



Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita

by Mahendranath Gupta

Sri Ramakrishna

Volume II of V

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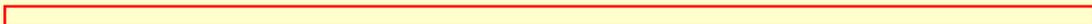
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M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta)

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

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

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

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

"He has no pride."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yam labdhva chaparam manyate nadhikah tatah,

Yasmin sthito na dukhena guruna api vichalyate.

— Gita 6:22

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

Day and night M. would proclaim the tact to save oneself in this age of Kali: 'Keep company of the holy, practise of spiritual discipline in solitude for some days and faith in the words of Guru.' They who saw him in his old age felt that here was a yogi, a rishi who was living in the ashrama soliciting the human beings to shower the love of Sri Ramakrishna on them. Morning, afternoon or evening

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

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

"Mother, why have You given him (M.) one kala Shakti (one sixteenth of Your power)? O, I understand, it will be enough for Your work. One day Thakur said to Master Mahashay, ‘The Mother has kept the Bhagavata Pundit (the preacher of the divine word) in the world tying him with one bond. Otherwise, who will speak out Bhagavata?’ And so on. Thus we see that just as Narendra Nath had come for Thakur’s work and Thakur too gave him the badge of authority of his

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

Sri Keshab Gupta wrote, "Repression of the temptation of being a literary figure is the veracity of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna

Kathamrita.’ Like tuberoses spreading its their perfume while keeping themselves hidden is the great beauty of this spiritual book.’”

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

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

It is obvious from the words coming out of the lips of Mahendra Nath and also from his bhava that he lived with Thakur in the perfect state of mind of a servant while making

a sannyasi of himself. He would often quote: ‘We ought to have the only aim. To be as perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect[170].’

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

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

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

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

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

to know of it, he said, 'You have done the right thing. The Mother will arrange all for you.'

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

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

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

more than a month. As directed by Thakur in her dream, the Holy Mother went to the house of Mahendra Nath and installed the holy water vessel with her own hands and arranged puja. In this shrine the Holy Mother carried out a lot of puja, japa and meditation.

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

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

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

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

December, 1897).

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

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

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

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

wrote: The exactitude is almost stenographic.

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

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

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

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

Many western devotees also used to meet M. at M.'s 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 great privilege for us to present to our English-speaking readers, Volume II of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita. Volume I of the book was published last year. In this five volume work, we have attempted to translate M.'s original Bengali edition, currently published by the Kathamrita Bhawan, Calcutta.

In the Kathamrita the blissful nectar of Thakur's words is available through the prism of M.'s totally devoted and pure mind. What he observed of Thakur and heard from his holy lips, he recorded in his daily diary that same day. A strong need has been felt by English-speaking readers, for an authentic and verbatim translation of original work of M. Therefore, we have retained whatever was in the original Bengali text, feeling that it is important to convey the original bhava (flavour) of the God-man.

M.'s original Bengali Kathamrita is a step-by-step approach to unfolding the mind of an ordinary aspirant from intellectual to intellectual-spiritual, from intellectual-spiritual to spiritual-intellectual and from spiritual-intellectual to spiritual. M. himself has mentioned what the Kathamrita contains. He says (in Volume VII, Section III, page 36 of M., the Apostle and the Evangelist): "The Kathamrita contains the whole life - the unfoldment of mind and soul. I was present in all these scenes. How the mind was influenced by all these scenes and words has been narrated here."

Our approach to the translation of Volume II has been similar to that adopted by us in Volume I. However, a discerning reader will notice three main enhancements. First, we have used the expression 'lust and greed,' or 'lust and gold' instead of 'woman and gold,' as a translation of kamini kanchana. Second, we have made the Bengali spellings for places and personalities consistent with the Ramakrishna literature, for words such as purashcharana, jivanmukta, Jadu Mallick etc., so as to enable the readers of Sri Ramakrishna literature to quickly identify with the place or person.

Last but not least, we have taken the help of two experienced American spiritual enthusiasts to review the book minutely from the Western perspective.

Smt. Ishwar Devi Gupta, who left her mortal frame on Buddha Purnima, 26 May, 2002, remains the driving spirit behind the translation and publication of these volumes of the Kathamrita, both English and Hindi. It was her strong desire that an English version of the five volumes of the Kathamrita be published. Sri Dharm Pal Gupta prepared the original draft of the English version, maintaining the same spirit of faithful translation. Before he left this world in 1998, he had completed the colossal work of translating the entire five parts of the Kathamrita into English.

With Thakur's grace and blessings we are able to bring out the second volume. We are extremely happy that the Volume II is being dedicated at Sri Ramakrishna's feet on the 109th birth anniversary of Swami Nityatmananda.

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

Ganga Dasahara

Thursday, 20 June, 2002

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*

Three Classes of Evidence

It has been a cherished desire for a long time to publish in serial form the life of Thakur from his childhood. After completing the Kathamrita in six or seven volumes, material would be available to write his life story as he recounted it himself. In this regard three classes of evidence will 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 account of Thakur's life that came directly from his holy lips and was published in the 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 rendering 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 devotees 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 avataras 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 bhaktas belongs to the third class evidence.

At the time of writing Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, M. relied upon the first class evidence. If M. publishes Thakur's life in a serial form, for that, too, he will rely mainly on the first class evidence. In other words, its contents will rely on words which issued from Thakur's own lips.

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

Usage of Expression 'kamini kanchana'

Sri Ramakrishna used the Bengali words *kamini kanchana* very frequently in the original five volumes of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*. Because he looked upon all women as the very manifestations of the Divine Mother, we believe he used this phrase to warn his disciples about lust and greed, which are the main obstacles to man's spiritual progress.

Accordingly, we have used the term 'lust and greed,' or 'lust and gold,' instead of 'woman and gold' as a translation of *kamini kanchana*.

Acknowledgements

Sri Ma Trust offers its sincere gratitude to all those friends and devotees who are helping in any way in propagation, publication and distribution of the volumes. Special mention must be made of:

Swami Swahananda, Vedanta Society, Hollywood, CA,
USA
Swami Tapasananda, Ganges, Michigan USA
Bob Adjemian, Vedanta Press & Catalog, Hollywood, CA,
USA
Sri L. N. Jhunjhunwala, New Delhi, India
Neil Feldman, Rockville, Maryland, USA
Harry Kiakis, San Diego, CA, USA
Dr. Kamal Gupta, Noida, India
Kathy Rabold, Oldsmar, Florida, USA
Vinay Mehta, Chandigarh, India

We are extremely thankful to the following devotees, including two American enthusiasts, who have helped with utmost devotion in production, reviewing and proof-reading of the book:

Nitin Nanda, Chandigarh, India
Vijay Nanda, Panchkula, India

Our special thanks to Martin Gemperle, Paris, France for the cover design of the book.

Section I

Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra and other Intimate Disciples in Dakshineswar

Chapter I

The story of Thakur's earlier life – Sri Ramakrishna in his first ecstasy of love in 1858

The devotee Krishnakishore, a sadhu from Ariadaha, Jatindra, Jaya Mukherji and Rani Rasmani

Sri Ramakrishna is in a happy state of mind today. Narendra has come to the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. Other intimate disciples are there as well. Narendra takes his bath and receives prasad^[1].

It is Monday, 16 October, 1882, the fourth day of the bright fortnight of Aswin. The Durga Puja falls on Thursday next, the seventh day of the lunar month.

Rakhal, Ramlal and Hazra are with Sri Ramakrishna. Narendra is accompanied by one or two Brahma youths. M. is also present.

Narendra has taken his meal with Sri Ramakrishna. After the meal, Sri Ramakrishna asks for bedding to be spread on the floor of his room. The devotees, particularly Narendra, will rest there. A mat of superior quality is spread out with a quilt and a pillow over it. Like a child, Sri Ramakrishna sits near

Narendra on the bedspread. Turning toward him joyfully, he talks with the devotees, particularly Narendra. A radiant smile plays on his face. During the conversation, he tells them of incidents in his life and his spiritual state.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra and others) — After this spiritual state of mine, I only longed to hear about the Lord. I used to wander about trying to find out where the *Bhagavata*, the *Adhyatma (Ramayana)* or the *Mahabharata* was being read. I used to go to Krishnakishore of Ariadaha to listen to the recitation of the *Adhyatma*.

“What faith Krishnakishore had! Once when he was in Vrindavan, he felt thirsty and went to a well. He found a man standing near it. When asked to draw some water for him, the man said, ‘I belong to a low caste and you are a brahmin. How can I draw water for you?’ Krishnakishore said to him, ‘Just say Shiva twice. The moment you say Shiva, you will be purified.’ The man uttered, ‘Shiva, Shiva,’ and drew some water. Such an orthodox brahmin and he took that water! What faith!

“A sadhu came to the bathing ghat at Ariadaha. I thought I would go to see him one day. I told Haladhari in the Kali Temple that I would go to meet the sadhu with Krishnakishore. I asked him if he would like to see him. Haladhari said, ‘What use is it to see a cage of clay?’ You see, Haladhari reads the *Gita* and the Vedanta philosophy. That is why he called the sadhu a ‘cage of clay’. I told Krishnakishore about it. He was quite angry and said, ‘What! Did Haladhari say that? One who meditates on the Lord, thinks of Rama, and has

given up everything for His sake, to call the body of such a man a cage of clay! He doesn't know that the body of such a devotee is made up of Spirit.' He was so angry that when he would come to the Kali Temple to pick flowers, he would turn away when he saw Haladhari and did not talk to him.

“He said to me, ‘Why did you cast off your sacred thread?’ When I was in that state, everything blew away from me as if by the cyclone of Aswin. No indication of my previous life remained! I lost external awareness! Even my *dhoti*^[2] fell off, so how could I care for the sacred thread? I said to him, ‘If you once experience that madness for the Lord, you will understand.’

“And this is what happened. He, himself, went into God-intoxication. He just uttered, ‘Om, Om,’ shutting himself in a room without another word. Thinking that it was a disease of the brain, a Kaviraj^[3] of Natagore was sent for. Krishnakishore said to him, ‘My good brother! Do please cure me of my disease, but not of my Om^[4]!’

“One day when I went to see him, he was in a pensive mood. ‘What is the matter?’ I asked him. He said, ‘The Tax man came and I am thinking about what he said – that if I do not pay with cash immediately, he will sell my utensils.’ I said, ‘What is the use of thinking about it? All he can do is to take away your utensils. Even if he carries them away tied together, he cannot carry you with him. You are *kha* (ether)!’ (Narendra and others laugh.) Krishnakishore says that he is like ether. You see, he studies the *Adhyatma (Ramayana)*. I used to joke with him, sometimes calling him *kha*. I laughed and

said, 'You are *kha*. The Tax man will not be able to carry you away.'

"During ecstasy, I would tell the truth to everybody. I did not care about one's position and was not afraid of men of power.

"One day Jatindra came to Jadu Mallick's garden. I was there. I asked him, 'What is man's duty? Isn't it to meditate on God?' Jatindra said, 'We are worldly people. Is there salvation for us too? Even King Yudhisthira had to visit hell.' I felt very angry. I said, 'What kind of man are you! You only remember Yudhisthira's visit to hell and you forget his truthfulness, his readiness to pardon, his forbearance, discrimination, dispassion and love for the Lord.' I was going to say much more when Hriday stopped me. He put his hand on my mouth. A short time later Jatindra left, saying that he had some business to attend to.

"Many days later I went with Captain^[5] to Sourindra Tagore's house. Seeing him, I said, 'I cannot call you a raja or anything like that because it would be a lie.' He talked with me for awhile, then Western visitors began to arrive. He is a man of rajasic nature. He keeps himself busy with so many things. Word of my visit was sent to Jatindra, but he sent a message that he had a sore throat.

"In the same state of God-intoxication, I saw Jaya Mukherji one day at the Baranagore *ghat*^[6]. He was performing *japa*^[7] but his mind was elsewhere. I approached him and gave him two slaps.

"One day Rasmani came to the Kali Temple. She

used to come for worship and would ask me to sing a song or two. This particular day I was singing, when I noticed that she was sorting flowers but her mind was elsewhere. I at once slapped her twice. Then she sat there anxiously and confused, with her hands folded.

“ ‘Brother, what kind of temperament have you developed?’ Haladhari asked. What was I to do? I prayed and prayed to the Mother and freed myself from the tendency to correct people.”

**With Mathur on pilgrimage in 1868 – Sri
Ramakrishna weeps on hearing worldly talk in Kashi**

“When I was in that state, I liked to hear nothing but talk of the Lord. If I heard worldly talk, I would sit silently and weep. Mathur Babu had taken me with him on pilgrimage. We stayed for many days in Raja Babu’s house in Kashi. One day I was sitting with Mathur Babu in the drawing room. Raja Babu was also there with his men. I noticed that they were talking about worldly things: so much money was lost, and so on. I began to weep, ‘Mother, where have you brought me? I was so well off in Rani Rasmani’s temple. That I should hear of ‘lust and greed’ even in holy places!’ There [in Dakshineswar] I did not have to listen to such worldly talk.’

Sri Ramakrishna asks the devotees, particularly Narendra, to rest awhile. He himself lies down on the smaller cot.

Chapter II

**Enjoys the kirtan with Narendra and others – full of
love, he embraces Narendra**

It is afternoon. Narendra is singing. Rakhai,
M., Narendra's Brahma friend, Priya, and
Hazra are there.

Narendra sings a devotional song to the
accompaniment of *mridanga* (drum).

Meditate upon Hari, O my mind! He is the
essence of consciousness. He is free from all
impurity!

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

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

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

Worship His holy feet in the lotus of your heart.
Gaze upon the matchless beauty of that beloved
form.

Now that the mind enjoys peace and the eyes
are filled with love, be immersed in divine love.
Inspired with your devotion, remain merged in
the joy of love.

Narendra sings again –

Satyam Shivam Sundaram^[8] manifests Himself in
the temple of the heart.

When shall my mind remain immersed night
and day in the sea of this Beauty? (When shall
that day come, O Lord, dispenser of the destiny

of the lowly?)

When, O Lord, will knowledge divine grow in
my heart, and this restless mind become
dumbfounded and take shelter at Your feet?

Just as the *chakora*^[9], on seeing the moon,
begins to frolic with joy,

In the same manner, bliss-like embodied nectar
will rise in the firmament of my heart and I,
too, O Lord, will become intoxicated in Your
light.

When, O friend of my soul, will this mind rest
at the holy feet of the King of kings?

At Thy matchless feet of peace and Absolute
good, the end of my life will be realized!

And when 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.

O the friend of the lowly, pray light in my heart
a burning faith like the polestar and fulfill my
desire.

When shall that day come when, constantly
looking on Him, my mind shall dive deep in the
sea of that Divine Beauty?

Having attained You, I will remain merged
night and day in the joy of love and forget
myself.

But when will such a day dawn?

Song –

Repeat the sweet name of the Lord with joy and

gladness!

Waves will rise on the sea of the nectar of His name. Drink it ceaselessly and give it to others.

When your mind goes dry, falling into illusory things of the world, sing His name and glory and fill it with the nectar of love.

Take care lest you forget that great mantra. Call upon the all-compassionate Father in adversity.

Come, shouting, ‘Victory to Brahman, victory to Brahman,’ and break the bonds of sin.

Becoming a practitioner of the yoga of love, become intoxicated with the joy of Brahman and attain your goal.

The kirtan continues with the accompaniment of the *mridanga*^[10] and cymbals. Narendra and other devotees sing the kirtan, forming a circle around Sri Ramakrishna. Now they sing – ‘Get absorbed in the nectar of divine love.’ Occasionally they sing – ‘Satyam Shivam Sundaram manifests Itself in the temple of the heart.’

At last, Narendra himself takes the *khol* (drum) and, full of emotion, sings along with Thakur: ‘Repeat the sweet name of the Lord with joy and gladness.’

When the song ends, Sri Ramakrishna embraces Narendra a long time, saying, “Oh, what joy you have given me today!”

Today a fountain of love is welling up in Thakur’s heart. It is about eight in the evening. He is pacing the verandah alone, intoxicated with divine love. Coming to the long northern verandah, he paces it from one end to the other.

At times, he talks with the Divine Mother.
Then he exclaims like one mad, “What [harm]
can you do to me?”

**Maya can do no harm to him who has the
Divine Mother to protect him.** Is this what he
is saying?

Narendra, M. and Priya are going to spend the
night. Sri Ramakrishna is beside himself with
joy that Narendra will stay with him. Supper is
ready. The Holy Mother is in the Nahabat^[11].
Having prepared the supper with *chapattis*
(Indian bread), gram lentils etc., she has sent
for the disciples to come and eat their supper.
The disciples stay here off and on. Surendra
bears the expenses every month. The verandah
to the southeast of Sri Ramakrishna’s room is
being made ready for eating.

**Narendra and others are forbidden to talk of the
school or any such matter**

Narendra and others talk as they stand at the
eastern door of the room.

Narendra — Don’t you see what the boys of today
have become?

M. — They are not bad, but no religious instruction
is given to them.

Narendra — My observation is that their behavior
is going downhill. They are flippant and vulgar,
they show off and play truant. I have even seen
them visiting places of ill repute.

M. — When I was a student, I never heard or saw such things.

Narendra — You apparently didn't keep company with such boys. I have seen them call other people vulgar names. Who knows what people they might be meeting!

M. — It is strange!

Narendra — I know many whose character has been lost. I wish the school authorities and their guardians had kept an eye on them.

**Talk on God is the real talk – *atmanam va vijantha
anya vachan vimumchatha***[\[12\]](#)

As they converse, Sri Ramakrishna comes from the room and says laughingly, “I say, what are you people talking about?” Narendra replies, “We are talking about the school. Boys today are losing their character.” Sri Ramakrishna listens for awhile and then says to M. gravely, “It is not good to talk about these things. No talk is right except talk about the Lord. You are older than he, and you are intelligent. You should not have allowed him to raise such topics.” (Narendra is around 19 or 20, M. is about 27 or 28.)

M. is embarrassed. Narendra and the other devotees keep quiet.

Sri Ramakrishna smiles as he stands and feeds Narendra and the others. He is very happy today.

Having taken their meal, Narendra and the

other devotees go to Thakur's room. Sitting on the floor, they rest and talk with him. It is a mart of joy. During the conversation, Thakur says to Narendra, "Do please sing that song: 'The full moon of divine love rises on the firmament of divine wisdom.' "

Narendra begins to sing. Soon the other devotees begin to play on the drum and cymbals in accompaniment.

Song –

The full moon of divine love rises on the firmament of divine wisdom.

The ocean of love overflows: O how full of joy is the Lord!

(Victory unto Thee, merciful Lord! Victory! Victory!)

In all the four directions the planets of devotees twinkle.

The Lord, the friend of the devotees, is joyfully enacting His *lila*^[13] with them.

(Victory unto Thee, merciful Lord! Victory! Victory!)

Behold, the gate of heaven is wide open and the vernal, joyful breeze of new dispensation arises,

Carrying the fragrance of divine love all around. It makes yogis drunk with the joy of communion.

(Victory unto Thee, merciful Lord! Victory! Victory!)

On the sea of the universe is the lotus of the new dispensation, upon which is seated in Her majesty the Divine Mother, the embodiment of all joy!

The devotees, like a swarm of bees, drink its nectar with great fervour!

Behold the gracious countenance of the Mother! Behold, it delights the heart, it fascinates the universe!

Falling at Her feet are bands of holy men, singing and dancing, drunk with joy.

What beauty unparalleled! The blessed vision restores life to the dying soul.

Premdas, holding the feet of all devotees, says, "Sing, O brothers. Sing, 'Victory to the Mother.' "

Thakur dances as he sings, surrounded by devotees who also begin to dance.

After the kirtan Sri Ramakrishna begins to pace up and down the northeastern verandah. Hazra Mahashay is sitting on the northern part of the verandah talking to M. Thakur goes there and sits down. He asks a particular devotee, "Do you sometimes dream?"

The Devotee — I did have a very strange dream: of water, water everywhere in the universe. What an immense, limitless sheet of water it was! A number of boats were sailing on it. Suddenly, they sank into the rising waves. I, and a number of other people, got into a ship. And lo! I saw a brahmin walking over that shoreless sea. I asked him, 'How can you walk on deep water?' The brahmin smiled and said, 'It is not difficult. There is an unbroken bridge underneath me.' 'Where are you going?' I asked. 'To Bhawanipur,' he answered. I said, 'Stop for awhile. Let me accompany you.'

Sri Ramakrishna — My hair stands on end to hear this.

The Devotee — The brahmin said, ‘I am in a hurry. It is not yet time for you to disembark! Let me go. Mark this path. You may tread it later on and follow me.’

Sri Ramakrishna — My hair stands on end hearing it. You should get initiated soon.

It is 11:00 p.m. Narendra and other devotees will sleep in Thakur’s room on bedding spread over the floor.

On waking up in the morning, the devotees see Sri Ramakrishna, naked like a child, pacing up and down, chanting the names of the various gods. Sometimes he gazes at the Ganges, sometimes he goes to the pictures of the gods hanging on the wall and offers his obeisance, and sometimes he sings hymns in a very sweet voice. At times he says, “Thou art the *Veda*, the *Purana*, the *Tantra*, the *Gita*, the *Gayatri*, the *Bhagavata*, the bhakta and Bhagavan.” Referring to the *Gita*, he says again and again, “*Tagi*^[14], *tagi, tagi, tagi.*” And sometimes he says, “Thou art Brahman, Thou art Shakti (Divine Power); Thou art Purusha^[15]; Thou art Prakriti^[16]; Thou art *virat*^[17]; Thou art *svarata*^[18]; Thou art *Nitya* (the Absolute); Thine is the whole *lila*; Thou art the twenty-four cosmic principles.”

In the meanwhile, early morning *arati*^[19] has started in the temples of Kali and Radhakanta.

Conch shells sound and bells are ringing. The disciples wake up to see that flowers are being collected from the Kali Temple flower garden for worship of the gods. The morning sacred music from the Nahabat floats over the area.

Narendra and the other devotees finish their morning ablutions and meet Sri Ramakrishna. He stands next to his room on the western corner of the northeastern verandah, his face beaming with a smile.

Narendra — I have noticed a number of sadhus belonging to the sect of Nanak seated in the Panchavati.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, they arrived yesterday. (To Narendra) I would like to see you all seated together on the mat.

All the devotees sit down on the mat. Sri Ramakrishna looks at them with delight and talks to them. Narendra raises the topic of sadhana (spiritual disciplines).

Practicing spiritual disciplines in the company of women prohibited for Narendra and others – sadhana done in the attitude of a son is extremely pure

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra and others) — Bhakti, or love of God, is the essence. When you develop love for Him, discrimination and dispassion come by themselves.

Narendra — Well, the *Tantra* talks of sadhana in the company of women.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is not a good path. It is very difficult and often brings about the downfall of the aspirant. Spiritual disciplines can be practiced with the attitude of a hero, a maidservant, or even the attitude of a mother to a child. I have the attitude of a child to his mother. The attitude of a maidservant is also good. The path of sadhana with the attitude of a hero is very difficult. The attitude of a child is very pure.

The sadhus belonging to the sect of Nanak salute Thakur saying, “[Namo Narayana](#) [20]!” Thakur asks them to take their seats.

Everything is possible with God – miracles

Sri Ramakrishna says, “Nothing is impossible for God. Nobody can describe His real nature. All is possible for Him. There were two yogis practicing sadhana. The sage Narada passed by. Knowing him to be Narada, one of them asked, ‘Are you coming from Narayana? What is He doing?’ Narada said, ‘I saw that He was passing camels and elephants back and forth through the eye of a needle.’ One of the yogis said, ‘What is there to marvel at? Everything is possible for Him.’ The other yogi replied, ‘Oh, no. That is impossible. You have never been there.’ ”

It is about nine in the morning. Thakur is seated in his room when Manomohan from Konnagar arrives with his family. He bows to Sri Ramakrishna. “I am taking my family to Calcutta,” he says. Thakur makes kind enquiries and then says, “Today is the first

Agastaya^[21] and you are going to Calcutta. What can I say, brother?" Saying this, he smiles a little and resumes the conversation.

Sri Ramakrishna instructs Narendra to become absorbed in meditation

Narendra and his friends return after bathing in the Ganges. Sri Ramakrishna says to Narendra with great eagerness, "Go to the banyan tree and meditate on the Lord. Shall I give you an *asana* (mat)?"

Narendra and his Brahma friends sit at the foot of the banyan tree in the Panchavati. It is around half past ten in the morning. Soon Sri Ramakrishna and M. arrive. Thakur begins to talk to the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Brahma devotees) — At the time of meditation, you must become absorbed in Him. Can you reach the precious stones at the bottom of the sea by floating on the surface?

Saying so, Thakur begins to sing in his sweet voice.

Song –

O my mind, dive deep, taking the name of Kali on your lips – dive into the deep waters of the heart, where the precious stones lie.

If you do not reach the treasure by diving three or four times, it does not mean that the sea of the heart has no treasures within.

Dive with all your might but once, O mind. In the sea of jnana, of *Kulkundalini*^[22], lie pearls of peace.

By your bhakti and wishing for Shivayukti (union with Shiva), you will reach them.

In this sea, there are six alligators – of lust and the rest – always moving about looking for food.

Smear your body with the turmeric of discrimination. The smell of turmeric will keep them away from you.

Many are the precious gems that lie scattered at the bottom of the sea.

Says Ramprasad, “Jump into the sea and you shall get them.”

The Brahma Samaj – lectures and social reforms – first attain the Lord and then preach

Narendra and his friends come down from the terraced platform and stand close to Thakur, who talks to them as they proceed south to his room.

“Alligators can catch you when you dive,” Sri Ramakrishna says. “But when your body is smeared with turmeric, they won’t touch you. In the sea of the heart there are six alligators, those of lust and the other passions. But when you rub your body with the turmeric of discrimination and dispassion, they cannot touch you.”

“What will learning and lecturing avail one if he does not have discrimination (*viveka*) and dispassion (*vairagya*)? The Lord is the only Reality and all else is transitory; only He is real, all else is unreal – this is called discrimination.

“First install Him in the temple of your heart.

Speeches and lectures can be delivered later if you like. What use is it to cry ‘Brahman, Brahman,’ unless you have discrimination and dispassion? It is just like blowing a conch shell.

“There was once a young man named Padmalochan. His fellow villagers called him by the pet name of Podo. In the village was a dilapidated temple, which contained no image of the deity. All around it, plants of Ashwattha and other bushes had grown up. Inside, bats made their nests. The floor was littered with their droppings and covered with dust. Nobody visited this temple.

“One day after dusk the villagers heard the sound of a conch shell. It came from the side of the temple. The villagers thought that somebody had perhaps installed the image of God in it and that evening worship with lamps was being performed. Boys, old men, men and women ran to the temple to worship God and witness His arati. But they saw that Padmalochan was standing there blowing a conch. There was no image of God, the dirt of the temple had not been removed, and the bat droppings were still there. They exclaimed, ‘Madhava (God) has not been installed in the temple of your heart!’ ”

Song –

O Podo, Lord Madhava has not been installed
in the temple of your heart.

You have brought confusion unnecessarily by
blowing the conch.

Eleven bats are camping there night and day.

“What will the blowing of a conch shell avail you, if you want to install Madhava (God) in the temple of your heart and wish to attain Him? Purify your mind first. When your mind is purified, God will take His seat on that pure *asana*. When there are bat droppings, Madhava cannot be installed. There are eleven bats, the eleven organs: Five organs of perception, five of karma [of work like hands, feet, etc.], and the mind. First install Madhava; then if you like, deliver sermons and lectures. Take a plunge first. Dive and pull out the gems. Then take to any other work.

“But nobody wants to dive. One practices no *sadhana*^[23] and no *bhajan*^[24]; one does not have discrimination and dispassion. However, one learns a couple of things and begins to lecture!

“It is the most difficult task to teach humanity. Only he who receives Bhagavan’s commandment after realizing Him may teach mankind.”

The [worldly] wife – all come under the control of one who has sincere bhakti

Thakur comes to the western part of the northern verandah of his room while talking and stands there. Mani is beside him. Thakur says again and again, “You can not reach Bhagavan without developing discrimination and dispassion.” Mani is married. He says to himself earnestly, “What will happen to me!” He is twenty-eight years old and has received an English college education. He asks himself, “Do discrimination and dispassion mean renunciation of ‘lust and greed?’ ”

Mani (to Sri Ramakrishna) — What should one do if one's wife says, 'You are neglecting me. I shall commit suicide.'

Sri Ramakrishna (in a grave tone) — She who is an obstacle in the way to the Lord, let her commit suicide or anything she likes! Such a wife should be shunned.

“She who is a hurdle in the way of the Lord is an *avidya* (worldly) wife.”

Absorbed in deep thought, Mani leans back against the wall worried. Narendra and the other devotees stand there without speaking a word.

Thakur continues talking for some time. He suddenly comes and stands near Mani. Alone with him, he softly says to Mani, “But if one has sincere love of God, all come under his control – whether it is the king, wicked people, or a wife. If you have sincere bhakti for the Lord, the wife also comes gradually to this path. If you are good, God willing, she can also become good.”

These words extinguish the fire in Mani's heart. He had been thinking that if his wife committed suicide, it could not be helped.

Mani (to Sri Ramakrishna) — How dangerous it is to be a householder!

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani and Narendra) — That is why Chaitanya Deva said, 'Listen, brother Nityananda. There is no salvation for a man of the world.'

(Alone to Mani) “There is no salvation for him who doesn’t have pure love for the Lord. He who lives a family life after God-realization need have no fear. If one practices spiritual disciplines at times in a solitary place and thus develops pure love for God, there is no danger in family life for him. Chaitanya Deva also had family men as his devotees. But they lived as householders only in name – for they lived without attachment.”

The worship of gods with food offerings and waving of lights is over. Now music begins to sound in the Nahabat. It is time for the deities to rest. Sri Ramakrishna sits down to take his meal. Narendra and other devotees are also going to have their meal with him.

[1] Sacramental food which has been offered to the deity

[2] Long cloth for covering the body

[3] An Ayurvedic physician

[4] Omkar, the Vedic symbol for the Supreme Being

[5] Colonel Viswanath Upadhyaya, a resident of Nepal. The advocate and emissary of the king of Nepal and his representative in Calcutta. A very orthodox brahmin and a great devotee.

[6] A brick landing stair on the bank of a river, a pond, or a reservoir

[7] Repetition of the Name

[8] Absolute Truth, Absolute Good and Absolute Beauty are one

[9] A red-legged partridge which enjoys moonbeams

[10] Drum

[11] Music tower

[12] Know that Self alone and discard all other talks.
Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.5

[13] Divine sport

[14] Tagi means a renouncer. It is formed by reversing the word “Gita”.

[15] The Self, the Absolute, Spirit. Pure Consciousness, the witness of the changes of Prakriti

[16] Primordial Nature, composed of the gunas, the material of the universe of mind and matter

[17] Personified vastness

[18] One who is self-illuminated and illumines others

[19] Singing of devotional songs along with waving of lights before the sacred images

[20] Salutations to the Lord

[21] The first day of the month of Bhadra. It is considered an inauspicious day for making a journey because Agastaya Muni set out for his journey to the south from Vindyachal on this day of Bhadra never to return.

[22] Kundalini; the serpent power

[23] Practice of spiritual disciplines

[24] Singing of devotional hymns

Section II

Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary Celebrated in Dakshineswar

Chapter I

With devotees at daybreak

Today the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna will be celebrated at the Kali Temple. It is Sunday, 11 March, 1883, the second day of Falgun. The intimate disciples of Thakur will celebrate his birthday with him.

This morning devotees have been coming one by one to the temple garden. The shrine of Mother Bhavatarini^[25] faces the entrance to the temple garden. The *sanai*^[26] is being played beautifully in the natmandir, in *prabhati*^[27] raga (type of melody), just after the early morning arati. It is spring and all the creepers and trees have clad themselves in new leaves. The hearts of the devotees dance with joy in anticipation of Thakur's birthday celebration. The very atmosphere seems filled with waves of heavenly joy. When he arrives, M. sees that Bhavanath, Rakhai and Bhavanath's friend, Kalikrishna, are already there. It is very early in the morning. Thakur is talking with them happily, seated on the eastern verandah. M. goes to them and prostrates before Thakur to salute him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Oh, you have come!
(To the devotees) One does not succeed if one has
the feeling of shame, hatred and fear. How much
joy you will have today! But the rascals who do not
sing and dance, intoxicated with the name of the
Lord, will never attain Him. Why feel ashamed of
talking about God, why fear what others think?
Come, sing together.

Bhavanath and Kalikrishna sing.

Song –

Blessed is this day so full of joy,

We are together spreading Your true religion in
Bharat (India).

Every heart is Your abode, everywhere Your
holy name is taken.

The community of devotees is singing Your
glories,

Lord, we want neither wealth, nor friends, nor
fame. We desire nothing.

Men and women pray to You with a longing
heart.

O Lord, we have taken refuge at Your feet.
Why fear? Why fear death?

Shouting, ‘Victory, victory to You,’ we have
attained the mine of immortality.

Sri Ramakrishna listens to the song with full
attention and his hands folded. While listening,
he suddenly goes into ecstasy. In fact, Thakur’s
mind is like a dry matchstick – strike it but
once and it lights. The mind of an ordinary
man is like a wet matchstick – howsoever

much you may strike it, it doesn't ignite. The reason is that it is attached to the objects of sense enjoyment. Sri Ramakrishna remains absorbed in meditation. After a long time, Kalikrishna whispers something in Bhavanath's ear.

What should be first? Name of the Lord or instruction to the working classes

Kalikrishna salutes Thakur and rises. Thakur is surprised and asks him where he is going.

Bhavanath — Sir, he has some work to do, so he must go.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why does he need to go?

Bhavanath — Sir, he is going to the Baranagore Working Men's Institute.

Kalikrishna leaves.

Sri Ramakrishna — He is unlucky. You see, the name of the Lord today will give such great joy! His fate does not allow him to enjoy it.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna with devotees during his birthday celebrations – rules of conduct very difficult for monk

It is between 8:30 and 9:00 in the morning. Not feeling well, Thakur did not take a dip in the Ganges today. Instead, a pitcher of water for his bath is brought to him on the eastern

verandah. Thakur takes his bath and the devotees help him. As he bathes, Thakur says, “Keep a jug of water aside.” He pours that water on his head last of all. Sri Ramakrishna is taking great care today – he doesn’t pour more than a jug full of water over his head.

After his bath, he chants the name of Bhagavan in a very sweet voice. Putting on freshly laundered clothes, he goes south through the brick courtyard to Kali’s shrine. A devotee or two accompany him. He constantly repeats the Name. His eyes, half closed, look like the eye of a bird hatching eggs.

Reaching Mother Kali’s shrine, he offers his obeisance and performs worship. It is not the time for formal worship, but he offers flowers and sandal paste at the feet of the Mother, and then brings them to touch his own forehead. Lastly, he brings the Mother’s flowers and leaves to his forehead. Then he says to Bhavanath, “Take the green coconut which has been offered to Mother Kali.”

Thakur then goes toward his room through the brick courtyard. He is accompanied by M. and Bhavanath, who holds the green coconut. On the right is the Radhakanta (Radha and Krishna) temple. Thakur says, “This is the home of Vishnu.” He offers them obeisance by lying prostrate on the ground, after having the darshan^[28] of the dual images of Radha and Krishna. To his left are the twelve Shiva temples. He offers obeisance, thinking of Sadashiva^[29].

Thakur now reaches his room. He sees that devotees are already assembled there – Rama, Nityagopal, Kedar Mukherji and many others.

All of them lie prostrate to salute him. Thakur enquires about their well-being.

Seeing Nityagopal, he says, “Do you want something to eat?” Nityagopal has the attitude of a child. He is not married; he is twenty-three or twenty-four years old. He is generally surcharged with ecstasy. He sometimes visits alone, and at other times in the company of Ram. Sri Ramakrishna loves him because of his ecstatic state. Thakur mentions occasionally that he is in the state of a *paramahansa*^[30]. Just now, he is looking at him as Gopal (child Krishna).

Nityagopal says, “I would like to have something to eat.” His whole conduct is childlike.

Instruction to Nityagopal: Complete prohibition of the company of women for the *tyagi* (man of renunciation)

After eating, Thakur takes him to the semi-circular verandah in the western corner of the room near the Ganges. He talks to him.

A great woman devotee, thirty or thirty-two years old, occasionally visits Sri Ramakrishna. She has great devotion to him. She also has great motherly affection for Nityagopal because of his wonderful states of mind. She often takes him to her house.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Nityagopal) — Do you visit her?

Nityagopal (childlike) — Yes, I do go. She takes me home with her.

Sri Ramakrishna — Beware, holy man! Go to her once or twice. Not very often, or you will fall! ‘Lust and greed’ constitute maya. **A holy man must remain very far away from women.** Everybody has a fall in their company – even Brahma and Vishnu struggle for life in their company.

The devotee listens to all this.

M. (to himself) — How strange! Thakur sometimes says that this devotee is in the state of a *paramahansa*. Even in this high state there is risk! Thakur has made such difficult rules of conduct for a sadhu. He runs the risk of downfall if he associates himself with women. If one does not have such a high ideal, how can one be liberated? That woman is unique in devotion. Even then, there is risk! Now I understand why Sri Chaitanya awarded such hard punishment to the Younger Haridas. Even though Mahaprabhu (Sri Chaitanya) forbade him, the younger Haridas talked with a young widow. Haridas was a sannyasi (monk), of course. So Mahaprabhu left him. What punishment! How hard the rule for a sannyasi! And what love Sri Ramakrishna has for this devotee! Lest some misfortune should befall him later on, he promptly cautions him in advance. The devotees are struck dumb! ‘Beware, holy man.’ This grave warning is heard by them all.

Chapter III

God with form and God without form – Sri Ramakrishna’s samadhi at the name of Rama

Now Sri Ramakrishna has come with the devotees to the northeastern verandah of the room. A householder, a resident of Dakshineswar, is also seated with the devotees. He talks Vedanta at home. In the presence of Thakur he is now talking with Kedar Chatterji on the topic of Shabda Brahman^[31].

Sri Ramakrishna and avatarhood – Sri Ramakrishna and harmony of religions

The Resident of Dakshineswar — Is the *Anahata Shabda*^[32] always sounding within and without?

Sri Ramakrishna — This sound alone is not enough. There is something indicated by the sound. Can I derive pleasure just from your name? Unless I see you, I cannot be a hundred percent happy.

The Resident of Dakshineswar — That *Shabda* is Brahman, the *Anahata* sound.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Kedar) — Oh, I see. His belief is like that of the rishis. The rishis said to Ramachandra, ‘Rama, we know you are the son of Dasharatha. Bharadvaja and other rishis may take you as an avatar and worship you. But we only want Akhanda Sachchidananda (Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute).’ Hearing this, Rama laughed and left.

Kedar — The rishis did not accept Rama as an avatar. They were fools.

Sri Ramakrishna (gravely) — Please don't say such things. We all have our own inclinations. Besides, what one understands is what one can digest. The mother cooks fish for her children in different ways. To some she serves *pulao* (fish with fried rice). But every stomach cannot digest *pulao*. To them she gives fish soup – whatever one can digest. And then some people prefer fried fish, and some, fish with sour sauce. (All laugh.) We all have different dispositions.

“The rishis were jnanis (men of knowledge), so they sought Akhanda Sachchidananda (Indivisible Existence Knowledge Bliss Absolute). On the other hand, devotees seek the avatar – to enjoy his love. Seeing Him, the darkness of the mind is dispelled. The *Purana* says, ‘When Ramachandra entered the Council Hall, it was as if a hundred suns were shining.’ Then why were the councilors not burnt? The answer to this is that His light is not physical light. The lotus of the heart of all the councilors opened their petals. You see, when the sun rises, the lotus opens its petals.”

Sri Ramakrishna is talking to the devotees as he stands there. Suddenly his mind is withdrawn from the external world and plunges within. “The lotus of the heart has opened up,” he says. He now goes into deep samadhi.

The lotus of Sri Ramakrishna's heart has opened in samadhi, having the vision of Bhagavan. He stands as before, but like an inanimate object. His holy face is radiant and smiling. Some of the devotees are seated, while others are standing. None utters a word. The

devotees watch him intently. They have never before seen this unique image of love, or enjoyed the sight of samadhi. After a long time, his samadhi breaks.

Taking a long breath, Sri Ramakrishna repeats the name of Rama again and again, as though nectar flows from every letter of the word. Now he sits down. The devotees sit around him and gaze at him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — When an avatar comes, an ordinary man cannot recognize him – he comes as if in secret. Three or four of his intimate devotees recognize him. Rama was a full manifestation of Brahman, he was a perfect avatar – but only twelve rishis knew this. The other rishis said, ‘Rama, we only consider you as a son of Dasharatha.’

“The Akhanda Sachchidananda^[33] cannot be known by all, but he who attains Nitya (the Absolute) and yet lives in His lila (sport) to enjoy himself with Him has ripe bhakti. Only after you have seen the queen in the foreign land (England), can you describe her, her work, and anything else about her. Bharadvaja and other rishis prayed to Rama in these words: ‘Rama, you are that very Akhanda Sachchidananda. You have manifested Yourself before us in the form of Rama. In fact, it is with the help of Your maya that You have appeared as a human being.’ Bharadvaja and other rishis were great devotees of Rama. They had ripe bhakti.”

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna in the joy of kirtan and samadhi

The devotees sit wonderstruck listening to this doctrine of the avatar. Some of them say, “What a wonder! He who is called Akhanda Sachchidananda in the *Vedas*, beyond mind and speech, that Being has manifested Himself before us as a man three and a half cubits^[34].” Since Sri Ramakrishna himself is saying this, it must be true. Were it not, this great man would not have gone into samadhi just by repeating, “Rama, Rama.” Undoubtedly, he has been seeing Rama’s form in the lotus of his heart.

Soon the devotees of Konnagar arrive, singing kirtan to the accompaniment of *khol* (Indian drum) and cymbals. Manomohan, Nabai and many others, singing the kirtan of the Name, reach Sri Ramakrishna in the northeastern verandah. Sri Ramakrishna, intoxicated with divine love, sings devotional songs with them.

