshineswar Temple. Later, he lost the confidence of the proprietor of the garden and therefore was not allowed to enter it.

I

Icchamaya : Has His own way in everything

Ishwara : The Lord

J

jada samadhi : Like a piece of wood unmindful of the world around

Jagannath Puri : An ancient place of pilgrimage in the Orissa state where Lord Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra are worshipped

jagat : The phenomenal world

Jatila and Kutila : The two obstructives

jiva : Embodied soul

jivanmukta : Liberated in this very life

jnana : Spiritual knowledge

jnani : Man of spiritual knowledge

K

Kala : God of Death

Kali : God in His relations to the conditioned

Kalpataru : Wish fulfilling tree of heaven

kamandala : Bowl made of gourd shell

karana : The body of ecstasy; the body made of joy

karanananda : Joy of causal

karma kshaya : Work no longer binds one

karmakanda : Work, activity

kaviraj : Old fashioned Hindu physician

Kedarnath Chatterji : Kedarnath Chatterji was in Dhaka for many days. His eyes would wet with tears on reading the story of the Lord. He was a great bhakta. His house was in the city of Hali.

khadkuto : Dry straw, grass, twigs, etc.; denotes an insignificant person

Kojagar Lakshmi Puja : The full moon night in the dark fortnight of Aswin. Lakshmi (goddess of wealth and prosperity) is worshipped in North India on Diwali festival. In Bengal Lakshmi is worshipped fifteen days prior to Diwali. On Diwali festival people worship Kali in Bengal.

Kaustubhmani : Jewel worn by god Vishnu

Kuber : The Hindu god of wealth

kumbhak : Suspension of breath

L

Lakshmi : Goddess of wealth

leela : The relative phenomenal world

M

maha pralaya : Total destruction of the world

mahabhava : Divine ecstasy

Mahachidakasha : The great space of Consciousness

Mahakarana : The Great Cause as the Unconditioned

mahapurusha : A great spiritual personality

mahatma : Spiritually advanced person

mahavayu : The current of spirit

mahayoga : Great communion

malechha : A non Hindu

mangal-ghat : Consecrated pitcher placed to win Divine favour

Mathur : Sport of Lord Krishna in Mathura

maya : Self-love

mayavada : Illunism

mridanga : A musical instrument almost like a tom-tom

N

Naradiya bhakti : Communion with God by love, devotion and self-surrender, as practised by Rishi Narada

nava-anuraga : The first love

nedas : Shaven headed Vaishnava monks

nedis : Shaven headed Vaishnava nuns

neeras : Totally devoid of sweetness, love, joy, bliss and other attributes

Nimai sannnyasa : The play depicting sannnyasa of Sri Chaitanya

nishkama bhakti : Love for God untainted by desires

nishkama karma : Motiveless, selfless work

Nitya : The Absolute

nivritti : Non-worldliness

Nyaya : Logic

O

Om Tat Sat : The Lord is the only Reality

Omkar : Om, the Vedic symbol for the Supreme Being

P

pakhavaja : Indian tom-tom

pancha kosha : The stages of existence of a created being viz., annmaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijnanamaya kosha and anandamaya kosha.

pancha pradip : Lamp with five wicks

pancha vayu : The five vital airs

Param Brahman : The Supreme Brahman

Paramatman : Universal Soul

Patanjal : Compiled by philosopher Patanjali

payas : Pudding made with rice and milk

Prakriti : The female aspect of God

pranayam : Control of breath

prasad : Sacramental food having offered to the deity

pravartakas : Beginners in spirituality

pravritti : Worldliness

prema : Ecstatic love; intense love for God

prema bhakti : Ecstatic love

pulao : A highly spiced fish dish of rice and meat boiled in clarified butter

purna jnana : Ultimate knowledge

Purusha : The male aspect of God

R

raga bhakti : Loving devotion for God

raga ragini : The modes of Indian music

rajarshi : A royal ascetic sage

rajoguna : Qualities that make one inclined to multiply work and duty

Ramalal : He was the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna and the priest of Kali Temple

Rasaswaroop : Fountain of love and bliss

Ratha Yatra : Car Festival

roshan chowki : A symphony of shahnai and other instruments

Rudra : Manifestation of Shiva as destroyer

rudraksha : A kind of dried fruit used as a bead

S

Sachchidananda : Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute

Sachchidanandamayi : All Knowing, All Intelligent and All Blissful Mother of the Universe

sadguru : Divine preceptor

sadhakas : The practitioners of spirituality

sadhan : Practice of devotional exercises

sakama karma : Work with a motive

sakhi : The milkmaid friend of Vraja; a female friend

sanatana dharma : The eternal religion

sandhya : Daily service morning, noon and evening, as laid down for the twice-born

Sankhya : Rationalism

sankirtan : Singing of hymns and devotional songs

sanskaras : Tendencies of one's past births

Santhal : An aboriginal tribe of India

saras : Sweet

Saraswati : Goddess of speech and learning

sati : Faithful wife; pure and chaste woman

sattvaguna : Qualities that lead Godward

Satyam Shivam Sundaram : Absolute Truth, Absolute Good and Absolute Beauty are one

Sejo Babu : Mathur Nath Biswas, Rani Rasmani's son-in-law. From the very beginning he served Sri Ramakrishna with extreme bhakti like a disciple.

shahnai : A wooden wind instrument

Shaktas : Hindus who worship God as the Primal Divine Energy

shama : Mental restraint

Shava sadhana : Spiritual discipline on a corpse

Shyam : An appellation of Krishna

Shyama : Goddess Kali

siddhas : Spiritually matured ones

Siddhu : Siddheswar Majumdar. He had his house in north Barahnagar

sika : One sika equals four annas; sixteen annas make one rupee.

Singhavahini : The goddess seated upon a lion

Snan Yatra : Ceremony of Lord Jagannath's sallying out in procession for a bath

swati nakshatra : A particular conjunction of stars

T

tamoguna : Qualities that cause ignorance which turn the mind away

from God

tanapura : A stringed musical instrument

Tara : Divine Mother

tarpan : Sacrament of offering drinking water to the deities

The Captain : Vishwanath Upadhyay, a resident of Nepal. The emissary of the king of Nepal and his representative in Calcutta. A very orthodox brahmin and a great devotee.

tilak : A sectarian mark painted on the body, or forehead

titiksha : Forbearance

twenty four categories : The twenty four categories are the following, viz. — the five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air, space); the five pranas (vital airs) (prana, udana, samana, vyana, apana); the five organs of sense; the five organs of work; the mind; the determinative faculty (buddhi); the ego; Prakriti

U

upadhi : Adjunct

V

vairagi : One who looks not for anything except the Lord; a person in vairagya (dispassion)

vairagya : Non-attachment to the world

Vaishishtha : Rama's preceptor and a holy sage

Vaishnavas : Hindus who worship God as the Preserver (Vishnu)

varnas : The four castes of Hindu society : Brahmin, kshatriya, vaishnava and shudra

vasus : A compact group of eight devas (gods)

vatsalya : One of the attitudes of worship in which the aspirant has the feeling of a child towards God

Videha : Bodiless; detached from the body

vidya shakti : Of divine nature leading to God and to light

vikara : Aberrations; defects; disease of the world

Vishishtadvaitavada : Qualified non-dualism

viveka : Discrimination

W

woman and gold : Lust and greed

Y

Yama : God of death

yatra : Theatrical performance

yogi : The aspirant who seeks to commune with God; unionist

Z

zemindar : Landlord