At times during the kirtan, while dancing, he goes into samadhi. Then he stands like a statue. In this state, the devotees adorn him with big interwoven garlands of flowers. The devotees look on him as Gauranga himself standing before them. Sometimes, Thakur is in the inmost state of samadhi (divine consciousness) when he loses all external consciousness and appears like an inanimate statue. At other times, overcome with divine love, he dances in a semi-conscious state. When in full consciousness, like Gauranga, he joins the devotees in singing hymns.

Sri Ramakrishna stands in samadhi. He has garlands around his neck. A devotee holds him for fear he might fall. Other devotees stand

around him and sing kirtan to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. His sight is fixed, he faces westward; his beautiful moon-like face beams with divine love.

The devotees gaze at this image of joy for a long time. His samadhi ends. It is mealtime. After awhile the kirtan also ends. The devotees busy themselves in serving Sri Ramakrishna his meal.

After resting for some time, Sri Ramakrishna puts on a new yellow cloth and sits down on the smaller cot. The devotees watch him. The unique figure of this joyous saint clad in yellow cloth and wearing a radiant smile on his face attracts them wholeheartedly. Their eyes are never satiated by watching this divinely rare, holy and loving person. M. says to himself, "I continue to want to watch him and to merge myself in that sea of beauty!"

Thakur sits down to take his meal. The devotees, too, happily partake of the prasada.

Chapter V

Talk on harmony of religions with the goswami

After the meal, Sri Ramakrishna rests on the smaller cot. The room, even the outer verandah, is full of people. The devotees sit on the floor in the room, gazing at Thakur all the while. Kedar, Suresh, Ram, Manomohan, Girindra, Rakhal, Bhavanath, M. and a number of other devotees are inside the room. Rakhal's father is also in the room.

Thakur addresses a Vaishnava goswami [\[35\]](#) seated there. Whenever he sees a goswami,

Thakur bows his head in salutation. Sometimes he even prostrates himself.

**The great importance of name or love of God –
Ajamila**

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, what do you say is the way?

Goswami — Sir, *Nama* (repetition of the holy Name) indeed takes one to Him. In the age of Kali, Name is of the greatest importance.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, undoubtedly. Name is of great importance. Yet if there is no love, how can it help? Deep yearning for the Lord is essential. What will it avail me if I repeat the Name but my mind remains tied to ‘lust and greed’?

“The scorpion or spider sting is not cured just like that. One has to treat it with the smoke of cow dung cakes.”

Goswami — But what about Ajamila? Ajamila was a great sinner; there was no sin he did not commit. But he attained liberation by calling his son by his name, Narayana, at the time of his death.

Sri Ramakrishna — Perhaps Ajamila had performed many meritorious deeds in an earlier birth. And it is a fact that he practiced austerities later in his life.

“And one can say this too, that it was his last birth. What use is it to wash an elephant if it again smears its body with mud? It becomes its original self. But

before it enters its stable, if someone wipes the dust off and gives it a bath, it remains clean.

“Even if a person is purified by repeating the Name, it is possible that he may be defiled later on by committing a number of sins. Such a person has no will power. He does not promise to himself that he will not commit another sin. A bath in the Ganges makes one’s sins disappear. But then, what does it avail one if sins disappear? They say that these sins live on the trees. As soon as a person returns from his bath in the Ganges, all his old sins jump onto his shoulders from the trees. (All laugh.) The same old sins sit again on the shoulders! One takes a step or two after the bath and lo! they are there again on one’s shoulders!

“So, repeat the Name and also pray at the same time that you may develop love for the Lord. And that all transitory things, such as money, name and fame, and pleasures of the body, may have less and less attraction for you. You must pray thus.”

Vaishnavism and sectarianism – harmony of religions

Sri Ramakrishna (to the goswami) — When one develops sincere devotion to Him, one can realize the Lord by any religion. The Vaishnavas will attain Him, so will the devotees, the Vedantists and also the Brahmajnanis. And the Muslims and the Christians shall also attain Him. Everybody will attain God if they develop sincere devotion to Him. But some people pick a quarrel. They say, ‘Unless you repeat the name of Lord Krishna, you will not succeed.’ Others say, ‘If you don’t repeat the name of Mother Kali, you will achieve nothing.’ Yet

others say, 'Except through Christianity, you will reach nowhere.'

"Such intelligence is known as 'dogmatic intellect'. Thinking that only my religion is true and all others are false is not right. You can attain the Lord by many paths.

"Besides, some say that the Lord has a form, that He is not formless, and they quarrel with the others. The Vaishnavas quarrel with the Vedantists. Unless you see the Lord face to face, you cannot talk of Him correctly. He who has seen Him, knows that the Lord has forms and He is also formless. What else He is cannot be talked about.

"A number of blind men came to an elephant. Somebody told them that it was an elephant. The blind men asked, 'What is the elephant like?' and they began to touch its body. One of them said, 'It is like a pillar.' This blind man had only touched its leg. Another man said, 'The elephant is like a husking basket.' This person had only touched its ears. Similarly, he who touched its trunk or its belly talked of it differently. In the same way, he who has seen the Lord in a particular way limits the Lord to that alone and thinks that He is nothing else.

"A person, having defecated in a jungle, said when he returned, 'I have seen a beautiful red chameleon under a tree.' Another person said, 'I went before you under that tree. Why, it is not red, it is green. I saw it with my own eyes.' And another person said, 'I know it well. I went earlier than both of you. I have also seen that chameleon. It is blue.' Two other people reported that it was yellow or brown, as well as of various colours. This led to a big

quarrel. Everybody thought that what he had seen is true. Finding them quarreling, a person said, ‘What is the matter, brothers?’ When he heard their accounts, he said, ‘I live under this very tree. I know very well what this animal is like. Each one of you is right in describing it. It is a chameleon – sometimes green, at other times blue, then again other colours. And at times I find it has no colour at all – it is attributeless.’ ”

God with form and without form

(To the goswami) “It is no use just saying that the Lord has a form. It is right that He assumes a human body, as in the case of, say, Sri Krishna. He appears before the devotees in different forms. This is true. But it is also true that He is the formless Akhanda Sachchidananda^[36]. The *Vedas* say that He is both with form^[37] and formless^[38], with attributes^[39] as well as attributeless^[40].

“Do you know how it is? Sachchidananda is like an infinite ocean. When it becomes cold, ocean water freezes into ice, which floats on the surface in different shapes. In the same way, when the cold of bhakti affects the ocean of Sachchidananda, one sees God with form. For the devotee He is with form. But when the sun of jnana rises, the ice melts; it becomes water as before – water above, water below, water everywhere. That is why they pray in the *Srimad Bhagavata*, ‘Lord, You are with form, and You are also formless. We see you wandering around like a human being, though the *Vedas* say that You are beyond mind and speech.’

“So one can say that for some devotees He assumes eternal forms. There are places where the ice never melts – it assumes the form of crystal.”

Kedar — Sir, in the Srimad Bhagavata Vyasa Deva prayed for God’s forgiveness for three misgivings. At one place he says, ‘Oh Bhagavan, You are beyond mind and speech. But I am narrating Your lila (worldly play) – that is only Your aspect with form. Pray pardon me.’

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, God is with form and He is also formless. Furthermore, He is even beyond form and formlessness. There is no limit to Him.

Chapter VI

Sri Ramakrishna – ever-perfect and dispassion^[41] of youth

Rakhal’s father is seated in Sri Ramakrishna’s room. Rakhal is living with Thakur these days. Rakhal’s father has married again after the passing away of his mother. He comes here sometimes to see Rakhal. He has no great objection to Rakhal’s staying here. He is a rich worldly man, always busy with litigation and other such matters. A number of lawyers, Deputy Magistrates and the like, often come to visit Thakur. Rakhal’s father comes to talk with them at times. He consults them on many worldly matters.

Sri Ramakrishna looks at Rakhal’s father every now and then. He wants Rakhal to stay with him at Dakshineswar.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Rakhali's father and the devotees) — Oh, what a mood Rakhali is in these days! Watch him and you will see his lips move every now and then. You see, he mentally repeats the Lord's name, so his lips move.

“All these boys are of the class of the ever-perfect. They are born with the knowledge of the Lord within. They will know when they are a little older that much contact with the world brings a sure fall. In the *Vedas* there is mention of a bird called Homa which lives high in the sky. It never comes down to earth. It lays its egg in the sky and the egg begins to fall. After some days a young chick breaks out of its shell and continues the fall. It is so high that it grows wings and opens its eyes during the fall. Still falling, it sees that it is going to hit the earth. Falling on the ground means sure death. Seeing the earth fast approaching, the young bird suddenly swoops upward toward its mother. It has but one aim: to reach its mother.

“All these youngsters are like this bird. They are afraid of the world from their early years. They have only one care, ‘How to reach the Mother, how to attain the Lord.’

“You might ask, ‘How can they have such jnana and bhakti living among worldly people and born out of the semen of worldly parents?’ There is a deep meaning to this. If a gram falls on a mound of dung, it still germinates into a gram plant. How useful such a gram is! It has indeed fallen on a heap of dung. But does it mean that it will become a plant of some other type?

“Oh, what a mood Rakhali is developing these days!

But how could it be otherwise? If arum is of a good quality, its shoots are also good. (All laugh.) Like father, like son.”

M. (aside to Girindra) — He has explained God with form and God without form so well. Do the Vaishnavas believe only in God with form?

Girindra — Perhaps they do. They are one-sided.

M. — Have you been able to understand the ‘eternal form’ of God? What about the ‘crystal’? I am not able to understand it well.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Well brother, what are you talking about?

M. and Girindra smile but do not reply.

Brinde, the maidservant (to Ramlal) — I say, Ramlal, please give this man his meal. You may give me my meal later on.

Sri Ramakrishna — What! You have not given Brinde her meal?

Chapter VII

In joy of devotional songs at Panchavati

The devotees sing the kirtan in the Panchavati in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna joins them. Repeating the name of the Divine Mother with the devotees, he is filled with joy.

Song –

The kite of my mind was soaring high up in the sky of the feet of Mother Shyama.

The rough wind of 'misdeeds' made it fall, circling to the ground.

Maya's pull made it heavy and I could not raise it again.

It got entangled with the string of love for wife and children.

Alas! Its crest of jnana is rent. One may pull at it but it falls down.

It has lost its crest, so how can it fly? The six passions have overpowered it.

It was tied to the string of bhakti. While playing, it fell into illusion.

Oh Nareschandra! Rather than weep or laugh, it was better not to have come to play.

They sing another song with the accompaniment of drum and cymbals. Thakur dances with the devotees.

Song –

The bee of my mind drinks deep at the blue lotus-like feet of Mother Shyama.

At the blue lotus-like feet of Shyama, at the blue lotus-like feet of Mother Kali.

The honey of all worldly things – the flowers of lust and so on – have lost all charm.

The feet of the Mother are black-hued, so is the bee; black has mixed with black.

The five elements, turbulent and fascinating, have broken away on seeing this play.

It is only now that Kamalakanta has seen the fulfillment of his hopes.

Joys or sorrows are the same to him; the ocean of joy rolls on.

The kirtan continues. The devotees sing.

Song –

What a machine Ma Shyama has built!

(What a machine Ma Kali has made!)

In this machine three and a half cubits high,
what pranks She is playing!

Mother, You Yourself are working this
machine, holding its cord.

But the machine says: I am working by myself.
It does not know who is working it.

Whoever finds the Mother remains a machine
no more.

Yet some machines have even bound the
Mother Herself with the cord of love.

Song –

One comes to this world to throw dice. Coming
here, I had entertained so many hopes.

To hope for hope is a low state of mind. First I
got a 'five' [of the dice].

Then a 'twelve'! And 'eighteen' and 'sixteen'.
The way they come again and again, I, too,
came to the world.

O Mother! When I got the 'next twelve,' I got
entangled with the five^[42] and the six^[43].

The devotees enjoy themselves. When they

stop for awhile, Thakur rises. A number of devotees have arrived in and around Thakur's room.

Sri Ramakrishna is going south toward his room from the Panchavati. M. is with him. They meet Trailokya as they reach Bakultala. Trailokya offers his obeisance to him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Trailokya) — They are singing in the Panchavati. Why don't you go there?

Trailokya — What shall I do there?

Sri Ramakrishna — Why, it is very nice. Do see it once.

Trailokya — I have already been there once.

Sri Ramakrishna — Good, very good. Very nice.

Chapter VIII

Sri Ramakrishna and right conduct in household

It is about half past five or six. Sri Ramakrishna is seated with the devotees on the southeastern verandah. He is looking at the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Kedar and other devotees) — The sadhu who has renounced the world only repeats the name of Hari. He has no other work to do. If he meditates on the Lord, there is nothing to wonder at. If he doesn't contemplate the Lord and doesn't repeat the name of Hari, everybody will

speaking ill of him.

“But if a family man repeats the name of Hari, it is heroic. Just see: King Janaka was a great hero. He wielded a double-edged sword – one of jnana and the other of karma. On the one hand he was a perfect knower of Brahman; on the other, he engaged himself in worldly work. An unchaste wife attends to her household work with great care. But she is constantly thinking of her lover.

“The company of holy men is always essential. Holy men bring you in contact with the Lord.”

Kedar — That is true, sir! Saints come for the good of mankind. They are like the railway engine which has many compartments attached to it. It pulls them all. Or they are like a river or reservoir: they quench the thirst of many people.

The devotees gradually prepare to go home. One by one they prostrate themselves before Sri Ramakrishna and take the dust of his feet. Addressing Bhavanath, Sri Ramakrishna says, “Don’t go home today. I am greatly inspired when I see you people.”

Bhavanath has not yet entered family life. He is about nineteen or twenty, fair complexioned, and has a beautiful body. He begins to shed tears at the very mention of the Lord. Sri Ramakrishna looks on him as Narayana (the very manifestation of God).

[25] The Divine Mother, saviour of mankind from the bonds of the world

- [26] A wooden wind instrument
- [27] Matin; morning song
- [28] Seeing, experiencing; paying respect to a holy place or person by a ceremonial visit; also the blessing or purification felt in the presence of holiness.
- [29] An appellation of Lord Shiva
- [30] Highest class among saints who have attained final knowledge and sanctity
- [31] The sound of Om
- [32] Unstruck sound of Om
- [33] Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute
- [34] Unit of length based on the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger and usually equal to about 18 inches
- [35] A Vaishnava guru or preceptor
- [36] Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute
- [37] *Sakara*
- [38] *Nirakara*
- [39] *Saguna*
- [40] *Nirguna*
- [41] Vairagya; nonattachment
- [42] Five elements collectively, namely: earth, water, fire, air and space
- [43] Six passions

Section III

Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Temple with Devotees – Second Visit of Adhar

Chapter I

Manilal and visit to Kashi

Come! Let's go once again to the Dakshineswar temple to see Sri Ramakrishna. Let us observe how he enjoys himself in the company of devotees, how he is ever absorbed in samadhi thinking of the Lord. Let us see him now in samadhi, now intoxicated with the joy of devotional songs, and now talking to the devotees. He always has the name of the Lord on his holy lips. His mind is ever indrawn, his conduct is like a five-year-old child. He utters the name of the Divine Mother with every breath. His conduct is absolutely like that of an ego-less five-year-old child. A child of five is unattached to sense objects; he is always happy, guileless and magnanimous. Sri Ramakrishna's one word is that God is the reality and all else is unreal, a matter of two days. Let us go and see that child intoxicated with divine love. The great yogi that he is! He roams all alone on the shore of the infinite ocean. One can't tell what he sees in this infinite ocean of Sachchidananda. Lo! Having witnessed it, he is roaming about mad with

love.

It is Sunday, the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra. Yesterday, Saturday, was the new moon when Sri Ramakrishna went to Balaram's house. In the deep dark night of the new moon, Mahakali plays alone with Mahakala^[44]. For this reason Thakur does not remain still long on the new moon. And it is why he is in the state of a child who is with his mother night and day and who cannot live without her.

It is Sunday morning, 8 April, 1883, twenty-sixth day of Chaitra. Thakur is seated like a child. Rakhal, a young devotee, is seated close by.

M. comes and prostrates himself before Thakur. Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, Ramlal, Kishori and many other devotees are gathered here. The elderly Brahmo devotee, Manilal Mallick, enters and offers his salutations to Sri Ramakrishna.

Mani Mallick has been on pilgrimage to Kashi. He is a trader and has an office in Kashi.

Sri Ramakrishna — So you have been to Kashi. Did you meet any sadhus there?

Manilal — Yes sir, I went to see Trailanga Swami, Bhaskarananda, and some others.

Sri Ramakrishna — Please tell me how you found them.

Manilal — Trailanga Swami is still in the same temple on Manikarnika Ghat with Benimadhav.

People say that he was in a high spiritual state before. He could work any number of miracles. Now they are far fewer.

Sri Ramakrishna — This is fault finding by worldly people.

Manilal — Bhaskarananda meets everybody. He is not like Trailanga Swami who doesn't say a word.

The spiritually perfect believe that 'God is the doer' – others believe in vice and virtue, in 'free will'

Sri Ramakrishna — Did you have any conversation with Bhaskarananda?

Manilal — Yes sir, we talked for a long time. Among other things we discussed vice and virtue. He said: Don't tread the path of sin. Don't even think of evil. This is what the Lord requires of you. Perform only actions which bring you merit.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, that is true as far as worldly people are concerned. But it is different for those who are illumined, who have realized that the Lord is the only reality and all else is unreal and ephemeral. They know that the Lord alone does everything and that we are all non-doers. They who are illumined never take a wrong step, they don't have to calculate before eschewing sin. They have so much love for the Lord that all their actions are exemplary. But they know that they are not the doers of their actions, they know that they are only the servants of the Lord – that they are only the machines while the Lord is the operator of the

machine. They know that what they are doing is by His will, that what they speak is what He makes them speak, that they move the way He makes them move.

“They who are illumined have gone beyond vice and virtue. They see that the Lord is indeed doing everything. There was a monastery whose sadhus used to go out every day to beg holy food. One day one of the sadhus saw that a landlord was badly thrashing a man. The sadhu was very compassionate. He intervened to stop the landlord from beating the man. The landlord was in a rage. All his anger fell on the body of the sadhu – he thrashed him so badly that the sadhu fell unconscious. Somebody went to the monastery to say that one of their sadhus had been harshly beaten by the landlord. The sadhus of the monastery came and saw him lying unconscious. All five of them lifted him, carried him to the monastery and laid him down. They sat around the unconscious sadhu downcast. Some of them fanned him. One of them said, ‘Pour a little milk in his mouth.’ As they did so, the sadhu regained consciousness and opened his eyes. A brother of the monastery said, ‘Let me see whether he has regained consciousness, whether he can recognize us.’ He spoke loudly to the sadhu, asking him, ‘Maharaj! Who is making you drink the milk?’ The sadhu said slowly, ‘Brother, he who beat me is indeed giving me milk to drink.’

“Till one has realized the Lord, one cannot attain such a state.”

Manilal — Sir, what you are saying is a lofty idea. I had such conversations with Bhaskarananda – on

various topics.

Sri Ramakrishna — In whose house is he staying?

Manilal — In some householder's residence.

Sri Ramakrishna — How old is he?

Manilal — He should be 55.

Sri Ramakrishna — And did you talk of anything else?

Manilal — I asked him how one could cultivate devotion and love for God^[45]. He said, 'Repeat the Name. Say Rama, Rama.'

Sri Ramakrishna — That is very good.

Chapter II

Family life and renunciation of work

The worship of the Mother of the Universe, Radhakanta, and the twelve Shivas in the temples has ended. The sounds of music and bell-ringing related to the arati and food offering is heard. It is the month of Chaitra. It is midday. The sun is shining brightly. Only a short while ago, flood tide started and the wind began to blow from the south. The holy Bhagirathi (the Ganges) began to flow northward a short time ago. Thakur is resting in his room after eating.

Rakhal's native village is near Basirhat. In

summer there is a great scarcity of water in his region.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani Mallick) — Look, Rakhal was telling me that there is a great scarcity of water in his region. Why don't you get a reservoir dug there? It will benefit so many. (Smiling) You have so much money. What will you do with it? It is said that dealers of oil are very calculating. (Thakur and the devotees laugh.)

Manilal Mallick's home is in the Sinduriapatti region of Calcutta. The Sinduriapatti Brahmo Samaj holds its sessions there. He invites numerous people during the annual festival of the Brahmo Samaj. He invites Sri Ramakrishna with them. Manilal also has a garden house in Baranagore. He often stays there alone and occasionally goes to see Thakur. Manilal is certainly a man of calculation! He seldom hires a carriage to go to Baranagore directly. Instead, he first goes to Sobhabazar by tram. From there, he hires a seat in the carriage for Baranagore. And yet he has no shortage of money. Many years later, after this, he donated twenty-five thousand rupees to support poor students.

Manilal keeps quiet, but after some time, having talked about various other matters, he refers to the prior conversation: "Sir, you were talking about a reservoir. That is all right. But why talk about dealers of oil?"

Some of the devotees try to suppress their laughter. Thakur also smiles.

Chapter III

**Sri Ramakrishna and Brahma devotees in
Dakshineswar – the essence of *prema* (ecstatic love)**

In a little while a number of elderly Brahma devotees arrive from Calcutta. One of them is Thakurdas Sen. There is a big gathering of devotees in the room. Thakur is seated on the smaller cot. Facing north, with a smile on his face, he sits like a child, conversing happily with the Brahma devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Brahma devotees and others) — You people talk so much of *prema*. But is it such an ordinary thing? Chaitanya Deva was in the state of ecstatic love. There are two characteristics of ecstatic love. One is to forget the world, to become unaware of everything external in the love of God. Chaitanya Deva would think that it was Vrindavan when he was in any forest and it was the Jamuna river at the sight of the sea.

“The second characteristic is to have no attachment to the body one holds so dear. The conviction of the body as the self fully disappears.

“You cannot have *prema* till you have seen the Lord.

“There are some marks of God-realization. When the splendour of love manifests within, God-realization is not far away.

“What does the splendour of love mean? Discrimination, dispassion, compassion, service to the holy, company of the holy, chanting the name and glories of the Lord, truthfulness – all these.

“When one comes across these signs of love, one

can know that the vision of God is not far away. By looking at the condition of the servant's house, one can easily determine if a rich man has decided to visit it. First of all, all weeds are cleared, cobwebs are removed, and the floor of the house is cleaned. The rich man himself sends a cotton carpet, a hubble-bubble and other such things. Seeing all these things being carried to the house, everyone surmises that the visit of a gentleman is not far away."

A Devotee — Sir, does one have to reason before being able to control the senses?

Sri Ramakrishna — That is a path – the path of discrimination. If you take to the path of devotion^[46], the inner senses get controlled automatically. And it is easier. The more you develop love for the Lord, the less you care for the pleasures of the senses.

“When they lose their child, can the grief-stricken parents think of their bodily pleasures?

A Devotee — I cannot imagine loving God.

**Great importance of God's name – the way – the
Divine Mother's name**

Sri Ramakrishna — By repeating His name you rid yourself of all your sins. Lust, anger, desire for creature comforts and the rest all disappear.

A Devotee — But who likes to repeat His name?

Sri Ramakrishna — Pray to God with a longing heart that you may develop a taste for His name. He always fulfills one's wishes ...

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna begins to sing in a sweet voice. Overwhelmed by the sorrows of man, he expresses to the Divine Mother the pangs he feels in his heart. Bringing upon himself the state of an ordinary human being, he talks to the Divine Mother of suffering of humanity.

Song –

O Mother Shyama, it is not anybody's fault. I myself am drowning in the well I have dug.

The six passions – lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy – are the spade by which I have dug a well in sacred land.

This well is now full of the waters of Kala (Death).

O the heartthrob of Death! O the Beloved of Death!

O my Redeemer! How can I save myself?

O the embodiment of the three gunas, You can rid me of these modes through Your powers.

How can I save myself from these waters of Death? Thinking of it, I shed an unceasing flow of tears.

Before, the level of the water of Death was not so high, but now it rises to my chest. How can I save myself?

O my Mother! You are my only refuge. Mother, liberate me. You can take me across by a single glance of Yours.

And then he sings of the delirious fever of mankind, which can be cured only by one's love for Her name.

Song –

O Mother Shankari^[47], O great physician, what delirious fever I suffer, in spite of the grace of Thy feet.

This perishable transitory pride of mine is consuming me in its flames. What depraved attachment I have developed for 'me and mine'!

How can I sustain my life – my desire for wealth and friends is ceaseless?

O the bestower of all goodness! I continue to indulge in things illusory, in wrong doings, in committing sinful acts and so on.

Says Dasharathi: My eyes are full of the deep sleep of maya,

And my stomach filled with the worm of violence. I am revolving as in a whirlpool of illusory action.

I am developing night and day distaste for Your name. Alas! will I be cured of this malady?

Sri Ramakrishna — 'Developing distaste for Your name.' If in disease you develop distaste, you have no possibility of being saved. If you retain a bit of taste, there is good hope for cure. Therefore, they talk of taste for the Name. The Lord's name must be repeated. Call the Lord by any name: Durga, Krishna, Shiva or any other. If, while repeating the Name, your love increases day by day, if you feel joy, then there is no danger. You are sure to be cured. His grace is sure to fall on you.

Sincere bhakti versus artificial bhakti – God cares only for the mind

“As the state of your mind, so is your gain. Two friends walking together saw the Bhagavata being recited at a place on the way. One of them said, ‘Come, friend, let’s go and listen to the recitation of the Bhagavata.’ His friend looked in, but shortly left for the red light area. He soon felt disgusted with himself and thought, ‘Shame on me! While my friend is listening to the story of Lord Hari, look where I have brought myself!’ On the other hand, the fellow who was listening to the Bhagavata was also feeling regret. He said to himself, ‘What a fool I am! This fellow is talking nonsense and I sit here listening to it! How my friend must be enjoying himself!’ Now, when both these men died, he who was listening to the Bhagavata was taken away by a messenger of death and he who had gone to a prostitute was taken to Vaikuntha (Vishnu’s abode, heaven) by a messenger of Vishnu.

“Bhagavan sees the mind. He doesn’t care who is doing what or where one is. ‘Janardhana^[48] knows the innermost thought.’

“While initiating a disciple in the Kartabhaja sect, they tell him, ‘Now it is your mind.’ That is to say, now it all depends on your mind.

“They say that he who has the right kind of mind acts correctly and achieves the right end.

“Because of the powers of his mind, Hanuman could cross the ocean. ‘I am a servant of Rama, I repeat His name, what is impossible for me?’ He

had this faith.”

Why can't one see the Lord? Because of one's egoism

“As long as one retains one's I-ness, one is ignorant. As long as egoism persists, there is no liberation.

“Cows bellow, ‘*Hamba, hamba*’ and goats bleat, ‘*Mein, mein.*’ For this reason, they have to suffer a lot. The butcher slaughters them and makes shoes, drums and hides out of their skin. There is no end to their suffering. In the Hindi language, *hum* and *mein* both mean ‘I’. The uttering of *mein, mein* (I, I) leads to more and more suffering. At last, the butcher makes strings with the guts of these animals. When the carder uses the string in his bow, it produces the sound of *tuhun, tuhun*. That is to say, ‘You, you.’ It is only when one says, ‘You, You,’ that one is saved and there is no more suffering.

“Oh Lord, you are the Doer and I, a non-doer. This is what constitutes jnana (spiritual wisdom).

“It is only when you become lowly that you can rise. The chatak bird has its nest near the ground, but it can soar at high altitudes. Farming is not possible at high elevations. You need low land to farm. Water only collects on low land; only there is cultivation possible.”

**Company of sadhus essential for the householders –
who is truly poor?**

“One should take a little trouble to seek the company of the holy. At home one only talks of worldly matters. There is always one ailment or the

other. The parrot says, ‘Rama, Rama,’ only when it settles on a perch. While flying through the jungle, it only squawks.

“Money does not make a man great. A sign of a wealthy man is light in every room. The poor do not have money to spend on oil, so they can’t have that many lights. You see, one must not keep this temple of the body in darkness: one must light the lamp of jnana (knowledge) within.

“Light the lamp of jnana in the house and see the face of the Mother Brahmamayī^[49].”

Real meaning of prayer – marks of spiritual awakening

“Everyone can attain jnana. There is the individual self and the Supreme Being. One must pray to God. Everyone can be united with the Supreme Self. Every house is fitted with gas pipes, but one must apply to the gas company to receive the gas. When you file an application, the company will arrange for the gas and your house will be lit. The company has its office in Sealdah. (All laugh.)

“Some people may become illumined. They have a special mark: they don’t like to hear anything but words about the Lord. They don’t like to talk of anything but of the Lord. Take, for example, the seven seas, the rivers of the Ganges and the Jamuna – they are all full of water. But the chatak bird wants only the raindrop. It is dying of thirst, but it does not drink any other water.”

Sri Ramakrishna and others sing – Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi

Sri Ramakrishna asks somebody to sing.

Ramlal and a brahmin brahmachari^[50] of the Kali Temple sing in accompaniment with a *banya*^[51].

Song –

O Kamalapati^[52], the lover of bhakti, if you dwell in the Vrindavan of my heart, my devotion to you will be like that of chaste Radha.

My wish for liberation will be like the milkmaids, and my body will be like the village of Nanda; my love will be like that of mother Yashoda.

Hold me, hold me, O Janardhana^[53]. Lift the mount Govardhan of the weight of my sins^[54]. Kill quickly the six messengers of Kamsa, lust and so on.

Play on your flute of grace and tame the cows of my mind. I pray that You remain in this pasture of my heart and that I may have the glimpse of my ideal.

Dwell now and evermore with your heart full of affection for your servant under the Vanshivatta^[55] of hope.

If you say that you are a prisoner of the love of the cowherds of Braja, then this Dasharathi, bereft of all spiritual knowledge, will become a cowherd and your slave.

Song –

What value has the new cloud in comparison to the moon-like face of beloved Shyam (Krishna)?

With a flute in His hands and a smile on His lips, He lights the world with His loveliness.

Clad in yellow robes, He outshines lightning. A wreath of wild flowers swings from His lotus-like breast to His feet.

In the company of youthful maidens, He lights up the bank of the Jamuna. Outshining numberless moons is this moon of the lineage of Nanda.

O friend! With the music of his flute, He, the epitome of all excellence, has stolen my heart, my mind and my wisdom.

Says Ganga Narayana, ‘To whom shall I tell my sorrow? O friend, if you were to fetch water from the bank of the Jamuna, you would know it.’

Song –

The kite of my mind was soaring high up in the sky of the feet of Mother Shyama.

The rough wind of ‘misdeeds’ made it fall, circling to the ground.[\[56\]](#)

Way to God-realization – love, gopi-like love – ‘tiger of love’

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Just as the tiger devours other animals, similarly, the ‘tiger of love’ swallows lust, anger and such other enemies. Once you develop love of the Lord, lust, anger and the rest disappear. The gopis (milkmaids) had

developed such love for Krishna.

“Moreover, there is the ‘collyrium of love’. Radha says, ‘Friend, I see Krishna filling all the four directions.’ Her friend says, ‘Dear one, you have applied the ‘collyrium of love’ to your eyes. That is why you see it so.’ It is said that if you use a collyrium made with the burnt head of a frog, you see snakes everywhere.

“They who live only with ‘lust and greed’ – who don’t think of God even once – are bound souls. What great work can they perform? They are like mangoes pecked by crows. Such mangoes cannot be offered to the gods. Eating them yourself is also risky.

“Bound souls, worldly people, are like silkworms. They could come out of their cocoons if they wished, but they have built their own homes and maya does not allow them to escape. And it all ends with death.

“Liberated souls are not under the control of ‘lust and greed’. Some clever silkworms cut their cocoons and come out. But they are very few.

“Because of maya (attachment), one remains forgetful. Few attain spiritual awakening, few are not deluded by the magic of maya, are not subject to the control of ‘lust and greed.’ When the pot^[57] containing ashes from the maternity room falls on one’s feet, the ‘damn, damn’ word of the magician can do no harm. One can see exactly what the magician is doing.

“There are two classes of perfect souls: one is *sadhanasiddha* (perfected by spiritual disciplines)

and the other *kripasiddha* (perfected by the grace of God). Some people go to great trouble to bring water to their fields for a good harvest. Others don't have to struggle at all; rainwater fills their fields. One has to practice sadhana rigorously to save oneself from maya. He who is a *kripasiddha* doesn't have to struggle. But there are only one or two such people.

“And then there are the *nityasiddhas* (ever-perfect ones). They are already spiritually awakened in every life. Take the example of a plugged fountain. The plumber, while doing something else, accidentally removes the obstruction and lo! water gushes forth from the fountain. When they see the love for God in an ever-perfect person express itself for the first time, people are amazed. They wonder where such bhakti, such nonattachment^[58] and such intense love came from.”

Thakur is talking of the love for God – the love of the gopis for Krishna. In the meanwhile, some music begins to play. Ramlal sings.

Song –

O Lord, Thou art my all, the support of my life,
the Essence of essences.

I have none but Thee as my own in the three
worlds.

Thou art my joy, peace, support, refuge,
treasure, wealth, knowledge, intelligence and
strength.

Thou art my home, my rest, my relaxation,
friend and family.

Thou art my present, my salvation, my future

and my heaven.

Thou art my scripture and injunctions too, Thou
my wish-yielding guru, the fountainhead of my
never-ending bliss.

Thou art the means, the end. Thou art the
creator, the sustainer and the adorable one.

Thou art the chastising father, the tender-
hearted mother, the pilot who steers me across
the sea of life.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Oh, what a
beautiful song! ‘Thou art my all in all.’ The
milkmaids said to Radha when Akrur came [to
fetch Sri Krishna], ‘Oh Radha, He has come to steal
your entire wealth!’ Such love! Such longing they
had for Bhagavan!

And then another song –

Does the chariot of Him who wields the
sudershan chakra^[59] and who moves the
world around and around with His wheel of
Power need any wheels? O milkmaids! Don’t
hold the wheels of the chariot back.

(These lines refer to an incident when the
milkmaids held back the wheels of Sri
Krishna’s chariot from moving when he was to
go to Mathura with Akrur from Vrindavan).

Song –

O dear *sakhi*^[60], for whom are you now
making this garland with so much care and
love?

While listening to the song, Sri Ramakrishna

dives deep in the sea of samadhi. The devotees gaze upon him amazed. It is quiet. No movement is made. Thakur is merged in samadhi. He sits there with folded hands, as he is seen in the photograph. Tears of joy trickle down the outer corners of his eyes.

Conversation with the Lord – Sri Ramakrishna’s vision – Krishna pervading everywhere

Thakur returns to the normal state of consciousness after quite some time. But what was he talking about with Him whom he has seen in samadhi? Some words reach the ears of the devotees. Thakur speaks indistinctly to himself, “You are I, I am You. You eat, I eat You... Beautiful indeed: You do it all.”

“Are my eyes jaundiced? I see You everywhere.

“O Krishna! Friend of the lowly and beloved of my soul. Govinda!”

Saying, “Beloved of my soul,” and “Govinda,” he again enters samadhi. Absolutely still and unable to take their eyes off him, the devotees see Sri Ramakrishna in a deep ecstatic state.

Chapter V

Sri Ramakrishna filled with God-consciousness – word of God issuing from his lips

Second visit of Adhar Sen – Sri Ramakrishna instructs a householder

Sri Ramakrishna is in samadhi and is seated on the smaller cot. The devotees sit around him.

Adhar Sen has arrived, accompanied by several friends. He is a Deputy Magistrate. It is his second visit to Thakur. Adhar is twenty-nine or thirty years old. Saradacharan, a friend of Adhar, is grieving the loss of his son. Saradacharan was a Deputy Inspector of Schools. He is now retired and receives a pension. He had been practicing meditation and prayer even before his retirement. Nothing consoles him after the death of his elder son. That is why Adhar, having mentioned Thakur's name to him, has brought him here. Adhar had also been wanting to see Thakur again.

Sri Ramakrishna's samadhi ends. He sees the roomful of devotees looking at him and then mumbles something to himself.

Is the Lord talking and instructing from his lips?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is seldom that worldly people show spiritual wisdom – only occasionally, like the flame of a lamp. No, no, it is like the ray of the sun when it peeps through a chink in the wall. It is only possible for worldly people to repeat the Lord's name – not to feel His love. It is like a child saying, 'I swear by God.' He has learnt these words from his quarreling aunts.

“Worldly people have no grit. It does not matter to them whether they succeed or not. If they dig a well for water but strike a rock, they stop digging and look for another spot. If they find sand in the next spot, they give that spot up too. If they had continued to dig at the original spot, they would have found water there.

“A human being reaps what he sows; as the song

goes.”

Song –

Nobody is to be blamed, Mother. I am
drowning in the water of the well I have dug.

“ ‘I’ and ‘mine’ constitute ignorance. If you think about it deeply, you will find that what you call ‘I’ is none other than the Atman. Think about it. Are you the body? Are you bones, or flesh, or something else? You will conclude that you are none of these. You don’t have a distinguishing individuality. Moreover, you do nothing. You have neither good qualities nor defects, neither merit nor sin.

“To say that this is gold and that is brass is ignorance. That all is gold is jnana.”

Signs of God-realization – is Sri Ramakrishna an Incarnation of God?

“All reasoning stops after God-realization. Yet, some people do reason even after they have realized God. And some people chant God’s name and glories out of love for Him.

“How long does a child cry? Till he is put to the mother’s breast. Thereafter, he stops crying and he is full of joy. He takes his mother’s milk so joyfully! Yet, he may also play and smile while he sucks.

“God has become all the forms there are. Even so, He manifests most in the human being. He is especially present in the person who has the nature

of a purely *sattvic*^[61] child – who laughs, cries, dances and sings innocently.”

Loss of a son – ‘O *jiva*, get ready for the battle’

Thakur inquires about Adhar’s well being.
Adhar tells him that his friend has lost his son.
Thakur begins to sing a song.

O *jiva*! Get ready for the battle!

Death has entered your house in battle array.

Mounting the chariot of bhakti, bearing the
quiver of jnana,

Bending the bow of your tongue with the
bowstring of love,

Aim the Brahmastra^[62] that is the name of the
Mother of Universe.

Here is a strategy for the battle: you need no
chariot or charioteer.

Fight your foe from the bank of the Ganges; he
will easily be slain.

“What to do? Be ready for death. Death has entered your house. You have to battle it with the weapon of God’s name. He is the Doer. I say, ‘Mother, I act as You make me act; I speak what You make me speak. I am an instrument, You are the Being who uses the instrument. I am the dwelling, You are the indweller; I am the carriage, You the driver.’

“Give Him the general power of attorney. If you give the responsibility to a good man, you never suffer any harm. Let His will be done.

“I say, brother, shouldn’t you be sorrow-stricken?

He was your son! When Ravana was killed in battle, Lakshmana ran to him and saw that there was no spot among his bones where there was not a hole. Then he said to Rama, ‘Rama, how powerful are your arrows! There is no spot on Ravana’s body without a hole.’ Rama replied, ‘Brother, the holes that you see in his bones are not made by arrows. It is due to grief for his sons. That grief has pierced all his bones. All the holes are marks of it – his grief has done this to him.’

“You see, all this is transitory – home, family and children are all for two days. Only the palm tree is real. One or two fruits have dropped from the tree. Why sorrow for them?

“God does three things: He creates, He preserves, and He dissolves. Death is inevitable. At the time of universal dissolution, everything will be destroyed, nothing will survive. But the Divine Mother will preserve some seeds of creation. She will take them out again at the time of the new creation. It is just like the mistress of the house with her hotchpotch pot. (All laugh.) In it She preserves cucumber seeds, sea-foam and indigo pills in small bags.”

Chapter VI

Instruction to Adhar – death stands facing you

Thakur talks to Adhar while standing on the verandah to the north of his room.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Adhar) — You are a Deputy [Magistrate]. You have this position by the Lord’s grace. Don’t forget Him. But know that everybody

has to tread the same path. You are here only for a few days^[63].

”The world is your place of work. You have come here to work. It is just as one comes from one’s country home and works in Calcutta.

“Some work is necessary – you must practice some spiritual disciplines. You must finish your work quickly. The goldsmith, while melting gold, uses bellows, blow pipes and a fan to blow air so that fire may give more heat and the gold may melt. When the gold melts, he asks for a smoke. He has worked hard for a long time; he will now smoke his pipe. You have to have grit, a firm resolve. Only then can you practice spiritual disciplines.

“The mystic seed of His name is very powerful. It dispels ignorance. A seed is so soft, and so is its sprout. Yet it breaks the earth and germinates.

“When you live amid ‘lust and gold,’ your mind is forcefully pulled to them. So you must be cautious. But he who has renounced the world need not fear much. The genuine renouncer keeps a proper distance from ‘lust and gold’. That is how he can fix his mind on the Lord while practicing spiritual disciplines.

“Who is a real renouncer? He who can keep his mind fixed on the Lord. Like the bee which only takes honey from flowers. But he who is in the household, living amid ‘lust and gold,’ can sometimes fix his mind on the Lord, and at other times it goes to ‘lust and gold’. He is like the ordinary housefly who sits on sweets one moment and on a sore or excreta another.

“You must always fix the mind on the Lord. Initially, you have to make some effort. Later you enjoy a pension.”

[44] Shiva, the Absolute

[45] Bhakti

[46] Bhakti

[47] An appellation of Goddess Durga

[48] An appellation of Lord Vishnu, the vanquisher of demon Jana

[49] All Blissful Mother of the Universe

[50] An unmarried and celibate student practicing spiritual discipline

[51] A semi-circular instrument played along with the tabla (drum)

[52] The husband of Kamala (Goddess Lakshmi).

[53] An appellation of Lord Vishnu; the vanquisher of demon Jana.

[54] Krishna had lifted the mount Govardhan on his finger. So lifting the weight of sins means to mitigate the effects of sins.

[55] A banyan tree at Vrindavan under which Krishna played his flute.

[56] This song was sung earlier too. See Section II, Chapter VII of this volume.

[57] In India, normally a pot containing ashes of cow dung and other substances are kept in maternity room to ward off evil spirits

[58] Vairagya

[59] A wheel shaped weapon of Lord Vishnu

[60] Milkmaid friend of Radha

[61] Possessing the quality of sattva

[62] Weapon of Brahma (Lord the Creator)

[63] Adhar Sen passed away after a year and a half.

Getting the news, Thakur cried for a long time before the Divine Mother. Adhar was a great devotee. Thakur had said to him, “You are my own.” Adhar’s house was in Benetola, Sobhabazar, Calcutta. Several of his daughters are still alive. His brothers, Shyam Lal and Hira Lal, and other members of his family still live there in his Calcutta house. The drawing room of the house and the worship hall have become places of pilgrimage.

Section IV

Sri Ramakrishna in Worship Hall of Surendra's House

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna celebrates worship of Mother Annapurna with the devotees at Surendra's house

It is 6.00 p.m. Sri Ramakrishna has graced the assembly of the devotees with his presence in the courtyard of Surendra's house.

One climbs east from the courtyard to reach the worship hall. There a beautiful image of the Mother has been installed. Around Her neck is a garland of flowers, and hibiscus and vilwa leaves have been offered at Her feet. The Mother's image illumines the worship hall.

Today the worship of Mother Annapurna^[64] is to be celebrated. It is Sunday, 15 April, 1883, the eighth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Chaitra (the third of Vaishakh 1290 B.Y.) Surendra has invoked the Mother, so he has invited Sri Ramakrishna.

Accompanied by devotees, he arrives at the worship hall and pays his respect to the deity. He stands there, gazing at the Mother, telling the *mula mantra*^[65] on his fingers. The devotees also pay their obeisance and have darshan of the deity. They stand close to the Lord (Sri Ramakrishna).

Thakur now comes down to the courtyard with the devotees. It is covered with cotton carpets,

over which are laid white linen sheets and bolsters. On one side a number of Vaishnava devotees are seated with their drums and cymbals, prepared to sing devotional songs. The devotees sit around Thakur.

Thakur is invited to lean against a bolster, but he does not do so. Instead, he pushes the bolster a little away before sitting down.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — To lean against a bolster! Do you know how difficult it is to give up vanity? You may think you are not prey to vanity, but it enters in no time from somewhere.

“Even when the goat’s head is severed, its limbs continue to shake. Suppose you have a fearful dream. After you wake up, even quite wide-awake, you still have palpitations of the heart. Vanity is just like this. Even if you forcibly push it away, it returns. Guests often put on long faces and complain, ‘Oh, we have not been treated hospitably.’ ”

Kedar — ‘Be humbler than a blade of grass, be patient and forbearing like a tree.’

Sri Ramakrishna — I am the dust of the dust of the feet of the devotees.

Vaidyanath arrives. He is well educated and an advocate in the High Court of Calcutta. He salutes Thakur, folding his hands, and takes a seat on one side.

Surendra (to Sri Ramakrishna) — He is related to me.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, I see. He has a very agreeable nature.

Surendra — He has come to ask you something.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vaidyanath) — Whatever you see is all His power. Without His power, nobody can do anything. Yet God's power is not equally manifest everywhere. Vidyasagar asked me, 'Has God given more power to some?' I replied, 'If there was not unequal power, why should we have come to see you? Have you grown two horns?' Yet this is certain: God is present in all as the all-pervading power^[66] – but there is a special manifestation of His power in some.

Free will or God's will

Vaidyanath — Sir, I have a doubt about what they call free will. Sometimes I wonder if it is true that I can do a good act as well as a bad one. Do we really have free will?

Sri Ramakrishna — Everything is under the Lord's control – it is all His *lila* (divine sport). He has created a variety of things: small, big, powerful, weak, good and bad. Whether a man is good or bad is all His maya, His sport. Don't you see that all the trees in the garden are not alike?

“Till one has realized God, one entertains the feeling that one is free to act. This illusion is also created by Him. If man did not feel that he had free will, there would be much more sin. If sin entailed

no punishment, one would have no fear of it.

“Do you know how one feels when one has realized the Lord? It is like this: I am a machine, You are the operator; I am the home, You are the mistress of the home. I am a chariot and You are the charioteer. I move the way You make me move. I speak the way You make me speak.”

Is it possible to realize the Lord in a day? Company of the holy is essential

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vaidyanath) — It is not right to argue. What do you think?

Vaidyanath — Yes sir, the inclination to argue disappears only when one attains jnana.

Sri Ramakrishna — Thank you! (Since Thakur says it in English, they all laugh.) You will succeed. When a person talks of the Lord, people don't believe him. If some spiritually advanced person says that he has seen the Lord, even then ordinary people don't believe him. They say, 'If he has seen the Lord, he should show us too.' But can one learn the science of examining the pulse in one day? One must accompany an Ayurvedic physician for a long time. Only then can he distinguish between the various humors of *kapha*, *vayu* and *pitta*^[67]. One must keep the company of him who practices the art of examining the pulse. (All laugh.)

“Can everybody tell the grade of yarn – what particular grade it is? You have to be a dealer in yarn. Or you have to work for some days with a dealer of yarn before you can tell whether the grade

of the yarn is forty or forty-one.”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna enjoys kirtan with devotees – he passes into samadhi

They are now going to start the kirtan. Drums are playing, Goshtha being one of the drummers. Singing has not yet begun, but the soft sound of the drum brings to mind Gauranga’s group of devotees singing the name of the Lord. Sri Ramakrishna is becoming absorbed in ecstasy. Every now and then he glances at the drummer and exclaims, “Ah! Ah! What joy! My hair stands on end!”

The singers ask which song should they sing. Sri Ramakrishna asks humbly, “Please sing something about Gauranga.”

The kirtan begins. First they sing about the celestial beauty of Gauranga. It is followed by another song.

Song –

The beauty of Gauranga’s face, filled with divine love, is brighter than the brightest gold.

His smile, which illumines the whole world, surpasses even the charm of a million moons shining in the autumn sky.

The kirtan sings of the beauty of Gauranga.

The musicians add lines –

Friend, did you see the full moon?

It does not wane, it does not stain.

It illumines the devotee’s heart.

The musician then sings: “His face is bathed in the nectar of a million moons.” Hearing this line Thakur passes into samadhi.

The song goes on. After awhile Thakur regains outer consciousness. He suddenly stands up. Full of emotion and intoxicated with divine love like the *gopis* (milkmaids) of Vrindavan, he describes Krishna’s beauty and joins the musician:

Friend, is it his beauty or because of some fault of my own?

In the three worlds, I see nothing but Krishna!

Thakur sings as he dances. The devotees watch him in amazement. The singer then sings: The *gopi* is speaking –

O flute, please stop. Can’t you go to sleep?

He sings further –

How can it sleep?

It is lying on such a delicate and beautiful twig.

It is drinking the nectar from the Lord’s lips and is being played with His fingers.

Sri Ramakrishna now takes his seat. The musician sings: Radha says, “Eyes gone, ears gone, nose gone; all my senses have departed! Oh, why have I been left alone?”

The last song is about the meeting of Radha and Krishna.

Radha is making a garland of flowers to place around the neck of Shyam.

While she is doing so, she sees Shyam, the treasure of all good qualities.

Song – Radha meets Sri Krishna

The lovelorn Radha lies in the Nidhu grove of Vrindavan absorbed in the thoughts of Krishna.

No simile can describe the beauty of these two lovers, nor is there any limit to their love.

The one half shines like bright gold, the other half like blue sapphire.

A garland of wildflowers dangles from one side of the neck and from the other swing precious pearls.

A *makar kundal* (an ornamented earring) adorns half the ear; on the other half is a *rattan chabhi* (an ornament).

On one half of the forehead is the glow of the moon and on the other half that of the sun.

On half of the forehead waves the peacock feather and on the other half a braid.

And gleams there the golden lotus, too, and the serpent ready to disgorge a jewel.

The kirtan ends. Thakur utters the mantra, “Bhagavata-Bhakta-Bhagavan (the Lord, the devotee and His Word are one).” He prostrates himself again and again. He bows to the devotees all around him. Next he takes the dust of the ground where the kirtan was sung.

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna and God with form and without form

It is about 9:30 in the evening. Mother Annapurna's presence has illuminated the worship hall. Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees stand in front of Her. Surendra, Rakhal, Kedar, M., Ram, Manomohan and other devotees are present. They have all taken prasada with Thakur. Surendra fed them to their heart's content. Now Sri Ramakrishna is to return to Dakshineswar. The devotees also must go home. They have all gathered in the worship hall.

Surendra (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Today we have not repeated the Mother's name even once.

Sri Ramakrishna (pointing at the deity) — Ah, how beautiful the hall looks, as if the Mother Herself has illumined it! How much joy is there in having Her darshan in this manner! All sensuous desires, all sorrows, flee. Can one have the vision of the Formless God as well? Surely one can. But it is not possible if you have the least worldliness. The rishis meditated on the Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute after giving up everything worldly.

“The Brahmajnanis^[68] sing about Him as the unchanging and unmoving entity. I don't like it. One who sings like this apparently does not enjoy God's sweetness. When you are deluded by treacle, you don't think of syrup made with sugar candy.

“Just see, how you people are having visions with your physical eyes and enjoying the sight. They who talk of the Formless One get nothing – neither within nor without.”

Sri Ramakrishna now sings the Mother's name.

Song –

O Mother, ever blissful as You are,
Do not deprive me of bliss.
My mind knows nothing but Your lotus feet.
The king of Death scolds me.
Tell me, Mother, what I shall say to him?
My only desire was to cross the sea of the
world with the name of 'Bhavani' on my lips.
I did not even dream, O Mother,
That You would drown me in this shoreless,
fathomless sea!
I swim 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 Your name, O Durga.

And then he sings.

Song –

Let us utter, utter the name of Durga.
He who treads his path saying, 'Durga, Durga,
Durga,' is protected by Her with the trident in
Her hand.
You are the day, You are the evening, You are
the night.
At one time, You art Purusha^[69] and at another
the Eternal Female.
You ask me to leave You, but that I shall never

do;

I shall be the ankle-bells ringing on Your feet;

I shall be the fish in water and You will catch
me in Your claws,

When You soar high in the sky like a kite,

O Mother Brahmamayi^[70],

My life shall be rent asunder at one cruel
scratch of Your claw.

Do, then, give me Your two red feet as refuge.

Sri Ramakrishna pays his obeisance again to
the image of the deity. As he goes downstairs,
he calls out, “Rakhal, are my shoes there?”

Sri Ramakrishna enters the carriage. Surendra
salutes him. The other devotees also salute
him. The street is still lighted by the moon.
Thakur’s carriage moves toward
Dakshineswar.

^[64] Divine Mother, the giver of food

^[65] An esoteric word or words uttered inwardly at
prayer

^[66] Vibhu

^[67] Phlegm, wind and bile

^[68] Referring to the members of Brahma Samaj

^[69] The Self, the Absolute, Spirit. Pure Consciousness,
the witness of the changes of Prakriti

^[70] The All Blissful Mother

Section V

Sri Ramakrishna at a Devotee's House in Calcutta

Chapter I

Ramchandra Dutta's house – Sri Ramakrishna enjoys the kirtan

It is Saturday, 2 June, 1883, the dark fortnight of the month of Vaishakh. It is an auspicious day when Thakur comes to visit Calcutta. From Balaram's home he goes to Adhar's. Having heard the *kalahantrita*^[71] kirtan he comes to Ram's house in Madhurai Street at Shimulia.

Ramchandra, who had qualified in medicine, was first an assistant chemical examiner in the Medical College. Later, he became a professor of chemistry in Science Association. He built his house with his own money. Thakur has visited his house on several auspicious occasions; consequently, it has become a very holy spot of pilgrimage for the devotees. By the grace of the Guru, Ramchandra is trying to lead the spiritual life of a householder. Sri Ramakrishna profusely praises Ram. He says, "Ram invites devotees to his house and serves them very well!" His house has become a special meeting place of the devotees. Nityagopal, Latu and Tarak [later Swami Shivananda] have become like members of Ramchandra's own family. They have lived with him for several days. Besides,

Narayana^[72] is worshipped there daily.

Ram first invited Sri Ramakrishna to his home on the Phuldolan^[73] day – it was the full moon day of Vaishakh. On this day nearly every year he invites Sri Ramakrishna with his devotees to celebrate the festival. Many of Ramchandra’s disciples, who are like his own children, continue to celebrate it.

Today the festival will be at Ram’s residence, which the Lord [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] is to visit. So Ram has arranged a reading of the Srimad Bhagavata. Though the courtyard is small, a great deal has been arranged in it. There is a canopied dais for the pundit to sit while reading the story of Raja Harischandra from the Srimad Bhagavata. When Thakur arrives from his visits to Balaram and Adhar, Ramchandra goes to him to take the dust of his feet. He then accompanies Thakur to a prearranged seat in front of the dais. He is surrounded by devotees. M. is seated close to him.

Sri Ramakrishna and the story of Raja Harischandra

The story of Raja Harischandra continues. Vishwamitra said, “Maharaj, you have given me the whole earth along with the oceans! Thus you do not have the right to stay at any one place. Even so, you may go to live in the holy city of Kashi *dham*^[74]. It is the city of Mahadeva (Shiva). Come, let me take you and your wife, Shaibya, and your son. There, you may collect the offering for me.” Saying so, Bhagavan Vishwamitra accompanied the king to Kashi, where they visited the temple of Vishveshvara (Lord Shiva).

As soon as the visit to Vishveshvara Shiva is mentioned, Thakur becomes absorbed in ecstasy. He indistinctly utters, “Shiva, Shiva.”

King Harischandra could not make the promised offering, so he sold Shaibya. His son, Rohitashava, went with Shaibya. The pundit also narrates the story of Rohitashava picking flowers at his brahmin master’s house. A snake bit him in the garden and he died in the deep darkness of night. There was no one to cremate him. The old brahmin did not leave his bed. Shaibya, all alone, picked up the body of her son in her lap and started for the cremation ground. Every now and then thunder and lightning flashed among the clouds. It was as if lightning was playing again and again in order to pierce the darkness. Shaibya cried as she went, sorrow-stricken and full of fear.

Because he was unable to collect the entire money for the offering, Harischandra sold himself to a *chandala* (pariah). Having then turned into a chandala himself, he earned a small fee from cremating dead bodies. Many dead bodies burned, while others had already been reduced to ashes. How terrible the cremation ground was in the dark night. Shaibya reached it, weeping bitterly. The sound of her cries would rend any heart. What human being does not feel his heart melt to hear this story? All the listeners begin to cry loudly.

What is Thakur doing while listening to the story? He is sitting absolutely still, silent. Once a tear falls from the corner of his eye and he wipes it away. Why does he not cry out restlessly like the others?

The story continues. At last Vishwamitra came and revived Rohitashava. Everyone visited the temple of Vishveshvara Shiva. The pundit ends his reading by narrating that Harischandra's throne was restored to him. Thakur has sat in front of the dais listening to the holy story for a long time. When the story ends, he goes to the outer room and sits down. The devotees and the pundit narrator follow him and sit around him. Thakur requests the pundit to narrate the story of Uddhava.

Liberation and bhakti – the love of gopis – gopis don't want liberation

The narrator says – When Uddhava came to Vrindavan, the cowherd boys and the milkmaids of Braja ran eagerly to meet him. They asked him, “How is Sri Krishna? Has he forgotten us? Does he remember us?” Some of them began to cry, others took him to different parts of Vrindavan, saying, “At this spot Sri Krishna lifted Mount Govardhan on his finger. Here he slayed Dhenukasur. Here he slayed Shaktasur^[75]. He grazed his cows in this pasture. He wandered here on the bank of the Jamuna and played here with the cowherd boys. He talked with the gopis in this grove.

” Uddhava said, “Why are you so anxious about Sri Krishna? He is omnipresent. He is God Himself. There is nothing besides him.” The gopis said, “All this is beyond our comprehension. We are not educated. We only know our Krishna of Vrindavan who played with us here.”

Uddhava said, “He is the very presence of Bhagavan. If you meditate on him, you do not have to come to this world. Meditation on him liberates the *jiva* (embodied soul).” The gopis

said, “We don’t understand all this talk about liberation and such. We only want to see our Krishna, the beloved of our soul.”

Sri Ramakrishna listens to all the conversation with full attention and goes into bhava. He says, “The gopis are right.” Then he begins to sing in the same sweet voice –

I am not hesitant to grant *mukti* (liberation). I hesitate to grant pure bhakti.

Who wins pure love surpasses all. He is served by all.

He triumphs over the three worlds.

Listen, O Chandravali^[76], I will tell you of love.

One may gain liberation but rare indeed is bhakti.

Because of bhakti I became King Bali’s doorkeeper in the nether world.

Only in Vrindavan can one find pure love.

But for cowherd boys and milkmaids none knows its secret.

Because of bhakti in Nanda’s house, taking him as my father, I carried his burden on my head.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the narrator) — The bhakti of the gopis is *prema* bhakti^[77]. It is *avyabhicharini*^[78] and single-minded bhakti. Do you know what *vyabhicharini*^[79] bhakti is? It is bhakti mixed with jnana. In it one believes that Krishna has become all – he is the Supreme Brahman, he is Rama, he is Shiva and he is Shakti. But *prema* bhakti is not mixed with jnana.

Hanuman came to Dwaraka and said, 'I want to see Sita and Rama.' Bhagavan [Sri Krishna] said to Rukmini, 'Please assume the form of Sita. Otherwise, there will be no escape from Hanuman.' When the Pandavas were performing Rajasuya Yajna, many kings were present. They all made Yudhisthira sit on his throne and paid obeisance to him. Bibhishana said, 'I shall only pay obeisance to Narayana (Vishnu) and to none else.' Then Sri Krishna himself lay prostrate before Yudhisthira to pay his obeisance. Thereafter, Bibhishana did the same, with his crown on his head.

"Do you know what it is like? It is like a bride in the family. She serves her husband's younger and elder brothers, his father and also her own husband. She gives them water to wash their feet and a towel. She provides a low wooden seat for them all. But she has quite another type of relationship with her husband.

"Prema bhakti is comprised of the two feelings, 'I' and 'mine'. Yashoda thinks, 'Who will look after Gopal (Krishna) if *I* don't do so? He may fall ill if *I* don't.' Yashoda does not know that Krishna is Bhagavan Himself. On the other hand, she feels, 'He is *mine*.' She knew: Krishna is *mine*, that Gopal is *my* own. Uddhava said, 'Your Krishna is Bhagavan Himself. He is the Lord of the Universe. He is no ordinary being.' Yashoda replied, 'I am not asking you about your Lord. I am asking you about my Gopal – my Gopal, not the Lord.'

"What single-minded devotion the gopis had! Only after many, many entreaties to enter the royal court did the doorkeeper take them to Krishna. But when they saw a person with a turban, they stood with

bowed heads. ‘Who is this person with a turban?’
they asked among themselves
. ‘Shall we lose our chastity by talking to this man?
Where is the beloved of our souls who wears
yellow robes and a crest of peacock feathers?’

“See, what single-minded devotion they had for
Him! A unique kind of mood persists in Vrindavan.
People around Dwaraka worship Krishna, Arjuna’s
friend. They have little regard for Radha.”

Firm faith of gopis – jnana bhakti and prema bhakti

A Devotee — Which is better: bhakti mixed with
jnana or prema bhakti?

Sri Ramakrishna — Unless one has intense love for
the Lord, one cannot attain prema bhakti (ecstatic
love) and does not consider Him as one’s very own.
Three friends were going through a forest when
they saw a tiger. One of them said, ‘Brother, we are
done for.’ The second said, ‘Why should we die?
Let’s call on the Lord.’ And the third one said, ‘No,
why trouble Him? Come, let’s climb a tree!’

“The person who said, ‘We are done for,’ did not
know that the Lord is the savior. He who said,
‘Let’s call on the Lord,’ was a jnani. He knew that
the Lord creates, preserves and dissolves. And he
who said, ‘Why should we trouble Him? Come,
let’s climb a tree,’ had prema (intense love) in his
heart; he had deep love for God. Such a love has
this characteristic: the one who has it considers
himself more powerful than the beloved. He does
not want his beloved troubled. He wants to save his

beloved from even the prick of a thorn.”

Ram takes Thakur and the devotees upstairs and serves them several kinds of sweets. The devotees take the prasad full of joy.

[71] Expressing regret at separation as a result of insult hurled by a lover. Here it indicates pangs of separation of Radha from Krishna.

[72] Lord Vishnu

[73] A festival held in honour of Sri Krishna on the full moon day of Vaishakh. A swing of flowers is decorated for Sri Krishna on this day.

[74] Place of pilgrimage

[75] Dhenukasur and Shaktasur were demons sent by Kamsa to kill Sri Krishna

[76] One of the gopis at Vrindavan

[77] Ecstatic love for the Lord

[78] Unalloyed; non straying

[79] Disloyal to one's ideal; unchaste

Section VI

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees at Kali Temple in Dakshineswar

Chapter I

With devotees in Dakshineswar – on the Phalaharini puja day

**Manilal, Trailokya, Biswas, Ram Chatterji, Balaram,
Narendra and Rakhil**

The fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Jaishtha. People are fasting on this fourteenth day of savitri^[80]. The Phalaharini puja^[81] will be celebrated at night on the last day of the dark fortnight. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in the shrine of the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. The devotees are coming to see him. It is Monday, 4 June, 1883.

M. had visited Sri Ramakrishna last Sunday.

The Katyayani puja^[82] was held last night. Thakur, full of emotion, stands in front of the Mother in the natmandir. He says –

Mother, You are the Katyayani of Braja. You are heaven, You are the earth. And You are the nether world.

Hari, Brahma, the twelve Gopals, ten great sciences and ten avatars have all originated out

of You.

This time You shall have to take me across by any means.

Thakur sings and talks to the Mother. He is fully intoxicated with divine love. Now he goes to his room and sits down on his cot.

The Mother was worshipped until midnight.

The following morning, a Monday, Balaram and some other devotees have arrived.

Trailokya and other proprietors of the garden have come with their families for the Phalaharini puja.

It is nine o'clock. Thakur sits on the round verandah overlooking the Ganges with a smile on his face. Playfully he places Rakhal's head on his lap – Rakhal is lying down. For some days, Thakur has regarded Rakhal as Gopala (baby Krishna).

Trailokya is going to the temple for Mother Kali's darshan. On his way he passes Thakur's room. Attendants holding an umbrella accompany him. Sri Ramakrishna exclaims, "Rakhal, get up."

Sri Ramakrishna sits up and Trailokya bows down to him.

Sri Ramakrishna — Brother, was there no *yatra* (musical performance) yesterday?

Trailokya — No, it could not be arranged.

Ramakrishna — Well, let it pass this time, but you must see to it that it is not forgotten in the future.

One must continue to observe the injunctions.

Trailokya, assenting, leaves. Shortly after, Ram Chatterji, the priest of the Vishnu temple, arrives.

Sri Ramakrishna — Ram, I said to Trailokya, ‘The yatra was not performed. You must see to it that it is not forgotten in future.’ Should I have said that?

Ram Chatterji — Sir, what is wrong with it? You were right. One must follow the traditions.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Balaram) — Please eat here today.

Before the meal, Thakur tells the devotees a number of things about his spiritual state. Rakhal, Balaram, M., Ramlal and one or two other devotees are present.

Sri Ramakrishna is angry with Hazra – seeing God in man

Sri Ramakrishna — Hazra used to instruct me, saying, ‘Why do you think so much about the young men?’ One day in a carriage on the way to Balaram’s house, I was very worried about it. I said to the Mother, ‘Mother, Hazra asks why I think so much of Narendra and the other young men. He asks why I spend so much time worrying about them, instead of meditating.’ While I was saying this, She immediately showed me that She had indeed become a human being. One can clearly see Her in a very pure mind. Having seen Her form,

when I came down a little from samadhi, I was very angry with Hazra. I said to myself, ‘That rascal has defiled my mind!’ Then I said, ‘Well, after all, he was not to be blamed. How could he know?’

Sri Ramakrishna’s first meeting with Narendra

“I see the young men as the very manifestations of Narayana. When I met Narendra for the first time, I noticed that he did not have body consciousness. I just touched his chest with my hand and he lost all external consciousness. When he returned to his normal state, he exclaimed, ‘I say, what did you do to me? I have my father and mother!’ This happened in Jadu Mallick’s house. Gradually, I felt more and more longing to see him. I became restless for him. Then I asked Bholanath^[83], ‘I say, brother, what is the matter with me? There is a boy, kayastha by caste, named Narendra. Why do I feel such attraction for him?’ Bholanath told me, ‘The *Mahabharata* explains it. When the mind of a person who goes into samadhi comes down, he wants to live and associate with sattvic people. He feels contented only when he meets such people.’ When I heard this that I was at peace with myself. At times I sat down and wept to see Narendra.”

Chapter II

His Earlier Story: Sri Ramakrishna intoxicated in divine mood and his vision of God’s form

Sri Ramakrishna — Oh, what a state I was in! When I had this state, I didn’t know how days and nights passed by. Everybody said that I had gone

mad. So they married me off. I was in a state of divine madness. First I was worried for my wife. Then I thought, ‘Well, she can live, eat and drink normally, as I do.’ I went to my father-in-law’s house where a big kirtan was being performed. Nafar, Digambar Bannerji’s father, and others attended it. There was a lot of devotional music. At times I felt worried about the future. Then I said to the Mother, ‘Mother, if the *zemindar* (landlord) of the village talks to me and shows me his respect, I will know that all my spiritual realizations are true.’ And he did come on his own to talk to me nicely.

His Earlier Story: Worship of [sundari\[84\]](#) and [kumari\[85\]](#) – witnesses Ramlila and balloon in the Maidan – feeding of cowherd boys in Sihore – with Mathur in his Janbazar house

“What a state I passed through! A very ordinary thing would at once fill me with inspiration. I worshipped *sundari*. She was a fourteen-year old girl. I saw her as the manifestation of Mother Herself. I offered her a rupee and bowed down to her.

“I went to see Ramlila [\[86\]](#). I saw the real Sita, Rama, Lakshmana, and Bibhishana before me. So I worshipped all the actors who were playing these parts.

“I invited *kumaris* and worshipped them. I saw them as the Mother Herself.

“One day I saw a girl in blue robes standing under a bakul tree. She was a prostitute, but my mind at once became filled with Sita. Instead of the girl, I

saw Sita herself coming to Rama after being freed from Lanka. For a long time I was unconscious, in the state of samadhi.

“Another day I went for a walk in the Fort Maidan. A big crowd had gathered to watch a balloon being released. My eyes fell on a European boy leaning against a tree with his body bent in three places. My mind was at once filled with the consciousness of Sri Krishna, and I passed into samadhi.

“In Sihore I served snacks and drinks to cowherd boys, as though they were real cowherds of Braja. Then I ate them too.

“I often lost consciousness, so Mathur Babu kept me with him in his Janbazar house for a number of days. I felt as though I had truly become a maid of the Mother of the Universe. The women of the household were as comfortable and free with me as with a small boy or a girl. With the maidservant, I used to escort Mathur’s daughter to her husband’s room to sleep.

“Even now my mind is transported at the thought of the slightest thing. Before, I could not keep myself still when I saw Rakhai mumble while performing japa. I would immediately be transported by the thought of the Lord.”

Sri Ramakrishna narrates many other things about his *prakriti* bhava (feminine state). He says, “I told a male musician about the tips of female musicians. He said, ‘How well you do it! Where did you learn it?’ ” Thakur then begins to mimic a female musician, giving tips on how she sings. None of the devotees could keep from laughing.

Chapter III

Thakur with Manilal – an ocean of motiveless grace

Sri Ramakrishna is resting awhile after eating. He is not sleeping, but is a bit drowsy. Manilal Mallick, an old Brahmo devotee, enters and bows down to Thakur. He takes a seat. Thakur remains lying on his bed. Manilal talks to him casually. Thakur is half-asleep, half-awake. He responds to Manilal.

Manilal — Shivanath is all praise for Nityagopal. He says that Nityagopal is in a very nice spiritual state.

Thakur is still lying on his bed, his eyes a bit drowsy. He asks, “What does he say about Hazra?” Thakur now sits up and talks to Manilal about Bhavanath’s bhakti.

Sri Ramakrishna — Oh, what a nice spiritual state he is in! His eyes fill with tears when he sings. At the sight of Harish he goes into ecstasy. He says that Harish is truly a very good man. You see, Harish leaves his own house and stays here [at Dakshineswar] at times.

Sri Ramakrishna asks M., “Well, why does he have so much bhakti? Why do Bhavanath and others get inspired with God?”

M. remains silent.

Sri Ramakrishna — You know how it is? All men look alike on the outside, but some of them have

‘sweetened milk’ within. The *puli*^[87] may have lentils for its filling, or sweetened milk. In both cases it looks alike. A filling of ‘sweetened milk’ is the desire to know the Lord and to have ecstatic love for Him.

Salvation and vision of one’s own real Self by Guru’s grace –Thakur grants fearlessness

Now Thakur grants fearlessness to the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Some think that they will never gain jnana and bhakti, that they are bound souls. But when the Guru’s grace descends on someone, he need not fear. A tigress came into a flock of goats. When it sprang on its prey, it gave birth to a cub. The tigress died, but the cub grew up in the flock of goats. The goats ate grass and so did the cub. They bleated, so the cub also began to bleat. The cub grew to become a big tiger. One day another tiger happened to come into the flock of goats. It was amazed to see a tiger eating grass. It ran toward it and grabbed it in its paws. The latter began to bleat. The wild tiger dragged it to a pond and said, ‘Look at your face in this water. You are exactly like me. Here is some meat, eat it.’ Saying so, it forced the meat into the mouth of the grass-eating tiger. It at first refused to take it and began to bleat, but having tasted blood, it began to eat the meat. The wild tiger said, ‘Have you understood now? You are just like me. Now accompany me to the forest.’

“If the grace of the Guru dawns, there is no fear. The Guru makes you understand who you are, what

your real nature is

.

“If you practice a little spiritual disciplines, the Guru tells you everything: Do this now and that later. In time, one begins to understand what is real and what is unreal. The Lord is the Reality and the world illusory.”

Even pretense of spiritual practice is useful – a *jivanmukta*^[88] may live in household

“One night a fisherman was casting his net in a garden pond and stealing fish. When the owner of the garden came to know of it, he surrounded the fisherman with his men. They started searching for him with torches etc. In the meantime the fisherman had smeared his body with some ash and sat under a tree like a sadhu. The men looked for the fisherman everywhere, but could not find him. They only saw a sadhu with ash smeared on his body sitting under a tree meditating. The next day the whole neighbourhood was agog with the news that a sadhu of high spiritual attainment had arrived in the garden. Many people went to the sadhu and offered him flowers, fruits, sandesh and sweetmeats to show their respect. They also offered him a lot of money. The fisherman said to himself, ‘What a wonder! I am not a real sadhu. Yet people have so much devotion for me. Should I become a genuine sadhu, I would assuredly realize the Lord. There is no doubt about it.’

“Even the pretense of spiritual practice brought awakening. Had it been true *sadhana*, how much

more awakening would one acquire? One would know what is real and what is illusory. The Lord, indeed, is the Reality and the world transitory.”

A devotee is thinking, “Is the world transitory? The fisherman renounced the world. But what about those who continue to live in the world? Must they also renounce it?” Sri Ramakrishna, the ocean of motiveless grace, immediately says to M., “If a clerk is sent to jail, he has to finish his term there. But when he is released, does he begin to dance joyfully in the street to the beat of the drum? He again finds the job of a clerk and takes up his old profession. By the grace of the Guru, having acquired jnana, one continues to live in the household as a *jivanmukta*.”

Saying so, Sri Ramakrishna grants fearlessness to the householders.

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna with Manilal and others – God without-form

Manilal (to Sri Ramakrishna) — At what place should I meditate during my daily worship?

Sri Ramakrishna — The heart is a well-known place, meditate on God there.

Faith is all-important – Haladhari believes in the formless God – Sambhu’s belief

Manilal, a Brahma devotee, believes in the formless God. Addressing him, Thakur says,

“Kabir used to say that God with form was his mother and the formless God his father. And he added, ‘Whom to slight and whom to worship? Both sides of the scales are even.’ ”

“Haladhari used to live with God with form during the day and the formless God at night. That is why, whichever bhava you adopt, you can succeed if you have the right kind of faith. Whether you believe in God with form, or in the formless God, you must have sincere faith.”

His earlier story: The first ecstasy – is the Lord the doer or is it coincidence?

“Sambhu Mallick used to come to his garden on foot from Baghbazar. Somebody said to him, ‘It is so far away, why don’t you take a cab? Some misfortune could occur on the way.’ Sambhu blushed with anger and said, ‘What! I set out on my journey after repeating God’s name. How can there be any unfortunate incident?’ By having faith in Him, you can do anything! I used to say that I would believe only if I saw such and such person – if such and such accountant talked to me. At that time, whatever used to come to my mind would come to pass.”

M. had studied logic. He had read that it is just coincidence that morning dreams tally with actual events; that, in fact, it was just superstition. He had read this from a chapter on fallacies. So he asks Sri Ramakrishna –

M. — Well, did it ever happen that the actual event did not tally with what you thought?

Sri Ramakrishna — It always tallied. I would repeat His name and whatever I believed would come to pass. (To Manilal) But do you know the fact? Unless you are guileless and generous, you cannot have sincere faith.

“People with such physical traits as a neck bone that is too prominent, and hollow or squint eyes, do not easily acquire faith. ‘It is a misfortune to meet bad omens such as a banana tree in the south, the *pui*^[89] creeper in the north and a black tomcat passing in front of you!’ ”(All laugh.)

**Thakur’s compassion for Bhagavati, the maidservant
– Sri Ramakrishna and a wife’s chastity and
faithfulness toward her husband**

It is dusk. The maidservant comes and burns incense in the room. Manilal has left but there are still one or two people in the room. It is still and fragrant. Thakur is sitting on the smaller cot. Rakhali is also there.

After some time Bhagavati, the maidservant of the temple proprietor, salutes Sri Ramakrishna from a distance. Thakur asks her to sit down. Bhagavati has been serving for a very long time. She has been with the proprietor for several years. Thakur has known her for many years. Since childhood she has been temperamental, but Thakur is an ocean of compassion, a savior of the fallen. He talks to her about things in the past.

Sri Ramakrishna — You are getting old. Do you feed sadhus and Vaishnavas^[90] with the money

you earn?

Bhagavati (smiling) — How can I say that [\[91\]](#)?

Sri Ramakrishna — Have you been to Kashi, Vrindavan and so forth?

Bhagavati (a bit hesitant) — How can I say it myself? I have paid for building a ghat paved with stones and my name is engraved on one of the slabs.

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you saying?

Bhagavati — Yes, my name is engraved there as Srimati Bhagavati Devi.

Sri Ramakrishna — Nice, very nice indeed.

Now taking courage, Bhagavati takes the dust of Thakur's feet.

Sri Ramakrishna stands up stunned, uttering, "Govinda, Govinda," just like a person bitten by a scorpion is startled and stands up suddenly. There was the Ganges water in a pitcher in a corner of the room – it is still there. He reaches the pitcher out of breath, as if frightened, and starts washing the spot she had touched with the Ganges water.

One or two devotees present in the room watch this affair in silent amazement. The maid is seated there as if dead. Sri Ramakrishna, the ocean of compassion, the savior of the fallen, addresses the maid and says in a touching voice, "You may salute me

from a distance.” Saying this, he goes back to his seat and tries to make her forget the incident. He says, “Now listen to some songs.” And he begins to sing.

Song –

The bee of my mind drinks deeply at the blue lotus-like feet of Mother Shyama.

At the blue lotus-like feet of Shyama, at the blue lotus-like feet of Mother Kali.

The honey of all worldly things – the flowers of lust and so on – has lost all charm for it.

The feet of the Mother are black-hued, so is the bee; black has mixed with black.

The five elements, turbulent and fascinating, have broken away on seeing this play.

It is only now that Kamalakanta has seen the fulfillment of his hopes.

Joys or sorrows are the same to him; the ocean of joy rolls on.

Song –

The kite of my mind was soaring high up in the sky of the feet of Mother Shyama.

The rough wind of ‘faults’ made it fall circling to the ground.

Maya’s pull made it heavy and I could not raise it again.

It got entangled with the string of the love for wife and children.

Alas! The crest of jnana [of the kite] is rent. One may pull at it but it falls down.

It has lost its crest, so how can it fly? The six passions have overpowered it.

It was tied to the string of bhakti. While playing, it fell into illusion.

O Nareschandra! Rather than weep or laugh, it was better not to have come to play.

Song –

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.

[80] On this day a fast is kept by Hindu married women

[81] On this day the Divine Mother is worshipped as the consumer of the karmas of the devotee

[82] Worship of Goddess Durga

[83] Bholanath was a clerk in the Kali Temple. Later he became the treasurer.

[84] A beautiful girl

[85] An unmarried young girl

[86] Play of Lord Rama

[87] A ring shaped sweetmeat with some filling in it

[88] One liberated in this very life

[89] A creeper used as a pot herb

[90] Followers of Sri Chaitanya; worshippers of Lord Vishnu

[91] She means yes. In India people usually do not mention about their pious deeds.

Section VII

Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar with Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna's first intoxication of divine love

His earlier story – Devendra Tagore, Dina Mukherji and Kumar Singh

It is the last day of the dark fortnight, 5 June, 1883. Sri Ramakrishna is at the Kali Temple garden. Since it is Tuesday, not many visitors have come. It is on Sundays that there is a greater gathering of the devotees.

Rakhal and Hazra are with Sri Ramakrishna. Seating arrangements have been made on the verandah in front of Thakur's room. M. has been staying here since the previous Sunday.

The musical drama 'Krishna Yatra' was staged on Monday night in the natmandir of Mother Kali's temple. Thakur attended it for some time. This musical play was to have been staged on Sunday night, but was postponed until Monday.

After the midday meal, Thakur again narrates his state of divine ecstasy.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — What states of consciousness have I passed through! I did not eat here; I would go to the house of a brahmin, either in

Baranagore or Dakshineswar or Ariadaha. And I would go there at the wrong time. I would go and just sit there without saying a word. If I was asked anything, I would only say that I wanted to eat there. I said nothing else. I would go to Ram Chatterji's house in Alambazar. Sometimes, I went to the house of Savaran Choudhury of Dakshineswar. I did eat there, but I didn't like it. I found a distinctive smell of fish and meat.

“One day I decided to go to Devendra Tagore's [Ravindra Nath Tagore's father's] house. I said to Mathur Babu, ‘Devendra repeats the Lord's name. I want to see him. Will you please take me to him?’ Mathur Babu was a very arrogant person. He would not go to other people's houses easily. He tried to dissuade me but later said, ‘Devendra and I were class fellows. I will take you to his house, baba (father).’

“Another day I heard that a fine person and devotee, Dina Mukherji, was living near the Baghbazar bridge. I approached Mathur Babu saying that I wanted to go to Dina Mukherji's house. Mathur Babu was helpless; he took me in his carriage. It was a modest house, and here was a great man in a big carriage. They, as well as we, felt embarrassed. He was celebrating his son's sacred thread ceremony. Where could he seat us? We were going to enter a nearby room when he said, ‘There are women in that room, you may not go in.’ Great embarrassment! When we left, Mathur Babu said to me, ‘Baba, I shall no longer listen to you.’ I laughed.

“What states have I passed through! Kumar Singh was giving a feast to the sadhus to which I was

invited. When I got there, I found a number of sadhus present. I sat down and some of them asked who I was. As soon as they asked, I got up and sat down separately. I said to myself, ‘What does it matter?’ Later, when everyone was made to sit with leaf plates on the floor, I began to eat before anybody asked me to. I heard some sadhus saying, ‘Look what he is doing!’ ”

Chapter II

Conversation with Hazra – dialogue between Guru and disciple

It is five o’clock. Thakur is sitting on a step close to the verandah. Rakhai, Hazra and M. are seated close to him. Hazra has the attitude of ‘Soham^[92]’.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Hazra) — To your way of thinking, all difficulties are over. It is He who is a believer and it is He who is an atheist; it is He who is good or bad. Besides, He is real and also unreal; that is, all the states of sleep etc. are also His. And then He is also beyond all states.

“A son was born to a peasant late in life. He raised the boy with great care. The boy grew up in time. One day the peasant was working in the field when somebody came to him and said, ‘Your boy is seriously ill. He might not survive.’ When the man reached home, his boy was dead. His wife was weeping bitterly but the eyes of the peasant remained dry. She complained to a neighbour sadly, ‘He has lost such a nice son, but there is not a tear in his eye!’ After a long time, the peasant said to his

wife, ‘You know why I am not crying? I had a dream last night. I saw that I had become a king and the father of seven sons. I also saw in the dream that the boys were people of great quality. As they grew, they acquired knowledge and religion. Then the dream ended. I say to myself: Should I cry for your one son – or those seven sons?’ Jnanis believe that the state of dream is as true as the wakeful state.

“The Lord indeed is the doer. Everything happens according to His will.”

Hazra — But it is very difficult to understand this. A sadhu of Bhukailas was tortured so terribly that he almost died. The sadhu was in samadhi. First they buried him, then they immersed him in water, and then they branded him with a hot iron. That is how he was brought back to consciousness. Because of such torture, he died. People tortured him, but he died by the Lord’s will.

Problem of evil and immortality of soul

Sri Ramakrishna — One reaps the consequences of one’s actions. By the Lord’s will the sadhu who was in samadhi died. The Kaviraj makes *makaradhvaja* in bottles. They smear the bottles all around with mud and put them in a furnace. The gold in the bottles melts, gets mixed with other ingredients, and becomes *makaradhvaja*. The physician then carefully breaks the bottle and takes the *makaradhvaja* out. Obviously, the bottle is of use no longer – it makes no difference if it is or is not there. Similarly, though people killed the sadhu

in ecstasy, perhaps he had already attained the goal. After attaining Bhagavan, what does it matter whether the body survives or dies?

Distinction between sadhu and avatar

“The sadhu from Bhukailas was in samadhi. Samadhi is of various kinds. My state tallied with what the sadhu of Rishikesh said. Sometimes I would find the spiritual current creeping up like an ant in my body, and sometimes it would hop up, just as a monkey jumps from one branch of the tree to another. Sometimes it moved like a fish. Only he who has experienced it can understand. He forgets the world. When his mind goes down a little, he prays, ‘Mother! Please cure me. I would like to talk.’

“Unless one belongs to the class of *Ishvarakotis*^[93], one cannot return to life after samadhi. Some people go into samadhi as a result of their sadhana, but they don’t return. But when God Himself comes as a man, as an avatar, He has the key to the liberation of human beings in his hand. Then he returns from samadhi for the good of humanity.”

M. (to himself) — Does Thakur hold the key to the liberation of human beings in his hand?

Hazra — One can succeed just by pleasing the Lord – even without the avatar.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Yes, yes. There is a big registration office in Vishnupur. If you get the

deed registered there, you don't have to bother about the Goghat office!

**Dialogue between Guru and disciple – life of Thakur
narrated by himself**

It is Tuesday, the day of new moon. It is dusk. Arati is being performed in the temple. Conch shells, bells and some instruments are being sounded in the twelve Shiva Temples, in Radhakanta's Temple and that of Mother Bhavatarini. After the arati is over, Sri Ramakrishna passes through his own room to the southern verandah. It is pitch dark, but lamps are lit at various places in the temple. The Bhagirathi (Ganges) reflects the dark sky on its bosom. It is the day of the new moon, and so Sri Ramakrishna has slipped easily into bhava. Today his bhava is becoming intense. From time to time he utters "Om" and the Mother's name. It is hot weather. The room is very hot, so he has come to the verandah. A devotee's offering of a thinly woven mat is now spread on the verandah. These days Thakur thinks about the Divine Mother all the twenty-four hours. He talks in a whisper with Mani as he lies on the mat.

Sri Ramakrishna — Look, the Lord can be seen! So and so has seen Him. But please don't talk of it to others. Well, which one do you like better? God with form, or God without form?

Mani — At present I have greater liking for God without form. Even so, I am realizing gradually that He has taken all the different forms.

Sri Ramakrishna — Look, can you take me by carriage to the Mati Seal lake in Belgharia? If you throw a little puffed rice in the lake, all the fish gather to eat it. Oh, how the fish swim playfully! It is such a joyful sight! You will feel inspired, as if the fish of the Atman is sporting in the sea of Sachchidananda. In the same way if you stand in a big open field, you are inspired by the Lord – you feel as though you were a fish from an earthen pot which has jumped into the lake.

“You have to perform sadhana if you wish to see Him. I myself have undergone very hard austerities. How many kinds of spiritual disciplines have I practiced under the Bel tree! I would lie under the tree, crying, ‘Mother, please reveal Yourself to me.’ My body would become drenched with tears.”

Mani — You have undergone so many spiritual disciplines. How can people succeed in a moment? Can one construct a wall just by moving a finger all around the room?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Amrita says, ‘A man lights a fire and ten men take its heat sitting around it.’ And then, this is very true: it is good to remain in the lila (divine play) after having attained the Nitya (Absolute).

Mani — You said that lila is for enjoyment.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, even the lila is real. Look, bring some little offering when you come to me. Perhaps I shouldn’t say it myself, it may look egoistic, but I also say to Adhar, ‘Please bring

something worth one paisa.’ To Bhavanath, I say, ‘Buy me betel leaves for a paisa.’ Have you noticed what bhakti Bhavanath has! Narendra and Bhavanath are like male and female. Bhavanath is Narendra’s faithful follower. You must bring Narendra here in a carriage. Bring something to eat for him too. It will do you a great deal of good.

Philosophy and skepticism

“Jnana and bhakti are both paths to God-realization. In the path of bhakti, one has to observe more religious rules and rites. In the path of jnana, if somebody commits an unscriptural deed, it gets destroyed and does no harm. It is like a banana tree thrown into a roaring fire and is burnt.

“The path of jnana is the path of reasoning, which sometimes makes one become skeptical. In the case of a devotee who sincerely seeks Him, even if he becomes skeptical, he does not give up meditation on the Lord. If the ancestors of a person have been farmers, he does not give up farming, even if he has no crop for want of rain, or because of heavy rain in that year.”

Lying down, Thakur rests his head on a big pillow and continues talking. He says to Mani, “My feet are aching. Please stroke them a little.”

While rendering service to Thakur, the ocean of motiveless grace, Mani listens to the words of the *Vedas* issue from his holy lips.

[92] I am That

[93] Eternally free and perfect souls, born on earth for the good of mankind, with at least some of the characteristics of an avatar

Section VIII

Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar Temple with Devotees

Chapter I

Conversation about householder life on Dasahara day in Dakshineswar

**Rakhal, Adhar, M., Rakhal's father and his father's
father-in-law are there**

It is Friday, 15 June, 1883, Dasahara day, the tenth lunar day of the bright fortnight of Jaishtha. Devotees have come to see Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. On the occasion of Dasahara, Adhar and M. have a holiday.

Rakhal's father and his father's father-in-law have arrived. Rakhal's father is married for a second time. His wife's father had heard of Thakur a long time ago. He practices sadhana and has now come to see him. Thakur is sitting on the smaller cot after his meal. He glances at the father-in-law of Rakhal's father again and again. The devotees are sitting on the floor.

The Father-in-law — Sir, can one attain Bhagavan while living in the household?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Why not? Live like a mud fish. It lives in the mud, but the mud does not

stain its body. Or live like a woman of easy virtue. She attends to all her household chores, but her mind remains tied to her lover. Fixing your mind on the Lord, attend to all your worldly work. But this is very difficult. I told the Brahmos, ‘You can’t place tamarind pickles and a pitcher of water in the room of a patient suffering from delirium.’ If you do, how will he recover? Just think of tamarind pickles and your mouth begins to water. For a man, woman is like tamarind pickles. Besides, the desire for sensuous enjoyment is ever there; it is like the pitcher of water. One can’t find fault with this desire. It is that the patient wants to drink the whole pitcher of water! Oh, how very hard it is! Worldly life has so many problems. ‘If the householder comes this way, he is hit with a stick and if he goes that way, he is beaten with a broom. If he follows another way, someone throws a shoe at him!’ Besides, meditation on Bhagavan is not possible unless you practice in a solitary place. If you want to make an ornament after melting gold, but you are frequently called away, how will you be able to melt it? If you want to husk rice, you have to do it alone, by yourself. You have to occasionally pick out grains of rice to examine whether or not they are properly husked. If you are called away a number of times while husking, how will you complete the husking job properly?

**What is the way? Develop deep dispassion (*vairagya*)
– his earlier story – conversation with Gangaprasad**

A Devotee — Sir, is there a way?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, there is. If you develop

deep dispassion, you can succeed. What you know to be unreal should at once be given up forcibly. When I was ill, I was taken to Gangaprasad Sen. Gangaprasad said, ‘You will have to take *swarnapatpati* (an Ayurvedic medicine preparation of gold). But don’t drink water. Instead, take pomegranate juice.’ Everybody wondered how I could do without water. I firmly resolved not to take it. I said to myself, ‘I am a paramahansa! I am no ordinary *hansa* (swan), I am a *rajahansa* (king swan) – so I shall take milk^[94].’

“One should live in solitude for some days. When you have touched the Grand-dame, there is no danger in being out of the game. Once you have been turned into gold, you can stay anywhere. If you gain bhakti by living in solitude, if you attain Bhagavan, you may even live in a family. (To Rakhal’s father) That is why I ask these boys to stay here. They will develop love for Bhagavan by living here a few days. Then they can very well live in the family.”

Vice and virtue – sannyasa a great panacea for malady of the world

A Devotee — If it is the Lord who does everything, why do we say that such and such act is sinful – or is good or bad? One commits sin also by His will.

The Father-in-law of Rakhal’s Father — How can we understand what His will is? As Pope remarked: Thou Great First Cause, least understood^[95].

Sri Ramakrishna — There is virtue as well as vice,

but He is not tainted by them. There are good and bad smells in the air, but the air itself is free of them. It is the same with His creation. There are virtue and vice, real and unreal. In the case of trees, some bear mangoes, others jackfruit, and yet others hog-plums. You know, even wicked people are also needed. They send a ruffian to an estate where the inhabitants are rough. Then alone is the estate properly administered.

Sri Ramakrishna again talks about the life of the household.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Do you know what happens when you live as a householder? A lot of your mental powers are unnecessarily expended. This wastage of mental powers can be made up only by embracing sannyasa. Your father gives you your first birth. Your second birth is when your sacred thread ceremony is performed. And the third one is when you enter monastic life^[96].

“ ‘Lust and greed.’ These indeed are the two obstacles. The attachment to a woman leads one away from the path to the Lord. A man is unable to realize what has brought his downfall. When I went to the Fort, I hardly knew that I was going down a slope. When the carriage reached the Fort, I observed how far down I had come. Ah, She doesn’t let man know! Captain said, ‘My wife is spiritually wise.’ When an evil spirit possesses a person, he does not know that he is possessed. He just says, ‘I am all right.’ (Everybody sits perfectly still.)

“It is not only lust which is a danger in family life. There is anger, too. When you are thwarted in your desire, you get angry.”

M. — When a cat reaches out to snatch fish from my plate, I can't do anything about it.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why not? You must beat it once, there is no harm in that. The householder must hiss [threaten], but never pour venom. Reason? One must not harm anybody. However, you have to make a show of anger to save yourself from the enemy or he will hurt you. But one who has renounced need not even hiss.

A Devotee — Sir, it seems extremely difficult to attain Him while living a householder's life. How many householders can do it? We don't see such men!

Sri Ramakrishna — Why not? In the countryside [Kamarpukur], there is a Deputy [Magistrate] who is a great gentleman, Pratap Singh by name. He possesses many great qualities! He gives in charity, meditates and has developed love for the Lord. Once he sent for me. There are people like him.

Chapter II

Need of sadhana – faith in words of Guru – Vyasa's faith

Sri Ramakrishna — Sadhana (practice of spiritual disciplines) is essential. Why will you not succeed if you practice sadhana? If you have genuine faith,

you don't have to work too hard. You must trust the Guru's words.

“Vyasadeva had to cross the Jamuna. The *gopis* (milkmaids) had to cross at the same time, but there was no ferry. The milkmaids said, ‘Maharaj, what do we do?’ Vyasadeva said, ‘Well, I will take you across, but I am feeling very hungry. Do you have something for me to eat?’ The milkmaids had milk and *khira* (sweetmeat of milk and rice) and also a lot of butter. Vyasadeva ate everything they had. ‘Maharaj, what about our crossing?’ the *gopis* asked. Vyasadeva then stood on the bank and said, ‘Oh, Jamuna, if I have eaten nothing, let your waters part so that we may all cross.’ As he said this, the waters parted. The *gopis* were amazed. They said to themselves, ‘He has eaten so much just now, yet he says that he has eaten nothing!’

“This is firm faith: It is not I, but Narayana within the heart who has eaten.

“Shankaracharya was a knower of Brahman, but initially he had ideas of differentiation. He did not have absolute faith in the oneness of God. One particular day he was coming up the steps after a bath in the Ganges when he chanced to touch the body of a *chandala* (pariah) carrying a load of meat. He exclaimed, ‘Oh, I have touched you!’ The *chandala* said, ‘Master, you have not touched me, nor have I touched you. The pure Atman is neither the body, nor is it the five elements^[97], or the twenty-four cosmic principles^[98].’ Shankara then realized the oneness of God.

“When Jadabharata, carrying the palanquin of King Rahugana, began to talk about knowledge of the

Atman, the king came down from the palanquin and asked him who he was. Jadabharata said, 'I am not this, not that. I am pure Atman. I have full conviction that I am pure Atman.' ”

Sri Ramakrishna and elements of yoga: yoga of jnana and yoga of bhakti

“ ‘I am That, I am the pure Atman’ – this is the conviction of jnanis (men of spiritual wisdom). On the other hand, devotees say, ‘It is all the manifestation of the glorious wealth of Bhagavan.’ Were there no riches, how could you know a wealthy man? Yet it is a different matter if God, because of the devotion of an aspirant, says, ‘You are indeed the same as I.’ Suppose, on returning from the bazaar, a king’s valet takes the king’s seat and says, ‘Sir, I am the same as you,’ people would think that the valet is crazy. But suppose the king is so happy with his valet that he says one day, ‘I say, come and sit beside me. It will not be wrong. You are indeed the same as I.’ If the valet then goes and sits beside the king, there is nothing wrong with it. It is not right for an ordinary man to say that he is the same as the Lord. The wave comes from water, not water from the wave.

“The fact is that unless your mind is steady, there can be no yoga, whatever path you may take. The mind of a yogi is under his control. The yogi is not controlled by the mind.

“When the mind becomes steady, breathing stops and one experiences *kumbhaka*^[99]. The same *kumbhaka* is experienced in Bhakti Yoga (path of devotion). The breath becomes suspended by

following the path of devotion, too. As one repeats, ‘My Nitai is like a mad elephant,’ one is filled with a deep spiritual mood. Then one cannot complete the whole line. One says, ‘Elephant, elephant!’ and after that one is only able to say, ‘Ele!’

“In the state of bhava, breathing is suspended and one experiences *kumbhaka*.

“Suppose someone is sweeping the floor with a broom and another person comes and tells him, ‘Brother, so-and-so is no more. He is dead.’ If the dead person is not related to him, the man with the broom goes on sweeping and says casually, ‘Alas, is it so? The poor fellow is dead. He was such a good man.’ And he goes on sweeping. If the deceased had been a near and dear one, the broom would have fallen from his hand and he would have sat down, exclaiming, ‘Aie.’ His breathing would have stopped and he wouldn’t be able to think of the work he was doing. Don’t you see this with women? If one of them stands still, amazed at seeing something or hearing some news, the other women say to her, ‘I say, you have gone into bhava!’ Here, too, the breathing has stopped. That is why she has become speechless, only able to exclaim ‘Aie!’ ”

**Marks of a jnani – *sadhanasiddha*[\[100\]](#) and
nityasiddha[\[101\]](#)**

“It doesn’t help just to repeat Soham (I am That). There are marks of a jnani. Naren’s eyes protrude. His eyes and forehead have good marks.

“Besides, everybody is not at the same level. There

are four classes of human beings: the *baddha* jivas (bound ones), the *mumukshu* (seekers after liberation), the *mukta* (liberated) and the *nitya* jivas (ever-free). It is not that all these people have to take to sadhana (spiritual practice) – there are *nityasiddhas* (ever perfect) and *sadhanasiddhas* (perfected by sadhana). Some people attain the Lord after practicing a great deal of sadhana, while others are perfect from their birth, for example Prahlada. The Homa bird lives high up in the sky. When it lays its egg, it falls toward the earth. During the fall, the egg breaks and a chick emerges. Even then it goes on falling. It is still so high up that it develops its wings during its fall. When it is close to the earth, the chick realizes that if it hits the earth, it will be crushed. At once it shoots upward toward its mother, uttering, ‘Mother, mother, where are you?’

“The *nityasiddhas*, like Prahlada, practice sadhana later in life. They have already attained the Lord before the practice of sadhana. It is like the bottle gourd or the pumpkin which fruits before it flowers. (Looking at Rakhal’s father) A *nityasiddha*, even if he is born in a lower family, does not become less spiritual than he was. The gram, even if it falls on a dung heap, still sprouts into a gram plant.”

Vidyasagar and special manifestation of power in some – mere learning

“God has granted more power to some than to others. In one there is the light of a single earthen lamp, while in another it is a blazing torch. I recognized Vidyasagar’s limit of intelligence from one of his remarks. I could see how far his

intelligence went. When I told him that there was a special manifestation of God's power in some, Vidyasagar said, 'Sir, do you mean that He has granted more power to one and less to another?' I immediately replied, 'Indeed, it is so! Had there not been more power in one and less in another, why would you have become famous? It is when I heard of your learning, your charitable disposition and so forth that I came to see you. Of course, you have not grown two horns!' So learned, so famous is Vidyasagar to have said something so childish as: 'Has He granted more power to one and less to another?' You know how it is? The bigger fish like trout and carp are first to get caught in the net. Then the fisherman stirs the mud with his feet and minnows, mud fish and other small fish emerge and get caught in no time. If one has not realized the Lord, 'minnow and mud fish' come out of him. What does mere learning avail one?"

[94] Hamsa has two meanings, one a swan and the other a desireless ascetic

[95] Alexander Pope, 2nd verse of "The Universal Prayer"

[96] Except ye be born again ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven – Christ (John 3)

[97] Earth, water, fire, air and space

[98] The twenty four cosmic principles 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; *chitta*. All belong to Prakriti, or Nature, and are different from Purusha or Consciousness.

[\[99\]](#) Suspension of breath

[\[100\]](#) One perfected by devotional practices

[\[101\]](#) One perfected from birth; ever-perfect

Section IX

Sri Ramakrishna in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar

Chapter I

Distinction between a learned man and a sadhu – bhakti according to Narada enjoined for the age of Kali

Today is Wednesday, 26 September, 1883. It is the 10th day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadra. Fewer devotees visit Sri Ramakrishna on Wednesdays since it is a working day. Usually the devotees come on Sundays when they are at leisure. Free at half past one in the afternoon, M. reaches the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar to see Thakur at three o'clock. These days Rakhai and Lata are staying with Thakur most of the time. Kishori had arrived two hours earlier. Thakur is seated on the smaller cot in his room. On arriving, M. prostrates himself before him. After making polite enquiries, Thakur talks of Narendra.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Well, did you meet Narendra? (Laughing) He commented that I still visit the Kali Temple, but when I am cured of my madness, I will no longer go there.

“He comes here off and on. He tells me that the members of his family are very cross with him. The other day he came in a carriage. Surendra had paid the carriage fare, so Narendra's aunt (his father's

sister) went to Surendra's house to protest. She created a row.

While talking of Narendra, Thakur stands up. He goes to the northeastern verandah and stands there. Hazra, Kishori, Rakhai and others devotees are there. It is afternoon.

Sri Ramakrishna — How is it that you are here today? Don't you have school?

M. — Today the school closed at half past one.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why so early?

M. — Vidyasagar owns the school, so whenever he visits, the boys are given a holiday to celebrate.

**Vidyasagar and holding on to truth – life of Thakur
spoken with his own holy lips**

Sri Ramakrishna — Why doesn't Vidyasagar keep his word?

Holding on to truth and viewing other women as Mother,

Tulsi is a liar, if you do not realize Hari by this means [\[102\]](#).

“If you stick to truth, you can attain Bhagavan. The other day Vidyasagar said that he would come here, but he didn't show up.

“There is a great difference between a learned man and a sadhu. The mind of one who is a mere scholar remains attached to ‘lust and gold,’ while the mind

of a sadhu remains tied to the lotus feet of Hari. The learned man says one thing and does another. Leaving sadhus aside, even those whose minds are fixed on the lotus feet of Hari are very different in their actions and words. I saw a young sadhu belonging to the sect of Nanak in Kashi. He was the same age as you. He would call me a *premi* (loving) sadhu. His monastery is in Kashi. One day he invited me there. The head monk of the monastery was no different from a housewife. I asked him, ‘What is the way?’ He replied, ‘Bhakti according to Narada is enjoined for the age of Kali.’ He was reading a holy text. When he finished it, he said, ‘Vishnu in water, Vishnu on land, Vishnu on the hill top; Vishnu pervades the whole world.’ He ended with: peace, peace and perfect peace.”

Observance of Vedic rites not for the age of Kali – the path of jnana

“One day he was reading the *Gita*. He was so strict in his orthodoxy that he would not read it looking at a worldly man. Mathur Babu was present. The sadhu turned his back on him while reading. It was the same sadhu of the sect of Nanak who said, ‘There is a way: it is the path of devotion as enjoined by Narada.’

M. — Aren’t these sadhus Vedantists [\[103\]](#)?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, these people are Vedantists, but they also believe in the path of bhakti. The fact is, in the age of Kali it is difficult to observe Vedic rites and rituals. A person said that

he would observe the *purashcharana*^[104] of the Gayatri mantra. I asked, ‘Why? For the age of Kali you have the Tantric path. Can you not perform *purashcharana* according to the *Tantra*?’

“Vedic observances are very difficult to perform. These days one slaves for others [like the British masters]. It is said that if you slave like this for twelve years or so, you acquire the traits of the master. You imbibe the qualities of those for whom you have been slaving for so long. You take on their *rajas* and *tamas* and other qualities like violence and indulgence in sense pleasures while you serve them. Not only are you their slave, but you also receive a pension from them.

“A Vedantist sadhu visited here. He danced to see the clouds and thoroughly enjoyed himself when there was a rainstorm. If anybody approached him while he was meditating, he would get very angry. One day I went to him. Oh, how upset he was! He always discriminated: ‘Brahman is the only Reality and the world an illusion.’ The appearance of so many different forms is because of maya, so he carried a prism from a chandelier with him.

Through a prism you see many different colors. In fact, there is no colour at all. In the same way, there is really nothing but Brahman. But because of maya and egotism one sees a diversity of things. Lest he should become infatuated and become attached to it, this sadhu would not look at anything more than once. While taking his bath, he would discriminate at the sight of birds flying overhead. Together we would go to ease ourselves. When he heard that it was the pond of a Muslim, he did not use its water. Haladhari tested him in grammar – he knew

grammar. They talked of consonants. He was here for three days. One day, hearing the sound of the sanai^[105] while he was on the river embankment, he said, ‘He who has realized Brahman goes into samadhi hearing such music.’ ”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna, the Guru, in Dakshineswar – he exhibits the state of a *paramahansa*^[106]

While talking about the sadhus, Sri Ramakrishna exhibits the state of a *paramahansa*. His conduct is childlike, his face beams with laughter and there is no cloth around his waist, he is quite naked; his eyes swim with joy. He again sits on the smaller cot and speaks in his charming voice.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani) — I heard Vedanta from the Naked One (Totapuri): ‘Brahman is the Reality and the world an illusion.’ The magician performs so many magic feats: he produces a mango plant, even bearing mangoes. But all his magic is just sleight of hand. Only the magician is real.

Mani — Our life is like a long sleep. I understand it, but I do not see it correctly. The mind can’t even understand the sky. How can that very mind understand the world rightly just by seeing it?

Sri Ramakrishna — There is another way of looking at it. Not being able to see the sky properly, it looks as though it were touching the earth. How can a man understand rightly when he is delirious

with fever?

Sri Ramakrishna sings in a sweet voice about the delirious fever of mankind and Dhanavantri^[107].

O Mother Shankari^[108], O great physician, what delirious fever I suffer, in spite of the grace of Thy feet.

This perishable transitory pride of mine is consuming me in its flames. What depraved attachment I have developed for ‘me and mine’!

How can I sustain my life? My desire for wealth and friends is ceaseless!

O the bestower of all goodness, I continue to indulge in things illusory, wrong doing, sinful acts and so on.

Says Dasharathi: My eyes are full of the deep sleep of maya,

And my stomach filled with the worm of violence. I am going round and round as in a whirlpool of illusory action.

Day and night I am feeling distaste for Your name. Alas! will I be cured of this malady?

Mani — I said to Kishori, ‘There is nothing in a box – but two people are trying to snatch it from each other, thinking there’s money in it!’

Trouble in taking up a body – to be or not to be! The world is a mansion of joy

“Well, the body is the sole cause of all troubles. Thinking this, the jnani says to himself, ‘I would

rather give up this pillow case [\[109\]](#). Only that will save me.’ ”

Thakur is going toward the Kali Temple.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why? This world is a deceptive veil. But it is also called the mansion of joy.

Mani — There is no uninterrupted joy here.

Sri Ramakrishna — True indeed.

Thakur is now standing in front of the Kali Temple. He prostrates before the Divine Mother. Mani does the same. Thakur sits on the floor before the Mother on the lower platform in front of the shrine. He is clad in a red-bordered dhoti with part of it wrapped around his back and one end over his shoulder. Behind him is a pillar of the natmandir. Mani is seated close to him.

Mani — If that is so, why should one take up a body at all? I think the body is only for practicing some Karma Yoga (action). Who knows what one is doing! It only brings suffering and tribulation.

Sri Ramakrishna — When a gram falls on a heap of filth, it still sprouts into a gram plant.

Mani — So be it. Even then, aren't there the eight bonds?

Sachchidananda is the Guru – liberation by the grace of the Guru

Sri Ramakrishna — Not the eight bonds, but eight fetters [\[110\]](#). But let them be there! By His grace, these eight fetters fall off all at once. You know what it is like? Just as all darkness is dispelled in a moment when a light is brought into a room that has been dark for a thousand years. The darkness doesn't go bit by bit. Haven't you seen the magician performing his feats? Making knots in a cord, he ties one of its ends to something and holds the other end in his hand. Then he shakes the cord once or twice. When he gives a jerk, all the knots in the cord untie. But others can't untie a single knot, howsoever much they try. All the knots open in a moment by the grace of the Guru.

Sri Ramakrishna the agent of change in Keshab Sen

“Well, how has Keshab Sen changed so much lately? Tell me. He used to come here very often. He learned how to bow down here. One day I said to him, ‘Sadhus are not saluted the way you do it.’ One day I was going to Calcutta with Ishan in a carriage. He had heard many things about Keshab Sen. How beautifully Harish has expressed it: ‘All the cheques have to be cleared here. Only then will the bank cash them.’ ”(Thakur laughs.)

Mani listens to all this conversation in wonder.
He has understood that Sachchidananda
Himself clears the cheques in the form of the
Guru.

**His earlier story – instructions of the Naked One –
one cannot know God**

Sri Ramakrishna — Don't reason. Who can know Him? The Naked One (Totapuri) said, 'I have heard that this universe is created out of only a portion of God.'

“Hazra is inclined to reason a lot. He calculates that the world is created with so much, and so much is the remainder. When I hear his arithmetic, my head begins to ache. I know that I know nothing. Sometimes I think of God as good, and at other times bad. How can I know Him?”

Mani — True sir, who can know Him? One knows Him only as far as one's intellect can go, but he thinks he has understood it all. It is just as you say: An ant went to a mound of sugar. Just a grain of it filled the ant's stomach. And yet it said, 'Next time I am going to carry the whole mound to my home.'

Can one know the Lord? Self-surrender the only way

Sri Ramakrishna — Who can know Him? I don't even try. I simply call, 'Mother! Mother!' Let Her do Her will. If it is Her will, She will let me know Her, otherwise not. I have the attitude of a kitten. A kitten only calls out, 'Mew, mew.' Its mother may place it anywhere – maybe in the kitchen or on the master's bed. A little child only wants its mother. It doesn't know of her riches. It doesn't even want to know. All it knows is that it has a mother. So it doesn't worry. The son of the housemaid also knows that he has a mother. When he quarrels with the son of the master of the house, he says, 'I am going to tell my mother. I have a mother.' I also have the attitude of a son.

Placing his hand on his chest and pointing to himself, Sri Ramakrishna says to Mani, “Well, is there anything here? What do you say?”

Mani is speechless as he looks at Thakur. Perhaps he is saying to himself, “Is the Divine Mother living in Thakur’s heart? Is it the Mother who has taken up his body for the good of mankind?”

[102] A saying of Tulsidas, a great sage and poet of India

[103] Believers in the non-dual Brahman

[104] The performance of japa a certain number of times each day, methodically increasing and decreasing the amount

[105] A wooden flute

[106] Highest class of saints who have attained supreme knowledge and sanctity

[107] An excellent physician; the name of the physician of heaven (according to Hindu mythology)

[108] An appellation of Goddess Durga

[109] Meaning the outer sheath, the body

[110] Hatred, shame, ancestry, pride, fear, secretiveness, caste and grief

Section X

Sri Ramakrishna and Keshab Chandra Sen in the Lily Cottage

Chapter I

**In front of Keshab's house – 'he looks for you
with a yearning heart as you come'** [\[111\]](#)

**Keshab, Prasanna, Amrit, Umanath, Keshab's
Mother, Rakhal and M.**

Wednesday, 28 November, 1883. It is the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of Kartik. A devotee is pacing the footpath to the east of the Lily Cottage gate. He seems to be eagerly waiting for someone.

To the north of Lily Cottage is the Mangal Bari. A number of Brahmo devotees live there. Keshab lives in the Lily Cottage. His disease has worsened. Most people say, "It appears that there is not much chance of his recovering this time."

Sri Ramakrishna is very fond of Keshab. He is coming to see him today from the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. The devotee pacing outside is awaiting his arrival.

The Lily Cottage is situated on the western side of the Circular Road where he is walking. He has been waiting since 2:00 p.m. He sees many people on the road.

The Victoria College is situated on the eastern side of the road. A number of ladies from Keshab's Brahma Samaj and their daughters study there. One can see deep into the school building from the road. To the north there is a big garden house inhabited by an English gentleman. The devotee on the road has been observing for a long time that there seems to be some misfortune in the house. A little later, he sees a coachman and a groom in black livery bringing a hearse. These arrangements have been going on for the last one-and-a-half or two hours.

Somebody has parted from this mortal world, hence all the arrangements.

The devotee wonders, "Where does one go when one leaves the body?"

A number of carriages rattle southward. The devotee is keenly watching them to see if Thakur is in one.

It is almost five o'clock when Thakur arrives in a carriage. He is accompanied by Latu and one or two other devotees. M. and Rakhal are also present.

Keshab's family members lead Thakur upstairs. There is a wooden cot on the verandah south of the drawing room. Thakur is invited to sit there.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi – he talks to the Divine Mother in ecstasy

Thakur has been sitting here for quite some time. He is impatiently awaiting Keshab.

Keshab's disciples tell him humbly that Keshab is resting for awhile, but it will not be long before he comes.

Keshab suffers from a serious disease. His disciples and the members of his family, therefore, are very careful. Thakur is becoming more and more eager to see Keshab.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Keshab's disciples) — Look, what is the need for him to come? Why can't I go inside to see him?

Prasanna (humbly) — Sir, he will be here shortly.

Sri Ramakrishna — Go on, you're making an unnecessary fuss! Let me go in.

Prasanna talks about Keshab to divert Sri Ramakrishna's mind.

Prasanna — He is in a different state of mind. He talks to the Mother like you. The Mother speaks to him and he listens, laughs and cries.

“Keshab talks to the Mother of the Universe. Hearing Her, he sometimes laughs and sometimes weeps.”

Thakur is overwhelmed with emotion on hearing this. He passes quickly into samadhi.

It is winter, so Thakur is clad in a warm coat of green cashmere with a shawl over it. His body is erect, his eyes fixed, he is completely merged in samadhi. He remains in this state for a long time. His samadhi is not coming to an end.

It is evening. Thakur comes down to a somewhat natural state. A lamp has been lighted in the adjacent parlour. They are all trying to take Thakur to that room. It is with great difficulty that they manage to do so.

There is a lot of furniture in the room: a couch, chairs, coat hanger and also a lamp. Thakur is made to sit on the couch.

As he sits down, he again loses outer-consciousness and merges in ecstasy.

Casting his glance on the couch, he mutters something like one intoxicated, "It was of some use before. What is the need for it now?"

(Looking at Rakhal, he says) "Rakhal, you have come!"

Vision of the Mother of the Universe and conversation with Her –immortality of the soul

What does Thakur behold as he talks? He says

—

"O good! So You have come, Mother! How You show off in your Benarasi sari!

Mother, please don't trouble. Come and sit down. Do sit."

Thakur's ecstasy continues. The room is well lighted. Brahma devotees are all around him. Latu, Rakhal, M. and others are also seated near him. Thakur talks spontaneously in the state of bhava.

"The body and the soul. The body has come and it will go. But the soul is immortal. It is just like the

betel-nut. If the nut is ripe, its shell does not adhere to the nut. In the unripe state, it is very difficult to get the shell apart from the nut. When you have seen Her, when you have attained Her, body-consciousness vanishes – one feels that the soul is separate from the body.”

Keshab enters the room by the eastern door. They who had seen him in the Brahma Samaj temple or in the Town Hall are struck dumb seeing him. He is a veritable skeleton covered with skin. He is not able to stand up. He holds to the wall as he walks. It is with great difficulty that he sits down facing the couch.

In the meantime Thakur gets up from the couch and sits on the floor. Seeing Thakur, Keshab salutes him for a long time, lying prostrate on the floor. After the salutation, he sits up. Thakur is still in the state of ecstasy. What is he saying to himself? He is talking to the Divine Mother.

Chapter III

Brahman and Shakti Indivisible – God’s divine sport in man

Now Keshab raises his voice and says, “I have come, I have come.” He holds Sri Ramakrishna’s left hand and begins to stroke it gently. Thakur is intoxicated in bhava. He is saying many things spontaneously. All the devotees listen to him spellbound.

Sri Ramakrishna — As long as one retains one’s *upadhis* [\[112\]](#), one has the perception of plurality

and of persons, as Keshab, Prasanna, Amrita and so on. When one has attained ultimate jnana, one is aware that it is one Consciousness behind many things.

“Moreover, when one has acquired ultimate jnana, one sees that the same Consciousness has differentiated into the world, its creatures and the twenty-four cosmic principles.

“Even so, there is a special manifestation of God’s power in some. Truly He has become all – but at certain places there is greater manifestation of His power, in others less.

“Vidyasagar asked, ‘So, has God given more of His power to one and less of it to another?’ I said, ‘If it were not so, how could one person defeat fifty others? Besides, why should we have come to see you?’

“There is more power of God in that receptacle in which He manifests His lila (divine sport).

“The landlord can be found anywhere in his estate but he is often to be seen in the drawing room. The heart of the devotee is the Lord’s drawing room. He likes to enact His lila in the heart of a devotee. His power especially descends in the heart of a devotee.

“What are the signs of it? Wherever much work is done, there His power is especially manifested.

“The Adyashakti (Primeval Power) is not different from the Parabrahman (Supreme Brahman). You cannot think of the one without thinking of the other. For example, think of the gem and its lustre! If you do not hold a gem, you cannot think of its effulgence. Similarly, you cannot think of the gem

without thinking of its brilliance. It is like the snake and its serpentine movement. Without thinking of the snake, you cannot think of its movement. Similarly, forgetting the wriggling movement of the snake, you cannot think of the snake.”

Brahmo Samaj and seeing God in man – the difference between the aspirant and the perfected

“Adyashakti (the Primordial Power of Brahman) has differentiated into the phenomenal world, living beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles. It is a case of involution and evolution[\[113\]](#).

“Why do I care so much for Rakhal, Narendra and the other young men? Hazra said, ‘Why do you go about thinking of these young men? When will you give your mind to God?’ (Keshab and others smile slightly.)

“This set me to thinking seriously about it. I said to the Divine Mother, ‘What is this, Mother? Hazra asks why I think so much of the young men.’ Then I asked Bholanath. Bholanath said, ‘One can find the same illustration in the *Mahabharata*. When a person comes down from samadhi, where can he rest his mind? He cannot help seeking the company of devotees endowed with the quality of sattva.’ This dictum of the *Mahabharata* at once relieved my mind. (All laugh.)

“Hazra is not to blame. When a person is a spiritual aspirant, he should give his whole mind to God, saying, ‘Not this, not this.’ It is different in the case of a perfected soul. After attaining God, one realizes the fact of involution and evolution. When the butter is taken out of the buttermilk, one realizes

that the butter is not essentially different from the buttermilk, nor the buttermilk essentially different from the butter. One has full realization that God has become everything. Only at some places He manifests Himself in a greater degree than in others.

“When the ocean of ecstasy is agitated, even dry land is pole deep under water. Initially one must take the circuitous course of the river to reach the ocean. But when there is a flood, even dry land comes under pole-deep water. You can then row your boat straight to the ocean. You don’t have to go roundabout along the course of the river. When the harvest of paddy has been reaped, one need no longer go around the balk – one may walk straight over the field to any point.

“After God-realization, one sees that God manifests Himself in all things. However, there is a greater degree of His manifestation in the human being. And He is manifested more in devotees endowed with the quality of sattva – people who have no desire at all to enjoy ‘lust and gold’. (Everyone is silent.) When a person comes down from samadhi, where can he rest his mind? He seeks the association of pure devotees endowed with sattva guna, who have given up the enjoyment of ‘lust and gold’. Otherwise, with what will he engage himself?”

Brahmo Samaj and the Motherhood of God – the Mother of the Universe

“He who is Brahman is indeed the Adyashakti. When He is inactive, I call Him Brahman, I call

Him Purusha. When He creates, preserves, dissolves and performs such other actions, I call Him Shakti, I call Him Prakriti. Purusha and Prakriti. He who is Purusha^[114] is indeed Prakriti^[115]. Together they constitute the *anandamaya* (All-Blissful male aspect of God) and *anandamayi* (All-Blissful female aspect of God).

“He who is aware of manhood is also aware of womanhood. He who knows the father also knows the mother. (Keshab laughs.)

“One who has a sense of darkness also has a sense of light. One who knows the meaning of night also knows the meaning of day. One who has the feeling of joy also has the feeling of grief. Do you see this?”

Keshab (laughing) — Yes sir, I do.

Sri Ramakrishna — What Mother do I mean? Why, the Mother of the Universe! She who has created the Universe is preserving it. She who is always protecting Her children and providing them what they want: *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (fulfillment of desires) and *moksha* (liberation). A true child cannot live apart from its mother. It is his mother who knows everything. The boy just eats, drinks and plays; he knows nothing.

Keshab — That is quite true.

Chapter IV

His earlier story – Brahmo Samaj and describing

glories of the Lord

Sri Ramakrishna comes down to the sense world as he talks. He laughs and talks with Keshab. The room is full of people. They listen to Thakur with full attention, fixing their eyes on him. They observe that neither Thakur nor Keshab say, “How do you do?” or “How do you feel?” No words are spoken except about the Lord.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Keshab) — Why do the Brahmans dwell so much on the glory of God? ‘Oh Lord, You have created the moon, you have made the sun and the stars!’ What is the need of all this? Many people praise a garden when they see it. How many want to see the owner? What is greater, the garden or its owner?

“After drinking wine, who cares to enquire how much wine is in the wine shop? A single bottle suffices!”

His Earlier story – theft of jewelry in the shrine of Vishnu and Mathur Babu

“When I met Narendra, I never asked him who his father was or how many houses his father owned.

“You know how it is? Human beings admire wealth. So they think that the Lord, too, admires wealth. They think that if they praise God’s riches, He will be pleased. Sambhu said to me, ‘Bless me so that I may die leaving all my wealth at His lotus feet.’ I told him, ‘It is wealth to you, but what can you give God? To Him all this is wood and dust!’

“When the jewelry in the shrine of Radhakanta was

stolen, Mathur Babu and I went to the shrine. Mathur Babu said, ‘Away with you, Bhagavan, you aren’t worth anything! They took all the jewelry from your body but you could do nothing about it!’ I asked him, ‘What are you saying? Your jewels are no more than lumps of clay to Him. He who has Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth) as His Shakti (consort) is not always guarding the little offering of money that you make to Him. You should not speak in this way!’

“Does the Lord care for wealth? No, He is under the control of bhakti. What does He value? Not money but a feeling heart for Him, intense love, devotion, discrimination and dispassion for His sake.”

The form of God depends upon the worshipper – the *trigunatita*[\[116\]](#) devotee

“One’s idea of God varies according to one’s nature. The devotee with the quality of *tamas* sees that the Divine Mother eats meat, so he sacrifices a goat for Her. The devotee of *rajasic* qualities prepares rice and different kinds of dishes to offer Her. The devotee with the quality of *sattva* does not like to make a show of his worship to the world. In fact, people don’t even know that he worships. In the absence of flowers, he offers worship with vilwa leaves and water of the Ganges. He just offers a handful of sugared puffed rice or *batasas* (sweet cakes) for the deity’s dinner. At times he may offer a little *payas* (rice with milk pudding).

“And then there are the *trigunatita* devotees [who are beyond the three qualities of nature]. They are

like children. Their worship consists purely of chanting His name. Yes, the name of God alone and nothing else.”

Chapter V

Conversation with Keshab – treatment of the Atman in the Lord’s hospital

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing, to Keshab) — You are ill. Well, there is a reason for it. The intense devotional feeling within you has disturbed your body. When one is emotionally surcharged, one doesn’t understand what happens. Much later, you see that it has wreaked havoc on the body. I have noticed that when a big steamer is sailing in the Ganges, one is not aware of it. But lo! After awhile, one sees that waves of water are splashing against the bank, causing great commotion! Sometimes the water may break the bank, washing off portions of it.

“An elephant entering a hut soon makes it totter to its foundations and at last pulls it down. The elephant of bhava has entered the cottage of your body and is creating havoc there.

“Do you know how it happens? When a house catches fire, many things are burned and there is much noise and confusion. The fire of spiritual wisdom first burns up lust, anger and other such enemies. Later it destroys the sense of I-ness^[117]. Lastly, it brings about a great turmoil [in the body].

“You may be thinking it is all over. But it isn’t – as long as the least trace of disease remains uncured,

He does not release you. If your name has been entered as a patient in the hospital books, you cannot get away. The physician in charge (Doctor Sahib) doesn't allow you to leave the hospital while the least trace of disease remains. Why did you get your name entered in the hospital books?" (All laugh.)

Hearing of the hospital, Keshab laughs again and again – he is not able to control his laughter. He stops for awhile but laughs again. Thakur continues talking.

**His Earlier Story: Sri Ramakrishna's illness –
treatment by Kaviraj Rama**

Sri Ramakrishna (to Keshab) — Hriday used to say, 'I have never witnessed such bhava (fervour) and such illness, too.' I was at the time very ill with diarrhea of a rather severe type. And it seemed like myriads of ants were eating into my brain. But the words I spoke night and day were all concerning the Lord. Rama Kaviraj of Natagore came to treat me. He saw me sitting and talking to people and he said, 'Has this man gone totally out of his wits that he goes on talking like that with a body made of mere skin and a couple of bones?'

(To Keshab) "Everything is ordained by Her will. Thou doest Thy will alone, oh Mother Divine.

"Thou doest Thy will alone, O Mother Divine.
O Tara, Thou art free to will.

Thou doest Thine Own work, Mother. But
(foolish) man takes all credit to himself, saying,
'It is I who have done it.' "

“The gardener clears the soil round the roots of the Basra^[118] rose to give it the benefit of the night dew. The dew adds freshness and strength to the plant. I think that He is digging round about you to the very roots. (Thakur and Keshab laugh.) It seems that when you come next time, your work will be greater and more abiding than ever.”

Sri Ramakrishna wept for Keshab and vowed to offer a green coconut and sugar to Mother Siddheshwari

“Whenever I hear that you are ill, my heart is sorely troubled. The last time you were unwell, I wept during the last part of the night and prayed, ‘Mother, if something untoward happens to Keshab, with whom shall I talk?’ Then I went to Calcutta and presented offerings of green coconut and sugar to Mother Siddheshwari. I prayed to the Mother for your welfare.

Everyone looks with wonder and amazement on Thakur’s unspeakable love and anxiety for Keshab.

Sri Ramakrishna — This time, however, I have not felt it so much. I must tell you the truth.

“But I did feel a little worried for two or three days.”

The venerable mother of Keshab comes to the eastern door, by which Keshab had entered the drawing room. Umanath says to Sri Ramakrishna, who is seated near the door, “Here is mother bowing down to you.”

Sri Ramakrishna smiles. Umanath says, “The mother asks you to bless him so that he may get well soon.” Sri Ramakrishna says, “Offer your prayers to the Divine Mother who is Bliss everlasting. It is only She who removes all troubles.”

He says to Keshab –

“It would be better for you not to stay in the inner apartments for long hours. With children around you, you run the risk of sinking in the sea of ignorance. You will feel better if you only talk about the Lord.”

Having spoken so solemnly, Sri Ramakrishna laughs like a child. He says to Keshab, “Here, let me examine your hand.” He feels the weight of Keshab’s hand, like boys do. At last he says, “No, your hand is light enough. It is only the hands of those who think evil and do evil that are not.” (All laugh.)

Umanath again addresses Sri Ramakrishna from the door: “Mother requests you to bless Keshab.”

Sri Ramakrishna (gravely) — What power do I have? She alone can bless. Thou doest Thine Own work, Mother. But (foolish) man takes all the credit to himself, saying, ‘It is I who have done it.’

“It is on two different occasions that the Lord smiles. One is when two brothers divide a field between themselves. They measure it with a rope and say, ‘This side is mine and that is yours.’ The Lord laughs, thinking: The universe is Mine. These fellows take little parts of it and say, ‘This side is

mine and that is yours.’

“The Lord laughs a second time. The son is suffering from a serious disease. His mother is weeping. The physician comes and says, ‘Fear not, mother, I shall cure him.’ The physician doesn’t know that nobody has the power to save when the Lord slays.” (Everybody is agape with wonder.)

Just at this moment, Keshab begins to cough – he coughs for a long time. It doesn’t stop. Everybody feels sad hearing him coughing. After a long time, the cough stops for awhile. Keshab is not able to stay in the room any longer. He prostrates himself to salute Sri Ramakrishna, his head touching the ground. Then, with great difficulty, holding to the wall, he slowly goes back to his room by the same door.

Chapter VI

Brahmo Samaj and Vedic gods – only a man of mean intelligence wants to be a guru

Amrita – Keshab’s elder son – Dayananda Saraswati

Sri Ramakrishna will depart after taking some sweetmeats. Keshab’s elder son comes and sits by his side.

Amrita says, “This is Keshab’s eldest son. Please bless him by placing your hand on his head.” “It is not given to me to bless,” Sri Ramakrishna says with a smile as he gently strokes the boy’s body.

Amrita (smiling) — Well, then you may stroke his

body. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna talks to Amrita and other
Brahmo devotees about Keshab.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Amrita and others) — It is not given to me to say of a person, ‘Let him be healed.’ I do not even ask the Divine Mother to grant me this power. I only ask the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, pray grant me pure bhakti^[119].’

“How great Keshab is – honoured alike by men of the world who seek wealth and by holy men. I once met Dayananda in the garden house. He frequently left his room, saying, ‘Keshab Sen, Keshab Sen.’ He was asking everybody if Keshab had come. Perhaps Keshab was expected that day.

“Dayananda used to call the Bengali language *Gauranga Bhasha* (the language of Gaur).

“I suppose he [Keshab] did not believe in the Vedic deities and the efficacy of the *homa* (sacrificial fire), so Dayananda said, ‘God has made so many things, couldn’t He make deities?’ ”

Thakur speaks highly of Keshab before his disciples.

Sri Ramakrishna — Keshab is not a man of low intelligence. Very often he has said to many [of his disciples], ‘If you have any doubts, go to him [Sri Ramakrishna].’ It is my way also to say, ‘Let Keshab increase a million-fold.’ What shall I do with fame?

“Yes, Keshab is great – honoured alike by men of

the world and by holy men who seek God alone.”

Sri Ramakrishna will take some sweet snacks before he leaves by cab. The Brahma devotees accompany him to the cab.

Coming down the steps, Thakur sees that there is no light downstairs. He says to Amrita and other devotees, “All these places should be well lighted. Such an omission leads to poverty. See that such an omission does not take place again.”

With two or three devotees, Thakur sets out in a cab to return to the Kali Temple.

[111] A song by Jaydeva

[112] Adjuncts; semblances; the limitations imposed on the Self through ignorance by which one is bound to life.

[113] Involved, the totality of creation lies dormant in its potential state;

evolved, it is differentiated into all that is. M. says in his Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Part I: You go backwards to the Supreme Being and your personality becomes lost in His personality. You then retrace your steps. You get back your ego (personality) and come back to the point where you started only to see that the world and your ego or self were involved in the same Supreme Being.

[114] Male aspect of God

[115] Female aspect of God

[116] Beyond the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas

[117] The false ego that says ‘I am the doer’

[118] A superior quality rose

[119] Sincere love unmixed with worldly desires of any

kind, e.g., the weal of the body, pleasure, money, fame
etc.

Section XI

Sri Ramakrishna in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar with Devotees

Chapter I

Bhakti Yoga – principle of samadhi – spiritual states of Sri Chaitanya (Mahaprabhu)

Sunday, 9 December, 1883. It is the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Agrahayana (eighth month of the Hindu calendar). It is one or two o'clock in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in his room on the smaller cot talking about Lord Hari. Adhar, Manomohan, Shivachandra of Thanthania, Rakhal, M., Harish and other devotees are there. Hazra lives here these days. Thakur is describing the spiritual states of Sri Chaitanya (Mahaprabhu).

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Chaitanya Deva used to have these three states.

1. The conscious state – in this state his mind would roam between the gross and the subtle.
2. The semi-conscious state – in this state his mind was in the causal [\[120\]](#) state, in the enjoyment of the causal.
3. The innermost state – his mind would merge into the Great Cause [\[121\]](#).

“This conforms beautifully to the five sheaths (*koshas*) of the *Vedas*. The gross body is concerned with the *annamaya*^[122] and the *pranamaya*^[123] sheaths. The subtle body means the *manomaya*^[124] and the *vijnanamaya*^[125] sheaths. The causal body corresponds to the *anandamaya*^[126] sheath. The Great Cause is beyond the five sheaths. When the mind merges in the Great Cause, it results in what is called *nirvikalpa* or *jada samadhi*.

“When Chaitanya Deva was in the conscious state, he would chant the name of God. In the semi-conscious state, he danced with the devotees. And when he experienced the innermost state, he would be absorbed in *samadhi*.”

M. (to himself) — Is Thakur alluding to his own states? Chaitanya Deva also experienced these states.

Sri Ramakrishna — Chaitanya was an incarnation of *bhakti* (love and devotion). He came to teach love of God to mankind. Have love for God and everything else is done for you. There is no need at all for Hatha Yoga.

Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga

A Certain Devotee — Sir, what is Hatha Yoga?

Sri Ramakrishna — In Hatha Yoga, one is more concerned with the body. A Hatha yogi puts a bamboo tube in his anus for washing the inner

organs of the body. He draws ghee (clarified butter) and milk through his organ of reproduction. He practices exercises to train his tongue. He sits in a fixed posture and sometimes levitates. All these are the actions of *prana* (the vital breath). A magician, while performing magic feats, turned his tongue to touch his palate and immediately his body became stiff. People thought he was dead. He was buried and remained in a grave for many years. After a long time the grave was somehow opened and that man regained outer consciousness. As soon as he was conscious, he cried out, ‘Look at my magic! See my feats!’ (All laugh.) All these are actions of *prana*.

“Vedantists don’t accept Hatha Yoga. Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. In Raja Yoga one unites with God through the mind. One communes with God by means of love and reason. It is a good path of union with God. Hatha Yoga is not well-suited for the age of Kali in which life depends on food.”

Chapter II

Austerities of Sri Ramakrishna – his near and dear ones – great centres of pilgrimage of future

Sri Ramakrishna is standing on the path by the Nahabat. He sees M. seated on a side verandah behind the fence and absorbed in deep meditation. Is he meditating on the Lord? Thakur is on his way back from Jhautala (willow grove) after having a wash.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well! So you are meditating here. You will soon succeed. Just practice a little

and someone will appear to tell you the right way.

M. is startled when he sees Thakur. He remains seated on his *asana* (meditation seat).

Sri Ramakrishna — The time is ripe for you. The bird doesn't hatch its egg before the right hour. I have indicated your spiritual ideal (abode). It is truly your 'abode'.

Saying this, Thakur tells Mani again what his spiritual ideal (abode) is.

“It is not that everybody has to practice a lot of austerities – though I had to make a great deal of effort. I used to lie down with my head on the ground and the whole day would pass by while I wept and called out, ‘Mother, Mother!’ ”

Mani has been coming to Thakur for the last two years or so. He has been educated in English, so Thakur sometimes calls him 'Englishman'. Mani is college-educated and he is married.

He has heard Keshab and other learned men lecture. He enjoys reading English philosophy and science. But since he has met Thakur, he has been finding the learned books of European scholars and lectures in English and other languages unattractive. Now he wishes only to see Thakur day and night and to listen to his holy conversation.

These days M. deliberates especially upon one instruction of Thakur. Thakur has said, “You can only see the Lord if you take to sadhana (spiritual disciplines).” He also has said,

“Indeed, the aim of human life is God-realization.”

Sri Ramakrishna — Just practice a little and someone will come to tell you the right way. You must observe the fast of *ekadashi*[\[127\]](#).

“You are my own, my near and dear one. Why else would you come here so often? While listening to the kirtan (devotional songs), I saw Rakhai among the cowherds of Braja. Narendranath belongs to a very high spiritual ideal (abode). And Hirananda! What a childlike temperament he has! He is so sweet! I long to see him, too.”

**His earlier story – intimate companions of Gauranga
– tulsi grove – service rendered by Mathur Babu**

“I saw the intimate companions of Gauranga (Chaitanya Deva), not in bhava (ecstasy), but with my physical eyes. Formerly, I was in such a state that I had visions with my physical eyes. Now I see things in ecstasy.

“With the physical eyes I saw Gauranga and his intimate companions. I saw you, too, among them. Also Balaram.

“Why do I suddenly stand up when I see somebody? You know, it’s as if I were meeting an old acquaintance after a long time.

“I used to weep and pray to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, I am dying to see the devotees! Please bring them to me quickly.

’ At that time whatever came to pass in my mind would happen.

“I had planted a grove of tulsi in the Panchavati for performing japa and meditation. I had the idea that it should be enclosed by a fence of bamboo canes. Later I found that a bundle of bamboo canes and a small piece of string had come floating in with the tide in front of the Panchavati. A labourer of the temple joyfully informed me about it.

“In that state I could not perform worship. I said, ‘Mother, who will look after me in this state? Mother! I am not strong enough to bear my own burden. And I like to hear about You, I like to feed Your devotees. I like to offer something to them who visit me. How is it possible, Mother? Mother, please provide a rich person to help me!’ That is why Mathur Babu rendered me so much service.

“And I said, ‘Mother, I shall have no child, but I want a particularly pure boy devotee to always live with me. Pray give me such a boy.’ So I got Rakhal. Those who are intimate with me are either a portion of the divinity or one *kala*^[128] thereof.”

Thakur again goes toward the Panchavati. M. accompanies him. Thakur laughs and talks on various topics.

**His earlier story – wondrous vision of the form –
branch of the banana tree**

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — You see, one day I saw a wondrous form extending from the Kali Temple to the Panchavati. Do you believe it?

M. is aghast. He takes a leaf or two from a branch in the Panchavati and puts them in his

pocket.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you see where that branch fell off? I used to sit under it.

M. — I took a green branch from this tree and have it at my home.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Why?

M. — I am overjoyed when I see it. In the end, this spot will become a great centre of pilgrimage.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — What kind of centre of pilgrimage? Like Panihati?

A great festival is held at Panihati to commemorate Raghava Pandit. There is a large gathering. Sri Ramakrishna attends the festival almost every year. There he dances in ecstatic love during the kirtan just as Sri Gauranga (Chaitanya Deva) did. Unable to hold himself back at the call of his devotees, he came again to reveal his image of love during the kirtan.

Chapter III

Narration of the Lord's story

It is evening. Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the smaller cot in his room meditating on the Divine Mother. Arati of the deities is being performed one after the other in the shrines. One can hear the sound of conch shells and the ringing of bells. M. is to stay here for the night.

After some time, Thakur asks M. to read the

‘Bhaktamala’ to him. M. reads.

The story of king Jayamal

“There was a king named Jayamal. Of pure nature, he had an ineffable love for Lord Krishna. He observed the rules of worship strictly, according to *Navadha* bhakti (devotion of nine rites). His devotion was as strong as a line drawn on rock.

“He was only happy when engaged in the worship of the Deity Shyamalasundara^[129] and he knew no other gods or goddesses. At dawn he regularly sat down for four hours to worship Him.

“He would not think of anything but His worship at this time, even if there was danger to his treasury or a thunderbolt struck from above.

“Having come to know of it, a rival king invaded Jayamal’s kingdom while he was engaged in worship.

“Without their king’s command, the army chief and soldiers could not go to battle. They stood waiting for his orders as the enemy gradually surrounded the fort. Even so, the king was not moved.

“His mother came to him beating her forehead, and cried loudly in sorrow, ‘Everything is being taken away! There is complete destruction! Yet you are so unconcerned!’

“Jayamal said, ‘Mother, why do you pester me? What can one do when the Giver Himself takes back what He has given? What He protects, no one can take away. All our efforts are certainly in vain.’

“In the meantime Shyamalasundara, the Deity,

armed Himself and rode the king's horse to the battlefield. He destroyed the enemy's army, then tied the horse and returned to the worship.

“His worship over, King Jayamal came out and saw his horse panting and perspiring profusely from head to foot. He asked, ‘Who rode my horse? And who has tied him to the shrine?’ No one knew who had ridden the horse and who had brought it back.

“Suspecting something unusual, the king warily went to the battlefield with his soldiers. There he saw enemy soldiers lying dead in the field. Only one was spared, their chief king. Surprised, he asked the king what had happened.

“The enemy king, putting a cloth around his neck [\[130\]](#) and offering worship to King Jayamal with folded hands, made his submission: ‘What fight could we put up against your wonderful soldier? He could conquer the three worlds.’

“I don't ask for wealth, nor do I ask for a kingdom. You may take my kingdom if you will tell me who the blue-hued soldier is who destroyed my whole army. He won my heart as soon as I saw him.

“King Jayamal understood that it was all the doing of Shyam (the blue-hued One, Sri Krishna). The enemy king also understood the mystery and began to chant prayers, holding Jayamal's feet. He said, ‘I take refuge at the feet of the one by whose blessing Sri Krishna has showered His grace on me. May your Shyam accept me.’ ”

The reading from the scripture over, Thakur talks with M.

**Dogmatism in Bhaktamala – who is an intimate one?
Janaka and Shukadeva**

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you believe it? Do you believe that He Himself vanquished a whole army, riding a horse?

M. — The devotee called upon Him with a yearning heart. So I believe it. But whether the Lord was actually seen riding a horse, I don't know. He could have come on horseback, but I am not sure if He was actually seen.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — This book contains beautiful stories of devotees. But the book is dogmatic. It runs down other beliefs.

The next day Thakur is talking to M. standing on the garden path. Mani says to him, "I must come and stay here."

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, you come to me so often. What does it signify? People go to a sadhu and see him just once. What does it mean that you come here so often?

M. is silent. Thakur himself replies to his question.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Does one visit unless one is very intimate? One who is intimate is one who is very near and dear, one's very own – like father, son, brother and sister.

"I don't say everything to you at one time. If I did, why would you come again to see me?"

“Shukadeva went to Janaka seeking Brahmajnana (the knowledge of Brahman). Janaka asked him first to pay his *dakshina*^[131]. Shukadeva said, ‘How is the teacher’s fee due before the instruction is given?’ Janaka laughed and said, ‘When you have gained Brahmajnana, you will not be able to differentiate between the guru and the disciple. So I ask for the teacher’s fee in advance!’ ”

Chapter IV

Reflections in the heart of the disciple

It is the bright fortnight. The moon has risen. M. is strolling on the garden path of the Kali Temple. On one side of the path are Sri Ramakrishna’s room, the Nahabat, the Bakultala and the Panchavati. On the other side, the bright waters of the Bhagirathi (the holy Ganges) reflect the moonlight.

M. is talking to himself, “Can one really realize God? Sri Ramakrishna says so. He says, ‘Do a little and someone will come and tell you the way.’ In other words, he has asked me to practice some spiritual disciplines. Well, I have married and have children. Can one married and with children still attain Him? (Thinking for awhile) Certainly one can. Otherwise, why should he have said so? Is it not possible by His grace?”

“One sees the universe in front – sun, moon, stars, living beings and twenty-four cosmic principles. How have they come into existence? Who is their Creator? Moreover, what am I to Him? This life is in vain without this knowledge.

“Sri Ramakrishna is the best among men. I have never seen such a great, saintly person in my life. He certainly has seen the Lord. If not, to whom does he talk day and night, crying, ‘Mother, Mother!’ And how is it that he has so much love for the Lord – such love that he loses all outer consciousness? He goes into samadhi and becomes inert. And then sometimes he laughs, sometimes he weeps, sometimes he dances and sings, intoxicated with divine love.”

[120] *Karana*

[121] *Mahakarana*

[122] Gross physical sheath sustained by food

[123] Subtle, vital sheath consisting of five pranas: prana, apana, samana, vyana, and udana. It vitalizes and holds together the body and mind for the continuation of life; its gross manifestation is the breath.

[124] Sheath of mind which receives sense impressions

[125] Sheath of intellect which discriminates or wills

[126] Body of bliss, so-called because it is nearest to the Blissful Atman

[127] The eleventh day of the lunar fortnight

[128] One sixteenth of the power of divinity

[129] An appellation of Lord Krishna

[130] One puts a piece of cloth round one’s neck to indicate humility

[131] A fee or gift given to the teacher

Section XII

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees at Dakshineswar

Chapter I

It is the full moon day of the month of Agrahayana^[132], the Sankranti^[133], Friday, 14 December, 1883, time about 9:00 a.m. Sri Ramakrishna is standing near the door of his room on the southeastern verandah. Ramlal stands nearby. Rakhal and Latu are also not far away. M. enters and salutes Thakur by touching his head to the ground.

Thakur says, “So you have come! It is a very auspicious day.” M. will stay with Thakur for a few days and practice *sadhana* (spiritual disciplines). Hasn’t Thakur said, “Do a little and somebody will come to tell you the way?”

Thakur had said to M., “It is not right for you to take your meals daily from the guest house. It is intended for the sadhus and the poor. You should bring your own cook here.”

Consequently, M. has brought a cook with him.

Where is his food to be cooked? M. drinks milk, so Thakur has asked Ramlal to arrange it with the milkman.

Ramlal is reading the *Adhyatma Ramayana* to Thakur. M. is seated beside Thakur.

“Ramachandra is returning to Ayodhya after

marrying Sita. On the way he is accosted by Parashurama. Having heard that Rama has broken Shiva's bow, Parashurama creates a great deal of trouble. Dasharatha is full of fear. Parashurama throws a bow to Rama and asks him to string it. Rama smiles, holds it with his left hand, strings it and then twangs it. Putting an arrow to the bow, he says to Parashurama, 'Tell me, where I should shoot it.' Parashurama's arrogance crumbles. Realizing that Sri Rama is the Supreme Brahman, he chants a hymn of praise to him."

Sri Ramakrishna goes into ecstasy hearing Parashurama's hymn. Every now and then he utters, "Rama, Rama" in a sweet voice.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ramlal) — Please read the story of Guhaka, the boatman.

When Ramachandra went to the forest to fulfill a pledge to his father, it startled Guhaka. Ramlal reads from the Bhaktamala –

"Guhaka began to shed tears and his voice cracked. Almost motionless, he gazed at Rama like a puppet.

"Slowly approaching Rama, he said, 'Please come into my house.' Rama called him a friend and embraced him. Guhaka then surrendered himself to Rama, saying:

" 'It is good that you are my friend. I surrender my body and soul at your feet. You are my soul, my wealth, my kingdom, my love, my liberation and all meritorious deeds. I am dying of love for you. I dedicate myself at your feet.'

“Ramachandra is to spend fourteen years in the forest with matted hair and wearing the bark of trees for clothes. Hearing this, Guhaka matted his own hair and put on a cloth of bark; he ate nothing but fruits and root vegetables. After fourteen years, when Rama did not return from exile, Guhaka was preparing his own funeral pyre when Hanuman came and told him that Rama was coming. At Hanuman’s words, Guhaka was overjoyed. Soon Ramachandra and Sita arrived by the Pushpaka [\[134\]](#) chariot.

“Ramachandra, the compassionate, the source of supreme joy, the gracious loving Lord of the devotees and the mine of all virtues, embraced his great and dear devotee, Guhaka, who was thrilled with joy. The Lord and the servant remained in deep embrace while tears drenched their bodies. Blessed you are, Guhaka! There was the chant of ‘*jai, jai*’ (victory, victory) from the heavenly abode.”

Keshab Sen content with what comes to him without effort – the way – deep dispassion and renunciation of worldly life

Sri Ramakrishna is resting awhile after his meal. M. is seated nearby. Soon Dr. Shyam and some other people arrive.

Sri Ramakrishna sits up and begins to talk.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is not that one must always work. When God is realized, there is no duty to perform. When the fruit appears, the flower falls off by itself.

“There is no obligatory worship like *sandhya*^[135] for him who has realized God. Sandhya ends in the Gayatri^[136]. The recitation of the Gayatri is enough. Gayatri ends in Omkar^[137]. You don’t even have to chant the Gayatri mantra – just repeating Om is enough. How long are there such duties as sandhya? As long as, at the name of Hari or Rama, hair of the body does not stand on end, or tears of joy flow. It is not right to worship for the sake of wealth, or for winning a lawsuit.”

A Particular Devotee — Everybody is trying to earn money. I see it. Hasn’t Keshab Sen given away his daughter in marriage to a prince?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is different with Keshab. To a true devotee, the Lord provides everything without any effort on his part. The real son of a king gets a monthly allowance automatically. I am not talking of pleaders and advocates who earn money by becoming slaves to others and working so hard. I say, ‘One should be the real son of the king.’ He who has no desire, who never asks for money, gets it automatically. The *Gita* says: ‘That which comes without effort^[138].’

“The real brahmin is he who has no desire – he accepts food even from a *dome*^[139]. He does not ask for anything. Everything comes to him by itself.”

A Particular Devotee — Sir, how should a householder lead his life?

Sri Ramakrishna — He must live like a mudfish. He must develop love for the Lord by meditating on Him in a solitary place away from home. He can then live with his family without attachment to it. He lives in the mud but does not allow it to soil his body. Such a person leads a life of nonattachment in the world.

Sri Ramakrishna notices that Mani is all attention to his words.

Sri Ramakrishna (casting a glance at Mani) — One can realize the Lord when one has developed deep dispassion (*vairagya*). He who develops it feels that the world is a forest on fire – it is ever burning! He looks at his wife and son as a death well. When one has such dispassion, one leaves one's home. But living with nonattachment alone is not enough. 'Lust and greed' constitute *maya* (illusion). If you recognize *maya* it will take flight, ashamed of itself. A person covered himself with a tiger skin to frighten others. He whom he was trying to frighten said, 'I have recognized who you are! You are our own 'Hare'.' The man in the tiger skin laughed and went away to frighten somebody else.

“All women are forms of Shakti (Divine Energy). It is the *Adyashakti* (Primeval Power) that has become woman and appears to us in the form of women. The *Adhyatma (Ramayana)* says: Narada and other saints sang the praises of Rama, saying, 'Oh Rama, you are the forms of all men and all the forms of women are the manifestations of Sita. You are Indra, Sita is Indrani; You are Shiva, Sita is Shivani; You are an aspect of man and Sita of woman!' What more can I say? Where there is a

male, you are that and where there is a female, it is Sita.”

**Renunciation and *prarabdha* [\[140\]](#) – Sri Ramakrishna
prohibits *vamachara* [\[141\]](#)**

(To the devotees) “One cannot renounce by a mere wish. One has to consider the *prarabdha* and the *samskaras* (tendencies of past life). A yogi said to a king, ‘Please come sit with me and meditate on Bhagavan.’ The king said, ‘Master, I will not be able to do so for long. I still have some desire for sense enjoyments. If I stay in this forest, I might even create a kingdom here. I still have the desire for sense enjoyments.’

“When he was a boy, Natabar Panja used to graze cattle in this garden. But he had great desire for sense enjoyments. That is why he established a castor mill and is earning a lot of money from it. He does a lot of trading in castor oil in Alambazar.

“According to one sect, spiritual disciplines must be practiced in the company of women. I was taken to a group of women by people of the Kartabhaja sect. All the women came and sat near me. When I addressed them as mother, they said to each other, ‘Oh, he is only a beginner – he doesn’t yet know the ‘ghat’ (the way).’ In their sect he who is unripe is a beginner. Then he becomes an aspirant and lastly *siddha* of the *siddhas* (supremely perfect).

“A woman approached Vaishnavcharan and sat near him. When asked, Vaishnavcharan said, ‘She has the attitude of a child.’

“One easily experiences a downfall by thinking of a

woman as one's wife. Taking her as the Mother is a pure attitude."

The devotees from Jhansa Ripade rise, saying,
"We take our leave. We will see and pay
homage to Mother Kali and the gods."

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna and idol worship – yearning and God realization

Mani is strolling alone in the Panchavati and other areas of the Kali Temple. Thakur has said, "By practicing a little spiritual disciplines, one can realize God." Is Mani thinking about that? And about deep dispassion? And that maya takes to its wings when she is recognized?

It is about half past three. Mani is again sitting in Sri Ramakrishna's room. A teacher from the Broughton Institution has brought some students to visit Sri Ramakrishna. Thakur is talking with them. The teacher asks a question every now and then. The topic of conversation is idol worship.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the teacher) — What is wrong with idol worship? The Vedanta holds that wherever there are 'existence, light and love,' God manifests. Thus, there is nothing but God in all the objects we see.

"Just see how long little girls play with dolls. Till they get married and live with their husbands. When they get married, they put away their dolls and other toys in a wicker basket. When you have

attained God, what is the use of worshipping the idol?”

He looks at Mani and says –

“One attains God when one develops intense love for Him. A lot of yearning is necessary. When one has great yearning, the whole mind goes to Him.”

Childlike faith and God-realization – Govinda, the husband – the boy Jatila

“There was a girl who became a widow at a very early age. She had never seen her husband’s face. Seeing the husbands of other girls, she asked her father one day, ‘Father, where is my husband?’ Her father replied, ‘Govinda is your husband. If you call Him, you will see Him.’ Hearing this, the girl went into her room and, shutting the door, she began to cry and call out, ‘Govinda! Please come. Let me see you. Why don’t you come?’ Hearing the cries of the little girl, Bhagavan could not hold Himself back – He appeared before the girl.

“A childlike faith is needed! Such as the yearning of a child to see its mother. Such longing heralds the dawn. It is followed by sunrise. One sees the Lord after such intense longing.

“Listen to the story of the boy Jatila. To get to school, he had to go on horseback through a forest. On the way, he would feel frightened. When he told his mother about it, she said: Why fear? You should call out, ‘Madhusudana.’ The boy asked, ‘Who is Madhusudana?’ The mother replied, ‘Madhusudana is your elder brother.’ After that, when he felt afraid

going through the forest alone, he cried out, 'Brother Madhusudana.' When there was no reply, he called out, 'Where are you, brother Madhusudana? Please come, I am so afraid!' Bhagavan then could not hold Himself back. He came and said, 'Here I am. What is there to fear?' And he accompanied the boy to the passage leading to the school and said to Jatila, 'I will come whenever you call Me. Don't be afraid.' Such childlike faith! Such yearning!

"A brahmin used to worship Bhagavan daily in his house. One day he had to go out on business. Before going he said to his young son, 'Offer food to Bhagavan today. The deity must be fed.' The boy did so. But Bhagavan sat still – He would neither talk nor eat. Having waited for some time, the boy saw that Bhagavan did not move. He was very sure that He would come, take his seat on his *asana*, and eat his meal. The boy said again and again, 'Bhagavan, please come and eat. It is already very late. I cannot be here much longer.' Bhagavan, however, did not say anything. The boy began to cry, saying, 'Lord, my father asked me to feed you. Why don't you come? Why don't you eat here?' He cried yearningly for some time. Then he saw Bhagavan come smiling to take His *asana* (seat) and eat the meal. After serving Him, the boy went out of the shrine. The members of his family said, 'You have fed the Lord. Bring the offered food downstairs.' The boy said, 'Yes, yes. I have fed Him and Bhagavan has eaten everything.' They said, 'What are you saying?' The boy said simply, 'Why, Bhagavan has eaten the food!' They all went to the shrine and were speechless with wonder!"

It will be a long time till evening. Sri Ramakrishna stands on the southern side of the Nahabat and talks to Mani. The Ganga flows in front of them. It is winter, so Thakur is wearing a shawl.

Sri Ramakrishna — Will you sleep in the room in the Panchavati?

Mani — Won't they give me the upper floor room of the Nahabat?

Sri Ramakrishna will talk to the manager about Mani. He will indicate a room for him. Mani has liked the room on the upper floor of the Nahabat. He is poetic by temperament. By staying there, he will be able to enjoy the view of the sky, the Ganges, the moonlight, the flowering trees and so forth.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why wouldn't they assign the room to you? I suggested the room in the Panchavati because so much repetition of Hari's name and meditation have been practiced there.

Chapter III

To love the Lord is the end of life

Incense has been burnt in Sri Ramakrishna's room. Thakur is seated on the smaller cot and meditating. Mani is seated on the floor. Rakhal, Latu and Ramlal are also in the room.

Thakur says to Mani, "The main thing is to develop bhakti for God, to love Him." He asks Ramlal to sing. He sings in a sweet voice.

Thakur sings the initial words of every song,
letting him sing the rest.

As asked by Thakur, Ramlal sings ‘the
sannyasa of Gauranga.’

What an exquisite bright form of Sri Gauranga
– his eyes streaming with the tears of love –
have I seen in Keshab Bharati’s hut!

Gauranga is dancing mad like an elephant. He
sings and then rolls on the dust, tears streaming
from his eyes.

He calls on Hari, weeping, piercing the mortal
world and heaven with his thundering voice.

Then he repeatedly prays for liberation of the
slave, with a straw under his teeth and his two
palms joined together.

He wears the robe of a yogi after having his
locks of hair shaved.

One cries with one’s heart seeing him so surged
with bhakti and *prema* (ecstatic love).

Having renounced all, he has come to distribute
prema, overwhelmed as he is by the sorrows of
mankind.

Premdas wishes to wander from door to door
like a slave at the feet of Sri Chaitanya.

Ramlal sings again: Sachi weeps and says,
“Nimai! How can I live without you?” Thakur
says, “Please sing that song.”

1. I am not hesitant to grant liberation. I hesitate
to grant pure bhakti... [See Section V for
complete song.]

2. Can everybody have the vision of Radha?
Can one have the love she had?

It is extremely rare indeed. No adoration, no sadhana – how can one attain the treasure?

Unique are the raindrops that fall on the new moon of the month during the Libra zodiac sign in *swati nakshatra*[\[142\]](#). Does it rain like that at any other time?

Thakur again says to Ramlal, “Please sing that song: Gaur and Nitai, you two brothers...”
Thakur adds lines to the song along with Ramlal.

O Lord, Gaur and Nitai, you two brothers are so full of compassion.

I went to Kashi but Vishveshvara told me that I had come to Sachi Devi’s house in Nadia. O Lord, I have recognized you.

I have been to several places. But nowhere have I seen a compassionate one like you.

You were Kanai and Balai in Braja. Now hiding these forms you are Gaur and Nitai in Nadia.

In Braja you played hide and seek; in Nadia your sport is to roll in the dust uttering, ‘Hari, Hari,’ intoxicated with love.

Your sport in Braja was full of action. In Nadia it is only repeating the name of Hari.

O Gauranga, the compassionate one, the whole of your body is covered. Only your two slanting eyes have been spared.

O the saviour of the fallen, hearing your redeeming name, I feel so assured in my mind.

I have reached you with great hopes. O the compassionate one, Lord Gauranga, give me shelter under your feet.

Jagai and Madhai have been liberated. O Lord, the redeemer of the holy, I need your assurance.

You even raise the *chandala* up in your arms and utter *Haribol*^[143] to him with so much compassion, you Lord of the indigent.

Sri Ramakrishna's devotees practice sadhana in solitude

Mani is alone in the upper story room of the Nahabat. It is quite late at night. Today is the full moon day of Agrahayana. The sky, the Ganges, the Kali Temple, the spires of the shrine, the garden paths and the Panchavati seem to be swimming in moonlight. Mani, all alone, is meditating on Sri Ramakrishna.

At about 3:00 a.m. he rises. He goes toward the Panchavati to the north. Sri Ramakrishna has talked to him about the Panchavati. Mani doesn't like to stay in the Nahabat anymore. He has made up his mind to live in the Panchavati room.

Stillness reigns everywhere. There was a flood tide of the river at 11:00 p.m. He had heard the repeated sound of the tide. Now he proceeds toward the Panchavati. He hears a sound from far off, as if somebody is wailing from the Panchavati grove in pain, "Where are you, brother Madhusudana?"

It is full moon. The rays of the moon stream down through the branches of the banana trees.

He proceeds further and sees from a distance that one of Sri Ramakrishna's devotees is seated in the middle of the Panchavati. It is he who has been calling aloud from that solitary spot, "Where are you, brother Madhusudana?"

Mani watches him silently.

[132] Eighth month of the Hindu calendar

[133] The last day of the month

[134] It is the chariot of Kubera which can fly through air at great speed

[135] Worship and meditation performed at dawn, noon, and sunset by orthodox Hindus

[136] A Vedic mantra (sacred text) which brahmins and other twice-born Hindus repeat everyday while meditating on the Supreme Being. "May we meditate on the effulgent Light of Him who is worshipful and who has given birth to all worlds. May He direct the rays of our intelligence toward the path of good."

[137] The Vedic symbol for the Supreme Being

[138] Gita 4:22

[139] A caste of Hindus whose duty is to cremate the dead

[140] Karma which is stored up and begun to bear fruit

[141] Religious practice, prescribed in the Tantra, to be performed by a man in collaboration with a woman.

[142] A particular conjunction of stars

[143] To chant the name of Lord Hari

Section XIII

Sri Ramakrishna with Prankrishna, M. and other Devotees at Dakshineswar

Chapter I

Prankrishna, M., Ram, Girindra and Gopal with Sri Ramakrishna

It is 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, 5 April, 1884, the twenty-fourth day of Chaitra. M. comes to the Dakshineswar Temple and sees Sri Ramakrishna sitting on the smaller cot in his room, smiling. A number of devotees, including Prankrishna Mukherji, are sitting on the floor.

Prankrishna is from the aristocratic Mukherji family of Janai. His home is in Shyampukur in Calcutta. He is the head of the auction house of McKenzie Lyal known as the Exchange. Though a householder, he is very interested in discussions of the Vedanta. He is devoted to the Paramahansa Deva [Sri Ramakrishna] and often comes to see him. One day he took Sri Ramakrishna to his house and held a celebration in honour of his coming. He takes his daily morning bath at the Baghbazar ghat and when a boat is available, he goes directly to Dakshineswar to see Thakur. Today, too, he hired a boat. Hardly had it left the bank when the river became choppy. M. asked Prankrishna to let him off the boat. In spite of assurances of safety from Prankrishna and his

friends, M. insisted. He said, “You must put me on land. I shall go to Dakshineswar on foot.” Prankrishna had to let him go.

Reaching Dakshineswar, M. finds Prankrishna and the others talking with Thakur on spiritual matters. They had arrived a few moments before M. He salutes Thakur by touching his head on the floor and takes his seat.

Humanity and divinity of incarnation

Sri Ramakrishna (to Prankrishna) — But He is manifest more in the human being. If you say, ‘How can one who is subject to hunger, thirst and other human needs, and who may be suffering from disease or sorrow, be an avatar,’ the reply is, ‘Even Brahman laments when bound by the five elements.’

“You see, Ramachandra wept in his suffering at Sita’s pangs of separation. And once He Incarnated Himself as a sow to kill Hiranyaksha (the demon). When Hiranyaksha had been killed, Narayana still did not want to go back to heaven. He stayed in the body of the sow and had a big litter. He was very happy living with the young ones. The gods exclaimed, ‘What does it mean? Bhagavan doesn’t want to return.’ So they all went to Shiva and humbly told him the situation. Shiva went to the sow and tried to persuade it to return, but it began to suckle its young ones. (Everybody laughs.) Then Shiva pierced the sow’s body with his trident. Narayana came out, laughing merrily, and went back to heaven.”

Prankrishna (to Thakur) — Sir, what is the *Anahata*

Shabda?

Sri Ramakrishna — The *Anahata Shabda* goes on continuously by itself – it is the sound of Om. It originates in the Supreme Brahman. Only yogis can hear it, not those who are attached to the sense world. Yogis know that this sound rises from the navel and that it also originates in the Supreme Brahman, resting on the Ocean of Milk^[144].

Keshab Sen's question about the afterlife

Prankrishna — Sir, what is the afterlife like?

Sri Ramakrishna — Keshab Sen asked the same question. As long as a man lives in ignorance – in other words, as long as he doesn't realize the Lord – he has to be born in this world. But when he has attained jnana, he does not have to come to the world any longer, to the earth or to any other world.

“The potter puts his pots out to dry in the sun. You must have noticed that some of the pots dry hard and others do not. When a cow or some other animal happens to walk over them, some of them break. If a hard pot breaks, the potter throws it away, for it is of no use. But when a soft one breaks, he collects its clay and again puts it on the wheel to make another pot. It means that until one has realized God, one has to go back into the hands of the ‘potter.’ In other words, one has to repeatedly return to this world.

“What is the use of sowing boiled paddy seed? It can never sprout into a plant. When a man has been baked (perfected) in the fire of jnana, he is not used

for new creation – he attains salvation.”

Vedanta and ego – Vedanta and ‘awareness of a witness’ – jnana and vijnana

“According to the *Puranas*, the devotee is one entity and Bhagavan is another. I and you are separate entities. The body is only a small earthen bowl. Inside the body there is the mind, the intellect and the water of ego. Brahman is like the sun. He is reflected in the water. Thus the devotee sees the form of the Lord.

“In the Vedanta, only Brahman is real; all else is maya, like a dream, a nonentity. The stick of I-ness lies on the ocean of Sachchidananda. (To M.) Listen to this carefully. If you take out this stick of ego, there remains only one ocean of Sachchidananda. But as long as there is the stick of ego in it, it looks split into two – one part of the water here, and the other part there. When one attains the knowledge of Brahman one goes into samadhi. Then this I-ness vanishes.

“For this reason, Shankaracharya preserved his ‘I of knowledge’ – to teach mankind.

(To Prankrishna) “But a jnani (man of spiritual knowledge) has certain characteristics. One may think that he has attained jnana, but what are the signs? He cannot harm anybody, he becomes childlike. When the philosopher’s stone touches a steel sword, its steel turns into gold. This gold cannot injure. Outwardly you may see anger and egoism in him, but in reality the jnani has none.

“From a distance a burnt piece of rope still looks

like a rope. But if you go near it and blow on it, it blows away. There is only a semblance of anger and egoism in a jnani. In reality there is no anger, or egoism.

“The child has no attachment. It makes a doll house and if anybody touches it, it begins to cry loudly, jumping around in protest. Later, it breaks the doll house itself. Sometimes it obstinately says, ‘My father gave this cloth to me; I won’t give it to you.’ And next it forgets about the cloth when given a doll to play with; it leaves the cloth behind and goes away.

“All these are the signs of a jnani. Perhaps he is very rich – he has big pictures in his house, a horse driven carriage and so on. But he leaves all this behind and goes to Kashi[\[145\]](#).

“According to Vedanta, even the state of waking is not of any significance. A woodcutter was dreaming when somebody woke him up. Irritated, he cried out, ‘Why have you disturbed my sleep? I was a king and father of seven boys. The boys had already been educated and trained in weaponry. I was on my throne, ruling my kingdom. Why did you destroy my world of happiness?’ The man said, ‘But it was a dream, what does it matter?’ The woodcutter said, ‘Go on! You don’t understand. To be a king in a dream is as true for me as to be a woodcutter. If it is true to be a woodcutter, then it is also true to be a king in a dream.’ ”

Prankrishna is always talking about jnana. That must be why Thakur is telling him about the state of a jnani. Now he talks of the state of a vijnani. Is he hinting at his own state?

Sri Ramakrishna — Reaching the Atman through the path of ‘neti, neti’ (not this, not this) is jnana. By reasoning ‘neti, neti,’ one goes into samadhi and attains the Atman.

“What is vijnana? You must know God in a special way. One person has heard of milk, another has seen it, and yet another has drunk it. He who has only heard of milk is an ajnani (a man of ignorance), he who has seen it is a jnani (a man of spiritual knowledge), and he who has drunk it has attained vijnana. That is to say, he has known God in a special way. When one sees the Lord and talks to Him as a near and dear one, it is *vijnana*.

“Initially one must start discriminating ‘neti, neti’. God is not the five vital elements^[146], nor the senses. He is neither the mind, nor the intellect nor the ego. He is beyond all cosmic principles. If you are to climb a roof, you have to leave the steps behind one by one. The steps are not the roof. But when you have reached the roof, you perceive that the steps are made of the same material as the roof, namely bricks, lime and brick-dust. He who is the Supreme Brahman has become the universe and all its living beings. He has also become the twenty-four cosmic principles. That which is Atman has become the five vital elements. Then why is the earth so hard if it is made out of the Atman? All is possible by His will. Flesh and bones have resulted from blood and semen. How hard is sea foam!”

Can a householder attain vijnana? He needs to perform sadhana

“When one has attained vijnana, one may live in the family. Then one realizes very well that God has become the universe and its living beings, that He is not outside the world. When Ramachandra attained jnana, he said, ‘I shall not live in the household.’ Thereupon Dasharatha sent Vaishishtha to explain it to him. Vaishishtha said, ‘Rama! If there is no Lord in the household, you may renounce it.’ Rama was silent at this. He knew very well that there is nothing without the Lord. So he did not renounce the world. (To Prankrishna) The main thing is that you need the divine sight. You develop this sight when your mind becomes pure. Just consider the Kumari Puja (Thakur’s worship of an unmarried girl). This girl had excreta and urine inside her body. But I saw her as the very manifestation of Bhagavati. Take the case of the wife and son. A man loves both of them, but each with a different attitude. So it is said that it all depends on one’s mind. The attitude of the pure mind is very different from the impure. It is this pure mind with which one sees the Lord in the household. You need to practice sadhana (spiritual disciplines) for it.

“Practice of spiritual disciplines is needed. One has to know that one gets easily bound when one has physical relations with one’s wife. A woman naturally loves her husband, just as a man loves his wife. That is how both of them quickly fall spiritually.

“But there is a great advantage to family life. One may have physical relations with the wife when it is especially needed. (Smiling) Why are you laughing, M.?”

M. (to himself) — Since householders cannot renounce fully, all at once, Thakur is allowing this much. Isn't one-hundred percent brahmacharya (celibacy) totally impossible while living in the family?

A Hatha Yogi (practitioner of Hatha Yoga) enters.

A Hatha Yogi has been living in the Panchavati for the last few days. He takes only milk and opium, and practices Hatha Yoga. He doesn't eat rice and lentils. However, he hasn't enough money for the milk and opium. When Thakur went to the Panchavati, he had a word with the Hatha Yogi. The Hatha Yogi said to Rakhal, "Please request the Paramahansa to arrange it for me." Thakur sent the message that he would see if the gentlemen from Calcutta would help when they visit him.

The Hatha Yogi (to Sri Ramakrishna) — What did you say to Rakhal?

Sri Ramakrishna — I told him that I would find out if any gentleman was willing to give some money. But nobody did. (To Prankrishna) It seems you don't like these people.

Prankrishna doesn't reply.

The Hatha Yogi leaves.

Thakur resumes the conversation.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna and telling the truth – believe in

God's sport as a human being

Sri Ramakrishna (to Prankrishna and other devotees) — Besides, you must always be firm in telling the truth while leading a household life. You can, indeed, realize Bhagavan simply by being truthful. I am not so firm about telling the truth now as I used to be. Before, if I once said that I would take a bath, I would begin to doubt whether I had taken a full bath, even when I had stepped into the Ganges, recited the sacred words, and poured a little water on my head. If I said that I would go to a particular spot to ease myself, I would go only there. I went to Ram's house in Calcutta and happened to say that I would not eat *luchi* (fried bread). When I was given food, I was very hungry. But since I had said that I would not take luchis, I just filled my stomach with sweetmeats. (All laugh.)

“Now I am not so particular about speaking the truth. Once I happened to say that I would go to ease myself, but felt no special need for it. What was I to do? I asked Ram^[147]. He said, ‘You need not go.’ Then I reasoned, ‘All is Narayana, Ram is Narayana too. Why should I not accept his word?’ The elephant may be Narayana, but so is the mahout. When the mahout is asking me not to go near the elephant, then why should I not obey him? Thinking this way, I am now less strict about being truthful.”

**His earlier story: Vaishnavcharan's instruction –
believe in God's sport as a human being**

“Now I find that I am undergoing a change. Many days ago Vaishnavcharan said that one attains *purna* (ultimate) jnana only when one sees God in man. Now I see that it is He who is moving about in all the different forms. Now He is in the form of a sadhu, now a deceitful person, and now a rascal. So I say, ‘Narayana in the form of a sadhu, Narayana as a deceitful person, Narayana as a rascal, and Narayana as a wicked person.’”

“Now I ask myself, how can I feed everybody? I have the desire to feed everyone. So I make a person stay here and I feed him.”

Prankrishna (looking at M. and laughing) — He is a good man. (To Sri Ramakrishna) Sir, he forced us to land him from the boat.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — What happened?

Prankrishna — He was on the boat. Seeing a few waves on the river, he said, ‘Let me land.’ (To M.) How did you get here?

M. (laughing) — On foot.

Sri Ramakrishna begins to laugh.

**Difficult for the householders to give up worldly work
– the pundit and practice of discrimination**

Prankrishna (to Ramakrishna) — Sir, I am thinking about giving up work. When one is busy at work, one can think of nothing else. (Pointing at a gentleman companion) I am training him in my job.

When I give it up, he will attend to it. I feel that I can't engage in work any longer.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, it is very troublesome. It will be very nice if you can take to contemplation of God now. But though you say so, will you be able to give it up? Captain also said the same. Householders say so, but they cannot do it.

“So many pundits talk of jnana. They only talk of it, but they don't put their words into practice. They are like vultures that soar high but their gaze remains fixed on the charnel pits. In other words, they remain attached to 'lust and gold,' to the world. When I hear of a pundit having discrimination^[148] and nonattachment^[149], I am in awe of him. Otherwise, they are like dogs and goats to me.”

Prankrishna salutes Thakur and prepares to leave. He asks M whether he will accompany him. M replies, “No, you go ahead.” Prankrishna laughs and says, “And you must also leave!” (All laugh.)

M. strolls near the Panchavati and then takes his bath at the ghat where Sri Ramakrishna usually bathes. Then he goes for the darshan^[150] of Bhavatarini and Radhakanta and offers his obeisance. He says to himself, “I was told that the Lord is formless. Why, then, am I paying obeisance to deities? Sri Ramakrishna believes in gods and goddesses with form. Is that the reason I am doing this? I know nothing about the Lord, nor do I understand. When Thakur believes in them, I, an insignificant fellow, should also have faith.”

M. is having the darshan of Bhavatarini. He sees that She has a human head and a sword in Her two left hands. With Her two right hands She is granting assurance and fearlessness. On the one hand, She is so terrible, and on the other, the gracious and loving Mother of the devotees – the meeting point of both attitudes. The Mother, compassionate to the lowly, to the devotee, so affectionate! But it is also true that the Mother is terrible, the picture of death! Why two opposite attitudes in one person? Only She knows.

It is Thakur's explanation that is coming to M.'s mind and he is thinking about it. It is said that Keshab Sen accepted Mother Kali in Thakur's presence. Keshab would say, "Is this the Goddess who was Spirit and Consciousness manifesting Herself in a clay image?"

Sri Ramakrishna, the man in samadhi, is conscious of pots and pans

Now M. comes and sits close to Sri Ramakrishna. Seeing that he has taken his bath, Thakur gives him prasad of fruits and so forth. M. takes them to the semi-circular verandah. He leaves the brass pot of drinking water on the verandah and quickly comes in to sit close to Thakur again. Thakur says, "Did you bring the brass pot?"

M. — Sir, I'll bring it immediately.

Sri Ramakrishna — Bah!

M. is embarrassed. He goes to the verandah and brings the brass pot into the room.

M.'s home is in Calcutta but, because of family problems, he lives in a rented house in Shyampukur. His place of work is nearby. His father, brothers and others live in the paternal house. Thakur wants him to live in his parental house because it is more convenient to meditate on the Lord in a joint family. Though Thakur has been saying this off and on, unfortunately M. has not returned to his parental house. Thakur raises this topic again today.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, are you going back home now?

M. — I am not the least inclined to go there.

Sri Ramakrishna — But, why? Your father has renovated the whole house.

M. — I have suffered so many troubles in that house. There is no way that I can go there.

Sri Ramakrishna — Who are you afraid of?

M. — Everyone!

Sri Ramakrishna (gravely) — This fear is as unsubstantial as being afraid of the boat!

The deities have been offered holy food. Arati is being performed as the cymbals and bells ring. The Kali Temple is filled with joy. Hearing the sound of arati the indigent, sadhus and fakirs all run toward the guest house. Some of them have a sal leaf plate and the others, a

metal plate and a drinking pot. They all partake of the prasad (sacramental food). Today M., too, takes the prasad of Mother Bhavatarini (Kali).

Chapter III

Keshab Chandra Sen and the Navavidhan – the Navavidhan has some substance

Thakur is resting after his meal. In the meantime Ram, Girindra and many other devotees arrive. They offer him salutation by touching their heads on the floor, and then they take their seats.

The topic of conversation turns to Keshab Chandra Sen's Navavidhan.

Ram (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Sir, it doesn't seem to me that the Navavidhan has done much good. If Keshab Babu had been genuine, why would his devotees come to their present plight? According to me, there is no substance in him. It is like sounding some broken pieces of earthenware and then locking the door – people would think that there is a lot of money inside. But actually there are only broken pieces of baked clay. Outsiders don't know what is inside.

Sri Ramakrishna — There is definitely some substance in him. If not, why would so many people honour him? Why don't people see the greatness of Shivanath? Unless the Lord wills, greatness is not honoured.

“Yet, unless a person renounces the world, he can

accomplish nothing wonderful and people do not accept him. People say, 'He is a householder, he enjoys 'lust and gold' secretly while he tells us that the Lord is the only Reality and the world is transitory like a dream.' Unless one has renounced the world completely, his word is not accepted by everybody, even though some worldly people may accept it. Keshab lived a householder life, so he was also interested in his family. Worldly people have to be protected. He lectured a great deal, but he also made full provision for his household. What a son-in-law he had! I entered his house and saw big cots! When you live a householder's life, such luxuries come automatically. What is the world if not a place for sense enjoyment?"

Ram — Keshab got those cots when his ancestor's property was divided. It was his share. Sir, you may say anything, but Vijay Babu told me that Keshab Sen said to him, 'I am a portion of Christ, of Gauranga (Chaitanya Deva). And you should say that you are Advaita.' And do you know what he said? That you also belong to the Navavidhan. (Thakur and others laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — I don't know, brother. I don't even know the meaning of Navavidhan! (All laugh.)

Ram — Keshab's disciples say that he has harmonized jnana and bhakti.

Sri Ramakrishna (surprised) — How is that, brother? Then what does the *Adhyatma (Ramayana)* contain? Narada began to sing a hymn of praise to

Ramachandra, ‘O Rama! You are the same Supreme Brahman that the *Vedas* talk of. You have been living with us as a human being and, though you look like a man, in reality you are not a human being. You are that Supreme Brahman.’

Ramachandra said, ‘Narada, I am extremely pleased with you. Please ask for a boon.’ Narada said, ‘Rama, what boon can I ask? Grant that I may have pure bhakti for your lotus feet. And may you not enchant me with your world-bewitching maya.’ The *Adhyatma (Ramayana)* contains only jnana and bhakti.

Now the conversation turns on Amrita, a disciple of Keshab.

Ram — Amrita Babu has become quite a different person.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, I saw him rather sick the other day.

Ram — Sir, let me tell you about his lecture. The moment the drum is sounded, they all say, ‘Victory to Keshab.’ Didn’t you say that ‘dal^[151]’ is formed in small shallow pits of stagnant water? One day Amrita Babu said in his lecture, ‘The holy man [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] says that sects are formed in small pits. But brother, one needs the sects, one definitely needs them. I tell you the truth: they are indeed needed.’ (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna — What is this? Shame! Shame! Shame! What a lecture!

Now the topic of discussion is that some people like to praise their leader.

Sri Ramakrishna — The musical play of Nimai Sannyasa (the renunciation of Sri Chaitanya) was to be enacted at Keshab's house. I was invited to it. That day I heard somebody call Keshab and Pratap 'Gaur and Nitai'. Prasanna then asked me what I was. I noticed that Keshab was looking at me to see what I would reply. I replied, 'I am the servant of the servants of your servant, I am the dust of dust.' Keshab laughed and said, 'He can never be caught.'

Ram — Keshab sometimes used to say that you were John the Baptist.

A Devotee — And sometimes he would say that you are the Chaitanya Deva of the nineteenth century.

Sri Ramakrishna — What does that mean?

The Devotee — It means that Chaitanya Deva has incarnated again in the nineteenth century. And you are he.

Sri Ramakrishna (indifferently) — Leave it alone. But tell me now how my hand^[152] can be set right. My only care now is to see that my hand is cured.

The topic turns to Trailokya's songs. Trailokya sings the name of the Lord and devotional songs in Keshab's Samaj (society).

Sri Ramakrishna — Ah, how beautifully Trailokya sings!

Ram — How? Are all his songs all right?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, all right. Otherwise, why do his songs attract my mind so much?

Ram — He has composed all the songs in the *bhava* (attitude) he has borrowed from you. Keshab Sen used to describe these very attitudes at the time of performing worship. Trailokya Babu would then compose songs in the same mood. Just take this song —

It is a fair of joy in the mart of love.

How Hari is sporting merrily with the devotees!

“You enjoy yourself in the company of devotees. Noticing this, he has composed all his songs in the same mood.”

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Please don't torment me anymore. Why do you want to involve me in that? (Laughter.)

Girindra — The Brahma devotees say that the Paramahansa Deva lacks the faculty of organization.

Sri Ramakrishna — What does that mean?

M. — That you don't know how to form and run an organization. That you are not intelligent enough. That's what they say. (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ram) — Now please tell me why my hand broke? Please stand up and lecture on this topic. (All laugh.)

**Sri Ramakrishna instructs the Brahmos, the
Vaishnavas and the Shaktas on sectarianism**

“The Brahmos insist that God is formless. Let them say so. It is enough to call on Him sincerely. If you are sincere, He, being *antaryami*^[153], will surely make you know, make you understand, what His real nature is.

“Yet it is not good to say that only what you know of Him is right and others are wrong. That since we take Him as formless, He is formless and can't have form. Or that He has a form and so cannot be formless. Can a man reach the end of God?

“In the same way, the Vaishnavas and Shaktas are opposed to each other. The Vaishnavas say, ‘He is our Keshab [Sri Krishna].’ The Shaktas say, ‘He is our Bhagavati, the only giver of liberation.’

‘I took Vaishnavcharan to Mathur Babu. Vaishnavcharan is a man of discrimination and great learning. But he is a rigid Vaishnava. On the other hand, Mathur Babu is a devotee of Bhagavati. They were having a nice conversation when Vaishnavcharan said, ‘Only Keshab [Krishna] grants liberation.’ No sooner did Mathur Babu hear these words than his face flushed with anger. He said, ‘My foot!’ (All laugh.) Was he [Mathur] not a Shakta (worshipper of Shakti)? It was natural for him to react that way. In the meantime I tried to

distract Vaishnavcharan by stroking his body.

“I see that all those who harp on religion are actually quarrelling among themselves. The Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Brahmos, the Shaktas, the Vaishnavas, the Shaivites are all quarreling with each other. They haven’t gained the intelligence to understand that He who is called Krishna is Shiva, and also the Primeval Power. He is the same Being who is known as Christ or Allah. There is but one Rama, and He is known by a thousand names.

“There is one Substance; it is called by different names. Everybody is asking for the same one Substance. Yet there is a difference of place, person and name. A pond has a number of ghats. The Hindus draw water from one ghat and, filling their brass pots, they call it *jal*. The Mohammedans take water from the other ghat and, filling their skin bags, they call it *pani*. While the Christians take water from a third ghat and call it water. (All laugh.)

“When a person says that this substance is not *jal* but *pani*, or it is not *pani* but water, or not water but *jal*, it becomes ridiculous. That is the reason why there are different groups, ill will and quarrels. Resorting to fights with staves, and scuffling and killing in the name of religion is not good. Everybody is going toward God. When one is sincere and yearns for Him, one attains Him.

(To Mani) “Listen to this. The *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Tantras*, all these religious texts seek Him alone and none else. Whom the *Vedas* call Sachchidananda Brahman, the *Tantras* call

Sachchidananda Shiva and the *Puranas* call Sachchidananda Krishna.”

Sri Ramakrishna has heard that Ram sometimes cooks his own meal in his home.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani) — Do you cook for yourself sometimes?

Mani — No, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — Look here. Put a little cow’s ghee (clarified butter) in your meals. You will feel your body and mind becoming very pure.

Chapter IV

The father is dharma, he is the heaven and he is the supreme austerity

They have been talking quite a long time about Ram’s household life. Ram’s father is a staunch Vaishnava and Sridhar (Sri Krishna) is worshipped in his house daily. His father married a second time when Ram was very young. The father and stepmother lived with Ram, but Ram was not happy living with his stepmother. She is now forty. Ram is sometimes cross with his father because of his stepmother. This is the topic of conversation today.

Ram — My father is not the good man he was.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Do you hear? His father is not good – but he is.

Ram — There is no peace when she (the stepmother) comes to the house! Something unfortunate is bound to happen. Our household is breaking apart. I say it would be better for her to go and live with her parents.

Girindra (to Ram) — Why don't you keep your wife at her father's house in the same way? (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Are they like pots and pans, that the pot be here and its lid somewhere else? Shiva here and Shakti there?

Ram — Sir, we are living happily indeed. But when she comes to the house, family life falls apart.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, you can build a house for them elsewhere. This is another way. Give them their monthly expenses. Parents are big gurus. Rakhai once asked me whether he could eat from the same plate his father had used. I said, 'What are you saying? What has happened to you that you can't eat from your father's plate?'

“But this is the fact: they who are real devotees do not give their leftover food to anyone – not even to dogs.”

Worship the guru as your Ideal Deity – the guru not to be given up even if he is immoral

Girindra — Sir, what if the parents are guilty of some grave offense, that they have committed a

serious sin?

Sri Ramakrishna — Let them! The mother, even if she is of easy virtue, should not be forsaken. When the woman guru of a certain family became immoral, it was said that her son be made the guru. I said, ‘But why? You want to give up the yam and take the shoot. Even if she has gone wrong, what does it matter? You must take her as the guru.’ ‘Even though my guru visits the tavern, he is still my ever-blissful guru.’

Chaitanya Deva and his mother – a man’s debts – his duties

“Are parents such insignificant persons? No spiritual or other effort can be achieved if they are not pleased. Chaitanya Deva was intoxicated with love for God. Yet before embracing sannyasa, he implored his mother for many days. He said, ‘Mother, I will come every now and then to see you.’

(To M., reprimanding him) “And I tell you, your parents have reared you. And you have so many children. Yet you have left home with your wife and children. ‘Leaving behind the father and mother, the baul becomes a Vaishnava and comes away with his wife and son.’ Your father is well provided for. Were it not so, I would say, ‘Shame on you!’ (Everybody in the room is silent.)

“There are certain debts a man must pay: the debt to the deity, to the rishi, to the father, to the mother and also to the wife. Till you pay back the debt to your parents, you can achieve nothing.

“You have to pay back the debt to the wife too. Harish has left his wife to live here. Had there been no provision for her, I would have called him wicked and a rascal.

“When you have attained jnana, you look on your wife as the embodiment of Bhagavati (Divine Mother). The Chandi says, ‘The Divine Power dwells in all elements in the form of the Mother.’ She Herself has become your mother

“All women are the manifestations of the Divine Mother. So I cannot scold Brinde (the maidservant). Some people recite verse after verse from the scriptures and talk big, but they act quite the opposite.

Ramprasanna^[154] is arranging for milk and opium for that Hatha Yogi. He said, ‘Manu talks of service to the sadhus.’ On the other hand, his old mother hasn’t enough to eat. She has to go to the bazaar herself. When I see this, I feel so annoyed.”

Who is free from all debts? Sannyasi and his duties

“But then, this is also specifically true. If a person feels intoxicated with God’s love, there is no father, no mother, and no wife for him. He may have so much love for the Lord that he may appear to be mad! Such a person has no duties. He is freed from all his debts. What is intoxication with love for God like? In that state one forgets the world. One even forgets one’s body that is so dear. Chaitanya Deva had this state. He jumped into the sea unaware that it was a sea. He would fall hard on the ground again and again. He lost hunger, thirst and sleep. He was not at all conscious of his body.”

The Elder Gopal on pilgrimage – Sri Ramakrishna is present, so why go on pilgrimage? Adhar’s invitation – Ram’s vanity – Sri Ramakrishna meditates

Thakur suddenly says, “Ah, Chaitanya!
(To the devotees) Was Chaitanya He who is Indivisible Chaitanya (Consciousness)? Vaishnavcharan used to say, ‘Gauranga is a bubble of the same Indivisible Consciousness.’ ”

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you intend to go on pilgrimage?

The Elder Gopal — Yes sir, I may visit some places.

Ram (to the Elder Gopal) — He says that one becomes a *kutichaka* after being a *vahudaka*. The sadhu who visits many holy places is a *vahudaka*. One who doesn’t desire to move around, who settles down peacefully at one place on an *asana* is known as a *kutichaka*.

“And he also says this: A bird was sitting on the mast of a ship. It did not know when the ship came out of the holy Ganges and entered the black waters of the ocean. When it became aware of the ocean, it wanted to know where the land was. Flying to the north and finding no shore, it returned. Having rested for awhile, it flew south, but found no shore there either. Out of breath, it returned. Then it flew to the west and to the east after resting awhile on the same mast. When it found land or shore nowhere, it perched peacefully on the mast.”

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Elder Gopal) — As long as one thinks that the Lord is somewhere ‘there’, one is ignorant. But when one thinks that God is definitely ‘here’, that is jnana.

“Somebody wanted a smoke. He went to his neighbour’s home to get a light. It was quite late at night, so the neighbours were all asleep. When he had knocked for a long time, somebody came downstairs to open the door. Seeing the caller, he asked, ‘What is the matter?’ The former said, ‘Nothing more than this: I am addicted to smoking, you already know about that. So I have come for a light.’ Then the man said, ‘You are a fine man indeed! You have taken the trouble to come here and knocked so long. But you have a lantern in your hand!’ (All laugh.)

“What man desires, it is already with him. Yet, he wanders from place to place!”

Is Thakur hinting that he is present there? Why then go on pilgrimage?

Ram — Sir, I now understand why the guru asks some disciples to visit all the four *dhams*[\[155\]](#). When he goes from place to place and sees that what he sees ‘here’ is what he sees ‘there,’ he returns to his guru. All this is done so that the disciple may have firm faith in the words of the guru.

When the conversation stops for awhile, Sri Ramakrishna praises Ram.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Oh, what

qualities Ram has! How he serves devotees and looks after them! (To Ram) Adhar told me that you were very hospitable to him.

Adhar's house is in Sobhabazar. He is a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. The Chandi was sung at his house. Thakur and a number of devotees were present, but Adhar had forgotten to invite Ram. Ram is a very proud man. He told some friends of his displeasure at this negligence. So Adhar went to Ram's house to apologize.

Ram — Adhar is not to be blamed. I have learned that it was Rakhal's mistake – Rakhal was given the responsibility.

Sri Ramakrishna — You must not find fault with Rakhal. You can bring up mother's milk by pressing his throat [meaning a fairly young and immature person].

Ram — Sir, they say that the Chandi was sung there.

Sri Ramakrishna — Adhar didn't know about that. Just see, the other day he accompanied me to Jadu Mallick's house. When we were leaving, I asked him why he had not offered *pranami* (offering of money to the deity) to Mother Simhavahini^[156]. He replied, 'Sir, I didn't know that I was supposed to offer *pranami*.

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“And even if one is not invited, what is wrong with

going to the place where Hari's name is sung? One should go even uninvited where the name of Hari is being chanted. There is no need for an invitation.”

[144] According to Hindu mythology, the Lord rests on the Ocean of Milk (ocean of Great Cause) after the end of each creation

[145] Benares; a holy place of the Hindus

[146] Namely earth, water, fire, air and ether

[147] Ram Chatterji, the attendant of Sri Radhakanta in the temple

[148] *Viveka*

[149] *Vairagya*

[150] Act of seeing in order to pay homage

[151] The word has two meanings: 'sedge' and 'sect'

[152] Some days ago Sri Ramakrishna fell down and broke his hand. A bandage was tied around his hand for several days. The hand is bandaged even now.

[153] God as the Inner Controller

[154] Ramprasanna is a devotee from Ariadaha and the son of Krishnakishore

[155] Places of pilgrimage

[156] The Goddess seated upon a lion

Section XIV

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees at Dakshineswar and attends a Performance of Chaitanya at Calcutta

Chapter I

Conversation about Rakhal, Narayan (Naran), Nityagopal and the Younger Gopal

It is Sunday, 21 September, 1884, (the sixth day of Aswin, 1291 B.Y.). A number of devotees have gathered in Sri Ramakrishna's room – Ram, Mahendra Mukherji, Chunilal, M. and many others are there.

Chunilal has just returned from Vrindavan. He and Rakhal went there with Balaram. Rakhal and Balaram have not yet returned. Nityagopal is also in Vrindavan. Thakur talks of Vrindavan with Chunilal.

Sri Ramakrishna — How is Rakhal doing?

Chunilal — Sir, he is all right now.

Sri Ramakrishna — Isn't Nityagopal coming back?

Chunilal — He is still there. I saw him before I left.

Sri Ramakrishna — Who is accompanying your

wife and the others?

Chunilal — Balaram Babu said that a good and suitable person would be sent to accompany them. He didn't give the name.

Thakur now talks to Mahendra Mukherji about Narayan. Narayan goes to school and is 16 or 17 years old. He visits Thakur off and on. Thakur is very fond of him.

Sri Ramakrishna — He is very guileless, isn't he?

As he says 'guileless', Sri Ramakrishna is filled with joy.

Mahendra — Yes sir, very guileless.

Sri Ramakrishna — His mother came the other day. I was frightened to find her so egotistical. She found out that you and Captain visit here. She must have definitely thought that I and Narayan were not the only ones who come to the temple. (All laugh.) There was some sugar candy in the room. Seeing it she said, 'Nice sugar candy that is!' She must have concluded from this that there is no dearth of food here.

"Then perhaps I said to Baburam in her presence, 'Please keep some sandesh for Narayan and yourself.' Ganu's mother and some other women said, 'Oh God, how he bothers his mother to pay the ferry charges to come here!' His mother said to me, 'Please ask Narayan to marry.' I replied, 'It depends on his destiny. Why should I interfere in such matters?' (All laugh.)

“He doesn’t work hard in his studies, so she said, ‘Please ask him to study hard.’ I said to Narayan, ‘You must study hard.’ Then she said again, ‘Please tell him more emphatically.’ (All laugh.)

(To Chunilal) “Well, why doesn’t Gopal come?”

Chunilal — He has blood diarrhea.

Sri Ramakrishna — Does he take any medicine?

**A courtesan acting in theatre – his past story –
Thakur sees a balloon going up and is inspired**

Today Thakur is to visit the Star Theatre [\[157\]](#) in Calcutta and witness the Chaitanya Lila (play of Chaitanya). He will go with Mahendra Mukherji in his carriage to see the play. They discuss where they should sit to get a good view. Somebody suggests that a one Rupee seat gives a good view. Ram says, “Why? We will take a box.”

Thakur laughs. Somebody says, “Courtesans act in these plays. They play the role of Chaitanya Deva, Nitai and others.”

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — I shall look upon them all as the All-Blissful Mother.

“Let them act as Chaitanya Deva. Seeing an imitation custard apple made of *sola* (a dry plant), one has the feeling of a real custard apple.

“A devotee walking on the road saw a number of *babul* (acacia) trees. The devotee was instantly absorbed in bhava (divine fervour). He remembered

that the beautiful handle of the spade in the garden of Shyamasundar [Krishna] is made of the same wood. It at once brought the thought of Shyamasundar to his mind! When they took me to the Fort Maidan to see the balloon, I saw a European boy standing against a tree with his body bent at three places. Immediately, I was inspired with Krishna and went into samadhi!

“Chaitanya Deva was passing by the Meda village. He was told that they make *khol* (drum, used in kirtan) with clay from this village. At once he went into ecstasy.

“Seeing a cloud or the neck of a peacock, Radha could not control herself. She would be overcome with the presence of Sri Krishna and lose all outer consciousness.”

Thakur is now silent for awhile. After some time, he resumes the conversation: “Radha’s *mahabhava* – the *prema* (intense love) of the gopis was desireless. A genuine devotee has no desire. He merely prays for pure love for God. He doesn’t ask for occult powers, or any other power.”

Chapter II

Instructions by the Naked One – the eight occult powers are an obstacle in attaining the Lord

Sri Ramakrishna — Occult powers bring great troubles. The Naked One (Tota Puri) counseled me, saying, ‘A man who had occult powers was sitting on the seashore. The sea became stormy. Afraid that the storm would harm him, the man said, ‘Let

the storm halt at once.’ His words could not remain unfulfilled. A ship with a mast was passing. When the storm died down so abruptly, the ship sank. All the passengers occupying the ship went down with it. Thus he contracted the sin of drowning so many people! The sin resulted not only in losing his occult powers, but also sent him to hell.’

“A sadhu possessed many occult powers. This also made him very proud. But this man was basically a good fellow and had a lot of *tapasya* (penance) to his credit. Bhagavan one day came to him disguised as a sadhu and said, ‘Maharaj, I hear that you have acquired many occult powers.’ The sadhu asked him very cordially to sit down. Just then an elephant was passing that way. The second sadhu said, ‘Well Maharaj, can you kill this elephant by a mere wish?’ The first sadhu said, ‘Yes, it is possible.’ Saying so, he took a little dust, muttered a few words and threw it on the body of the elephant. Lo! It died, writhing in pain. The visitor sadhu thereupon said, ‘You indeed have great powers! You have killed the elephant.’ The first sadhu began to laugh. The other sadhu then said, ‘Well, can you bring the elephant back to life?’ The other sadhu said, ‘That, too, is possible.’ Saying so, he muttered a few words and threw some dust on the elephant. It staggered up. The other sadhu then said, ‘Oh, how powerful you are! But I ask you this: What have you gained by killing the elephant and then bringing it back to life? What spiritual progress were you able to achieve by it? Has it helped you to realize Bhagavan?’ Saying so, that sadhu disappeared.

“Religion is a very delicate matter. Even the

smallest trace of desire can stop you from attaining Bhagavan. A thread does not pass through the eye of a needle if its end has any fibers sticking out.

“Krishna said to Arjuna: Brother, if you wish to attain Me, even one of the eight occult powers will obstruct your reaching Me.

“The fact is that one becomes proud if one possesses occult powers. And this makes one forget the Lord.

“A cross-eyed gentleman came to see me. He said, ‘It is good that you are a paramahansa. Please perform *sawastyayana* (a religious practice for the attainment of worldly desire) for me.’ What low intelligence! A paramahansa should perform a *sawastyayana*! It is an occult power if one cures a person by performing *sawastyayana*. Pride stops you from attaining the Lord. Do you know what it is to be proud? Say, there is a high mound. You will see that it cannot hold rainwater; the rainwater just runs off. On the other hand, low land holds water. It helps plants to germinate and grow into trees. The trees later bear fruits.”

Love all – love dispels egoism and leads to God-realization

“So I say to Hazra, ‘Don’t think that you alone understand everything and that everyone else is a fool. You must love everyone. Nobody is a stranger. Hari dwells in all beings. Nothing exists without Him.’ Bhagavan said to Pahlada, ‘Ask for a boon.’ Pahlada replied, ‘I have had Your vision. I need nothing else.’ But Bhagavan would not listen. Then Pahlada said, ‘If You want to grant me a

boon, then please don't punish those who have troubled me.'

“It means that it was the Lord Hari Himself who had inflicted troubles on him. By harming those people, one would be harming the Lord Himself.”

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna surcharged with madness of jnana – his caste differentiation

His earlier story of 1857 – he meets a person with the madness of jnana just after the Kali Temple was founded – Haladhari

Sri Ramakrishna — Radha was seized with the madness of *prema* (ecstatic love) and also with the madness of bhakti – just like Hanuman. Seeing Sita entering the fire, he went toward Rama to hit him. And then there is the madness of jnana. Just after the Kali Temple was founded, I saw a jnani who looked crazed. People said that he belonged to the Brahmo Society of Rammohan Roy. A shoe on one of his feet was tattered. He was holding a bamboo branch in one hand and an earthen pot with a mango plant in the other. He took a dip in the Ganges and then entered the Kali Temple. Haladhari was sitting in the shrine. Later, the man began to sing a hymn in frenzy –

Kshon kshon Khattangadharini[\[158\]](#) etc.

“He went near a dog, held its ear and shared its food. The dog did not react. I had also begun to experience a state of divine madness. I embraced

Hriday and said to him, ‘Oh, Hriday! Am I also going to be put in such a state?’

“My state of madness! Narayan Shastri came and saw me strolling with a bamboo pole on my shoulder. He told people that I was in divine intoxication. In such a state, one does not distinguish one’s own caste from others. The wife of a man of low caste would cook a vegetable and send it to me and I would eat it.

“After the beggars and indigents had eaten and left the Kali Temple, I would take their leaf plates and touch them to my head and face. Haladhari said to me, ‘What are you doing? You are eating the leftover food of these indigents. How will you marry off your children?’ This made me very angry. Haladhari was my elder cousin brother. But what did it matter? I said to him, ‘Oh rascal, is it for this that you study the *Gita* and the Vedanta? Don’t you teach that only Brahman is the reality and the world illusory? You think that I am also going to have children! Fie on your study of the *Gita*!’

(To M.) “Look here, mere study does not help. A person may be able to recite musical notation very nicely. But it is very difficult to play it.”

Thakur is further describing his state of intoxication of jnana.

His past story – in Navadvip with Mathur – Thakur falls at the feet of Chine Sankhari

“I was on a boat trip with Mathur Babu for several days. During that trip we visited Navadvip. I saw that the boatmen were cooking very good food in

the boat and Mathur Babu knew that I would ask for it and eat it. So he said, ‘Father, do come here, come away.’

“But I can’t do it now. Now I am in a different state of mind. Now I only eat rice given by a pious man, a brahmin, or that offered to deities.

“What states have I passed through! In my village I would say to Chine Sankhari and the other companions of my age, ‘Brother, I fall at your feet. Just utter Haribol once.’ And I could fall at anybody’s feet. Chine said, ‘Oh brother, it is your first experience of *anuraga* (divine love). That is why you see everyone as equal.’ When a stormy wind blows, it raises a lot of dust and one sees no difference between the tamarind and the mango trees – one cannot distinguish the mango tree from the tamarind tree.”

What does Sri Ramakrishna believe in: in household life or complete renunciation? Keshab Sen’s doubt

A Devotee — How will a householder be able to go on with his duties of the world, if he experiences such madness of bhakti, or of *prema* (intense love), or of jnana?

Sri Ramakrishna (looking at the householder devotee) — There are two classes of yogis: *vyakta* (one who can be seen outwardly as a yogi) and the other, *gupta* (who hides his yoga). A householder is a *gupta* yogi, he doesn’t let others know of it. The householder renounces mentally, not externally.

Ram — This is like comforting a young boy. One

can be a jnani in the household, but not a vijnani.

Sri Ramakrishna — If he wants finally to be a vijnani, he can become so. It is not right to renounce the household by forcing yourself.

Ram — Keshab Sen used to say, ‘Why do so many people go to him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna]? He will one day gently sting them. Then they will run away from him.’

Sri Ramakrishna — Why should I sting gently? I tell people, ‘Do ‘this’ and do ‘that’ too – live in the family and also call on the Lord.’ I don’t ask them for complete renunciation. (Laughing) Keshab Sen one day said in one of his lectures, ‘Oh Lord, grant that we may dive into the river of bhakti and be carried to the ocean of Sachchidananda.’ All the ladies were behind a screen. I said to Keshab, ‘How could you all dive together? If you did that, what would happen to these ladies? First climb to dry land and then dive. And then again climb up to the dry land.’ Keshab and all other began to laugh. Hazra said to me, ‘You are very fond of rajasic^[159] people – those who have a lot of money, name, fame, and public respect.’ If that is so, why do I love Harish, Noto (Latu) and others? Why am I fond of Narendra? He doesn’t even have salt to eat with his roasted banana!

Sri Ramakrishna comes out of his room and goes toward the Jhautala talking with M. on the way. A devotee accompanies him with a washing pot and a hand towel. He is to go to Calcutta to witness the Chaitanya Lila – this

topic is being discussed.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M., as they approach the Panchavati) — Ram does everything in a rajasic way. What is the need to spend so much for a seat?

What Thakur means is that there was no need to buy tickets for the box class.

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna at a devotee's place in Hathibagan – Mahendra Mukherji's service to him

Sri Ramakrishna is going from Dakshineswar to Calcutta by Mahendra Mukherji's carriage. It is Sunday, 21 September, 1884, the sixth of Aswin, the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Aswin. It is five o'clock. Mahendra Mukherji, M. and a couple of other persons are also in the carriage. The carriage hasn't gone far when Thakur goes into the state of samadhi while meditating on the Lord.

The samadhi breaks after a long time. Thakur says, "And Hazra tries to teach me. Rascal!" After awhile, he says, "I shall take some water." Thakur often says this after coming out of samadhi, to bring his mind down to the outer world.

Mahendra Mukherji (to M) — Shall I bring something to eat?

M. — He will not eat now.

Sri Ramakrishna (still in the ecstatic mood) — I

shall eat. I shall ease myself.

Mahendra Mukherji has a flour mill in Hathibagan. He is taking Thakur to the mill. After resting for awhile, Thakur will go to the Star Theatre to see the Chaitanya Lila. Mahendra's house is in Baghbazar, a little to the north of the Madan Mohan temple. His father is not acquainted with the Paramahansa Deva, so Mahendra hasn't taken Thakur to his house. Priyanath, his second brother, is a devotee.

A cotton carpet has been spread over a wooden cot in Mahendra's mill. Thakur is sitting there talking on spiritual matters.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M. and Mahendra) — Hearing the narration of the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Hazra said, 'It is all the sport of Shakti (Divine Power). There is no Vibhu^[160] in it.' Can there be Shakti without Vibhu? He is trying to disprove the teachings of this place [of Sri Ramakrishna].

Brahman pervades all as Vibhu – a pure devotee doesn't want the six supernatural powers

“I know that Brahman and Shakti are not separate from each other. They are like water and its wetness, or fire and its power to burn. God is present in the form of Vibhu, though there is greater manifestation of His Shakti in some, less in others. Besides, Hazra says, 'When one attains Bhagavan, one acquires the six supernatural powers like Him. There will be six powers in one's grasp, which may or may not be used.

M. — One must have the six powers in one’s grasp!
(All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Yes, one must possess them. But what a low intellect! He who has never enjoyed powers is eager to possess them. The pure devotee never prays for these powers.

Betel leaves have not been served in the mill. Thakur says, “Please fetch some betel leaves.” He has to go to ease himself. Mahendra gets a pot of water and holds it in his hand. He will accompany Thakur out in the open space. Seeing Mani standing in front of him, Thakur says to Mahendra, “You don’t have to carry it. Give it to him.” Mani takes the washing pot and accompanies Thakur to the open space inside the mill. After the wash, Thakur is offered a smoke from the hookah. Thakur says to M., “Is it already *sandhya* (twilight hour)? If so, I shall not smoke from the hookah. When *sandhya* is approaching, one should remember Hari and forget everything else.” Saying this, Thakur sees whether he can count the hair on his hand. If he cannot, it is already dusk.

Chapter V

Chaitanya Lila in the theatre – Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi

**M., Baburam, a devotee of the lineage of Nityananda,
Mahendra Mukherji and Girish**

Thakur’s cab arrives in front of the Star

Theatre on Beadon Street at about 8.30 p.m. He is accompanied by M., Baburam, Mahendra Mukherji and one or two other devotees. They are purchasing the tickets. Girish Ghosh, the manager of the theatre, comes to Thakur's carriage with some theatre employees. They welcome him and cordially take him upstairs. Girish knows the Paramahansa Deva by name. He is extremely happy that Thakur has come to witness the performance of Chaitanya Lila. Thakur is given a seat in the southwestern box. M. is seated beside him. Baburam and one or two devotees are seated behind them.

The theatre hall is well lit. The seats on the ground floor are filled. Some boxes are also occupied. Each box has an attendant who fans the spectators from behind. Girish has appointed an attendant to fan Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna is as happy as a child to see the theatre hall.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M., laughing) — Ah! It is very nice! It is good we came. I get inspired when there are many people around. I then clearly see that He has become all.

M. — Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — What will they charge us?

M. — They will not charge us anything. They are glad that you came.

Sri Ramakrishna — It's all the Mother's greatness!

The curtain rises. All the spectators turn their eyes toward the stage. The first scene shows a meeting of sin and the six enemies [\[161\]](#). It is followed by a dialogue between discrimination, dispassion and bhakti.

Bhakti says, “Gauranga has taken birth in Nadia. That is why the learned and the rishis and munis are coming in disguise to see him.”

Blessed is the earth that Lord Gauranga has appeared in Nadia.

Behold, the demi-gods are coming by a flying chariot to have a glimpse of Lord Hari.

And lo! All the rishis and munis filled with divine love are coming too.

The demi-gods and goddesses, the rishis and munis, sing a hymn of praise to Gauranga, looking upon him as an incarnation of God. Seeing them, Thakur passes into an ecstatic mood. He says to M., “Ah! How wonderful it is.”

The demi-gods and goddesses, the rishis and the munis sing the hymn –

Men — Keshab, bestow your compassion on us, the lowly, you who roam the groves and glades (of Vrindavan).

Women — You, the beloved Madhava, the charming Mohan playing the flute.

Chorus — Haribol, Haribol, Haribol (chant the name of Hari), O my mind!

Men — The lad of Braja, the tamer of Kaliya, the

serpent and the dispeller of fear and harm.

Women — You with slanting eyes and the peacock feather arching on your forehead, the heart-throb of Radha!

Men — It was you who lifted the Govardhan Mount. Wild flowers decorate your person. O Damodara, the destroyer of Kamsa's pride.

Women — O Shyam, you sported with the milkmaids of Vrindavan.

Chorus — Haribol, Haribol, Haribol (chant the name of Hari), O my mind!

As the demi-goddesses sing, "You with slanting eyes and the peacock feather arching on your forehead, the heartthrob of Radha," Sri Ramakrishna goes into deep samadhi. The concert goes on, but he is unaware of the external world.

Chapter VI

Witnessing of Chaitanya Lila – Sri Ramakrishna becomes intoxicated with intense love of Gaur

Jagannath Misra (Nimai's father) has received guests. The child Nimai is strolling and singing joyfully with the companions of his age –

Where is my Vrindavan and where is mother Yashoda? Where is my father, Nanda, and where, brother Balai?

Where are my twin cows, black and white, and where is my bewitching flute? Where can I find

Sridama, Sudama and the other cowherd boys?

Where is my Jamuna's bank and where my
banana grove? Where, my milkmaids and my
Radha?

The guests offer food to Bhagavan with their
eyes shut. Nimai comes running and eats the
holy food. The guests recognize him as
Bhagavan and sing the hymn of the ten
avatars^[162] to please him. While taking leave
of Misra and Sachi, they sing another hymn –

Victory to Nityananda and Gaur, victory to the
redeemer,

The refuge of the helpless, the soul of the
embodied soul and the dispeller of fear!

In every new age You sport in a new way. A
new role with every new wave, You who bear
the burden of the universe.

You take away the fire of the world with the
rain of Your divine love, You the distributor of
the joy of Your divine sport.

The hope of the lowly, the destroyer of all sins
and the remover of all cause of fear.

As Thakur hears the hymn, he again passes
into an ecstatic mood.

On the bank of the Ganges in Navadvip, after
their dip in the Ganges, the brahmins and the
men and women perform worship. Nimai
snatches the food offering and eats it. A
brahmin is very annoyed with him and shouts,
“You mischievous boy! You are snatching the
holy food of Vishnu's puja. You will be totally
ruined!” Nimai still grabs it and is about to run
away. Most of the women are very fond of this

boy. They cannot bear to see Nimai leaving. They call out, “Nimai, come back! Do come back!” But Nimai does not listen to them.

Somebody knows the great mantra that will force Nimai to return. He begins to chant, “Haribol, Haribol.” Immediately Nimai returns, repeating, “Haribol, Haribol.”

Mani is seated beside Thakur. He is exclaiming, “Ah!”

Thakur cannot contain himself any longer. He begins to shed tears of love looking at Mani as he utters, “Ah.”

Sri Ramakrishna (to Baburam and M.) — Listen here, if I pass into an ecstatic mood or samadhi, you must not create a fuss about it. Worldly people will think that I am feigning it.

It is the sacred thread ceremony of Nimai. Nimai is in the robes of a sannyasin. He is surrounded by Sachi and the women of the area. Nimai sings a song to beg for alms –

O give me alms my mother. I am a new yogi roaming about weeping.

O the people of Braja, I love you. O mother, that is why I have come! See, I am fasting.

See mother! A yogi is repeating, ‘Radha, Radha,’ at your door. The time is up and he has to return. Mother, I live alone on the bank of Jamuna.

The water from my eyes meet the water of the Jamuna and flows slowly to mix with the waves in a gentle roar.

Everybody leaves except Nimai who stays alone. The gods in the guise of brahmin men and women are singing a hymn.

Men — The light of the moon shines in you. You have the form of *vamana* (a dwarf).

Women — You, the beloved of the milkmaids, the wanderer among the beautiful groves of Vrindavan.

Nimai — Victory to Radha, Sri Radha.

Men — The boys of Braja are with you. Your beauty puts to shame the pride of Madan, the god of love.

Women — Your love has intoxicated the gopis of Braja. There are waves of ecstasy.

Men — You who delude the demons, you are the Lord Narayana, the dispeller of the fear of gods.

Women — You roam about in Braja and beg love from the gopis.

Nimai — Victory to Radha, Sri Radha.

Sri Ramakrishna enters samadhi hearing the song. The curtain drops. The concert orchestra is playing a single tune.

Worldly people want to hold onto both: the world and God – Gangadas and Srivas

Srivas and others are in conversation in front

of Advaita's home. Mukanda sings in a sweet voice –

O my mind, don't go to sleep. You have remained oblivious, intoxicated with maya for so long.

Who are you? Why have you come? You have forgotten yourself.

Come out of this bad dream, open your eyes and see.

You are living with transitory things. Look for the eternal within yourself.

Come out of the darkness and see the bright light of the sun.

Mukanda has a very sweet voice. Sri Ramakrishna is praising him to Mani.

Nimai is at home. Srivas has come to see him. First he meets Sachi. Sachi weeps and says, "My son doesn't show interest in domestic duties."

I constantly tremble with fear ever since Viswarupa (her eldest son) left, lest Nimai should also embrace sannyasa.

Nimai arrives now. Sachi says to Srivas –

Alas, look at him. What crazy looks he has!

Tears from his eyes have drenched his chest.

Tell me, please tell me, how I can free him of this mood.

Nimai weeps, holding Srivas's feet and says –

O Lord, where do I have bhakti for Krishna?

My wretched life is now of no avail!

Tell me, O Lord, where is Krishna? How can I attain Krishna?

Kindly give me the dust of your feet so that I may be able to attain Banmali^[163].

Sri Ramakrishna continues to look at M. and wants to talk, but cannot. His throat is choked with emotion, his cheeks drenched with tears. He stares at Nimai, holding the feet of Srivas. Nimai is saying, “O Lord, how do I have love for Krishna?”

Nimai is not able to give lessons to his students. Gangadas was his teacher. Gangadas has come to instruct Nimai. He says to Srivas, “Revered Srivas, we are brahmins too. We, too, worship Vishnu. You people have ruined the household life (of Nimai).”

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — It is a householder’s instruction, ‘Do this and also do that.’ When a householder teaches, he wants you to hold onto both the world and God.

M. — True, sir.

Gangadas further instructs Nimai, “I say Nimai, you are well versed in scriptures. Discuss it with me. What is more important than the householder’s dharma? Please explain it to me. You are a householder, so why do you conduct yourself otherwise?”

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — See, he is saying this to uphold both sides [worldly and spiritual].

M. — Yes, sir.

Nimai says: I am not willingly unmindful of the household life. On the contrary, I wish for both sides to be taken care of. But –

Lord, I do not know at all why all this is happening.

Alas! What I am doing is through the attraction of my heart!

I wish I could live in the family, but I cannot.

My soul is flying out and there is no way to bring it back.

It is ever longing to jump into the deep sea.

Sri Ramakrishna — Ah!

Chapter VII

A descendant of Nityananda's family in the theatre and Sri Ramakrishna's inspiration – M., Baburam, the Goswami from Khardaha, of the lineage of Nityananda

Nityananda has arrived at Navadvip. He has been looking for Nimai, and Nimai for him. At that very moment, he meets Nimai. When they meet, Nimai says –

My life is blessed. My dream has come true. You had hidden yourself after appearing in a dream.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M., in a voice choked with emotion) — Nimai says, 'I saw you in a dream.'

Srivas is seeing the six-armed divine form and he sings his praises. Sri Ramakrishna also sees the six-armed divine form absorbed in bhava. Gauranga is in ecstasy. He talks to Advaita, Srivas, Haridas and others in an ecstatic mood.

Recognizing the ecstatic mood of Gauranga, Nitai sings –

O the Beloved of my soul, where is Krishna in the grove?

Please bring me my Krishna, O my beloved friend! Whom does Radha know except Krishna?

Sri Ramakrishna passes into samadhi on hearing the song. He remains in this mood for a long time. The orchestra goes on. Thakur's samadhi comes to an end. In the meantime, a gentleman from Nityananda Goswami's lineage of Khardaha comes in and stands behind Thakur's chair. He is thirty-four or thirty-five. Seeing him, Thakur is filled with joy. Holding his hand, he talks to him for a long time. He asks him a number of times to take a seat close to him, saying that he feels greatly inspired by his presence. He holds his hand and shows his love and regard by bringing the hand to touch his face.

As the Goswami leaves, Thakur says to M., "He is a great scholar. His father is a great devotee. When I go to Khardaha for the darshan^[164] of Shyamasundar, his father feeds me offered food worth more than a hundred rupees."

"He has very good traits. Just nudging him a little

easily arouses his consciousness. I get greatly inspired looking at him. Had he been here a little while longer, I would have stood up [in ecstasy].”

What Thakur means is that if he had been with the Goswami a little longer, he would have gone into an ecstatic mood.

The curtain rises. Nityananda is seated on the main road with his hand on his head to stop his bleeding. Madhai has thrown a brass pot at him and its edge has hurt him. But Nitai is absolutely indifferent to it – he is intoxicated with the love of Gauranga, filled as if up to the neck. Sri Ramakrishna is absorbed in an ecstatic mood. He watches Nitai embracing Jagai and Madhai. Says Nitai –

Come on, Jagai and Madhai, come dancing. Let us utter Haribol to our hearts’ content.

If you have struck me, you have done well. Sing ‘Hari, Hari’ and dance.

Repeat Haribol. The lovers will embrace you in love divine.

Raise, O raise, the name of Hari. Let the word resound all around.

You have not yet tasted *prema*. O brother, say Haribol and weep. Then you will see the moon in your heart.

O brother! I will lovingly dole out His name. That is why Nitai is calling so lovingly.

Now Nimai is talking to Sachi about his sannyasa.

Sachi falls into a swoon. Seeing her faint, many in the audience sob with grief. Sri

Ramakrishna, however, remains perfectly self-composed. Except that one can see a tear in the corner of his eye.

Chapter VIII

Sri Ramakrishna intoxicated with the love of Gaur

The performance ends. Sri Ramakrishna gets into a carriage. A devotee asks him, “How did you like it?” Thakur laughs and says, “The performance was truly the same as the reality.”

The carriage is proceeding toward Mahendra Mukherji’s mill. Suddenly Thakur passes into an ecstatic mood. After a long time, he murmurs lovingly:

“ ‘Oh, Krishna! Oh, Krishna! Jnana is Krishna! *Prana* (vital breath) is Krishna! The mind is Krishna! The Atman is Krishna! The body is Krishna!’ And he adds, ‘The beloved of my soul, oh Govinda! You are my life.’ ”

The carriage arrives at Mukherji’s mill. Mahendra treats Thakur to refreshments with the utmost hospitality and love. Mani is seated nearby. Thakur says lovingly to him, “Please take something.” Then he himself gives some *prasad* of sweetmeats to him.

Now Sri Ramakrishna is going to the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. He is accompanied in the carriage by Mahendra Mukherji and two or three other devotees. Mahendra is to leave the carriage after some distance. Thakur is full of joy and begins to sing –

O Lord, Gaur and Nitai, you two brothers
...[\[165\]](#)

Mani sings with him.

Mahendra intends to go on pilgrimage. This is the topic of conversation with Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahendra, laughing) — The sprout of *prema* (divine love) will wither away before it starts to develop within you.

“But come back quickly. Oh, for so many days I had been thinking of visiting your house. It is good that I visited it once.”

Mahendra — Sir, my life is blessed.

Sri Ramakrishna — You are already blessed. And your father is also a nice man. I met him the other day. He has faith in *Adhyatma (Ramayana)*.

Mahendra — Sir, grant that I may have bhakti by your grace.

Sri Ramakrishna — You are very large-hearted and guileless. One cannot attain Bhagavan without being guileless and generous. One must shun hypocrisy.

Mahendra takes his leave near Shyambazar.
The carriage moves on.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — What has Jadu Mallick done?

M. (to himself) — Thakur is so interested in the welfare of everyone! Has he incarnated in a human body to teach bhakti, like Chaitanya Deva?

[157] The premises of the Star Theatre is now the Kohinoor Theatre

[158] Divine Mother wearing a dress of a particular kind of grass

[159] People endowed with the quality of rajas

[160] All-pervading Consciousness

[161] The six passions: lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy

[162] The ten avatars: The fish, the turtle, the sow, Narasimha (half man, half lion), vamana (a dwarf), Parashurama (a warrior sage in Hindu mythology), Rama, Krishna, Buddha and the Kalki avatar (the name of the next and last Incarnation according to the Puranas)

[163] An appellation Sri Krishna; one wearing a garland of wild flowers

[164] To see and pay homage

[165] For the complete song, see Section XII, Chapter III of this volume

Section XV

Sri Ramakrishna in Sadharan Brahma Samaj – Instructions to Vijay Goswami

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna in the temple of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

M., Hazra, Vijay, Shivanath and Kedar

Today Sri Ramakrishna has come to the city of Calcutta. It is Friday, 26 September, 1884, the *saptami* puja^[166] day. Thakur has a number of engagements to attend. It is the great Shardiya (autumn) festival. Almost every Hindu house in the metropolis is performing the *saptami* puja of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna will pay homage to the image in Adhar's house and take part in the joyous festival of the All-Blissful Mother. He also wishes to see Shivanath.

With umbrella in hand, M. strolls the footpath of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj about midday. One o'clock strikes, and then two, but Thakur does not arrive. Now and then M. sits on the steps of Mahalnavish's dispensary and watches the joy of the boys on Durga Puja and how young and old alike are engaged in various activities.

Thakur's carriage arrives around three o'clock. Stepping down from the carriage and seeing the Samaj temple in front of him, Thakur joins his hands in salutation. He is accompanied by Hazra and one or two other devotees. Seeing Thakur, M. salutes him, falling at his feet. Thakur says, "I will go to Shivanath's house." Hearing that Thakur has arrived, the Brahma devotees gather around in no time. Taking Sri Ramakrishna with them, they reach the door of Shivanath's house in the area where the Brahmans live. Shivanath is not at home. What to do? Soon Vijay Goswami, Mahalnavish and other workers of the Brahma Samaj arrive. They greet Thakur and take him to the Samaj temple. "Please rest awhile," they say. "Shivanath should return soon."

Thakur sits down with a smiling face, full of joy. An *asana* was prepared for him below the dais where the musical party will sing devotional songs. Vijay and other Brahma devotees sit in front of him.

Sadharan Brahma Samaj and signboard – harmony between formless God and God with form

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing to Vijay) — I was told that there was a signboard here saying that people of other faiths cannot come in. Narendra said to me, 'You shouldn't go to the Brahma Samaj. It would be better to go to Shivanath's house.'

"But I say everybody is calling upon God. One should give up jealousy and antagonism. Some people say that God is with form, others say that He is formless. I say that he who has faith in God with form should meditate on Him as such, and he who

believes in the formless God should meditate on God without form. Yet dogmatism is not good: to say that my faith is correct and others are wrong. It is good to believe that one's faith is right – but that one does not know whether the faith of others is right or wrong, true or untrue. The reason is that until you have God's vision, it is not possible to know His true nature. Kabir said, 'God with form is my mother, the Formless is my father. With whom can I find fault? Whom can I worship? Both pans of the scale are equally heavy.'

“All of you – Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Shaktas, Shaivites, Vaishnavas, the ancient Brahmajnanis of the era of the rishis and the present day Brahmajnanis among you – are asking for the same Substance. A mother provides food that suits each stomach. She cooks fish differently for each of her five children. She doesn't make *pulao*^[167] and *kalia*^[168] for all of them because their digestions are different. For some she makes fish curry. But the mother loves all her children equally.

“Do you know my attitude? I like to eat fish prepared in all different ways. I have a feminine nature! (All laugh.) I like to eat fried fish, fish smeared with turmeric, sour fish, small dry fish cooked with spiced vegetables and the rest. Furthermore, I like the seasoned head of fish as well as *pulao* and *kalia* dishes. (All laugh.)

“Do you know how it is? Different religions are based on different times, places and people. But all the religions are only different paths. The paths are themselves not the Lord, though if you have sincere bhakti and tread any path, you can reach Him. If

there is an error in a particular path you choose, He will correct it if you are sincere. Suppose one sets out yearningly to visit Lord Jagannath [at Puri] and instead of going toward the south, he goes north. Somebody will surely tell him the way. He will tell him not to proceed, but to turn south. This fellow is sure to see Lord Jagannath sooner or later.

“At the same time you must not say that paths other than your own are erroneous. It is for the Creator of the universe to take care of that. Our duty is to somehow have the darshan of Lord Jagannath. (To the Brahmos) Your path is very good. You take Him as formless. This is indeed good. Bread sweetened with sugar candy, whether eaten straight or sidewise, will always taste sweet.

“Even so, it is not good to be dogmatic. You have heard the story of the chameleon. A man went out to ease himself. He saw a chameleon on a tree trunk. He came and told his friends that he had seen a red chameleon. He was absolutely sure that it was red. Another person went to the tree and said that he had seen a green chameleon. He was also convinced that it was green and no other colour. But the man who lived under the tree said, ‘What both of you have said is correct, but the creature is sometimes red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow and sometimes it has no colour at all.’

“The *Vedas* talk of God as both *saguna*^[169] and *nirguna*^[170]. You people just call Him formless. You are staunch believers in that one concept. That’s all right, let it be. When you know one of His aspects truly, you will come to know of His other aspects too. God Himself will make you

understand. You people who come here know this gentleman, and that one too (pointing at one or two Brahma devotees).”

Chapter II

Instructions to Vijay Goswami

Vijay is still a member of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj – he is a paid preacher of this Samaj. However, he does not agree with the rules and regulations of the present Brahma Samaj. He also associates with believers in God with form. This has caused estrangement with the authorities of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. Many of the Brahma devotees of the Samaj are displeased with him. Thakur suddenly addresses Vijay –

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay, smiling) — They condemn you because you meet people who believe in God with form. The devotees of God must have a firm and steadfast understanding^[171] – like the blacksmith’s anvil. It receives hammer blows unceasingly, but it remains unchanged. Unfriendly people may find fault with you and speak ill of you, but if you sincerely love Bhagavan, you will bear all this. Is it not possible to meditate on the Lord while living with the wicked? Remember the rishis who used to meditate on the Lord in forests with tigers, bears and other wild animals around them.

Unfriendly people have the nature of tigers and bears – they chase offensively and can harm you.

“You must be careful of many types. First, an important, wealthy man. Rich people can harm you if they wish. You have to talk to them very cautiously. You might even have to agree to something they say. Then there is the dog which you may chase away but it continues to follow you and bark. You have to stand up to it and pacify it with gentle sounds. Then there is the bull, which would attack you with its horns. You have to pacify it also with gentle words. Next there is the lunatic. When you arouse his anger, he will abuse you right and left, even your fourteen ancestors. You should say to him, ‘How do you do, uncle?’ This will please him. He may even sit and smoke with you.

“When I see a wicked person I am on my guard. If one of them comes and asks if I have a hubble-bubble for him, I say, ‘Yes, yes, I have.’

“Some people have the nature of a serpent. You don’t know when they will strike. You have to decide on a strategy to face their attack. If you don’t consider carefully what to do and you become angry, you may feel like harming him in return to a greater extent. So it is essential that you associate with the holy from time to time. It is only by keeping the company of holy men that you can discriminate between the real and the unreal.”

Vijay — I have no time. I remain so busy with work.

Sri Ramakrishna — You are a religious teacher

(*acharya*). While others may have leisure, the preacher never has. When the administrator of an estate brings order in one part of it, the landlord sends him to govern another. Likewise, you also never get leisure. (All laugh.)

Vijay (folding his hands) — Please bless me.

Sri Ramakrishna — These are words of an ignorant person. It is the Lord alone who blesses.

Instruction to Brahma householders – family life and sannyasa

Vijay — Kindly give us instructions.

Sri Ramakrishna (glancing around the Samaj hall with a smile) — This is good in a way – both spiritual and worldly pursuit here. There is the Reality and also absorption in worldly pursuits here. (All laugh.) By ‘scoring’ too many points, I have been ‘burnt’ [out of the game]. (All laugh.) Do you know the game called ‘nax’? If you score more than 17 points, you are ‘burnt’. It is a game of cards. He who scores less than 17 points, maybe 5, 7 or 10, is an expert player. By scoring many points, I am out of the game.

“Once I heard Keshab Sen deliver a lecture at his house. The ladies were seated behind a screen. Keshab Sen said, ‘Oh Lord! Bless us that we may dive deep and disappear altogether in the river of bhakti.’ I smiled and said to Keshab, ‘If you go deep into the river of bhakti, what will be the fate of those who are seated behind the screen? Therefore,

do this: dive, but then come up to the shore from time to time. Don't remain in deep waters after you dive.' Hearing this, Keshab and the others burst into laughter.

“Never mind! If you are sincere, you can attain the Lord even while living a family life. ‘I’ and ‘mine’ are ignorance. Jnana is knowing, ‘Oh, Lord! It’s all You and Yours.’

“Live in the household like a maidservant in a rich man’s house. She attends to all her chores, she brings up the master’s children and calls his son her Hari. But she knows quite well that it is not her house, nor is the boy her son. She attends to all her duties, but inwardly her mind dwells on her native village. Similarly, perform all your household duties, but keep your mind fixed on the Lord. And know that the home, the wife, the son, none are yours. They are all His. You are merely His servant.

“I ask you to have mental renunciation. I don’t ask you to leave home. You can attain God if you live unattached with your family and seek Him sincerely.”

Brahmo Samaj and yoga of meditation – subjective and objective yoga

(To Vijay) “I used to meditate with my eyes shut. Later on, I asked myself whether the Lord is present when I shut my eyes and not present when I open them. I open my eyes and see that the Lord dwells in everything – He pervades man, birds, beasts, plants and trees; He manifests in the sun and the moon, in water, on dry land, in everything.”

Shivanath and Kedar Chatterji

“Why do I like Shivanath? Because he has meditated on the Lord for so long. He who meditates on the Lord has substance and God’s power in him. And He who sings well, or plays musical instruments well – anybody who is expert in any branch of knowledge – has divine power within. The *Gita* says this too^[172]. And the Chandi says that one who is endowed with exquisite beauty has substance too, has God’s power in him. (To Vijay) Ah, what a mood Kedar has developed! As soon as he comes to see me, he begins to weep. His eyes are always full of tears, like the *chanabara*^[173] soaked in syrup.”

Vijay — There [in Dacca] we only talk of you^[174]. He is now very eager to see you.

After some time, Thakur rises. The Brahma devotees salute him. Thakur returns their salute. He gets into the carriage. He is to go to Adhar’s house for the darshan^[175] of the image of the Goddess.

^[166] The autumnal worship of Goddess Durga on the seventh day of the lunar fortnight

^[167] A highly spiced fish dish of rice and meat cooked in clarified butter

^[168] A rich curry of fish

^[169] With attributes

^[170] Without attributes

[171] *Kutastha* intellect

[172] Whatever being is glorious, prosperous, or powerful, know that to have sprung but from a spark of My splendour. (Gita 10:41)

[173] Bengali sweetmeat made of fried cheese

[174] Kedar Nath Chatterji, a great devotee, was in Dacca on government duty. Vijay Goswami also used to go to Dacca off and on. He met him there. Both being devotees, they enjoy each other's company.

[175] To see and pay homage

Section XVI

Sri Ramakrishna in Ram's House with Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna in the house of Ram on the Mahashtami Day

Sunday, 28 September, 1884, the Mahashtami^[176] day. Sri Ramakrishna has come to Calcutta to have the darshan of the image of the Goddess. The Shardiya (autumnal) festival of Durga is being celebrated in Adhar's house. Thakur is invited for three days. Having had the darshan of the image at Adhar's house, he then goes to Ram's house. Many devotees, including Vijay, Kedar, Ram, Surendra, Chunilal, Narendra, Niranjana, Narayan, Harish, Baburam and M. are present. Balaram and Rakhai are in Vrindavan *dham* (place of pilgrimage).

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling at Vijay and Kedar) — A nice meeting since you both have the same bhava (spiritual mood). (To Vijay) Well, what about Shivanath? Did you...

Vijay — Yes sir, he knows about your going to his house. I have not seen him, but I sent word to him. He knows about it.

Sri Ramakrishna had gone to Shivanath's

house to see him, but because of the latter's busy schedule, he had not been at home. Vijay had told him about the visit later.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay and others) — I had four desires in my mind.

“One, that I might eat fish curry with eggplant. Two, that I might meet Shivanath. Three, that I might see devotees repeating the name of Hari on their rosaries. And lastly, that I might see and salute the Tantrik practitioners drinking eight annas worth of wine on the *ashtami*^[177] day.”

Narendra is seated in front of Sri Ramakrishna. He is 22 or 23 years old. While talking, Thakur glances at him. He immediately stands up and goes into samadhi. Placing his foot on Narendra's knee, he stands there in samadhi. He is totally unconscious of the outside world. His eyes are fixed.

**God personal and impersonal – Sachchidananda and
Karanandamayi^[178] – *rajarshi*^[179] and
brahmarshi^[180] – *Ishvarakotis* and *jivakotis* – the
class of *nityasiddhas***

Sri Ramakrishna comes down from samadhi after a long time. He is still inebriated with divine joy. In a spiritual mood, speaking to himself, he repeats the name of God. Then he says, “Shall I say Sachchidananda! Sachchidananda! Sachchidananda? No. Today is the Mother's day. She is the source and giver of divine intoxication, *Karanandamayi*. Doh, re, mi, fa, soh, la, ti. It is not right to stay at ti – one cannot stay there long. I would rather stay

a note below.”

“Gross, subtle, causal [\[181\]](#) and Great Cause [\[182\]](#).
When one reaches the Great Cause, it is all quiet.
One cannot utter a word.

“*Ishvarakotis* (godmen) can return from the state of Mahakarana. The incarnations of God are *Ishvarakotis*. They ascend to high spiritual states and come down. They climb up onto the roof and come down again by the staircase to move around on lower floors. It is the case of involution and evolution. There is a seven-storied building. Some have access to the outer apartments only, but the prince can roam about on all seven stories.

“There is a kind of fireworks rocket that emits flower-like sparks. It first throws out sparks in one pattern – and then in another. It never stops emitting different patterns of sparks.

“And there is another kind of rocket which, if you light, shoots up for awhile with a hissing sound and then falls down. If an ordinary person goes up after practicing spiritual disciplines, he cannot come back to tell his experience. The *jivakoti* (individual soul) may attain samadhi after practicing spiritual disciplines, but he cannot come back from his samadhi and tell his experiences.

“But then there is the class of the *nityasiddhas* [\[183\]](#) – they seek the Lord from birth and nothing worldly attracts them. The *Vedas* speak of the Homa bird who lives high in the sky. When its egg hatches, the chick falls toward the earth. It keeps falling for many days. During the fall its eyes open. When it is nearing the ground, it gains the awakening – it

realizes that as soon as its body touches the ground it will die. In an instant the bird shrieks and darts directly upward toward its mother. Falling to earth means sure death. It is frightened at the sight of the ground and begins to yearn for its mother. She dwells high up in the sky. It flies swiftly and directly toward her! It sees nothing else.

“Those who accompany an incarnation of God are either *nityasiddhas*, or in their last birth.”

(To Vijay) “You people have both yoga and bhoga (spiritual inclination and worldly enjoyment). King Janaka had both yoga and bhoga. Thus he was a rajarshi, both a king and sage. Narada was a *devarshi*^[184] while Shukadeva was a *brahmarshi* (a sage who had attained Brahman).

“Shukadeva was a *brahmarshi*. He was not a jnani – he was the very manifestation of jnana. Who is a jnani? He who has attained jnana (spiritual wisdom) through the practice of religious disciplines. Shukadeva was the embodiment of jnana, in other words a storehouse of jnana. He became a jnani effortlessly – not by the practice of spiritual disciplines.”

While talking, Sri Ramakrishna comes down to the natural state. He will now be able to talk with the devotees.

He asks Kedar to sing. Kedar sings –

Song 1 –

O friend, how can I tell you what is in my mind?

It is forbidden to speak.

Without a real and sympathetic friend, I cannot survive.

The man who can know one's mind can understand it.

He is easily recognized. There are only one or two such people.

Such a person is filled with bhava, becomes absorbed in joy, and he comes and goes through the upstream course.

(A man in bhava frequents the 'upstream course'[\[185\]](#).)

Song 2 –

The wave of Gaur's love has touched my body.

By its thunder all heretics are crushed and the universe submerged.

I feel my mind should remain absorbed in divinity.

The crocodile of the intense love of moon-like Gaur has swallowed me, O my friend!

Is there any real friend who knows my misery, who can drag me out, holding my hand?

Song 3 –

He who does not recognize the shortcomings of love...

After the songs, Thakur talks to the devotees again. Keshab Sen's nephew, Nandalal, is there. He is seated beside Thakur along with one or two Brahma friends.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay and others) —
Somebody brought a bottle of wine. I tried to touch
it but couldn't.

Vijay — Ah!

Sri Ramakrishna — When one enjoys a divine
mood, one is already inebriated. One doesn't have
to drink wine. The *charanamrita*^[186] of the
Mother intoxicates me – exactly as if I had drunk
five bottles of wine.

**The states of a jnani and of a devotee described –
rules governing the food of the jnani and the devotee**

Sri Ramakrishna — In this state one cannot always
take every kind of food.

Narendra — In the matter of drinking and eating,
the best is that which chance brings.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is true of a particular state of
mind. For a jnani nothing is prohibited. According
to the *Gita* the jnani does not eat, he just makes an
offering to his Kundalini.

“This does not hold true for the devotee. Now my
mood is such that I can't eat unless I am given
bhoga (food offered to the deity) by a brahmin.
Formerly, the state of my mind was such that I
would enjoy inhaling the smell of the burning
corpses on the other side of Dakshineswar. Now, I
can't eat food offered by everyone.

“Though I cannot eat everything, once in awhile I
do. Once they took me to Keshab Sen's theatre

(Nava Vrindavan). There I was served luchis and a curry seasoned with dry chilies. I don't know whether it was a washerman or a barber^[187] who brought the food to me. (All laugh.) I ate it heartily. Rakhai asked me not to eat so much. (To Narendra) You will succeed now. You are in 'this' as well as in 'that'^[188]! You may eat everything now.

(To the devotees) "Blessed is the man who is attracted by the Lord, even though he may eat pork. On the other hand, shame on him who is attached to 'lust and greed,' even though he may be eating *havishya*^[189]."

His earlier story – Brahmajnana and loss of caste distinction after first state of God-intoxication – journey to Kamarpukur – Dhani, the blacksmith's wife – Ramlal's father – initiation into Allah's name through Govinda Rai

"I had the desire to eat lentils in the house of a blacksmith. I had heard since childhood that blacksmiths said brahmins didn't know how to cook food. So I went and ate at their home – but there was the smell of the iron smithy in it. (All laugh.)

"I received the sacred mantra of Allah from Govinda Rai. He cooked rice with onion in the Kuthi. I took some of it. I ate cooked vegetables in (the Baranagore) garden house of Mani Mallick. But then I developed some aversion to it.

"When I went to my native village [Kamarpukur], Ramlal's father was afraid that I would go and eat in any and every house. He was afraid that I might

be declared an outcaste. For this reason I couldn't stay long in the village. I came back.”

**Right conduct according to the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*
and the *Tantras***

“The *Vedas* and the *Puranas* talk of right conduct. What the *Vedas* and *Puranas* prohibit is recommended in the *Tantras* as good.

“What spiritual states have I passed through! I would open my mouth wide as if it would touch both heaven and the nether world. And I would utter, ‘Ma,’ (Mother) as though I were pulling the Mother inside, just as the fishes are pulled along with the net.”

Song –

O Kali! I am going to devour You this time. O You who are full of compassion for the lowly, I will surely eat You up.

Though I say that I will eat You, yet I'll not take You into my stomach.

Instead I'll make You sit on the lotus of my heart where I shall worship You with my heart.

(I am born under the constellation Ganda yoga (evil star).)

The child who is born under the Ganda yoga constellation eats his own mother.

This time either You will eat me, or I will devour You. And thus the two will become one.

I will smear my hands, face and other parts of the body with black (black being the colour of Kali).

When Yama (god of death) comes and binds me tight, I shall rub his face with Kali (Kali in two senses: one, Mother Kali, and the other, blackness).

If You say that I shall be in trouble with Kala^[190] by eating Kali, I tell you that I am not afraid of it.

I will defy him while uttering the name of Kali.

I shall eat the vegetables of the *Dakinis* and *Yoginis*^[191]. I will snatch the string of skulls from them and make a sour broth with it.

I will make him understand well that I am Ramprasad, the son of Kali.

Whether it means spiritual disciplines or brings the death of the body, whatever it may be, I shall certainly do it.

“I was like one gone mad. Such madness results from deep longing.”

Narendra sings –

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love.

What need is there for knowledge or reason?^[192]

While listening to the song, Sri Ramakrishna again goes into samadhi.

When he comes down from the samadhi, he takes up the mood of Girirani^[193] and sings the *agamani*^[194] song. Says Girirani, “O residents of this place, has my Uma come?” Intoxicated with intense love, Thakur sings the song.

After the song, Sri Ramakrishna says to the devotees,
“You see, it is the Mahashtami day. So the Mother has come!
That is why I feel such an arousal of divine inspiration!”

Kedar — Lord, you yourself have come. There is no Mother other than you.

Thakur glances in another direction and begins to sing the following song in a casual manner –

O *sakhi*^[195]! Where is He for whom I am going mad?

Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva have together broken Navadvip like mad gods.

And I have seen another mad person in Vrindavan who has made Radha his king and stands there in the garb of a police officer.

Another mad fellow I saw on the road to Navadvip carrying his love for Radha in his *kamandala*^[196]. He roams about with it, saying, ‘Here is nectar

.’

Again going into an ecstatic mood, Thakur sings –

You are the river of nectar, O Mother Shyama!
Who can fathom your various moods?^[197]

While Thakur is singing the song, Vijay suddenly stands up and says, “Haribol, Haribol.” Intoxicated with divine emotion, Sri Ramakrishna begins to dance with him and other devotees.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna with devotees

After the singing of devotional songs, Sri Ramakrishna, Vijay, Narendra and the other devotees sit down. All eyes are fixed on Thakur. It is not yet dusk. Thakur talks to them, making polite enquiries. Kedar folds his hands and in a most humble and sweet manner tells Thakur something. Narendra, Chunilal, Surendra, Ram, M. and Harish sit close to them.

Kedar (very humbly, to Sri Ramakrishna) — How can I get rid of my dizziness?

Sri Ramakrishna (lovingly) — It does happen. I also had it. Apply some almond oil. They say it cures dizziness.

Kedar — I shall do that, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Chunilal) — I say, brother, how are you?

Chunilal — Everything is fine with me. Balaram Babu, Rakhal and the others are well in Vrindavan.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why did you send so much sandesh?

Chunilal — I have just come from Vrindavan, sir...

Chunilal had accompanied Balaram to

Vrindavan. He was there for several months.
His vacation ended, he is now back in Calcutta.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Harish) — Wait a couple of days before you go to Dakshineswar. You fell ill there. The same could happen again.

(Lovingly to Narayan) “Come and sit near me. Come to Dakshineswar tomorrow and have your meal there. (Pointing at M.) Come with him. (To M.) What do you say?”

M. wants to go to Dakshineswar with Thakur this very day. He becomes thoughtful. Surendra has been there for a long time. He went home once, but has come back and is now standing beside Thakur.

Surendra drinks liquor. He used to drink so much that Thakur had begun to worry about him. However, Sri Ramakrishna didn't ask him to give up drinking altogether. He said to him, “Look here, Surendra, whatever you drink, first offer to the Divine Mother. And take only so much that you are not dizzy and you do not stagger. When you actively keep your mind on the Divine Mother, you will develop some aversion to drinking. She is the source of *karanananda*^[198]. When you attain Her, you feel a natural bliss.”

Surendra is standing beside Sri Ramakrishna. Glancing at him, Thakur suddenly asks, “Have you been drinking wine?” Saying so, he goes into an ecstatic mood.

It is dusk. As he regains a little external awareness, Thakur repeats the Divine Mother's name and begins to sing happily –

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 step

s.

More than mad, both are indifferent to fear and
shame.

It is already dusk. Sri Ramakrishna is uttering
the name of Hari, clapping his hands in
between. He chants in a sweet voice,
“Haribol^[199], Haribol, Harimaya, Haribol,
Hari, Hari, Haribol.”

And then he chants the name of Rama, “Rama,
Rama, Rama! Rama, Rama, Rama! Rama,
Rama.”

Sri Ramakrishna's prayer – how to pray?

Now Thakur prays –

“Oh, Rama! Oh, Rama! I am without bhajan^[200],
without sadhan (austerity), without devotion
(bhakti), without ritualistic worship! I take refuge in
You, oh Rama; in You I take refuge! I don't want
creature comforts, oh Rama! Nor worldly esteem,
nor the eight occult powers, nor even a hundred
occult powers, oh Rama! I take refuge in You, Your
refuge alone, oh Rama! Just grant that I may
develop pure love for Your lotus feet, oh Rama!
And may I never be deluded by your world-
bewitching maya! Rama, my Rama! My refuge!”

While Sri Ramakrishna prays thus, everyone's eyes are fixed on him. Hearing his compassionate voice, many devotees shed tears.

Ram stands close by.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ram) — Ram, where were you?

Ram — Sir, I was upstairs.

Ram was upstairs arranging a feast for Thakur and the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling at Ram) — Isn't it better to stay at a lower level than to go up? Water collects on low ground, but it flows off higher levels.

Ram (laughing) — True, sir.

Leaf plates for dinner have been laid on the terrace. Ramachandra takes Thakur and the devotees to the terrace and makes them eat heartily. Sri Ramakrishna, then accompanied by Niranjana, M. and others, go to Adhar's house. The Mother of the Universe has arrived there – it is the Mahashtami day! Adhar had prayed especially that Thakur be present, for then alone would his worship be successful.

[176] The eighth lunar day of the bright fortnight of Aswin or Kartik which is the second day of the autumnal

worship of Goddess Durga

[177] The eight day of either fortnight of the lunar month

[178] The Divine Mother, giver of divine inebriation

[179] A royal ascetic sage

[180] One who has attained Brahman and teaches its essence to others

[181] Karana

[182] Mahakarana

[183] Spiritually perfect since birth

[184] A godly person endowed with Supreme Knowledge

[185] Such a person is put in exalted spiritual states – his Kundalini reaches to higher spiritual centres.

[186] The water in which the Deity is bathed

[187] Washermen and barbers are considered to be belonging to a low caste

[188] Meaning that Narendra is attending to both the spiritual life and the worldly life

[189] A holy food consisting of boiled rice with clarified butter

[190] Shiva, the consort of Kali

[191] The spirits of destruction

[192] For complete song see Volume I, Section XII

[193] Wife of King Himalaya and mother of Uma

[194] Any of the songs about the coming of Uma, Shiva's wife, to her father's house

[195] The milkmaid friend of Radha

[196] Mendicant water pot

[197] For the full song see M. the Apostle and the Evangelist, Vol. 1, Section 13, Chapter 2

[198] Bliss of divine inebriation

[199] Repeat the name of Hari

[\[200\]](#) Singing of devotional songs

Section XVII

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees on Navami Puja Day in Dakshineswar

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra, Bhavanath and others in Dakshineswar

Monday, 29 September, 1884, the Navami Puja^[201] day. It is early morning. The *mangalarati*^[202] of Mother Kali has already been performed. The *roshan chowki*^[203] is playing the morning *raga ragini* (modes of Indian music) from the Nahabat. The gardeners with large wicker baskets in their hands and the brahmins with puja baskets are going to gather flowers for the worship of the Mother of Universe. Sri Ramakrishna has been awake since before dawn. Bhavanath, Baburam, Niranjana and M. stayed here last night. They slept on the verandah of Thakur's room. When they open their eyes, they see Thakur dancing in divine inebriation. He is uttering, "Victory, victory to Durga! Victory, victory to Durga!"

He is just a child! Without a dhoti around his waist, he dances, pacing the room and uttering the Divine Mother's name.

After awhile he says, "*Sahajananda*^[204], *Sahajananda*." Then he repeats the name of Govinda, "Govinda, you are my life, my life

breath.”

The devotees are now awake. They watch Thakur intently in his ecstatic mood. Hazra is also there. He is sitting on the verandah to the southeast of Thakur’s room. And Latu is there. He renders personal service to Thakur. Rakhal is in Vrindavan these days. Narendra visits Sri Ramakrishna from time to time. He is to come today.

The devotees had slept on the small verandah to the north of Sri Ramakrishna’s room. It is winter, so they had closed the wicker door. When they have finished washing their faces, Thakur comes and sits on a mat on the northern verandah. Bhavanath and M. are seated close to him. Other devotees come in from time to time and take their seats.

***Jivakotis*^[205] are skeptics and *Ishvarakotis*^[206] have unshakable faith**

Sri Ramakrishna (to Bhavanath) — You know, *jivakotis* do not have faith easily. On the other hand, *Ishvarakotis* need no proof for their belief, they have unshakable faith. Prahlada began to weep suddenly when he wrote the letter ‘K’ because it reminded him of Krishna. The nature of the jiva is beset with doubts. He says, “Yes, it is so, no doubt, but ...”

“Hazra will never believe that Brahman and His Shakti (Power) are inseparable, that the Power and the Being possessing the Power are not different from each other. I call God Brahman when He is inactive. But when He creates, preserves and dissolves, I call Him Shakti. But the substance is

one, it is indivisible. Think of fire and you are immediately reminded of its power to burn. Similarly, when you think of burning power, you are reminded of fire. You cannot think of one without thinking of the other.

“Then I prayed, ‘Mother, Hazra tries to upset the belief of ‘this place’^[207]. Either give him the right understanding, or take him away from here.’ The very next day he came and said, ‘I agree with you [that Brahman and Shakti are inseparable]!’ He said, ‘Vibhu (the All-pervading Being) exists everywhere.’ ”

Bhavanath (laughing) — Did you really feel disturbed at this idea of Hazra?

Sri Ramakrishna — My state has changed. I can no longer carry out discussions and arguments with people. I am not in the state of mind to discuss and argue with Hazra. Hriday^[208] said to me in Jadu Mallick’s garden, ‘Uncle, don’t you want to keep me with you?’ I said, ‘No, I am not in that state of mind. I can no longer get into arguments with you.’

**His earlier story – Sri Ramakrishna in Kamarpukur
– the world full of divine consciousness – childlike
faith**

“What is jnana and what is ajnana? It is ajnana (ignorance) when you think that the Lord is far away from you. When you know Him to be here [within you], that is jnana.

“When you have gained the right *jnana* (spiritual knowledge), everything seems to be full of divine

consciousness. I used to talk to Shibu^[209] when he was very small, four or five years old. He was in the countryside [Kamarpukur]. There was thunder and lightening in the clouds. Shibu said, ‘Uncle, God is striking flints!’ (All laugh.) One day I saw him catching a grasshopper. The leaves of a nearby tree were shaking. He said to them, ‘Be still, I have to catch the grasshopper.’ The child was seeing divine consciousness in everything! The simple faith of a child! If you don’t have childlike faith, you can’t attain Bhagavan. Oh, what a state I was in! One day I was bitten in a meadow. I was afraid it might have been snake bite! What should I do? I had heard that if a snake bites a second time, it takes back its own poison. I began to look for it in the place I had been bitten, so that it might bite me again. Somebody asked me what I was doing. When I told him, he said it must bite in exactly the same place where it had bitten before. Hearing that, I got up. Perhaps it was a small scorpion that bit me.

“And one day I heard Ramlal say that autumn dew was good for one’s health. So, coming by carriage from Calcutta, I stuck my head out of the window to be exposed to the dew. I fell ill after this.” (All laugh.)

Sri Ramakrishna and medicine

Thakur now goes into his room and takes his seat. Both of his feet are somewhat swollen. He asks the devotees to see whether a depression is formed on the skin when it is pressed. A small depression did form, but everybody told him that it was nothing.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Bhavanath) — Please ask Mahendra of Sinthi to come and see me. I will feel reassured if he says it is nothing.

Bhavanath (smiling) — You have great faith in medicine. We don't have so much.

Sri Ramakrishna — God makes the medicine and He Himself is the physician. Dr. Gangaprasad asked me not to drink water at night. I stuck to it as if it were an injunction of the *Vedas*. I look upon him as Dhanavantri^[210] himself.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna with Narendra, Bhavanath and others – he goes into samadhi

Yesterday Thakur had gone to Calcutta on the Mahashtami day for the darshan of the image of the deity. He first visited Ram's house and later went to Adhar's for the darshan of the deity. A number of devotees had gathered there. When Thakur saw Narendra, he went into samadhi. He stretched his foot toward Narendra's knee and went into samadhi standing there.

Today Hazra comes in and takes his seat. After some casual conversation, Thakur says to him, "Look here, yesterday there were so many people at Ram's house – Vijay, Kedar and many others. Why do I feel such strong emotion when I see Narendra? I saw Kedar as the 'abode' [realm] of *karanananda* (joy of divine inebriation)."

In the meantime Narendra enters the room. Sri Ramakrishna is beside himself with joy. Having saluted him, Narendra talks with Bhavanath and others. M. is also there. A long mat covers the floor of the room. While talking, Narendra lies on the mat, flat on his stomach. Looking at Narendra, Thakur suddenly goes into samadhi. He sits on Narendra's back in this state of samadhi.

Bhavanath sings –

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,

Do not deprive me of bliss.

My mind knows nothing but Thy lotus
feet [\[211\]](#).

Thakur comes out of his samadhi and sings –

You are the river of nectar, O Mother Shyama!
Who can fathom your various moods?

Thakur sings another song –

Chant, chant, O my mind, the hallowed name of
Durga,

Obeisance to You, Gauri. Obeisance to You,
Narayani

Only when You shower Your compassion on
this sorrowing servant of Yours, shall I know
Your greatness.

You, Yourself, are the dusk, the daytime and
the night.

Sometimes You become man and sometimes a
charming lady.

You hold the bow when You are Rama and the flute as Krishna.

With Your disheveled hair, You have captivated the heart of Shiva.

O Mother, You are the ten great powers. You, Yourself, are the ten avatars.

In what form are You incarnating to liberate me this time?

O Mother, Yashoda worshipped You with hibiscus flowers and vilwa leaves.

By placing Krishna in her lap, You fulfilled her heart's desire.

Where else do I live, O Mother, than in groves?

May my heart remain tied to Your red feet night and day!

I may die anywhere, I may die of any calamity, I must call out the hallowed name of Durga in my last moments.

If you ask me to go away, pray tell me, to whom shall I go?

O Mother! Who else has this nectar sweet name, Tara?

You may ask me to leave You, but I shall never do it.

O Mother! I will cling to Your feet and tinkle as the little bells of Your anklet.

When You sit with Shiva I shall tinkle at Your feet: Victory to Shiva, victory to Shiva!

If Your feet are scratched when I write Your name on them,

I shall write it on the ground so that You may

place Your feet on it.

Mother, if You fly in the sky, becoming a kite, I shall live as a fish in water.

Pray, lift me from there with Your claws.

Hurt by Your claws, O All-Blissful Mother, when I quit this mortal frame,

Kindly grant me, then, both of Your red feet.

O Mother Kali, the beloved of Kala (the Absolute), take me across.

You have made a boat with Your two feet to liberate me.

You are Yourself heaven, the mortal world, and the nether world.

Hari, Brahma and the twelve Gopalas have all sprung from You.

You Yourself, are the Sarvamangala^[212] of Golaka^[213], the Katyayani^[214] of Braja and the Mother Annapurna of the infinite forms of Kashi.

The one who treads the path uttering, 'Durga, Durga,' Shiva protects, holding his trident in hand.

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna in the company of Narendra, Bhavanath and others – he goes into samadhi and dances

Hazra, seated on the northeastern verandah, is counting the beads of his rosary. Thakur comes and sits in front of him. He takes Hazra's rosary in his own hands. M. and Bhavanath are

there with him. It is about ten o'clock.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Hazra) — Look, I cannot tell the beads of the rosary. No, no, perhaps I can. I can do it by holding the rosary in my left hand. But I cannot repeat the name of God.

Having said so, Thakur tries to repeat the Name on the rosary. But as soon as he starts, he passes into samadhi.

Thakur remains in samadhi for a long time, still holding the rosary. The devotees watch him, speechless with wonder. Hazra remains seated and also watches him wonderstruck. Thakur gains external consciousness after a long time. He exclaims, “I am feeling hungry.” He often says this to bring his mind to the normal plane.

M. goes out to bring something for him to eat, but Thakur says, “No brother, I will first go to the Kali Temple.”

Sri Ramakrishna performs Kali Puja on the Navami puja day

Thakur goes south toward the Kali Temple via the brick courtyard. On the way he pays obeisance to Shiva in the twelve temples. The Radhakanta temple is to his left. He then goes there and offers his obeisance. Reaching the Kali Temple, he salutes the Mother. He takes a seat and offers flowers at Her lotus feet. He also offers flowers to his own head. When leaving, he says to Bhavanath, “Take these articles with you – the green coconut offered to the Mother and the holy *charanamrita*.” Thakur then returns to his room with M. and

Bhavanath. As soon as he reaches his room, he offers obeisance to Hazra. ‘What are you doing, sir?’ Hazra cries out as he rises. He asks, “What is this?”

Sri Ramakrishna says, “Why, is something wrong?”

Hazra often argues with Thakur that the Lord indeed exists in everybody and that everybody can attain Brahmajnana by the practice of spiritual disciplines.

It is mealtime. The bells for the arati and food offering to the deities have rung. All the brahmins, Vaishnavas and indigents go toward the guest house to have Mother’s prasad and that of Radhakanta. The devotees will also partake of the Mother’s prasad, seated where the brahmin employees of the guest house sit for their meals. Thakur says, “Everyone must go and eat there. What do you say? (To Narendra) No. You eat here.”

“All right, Narendra and I will eat here.”

Bhavanath, Baburam, M. and the others leave for the guest house.

After taking some prasad, Thakur rests awhile – though not for long. The devotees are talking on the verandah. Thakur joins them and is happy in their company. It is two o’clock. They are all seated on the northeastern verandah. Suddenly Bhavanath appears from the southeastern verandah in the garb of a brahmachari. He is in ochre cloth, *kamandala* in hand, and is smiling. Thakur and all the devotees laugh.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — This shows the state of his mind. That is why he is dressed this way.

Narendra — He is in the garb of a brahmachari. I would like to put on the garb of a *vamachari* (practitioner of Tantrik rituals). (Laughter.)

Hazra — You have to procure the five ingredients: wine, meat, fish, posture and women, and the mystic circle [of Bhairavis].

Sri Ramakrishna does not comment on *vamachara*^[215]. He does not encourage this practice. In fact, he laughs it away. He begins to dance like one intoxicated. He sings –

I shall not be distracted even if You make me forget. The reason? I have had the vision of Your red feet.

His earlier story – Rajnarayan’s Chandi – Nakur Acharya’s song

Thakur says, “Oh, how beautiful is Rajnarayan’s singing of the Chandi! He sings and dances in the same way. And the songs of Nakur Acharya in our village! Ah, what dance! What music!”

A sadhu has arrived in the Panchavati. He is a hot-headed man. He uses foul language with anybody and everybody, and hurls curses. He comes in wearing wooden sandals.

He asks, “Can I get fire here?” Sri Ramakrishna folds his hands to salute the sadhu and remains standing in this posture till he leaves.

When the sadhu has gone, Bhavanath says,
“How devoted you are to sadhus!”

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — You see, he too is Narayana, though a man of tamas. This is how one should treat people of tamasic nature. Besides, he is a sadhu!

Sri Ramakrishna and game of golakdham – ‘the right person is victorious everywhere’

The devotees are playing the game of *golakdham*^[216]. Hazra is also playing. Thakur comes in and stands there looking at them. The pawns of M. and Kishori reach ‘heaven’. Sri Ramakrishna pays obeisance to both of them. He adds, “Both of you brothers^[217] are blessed.” (Aside to M.) “Don’t play this game any more.” Thakur continues to watch the game as Hazra’s pawn reaches ‘hell’. Sri Ramakrishna says, “What is the matter with Hazra? Yet again!”

In other words, Hazra’s pawn has again entered ‘hell’. Everyone giggles and laughs.

When all seven dice fall straight, Latu’s pawn is completely out of the ‘*samsar*’ (the world). Latu begins to dance with joy. Thakur says, “Just see how happy Latu is! He would have been very sad if that hadn’t happened. (Alone to the devotees) It has its own significance. Hazra has the conceit that he will win here – but the law of the Lord is such that He does not insult a righteous person. The righteous man is victorious everywhere!”

Chapter IV

Sadhana with women not for Narendra and his like – *vamachara* criticized

His earlier story – visit to holy places – mystic circles of Bhairavi

s in Kashi – Sri Ramakrishna in the attitude of a child

Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the smaller cot in his room. Narendra, Bhavanath, Baburam and M. are sitting on the floor. Narendra refers to the Tantrik sects of Ghoshpara, Panchanami and others. Thakur describes their practices and condemns them. He says, “They can’t follow spiritual practices correctly. They just satisfy sensual desires in the name of religion.”

(To Narendra) “You need not listen to their practices.

“The Bhairavas and Bhairavis are like them. Once when I went to Kashi, they took me to a Bhairavi^[218] mystic circle – every Bhairava^[219] was with a Bhairavi. I was asked to drink wine. I said, ‘Mother, I cannot touch wine.’ Then they began to drink. I thought perhaps they would begin japa and meditation. But they didn’t. Instead they began to dance. I began to fear that they might fall into the Ganges. Their circle was made on the bank of the Ganges.

“Great respect is shown to husband and wife if they take up the role of Bhairava and Bhairavi.

(To Narendra and other devotees) “Do you know what my attitude is? I have a filial nature, the attitude of a son toward his mother. Regarding a woman as mother is a very pure attitude. There is

no danger in it. Considering a woman as sister is not inferior. But looking on a woman as one's mistress, the attitude of a 'hero,' is beset with difficulties. Tarak's father used to practice this rite. It is a very difficult path. It is impossible to maintain the correct spirit in this path.

“There are different ways to reach the Lord. As many faiths, so many paths. It's like going to the Kali temple on different roads. Even so, some paths are pure, while others are dirty. One must take a pure path.

“I have seen so many faiths, so many paths. Now I don't like them anymore – they just argue with each other. However, you who are with me are my own. I tell you, I have reached the conclusion that He is the whole, while I am a part of Him; He is the Master, I am His servant; and sometimes I feel that I am He and He is me.”

The devotees listen to Thakur in deep silence.

Sri Ramakrishna and love of mankind

Bhavanath (humbly) — When you don't get along well with a person, your mind becomes disturbed. Then you can't love everybody.

Sri Ramakrishna — First talk it out with that person. Try to make up with him. If you fail in your efforts, don't worry. Take refuge in God and meditate on Him. There is no need to give up God and feel depressed because of other people.

Bhavanath — Christ and Chaitanya both said to

love everyone.

Sri Ramakrishna — Love you must, for God abides in all. But when you come across a wicked person, salute him from a distance. Chaitanya Deva did the same thing. He would restrain his spiritual feelings in the presence of those of a different nature. At Srivas's home, he forced Srivas's mother-in-law out of the room, dragging her by the hair.

Bhavanath — She was turned out by somebody else.

Sri Ramakrishna — Could anybody do it without his [Chaitanya Deva's] consent? What else to do if the two minds don't agree? Should one keep worrying about it the whole night? The mind, which should be given to God, should not be wasted in futile things. I say, 'Mother, I want none – neither Narendra, nor Bhavanath, nor Rakhal. Only You do I want. What use is a man to me?'

When Mother Chandi arrives in the house, I will hear any number of hymns in Her praise.

And any number of ascetics, yogis and sadhus with matted locks will come as well.

“Having attained Her, I shall have attained everything. Coins are clods of earth, and clods of earth are coins. Gold is clay and clay is gold – saying this, I gave them all up. I threw them into the Ganges. Then I began to fear that Mother Lakshmi might be angry with me because I had disregarded her glory. Lest She should stop giving me food, I said, 'Mother, I only want You and

nothing else.’ Having attained Her, I shall attain all.”

Bhavanath (smiling) — This is astute calculation!

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Yes, only that much calculation!

“Bhagavan appeared before a certain person and said, ‘I am very pleased with your penance. Ask me for a boon.’ The aspirant said, ‘Bhagavan, if you are granting me a boon, then please grant that I may eat on a gold plate with my grandson.’ So much was accomplished in one boon! He became wealthy, begot a son, and then a grandson.”

Chapter V

Lord is the refuge – Sri Ramakrishna’s devotion to his mother – in the joy of devotional songs

The devotees are in the room while Hazra is seated on the verandah.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know what Hazra wants? He needs some money. His family is in distress. He is in debt. That is why he practices japa and meditation – to get some money.

A Devotee — Can’t God fulfill a devotee’s desire?

Sri Ramakrishna — If it is God’s will. But the Lord doesn’t take all the burden of a person unless he is intoxicated by intense love for Him. Someone holds a child by the hand and makes him sit for his meal

at a feast. Who does so in the case of old people? When one meditates on Him and cannot take care of himself, the Lord then takes responsibility for him [\[220\]](#).

“He [Hazra] does not enquire about his family. Hazra’s son said to Ramlal, ‘Ask my father to come home. We shall not ask him for anything.’ Hearing this, I began to weep.”

Life of Sri Ramakrishna spoken with his own holy lips – visit to Vrindavan

“Hazra’s mother said to Ramlal, ‘Ask Pratap to come home and ask your uncle [Sri Ramakrishna] in my name to send Pratap.’ I asked him to go, but he didn’t listen.

“How great is one’s mother! How long Chaitanya Deva had to implore his mother before he was allowed to leave family life. Sachi [Chaitanya Deva’s mother] said, ‘I will cut Keshab Bharati [\[221\]](#) asunder!’ Chaitanya Deva had to beseech her to give her approval for his sannyasa. He said, ‘Mother, if you don’t approve of it, I won’t go. But if you keep me at home, I shall not survive. Besides, mother, you will be able to see me whenever you remember me. I shall not be far from you. And I will come to see you every now and then.’ It was only then that Sachi permitted him to leave.

“As long as his mother was alive, Narada could not leave her to practice austerities. He had to take care of her, you see. It was only after her death that Narada went away to practice spiritual disciplines

in order to realize Hari.

“When I was at Vrindavan I did not want to return. It was arranged for me to stay with Gangama^[222]. She had her bedding on one side of the room, and mine was on the other. I resolved not to return to Calcutta. ‘How long must I eat Kaivarta’s [proprietors of Dakshineswar temple, who belong to the low caste of fishermen] food?’ I asked myself. But Hriday said, ‘No, you must return to Calcutta.’ He pulled me one way and Gangama dragged me the other. I had a great desire to stay on with her. Suddenly, however, the thought of my mother came to me. My whole attitude changed immediately. ‘My mother is old now,’ I said to myself. ‘If I keep worrying about her, how can I meditate on the Lord? I would rather return to her. There I will meditate on the Lord with a free mind.’

(To Narendra) “You, too, please ask Hazra to go home. The other day he said he would go and stay there for three days. But he did nothing about it.

(To the devotees) “Today we talked of Ghoshpara and such Tantrik ways. Govinda! Govinda! Govinda! Let us now utter the name of Lord Hari. Let there be some cheese pudding after the dish of lentils.”

Narendra sings –

O my mind! Rest assured that there is the stainless Primal Purusha.

He is the beginningless Truth and cause of all causes. He pervades the moving and the unmoving world as *prana* (vital breath).

He is ever living, resplendent, the haven of all.

The man of faith alone beholds Him.

He is beyond the senses, the eternal, the essence of consciousness, and dwells in the cave of the hearts of all.

He is adorned by the different qualities of jnana and prema. Man is rid of all grief by meditating on Him.

He has numberless qualities, He is of ever-serene countenance. None can reach His depths.

But He reveals Himself by His grace to those who take shelter at His feet, knowing them to be humble and helpless by His grace.

Ever-forgiving and the source of all good, He is ever the giver of help in the sea of sorrows.

He is ever just and He bestows fruit in accordance with our good and bad deeds.

He is the most loving, the ocean of mercy and the treasure house of grace. By hearing of His glories one's eyes are filled with tears.

Behold Him and be blessed. He is the haven of all hungry hearts.

Wonderful is His nature, of peerless beauty without stain, which no human speech can describe.

O my brother! Become a beggar at His door and worship Him alone day and night.

Song 2 –

The full moon of divine love rises on the firmament of divine wisdom. [\[223\]](#)

Thakur is dancing round and round. The others are also singing and dancing. It is a mart of

joy. The song ended, Thakur begins to sing again.

Song 3 –

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.

Thakur is very happy to see that M. has joined
in the music. When the song ends, Thakur says
to M. with a smile, "It has been so nice. Had
there been a drummer, it would have been
much more intense. It would have sounded:
Tak tak ta dhina, dak dak da dhina."

The singing of devotional songs ends at dusk.

[201] The third day of Durga Puja

[202] Waving of lights before the deity at dawn

[203] Symphony of sanai and other musical instruments

[204] The spontaneous joy of ecstasy

[205] Ordinary human beings

[206] Godmen

[207] Thakur referred himself to 'this place'

[208] At that time Hriday was not allowed to enter the
temple garden. He had displeased the proprietor of the

garden. Hriday wanted Thakur to request the proprietor to hire him again. Hriday rendered a lot of personal service to Thakur, but he would speak harshly and reprimand him at the same time. Thakur was very tolerant of him.

[209] Shivaram, nephew of Thakur

[210] The name of the physician of heaven

[211] For complete song, see Section IV, Chapter III of this volume

[212] One who is the source of all good; an appellation of Goddess Durga

[213] Part of heaven which is the abode of Narayana

[214] A name of Goddess Durga

[215] Practice of Tantrik rituals in collaboration with a woman

[216] A kind of indoor game in which each player tries to get into heaven and on a false step falls into hell.

[217] Kishori was initiated by Sri Ramakrishna. He left his mortal frame exactly one year before M. He was a beloved of the sannyasin disciples of Thakur. Especially Swami Subodhananda and Swami Shivananda loved him. During his last years, he lived alone.

[218] A female aspirant of the Tantrik sect

[219] A male aspirant of the Tantrik sect

[220] Persons who meditate on Me, worship Me in all beings, never harbouring any other thought, to them thus ever zealously engaged, I carry what they lack and preserve what they already have. (Gita 9:22)

[221] The guru of Chaitanya Deva who initiated him into sannyasa

[222] A great woman saint of Vrindavan

[223] For complete song refer Section I, Chapter II of this volume

Section XVIII

Sri Ramakrishna at Adhar's House – enjoys Devotional Songs with Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna with Vijay, Kedar, Baburam and other devotees

Kedar, Vijay, Baburam, Narayan, M. and Vaishnavcharan

It is Wednesday, 1 October, 1884, the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Aswin. Accompanied by Narayan and Gangadhar, Thakur has come to Adhar's house from Dakshineswar. On the way he had suddenly passed into ecstasy and said, "That I should count the beads! Away with that! This emblem of Shiva has sprung up from the earth by itself."

Sri Ramakrishna has reached Adhar's house. A number of devotees have gathered there: Kedar, Vijay, Baburam and many others. Vaishnavcharan, the musician, has arrived. As directed by Thakur, every day when he returns home from office, Adhar listens to Vaishnavcharan's kirtan. Vaishnavcharan sings very sweetly. Today he is going to sing. When Thakur enters Adhar's drawing room, all the devotees rise and take the dust of his feet. After he has taken his seat with a smiling face,

the devotees also sit down. When Kedar and Vijay have bowed to him, Thakur asks Narayan and Baburam to pay obeisance to them. He asks Kedar and Vijay to bless the two young boys so that they may gain love for God. Pointing to Narayan, he says, “He is very open and guileless.” The devotees gaze at Baburam and Narayan.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Kedar and other devotees) — I just happened to meet you on the way. Had I not, you would have reached the Kali Temple by now. It is by the Lord’s grace that we met beforehand.

Kedar (humbly, folding his hands) — The Lord’s will! It is indeed your will.

Thakur laughs.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna in the joy of kirtan with the devotees

The kirtan begins. Vaishnavcharan sings a love tryst, ending it with a *rasa* (play of Radha and the milkmaids) kirtan. Just as the kirtan depicting the meeting of Radha and Krishna begins, Thakur dances, filled with divine love. The devotees also sing and dance, forming a circle around him. After the singing is over, everybody sits down.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Vijay) — He sings beautifully.

Saying this, he points at Vaishnavcharan and

asks him to sing the song beginning with ‘The beautiful Gauranga.’ Vaishnavcharan sings –

The beautiful and youthful Gauranga of golden hue is the best dancer.

When the song ends, Thakur says to Vijay, “How did you like it?” Vijay says, “It was wonderful!” Now Thakur himself begins to sing about the divine emotion of Gauranga –

Surely Gauranga would be in ecstasy.

What else can he who is the treasure house of ecstasy have?

He laughs, weeps and dances, surcharged with divine emotion.

Seeing a forest, he thinks of it as Vrindavan. Seeing the sea, he thinks it to be the Jamuna.

He who has Krishna within and Gaur without surely will have ecstasy.

Gaur sobs and weeps. He holds his own foot and says:

Where are you, Radha, full of ecstatic love?

Mani sings along with him.

Thakur’s song ends and Vaishnavcharan sings again –

O my Vina^[224], play Hari, Hari!

Without Hari’s compassion, you will not gain the Supreme Essence.

The name of Hari destroys all sorrows. Chant ‘Hare Krishna, Hare’.

By Hari’s will you will have no worry!

O Vina, utter but once the name of Hari. There is no haven except the name of Hari.

The servant, Govinda, says, 'Days are passing. Don't be drowned in distress.'

Thakur sings the different tunes emulating the musician. He says to Vaishnavcharan, "Sing this way, like professional musicians."

Vaishnavcharan sings –

O my tongue, always repeat the name of Sri Durga.

Who else can save you from danger but Sri Durga.

The boat of Durga's name sails on the lake of faith to take you across the sea of the world.

By practicing the instructions of the compassionate Guru, your boat reaches the bank.

If you were to say that the six enemies in the form of wind will create a storm around your boat,

Rest assured that the boat of Durga's name will reach the bank even in the storm, since it is piloted by Mrityunjay (Shiva, the immortal one).

O Mother, You are heaven, You are the mortal world, and You are the nether world.

It is from You that Hari, Brahma, the twelve Gopalas, the ten great sciences, and the ten avatars have sprung.

You will have to take me across this time, taking up one form or the other.

You are the moving and the unmoving. You are

the gross and the subtle.

You are creation, preservation and dissolution.
You are the root of the universe.

You are the Mother of the three worlds and
their savior.

You are the Shakti (Power) of all and You are
Your own Shakti too.

Thakur and the musician sing again and again
the following lines of the song –

You are the moving and the unmoving. You are
the gross and the subtle.

You are creation, preservation and dissolution.
You are the root of the universe.

You are the Mother of the three worlds and
their savior.

You are the Shakti (Power) of all and You are
Your own Shakti too.

The musician starts another song –

Air, darkness, the void, the firmament, the ten
quarters of the globe and all directions have
come into existence by receiving Your light.

All the immortal ones including Brahma and
Vishnu have taken their bodies because of the
light of Your Shakti.

The Ida^[225], the Pingala^[226], the
Sushumna^[227], the Vajra, the Chitrini^[228] are
all pulsating because of the Sahasrara^[229].

Rows and rows of lotuses are in the middle and
the upper regions of Chitrini.

There is white and golden lightening.

Two lotuses are open, one is still in bud.

There are two couples upward facing and downward facing.

Mother, You, in the shape of a swan, are moving as the Kundalini in the lotus.

Above is the naval chakra called Manipura^[230].

On it is the blood-red lotus of ten petals.

In this lotus dwells Your fire power.

When this fire is taken away, everything is extinguished.

In the lotus of the heart is the inward lake like the sky, on which floats the Anahata lotus.

There, is the gold-coloured, twelve-petalled, lotus-shaped arrow of Shiva.

In that lotus your Shakti lives as *jiva* and *prana*.

Above that, in the throat, is the Vishuddha lotus of sixteen petals, of the colour of smoke.

In this lotus Your Shakti lives as ether.

When ether is reached, the whole of ether becomes one unbounded space.

Above it is the thousand-petalled lotus within the cerebrum.

This is the most secret spot of the Guru.

It is in this lotus that the Supreme Shiva is present in His universal form.

He dwells alone in this white, thousand-petalled lotus.

It is in this lotus that Shiva is in the form of a shadow.

Shiva casts His reflection in the
Brahmarandra^[231]. When you reach there,
Shiva becomes His own form.

There, You enjoy Yourself happily with Shiva.

When the merrymaking is over, Shiva takes the
form of a reflection.

Chapter III

About God with form and God without form with Vijay and other devotees – mound of sugar

Kedar and some of the devotees stand up. They
are going home. Kedar salutes Thakur and
says, “Well, I take your leave now.”

Sri Ramakrishna — Are you going back home
without telling Adhar? That would be impolite.

Kedar — ‘When God is pleased, everyone is
satisfied’. When you stay, we all in a sense stay.
But I am not feeling well. I am particularly
uncomfortable when there is talk of marriage and
worldly conventions. There are social
obligations^[232]. I had some trouble before.

Vijay — You are leaving him [Thakur] here ...

Just at this moment, Adhar arrives to take
Thakur in to eat. Leaf plates have been laid
inside. Thakur rises and says to Vijay and
Kedar, “Come on. Come with me.” Vijay,
Kedar and other devotees sit with Thakur and
partake of the prasad.

After eating, Thakur again goes to the drawing room and takes his seat. He is surrounded by Kedar, Vijay and other devotees.

Kedar makes a submission and apologizes – Vijay has vision of the gods

Folding his hands, Kedar says to Thakur very humbly, “Please pardon me for hesitating to eat here.” Perhaps he thinks to himself, “If Thakur has eaten here, certainly a lowly person like me should not have hesitated to eat!”

Kedar works in Dacca. A number of devotees visit him there and bring sandesh and other sweets for him. It is this that Kedar humbly discusses with Sri Ramakrishna.

Kedar (humbly) — Many people bring me things to eat. Tell me, oh Lord, what is your command?

Sri Ramakrishna — Even if a devotee is a *chandala* (pariah), you can take food from him. For seven years I was in a state of God-intoxication. When I went to my native village [Kamarpukur], what a state I was in! I even ate from the hands of a public woman. But now I can’t do that.

Kedar (in a sweet voice, before leaving) — Lord, transmit your power to me. So many people visit me! What do I know?

Sri Ramakrishna — It will come about, brother! It does come when you are a sincere seeker of the Lord.

Before Kedar leaves, Yogendra, the editor of the Bangavasi [a Bengali paper], enters. He salutes Thakur and takes his seat.

They talk about God with form and God without form.

Sri Ramakrishna — God is with form and He is formless. How much more He is, we do not know. It will not do to say that He is formless.

Yogendra — There is a wonderful thing about the Brahma Samaj. Even a boy of twelve sees the formless God. But in the Adi Brahma Samaj, they don't object very much to God with form. They even attend worship at the houses of rich men.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — He has beautifully said that even he (a boy of twelve) sees the formless God.

Adhar — Shivanath Babu does not accept God with form.

Vijay — That is his mistake. As he [Thakur] says, the chameleon is sometimes this colour and at other times a different colour. He who lives under the tree understands it correctly. During meditation, I saw a movie – several gods saying many different things. I said to myself, 'I shall go to him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] and request him to explain.'

Sri Ramakrishna — You had the right vision.

Kedar — The devotee accepts God with form. The

devotee sees God with a form in his intense love for Him. Dhruva had the vision of Bhagavan and said to Him, ‘Why don’t your earrings move?’ Bhagavan said, ‘They will move if you touch them.’

Sri Ramakrishna — You must accept all these, brother – God with form and God without form. I was meditating in the Kali Temple when I saw Ramani, a prostitute. I said to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, You have this form too!’ That is why I say you must accept all. You can never tell when She may appear before you in any form She likes.

Saying so, Thakur begins to sing.

A God-inspired mendicant has arrived...

Vijay — God has infinite power. Can He not reveal Himself in one particular form? How amazing! All these people who are a speck of the dust of His feet try to know all about Him!

Sri Ramakrishna — People read a little of the *Gita*, or the *Bhagavata*, or the *Vedanta* and conclude that they have understood everything. An ant went to a mound of sugar. One grain of sugar filled its stomach. It took another grain in its mouth and returned home, saying to itself, “I shall bring the whole mound next time.” (All laugh.)

[224] A stringed musical instrument

[225] The spiritual column on the left side of the spine

[226] The spiritual column on the right side of the spine

[227] The spiritual canal situated in the center of the spinal cord and extending from the base of the spine to the brain. It is through the Sushumna that the Kundalini rises.

[228] Vajra and Chitrini are two *nadis* (spiritual columns), Sushumna has Vajra inside it and Chitrini is within the latter. Chitrini's lustre is Om and it is subtle as a spider's thread; it pierces all the lotuses of the Sushumna. Within Chitrini is the Brahman-nadi, the channel along which the Kundalini passes.

[229] Thousand-petalled lotus in the cerebrum, the abode of Shiva

[230] The third centre in the Sushumna

[231] The spiritual opening at the top of the head through which yogis say the soul leaves the body when merged with the Absolute

[232] Kedar was a brahmin, while Adhar belonged to a lower caste. Due to social obligations, Kedar did not want to eat at Adhar's home.

Section XIX

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees in Dakshineswar

Chapter I

With Vedantavagish, Ishan and other devotees in Dakshineswar

It is Saturday, 11 October, 1884. Sri Ramakrishna is lying on the smaller bedstead of his room in the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. It is about two o'clock. Priya Mukherji and M. are seated on the floor.

Having left the school at one o'clock, M. has just reached the Kali Temple, at about two.

Sri Ramakrishna — I went to Jadu Mallick's house. Right away he asked me, 'How much is the carriage fare?' When somebody said, 'Three rupees, two annas,' he came to me and enquired about it. Next he secretly asked the coachman who was standing behind Shukul Thakur. The coachman said, 'Three rupees, four annas.' (General laughter.) Jadu ran to us again and asked, 'How much did you say the fare was?'

"A broker visited Jadu. He said to him, 'There is a parcel of four *kathas* [\[233\]](#) of land in Burrabazar for sale. Would you like to purchase it?' Jadu asked, 'What is the price? Can you bring it down?' I said, 'You are not a serious buyer. You are just asking to while away time. Isn't that true?' He turned to me

and laughed. This is the way with worldly people. They want people to come to them so they will be known in the marketplace.

“Jadu had been to Adhar’s house. I told him, ‘Adhar was delighted that you went to his house.’ Jadu said, ‘What? Really? Was he really very pleased?’

“A certain Mallick went to Jadu’s house. I could see from his eyes how clever and deceitful he was. Looking him straight in the eye, I said to him, ‘It’s not good to be too clever. The crow is a very clever bird, but it eats excreta of others and dies.’ I also saw that he was wretched and not well off. Speechless with wonder, Jadu’s mother asked me, ‘Baba (father), how did you know all this, that he had nothing?’ I knew it by looking at his face.”

Narayan arrives. He sits on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Priyanath) — Well, your Hari is a fine person.

Priyanath — He is all right, but not particularly good. He does have a childlike nature.

Narayan — He addresses his wife as mother.

Sri Ramakrishna — How is that possible? Even I can’t do that! He calls her mother! (To Priyanath) You see, he is a very calm boy. And his mind is directed toward God.

Now Thakur takes up other topics of conversation.

“Do you know what Hem said? He said to Baburam that God alone is the Reality and all else an illusion. (All laugh.) No, brother, he meant it. He told me that he would take me to his house and sing devotional songs. But he didn’t. Later he said, ‘If I take up drums and cymbals, what will people say?’ He became frightened that people might think he was crazy.”

**The Ghoshpara ladies look on Haripada as
Gopala^[234] – dispassion since youth and women**

“Haripada has come under the influence of a Ghoshpara woman who doesn’t leave him alone. He said, ‘She takes me on her lap and feeds me, as if I were Gopala.’ I cautioned him that such a filial attitude brings about a downfall.

“You know, even if one has attained Bhagavan, one should keep a distance from women. And it is extremely harmful to frequent women of bad motives and be fed by them. They rob you of spirituality.

“You can safeguard your love of God only by being very cautious. Bhavanath, Rakhal and others once cooked their own food. They had just started eating when a baul^[235] came and sat with them, saying that he would also like to eat. I said, ‘There is not enough to eat, but if anything is left, we will keep it for you.’ This angered him and he left. On the Vijaya festival day people allow anybody to feed them with their own hands. It is not right. You must only eat from the hands of a pure devotee.

“You must be very cautious about women. Don’t listen to them when they display their Gopala bhava (motherly attitude toward a boy) to you. There is the proverb: ‘A woman can devour even the three worlds.’ When some women see an attractive young man, they set various kinds of snares to trap him. And this they call their Gopala bhava!

“They who have felt dispassion since their youth, they who wander about yearning for Bhagavan, they who have not entered family life, indeed belong to a separate class. They are pure aristocrats. In their deep dispassion they remain fifty cubits away from women lest the latter should bring a change in their attitude. If, however, they fall into the clutches of a woman, they no longer remain blue-blooded. Their attitude changes and they come down to a lower level of spirituality. They who have the right kind of dispassion from an early age belong to a higher spiritual ideal (‘abode’). They have an extremely pure attitude. They never allow a single stain to touch them.”

How to conquer the senses – practice of sadhana in the attitude of woman

“How can one conquer the senses? One should assume the feminine attitude. For a long time, I had the attitude of a maidservant of God. I used to dress myself like a woman and wore jewelry and a scarf on my head. I would perform arati with my head covered. Had I not, how could I have kept my wife with me for eight months? Both of us were the maid companions of the Divine Mother!

“I couldn’t say that I was a male. One day I was in

an ecstatic state when she [the Holy Mother] asked me, 'How do you think of me?' I replied, 'As the All-blissful Mother.'

“There is a sect which believes that whoever has breasts like a woman is a woman. Arjuna and Krishna did not have womanly breasts. Do you know the attitude in which Shiva is worshipped? The worship of the Shivalinga (the emblem of Shiva) is the worship of Mother's genital organ and that of the Father[\[236\]](#). When a devotee worships it, he prays, 'Lord, please grant that I am not born again. That I may not again have to pass through a mother's womb after the union of semen and blood.' ”

Chapter II

Sadhana in the company of women – Sri Ramakrishna prohibits it again and again

Sri Ramakrishna is talking of the feminine attitude. Priya Mukherji, M. and some other devotees are there. In the meantime a tutor from Tagore's family comes in with a number of boys of Devendra Nath Tagore's family.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — Sri Krishna has a peacock feather on his head. The feather bears the emblem of the female sex. It means that Sri Krishna is carrying Prakriti[\[237\]](#) on his head.

“When Krishna danced with the gopis, he assumed the attitude of a woman (prakriti). That is why he is seen dressed as a woman in the rasa[\[238\]](#). If you don't have the feminine attitude, you have no right

to be in the company of women. Only when one assumes the feminine attitude, can one participate in rasa and enjoy women's company. However, the *sadhaka* (aspirant) must be very cautious. He should remain far away from women. He should not associate frequently even with a woman of great devotion. When you are climbing up onto the roof, you must not sway. If you are unsteady, there is a danger of falling. The weak should hold onto a support when they climb.

“But it is different in the state of a *siddha* (man of spiritual perfection). There is no danger after one has attained Bhagavan's vision. One becomes fearless to a great extent. Once you have reached the roof, you have reached the goal; you can dance there. But you must not dance on the steps. And he who has climbed up to the roof, no longer needs to renounce what he formerly renounced. The roof is made of bricks, lime and brick dust; the steps are made of the same material. After the vision of Bhagavan, one realizes that the body of the woman about whom he had to be so cautious is the body of Bhagavati (Mother of the Universe). Thereafter he worships her as the Mother and there is no great risk of falling.

“One mustn't forget that when you have once touched the Grand-dame (in the game of hide and seek), you are free to do what you like.”

**The yoga of dhyana (meditation) and Sri
Ramakrishna – looking outwardly and inwardly**

“When a man's mind is turned outward, he sees the gross and his mind dwells in the *annamaya kosha*.

Next is the subtle body. When the mind functions in the subtle body, it dwells in the *manomaya kosha* and *vijnanamaya kosha*. Next comes the *karana* (casual) body. When the mind goes to the causal body, there is only bliss – the mind dwells in the *anandamaya kosha*. It is the same as the semiconscious state of Chaitanya Deva.

“Next the mind is merged – it vanishes – in *Mahakarana* (the Great Cause). When the mind vanishes, there is no more news of it. This is the inmost state which Chaitanya Deva experienced.

“Do you know what that inmost state is? Sri Dayananda said, ‘Come into the inner apartment and shut the door!’ But not everybody can go inside the inner apartment.

“I used to correlate this with the flame of a lamp. I would think of the flame’s red colour as gross. The white inner part, I would think of as subtle. And the innermost black part, I named the *karana* (body of ecstasy).

“There are signs that one is meditating correctly. One of the signs is that a bird will sit on your head, thinking you are an inert object.”

**His earlier story – first meeting with Keshab in 1864,
Keshab in meditation – one can also meditate with
eyes open**

“I saw Keshab for the first time in the Adi (Brahmo) Samaj. Several people were sitting on the dais. Keshab was in the middle. He was motionless, like a log of wood. I said to Mathur Babu, ‘Look at his float. The fish has eaten the bait.’ Because of his

power of meditation he achieved all that he desired (name, fame and so forth) through the grace of the Lord.

“One can also meditate with eyes open. And it is also possible while talking. Imagine the painful twinge of a toothache!”

The Tutor from the house of Tagore — Yes sir, I know it quite well. (Laughter.)

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — When you have a toothache you attend to all your duties, but your mind remains attached to the toothache. In similar fashion, you can meditate with your eyes open – and also while talking.

The Tutor — God’s name is the redeemer of the fallen, so I feel reassured. He is compassionate.

His earlier story – conversation with the Sikhs and Krishnadas

Sri Ramakrishna — The Sikhs also said that God was merciful. I asked them, ‘How is He merciful?’ They answered, ‘Why Maharaj, God has created us as human beings. He provides us with everything, and He protects us from danger at every step.’ I rejoined, ‘How is He great to create us, rear us and then feed us? If you have a son, will people from Vamanpara [\[239\]](#) look after him?’

The Tutor — Sir, some people succeed spiritually in no time, while others do not. How do you explain that?

**Dispersion of Lala Babu[240] and Rani Bhavani –
sattva guna results from samskaras[241]**

Sri Ramakrishna — You know, one succeeds spiritually to a large extent as the result of the *samskaras* of the previous life. But people think it takes place all of a sudden.

“Somebody drank a bottle of wine in the morning. He began to stagger and behave like a mad man. People were surprised that a bottle should turn one’s head so much. Then somebody said, ‘Let me tell you, he has been drinking the whole night.’”

“Hanuman set fire to the golden city of Lanka. People were amazed that a monkey could burn the whole city. But later they said that it was the sigh of Sita and the wrath of Rama which burnt everything.

“And then look at Lala Babu, a very wealthy man. Unless one has good samskaras from a previous birth, can one have such dispersion as Lala Babu? And Rani Bhavani! Though a woman, she possessed such spiritual knowledge and love of God!”

Rajas in Krishnadas – doing good to the world

“In one’s last birth one is endowed with sattva guna[242] and one’s mind is attached to Bhagavan. One feels a deep longing for Him and the mind rejects worldly experiences.

“Krishnadas Pal came here. I saw that he had rajas[243] prominent in him. Since he was a Hindu, he took his shoes off outside. After a short

conversation with him, I realized that there was not much substance in him. I asked him what he thought the duty of a man was. He said, 'Doing good to the world.' I said, 'Who are you that you can do good to the world? Is the world so small that you can do good to it?' "

Thakur is overjoyed to see Narayan. He makes him sit beside him on the smaller cot and pats him affectionately. He gives him some sweets to eat and says lovingly, "Will you have some water?" Narayan is a student at M.'s school. At home he was beaten for visiting Thakur. Thakur says tenderly to him with a smile, "Get a long leather jacket made for yourself. Then you won't feel the blows."

Thakur says to Harish, "I would like to smoke the hubble-bubble."

Thakur forbids spiritual practice with women companions as in Ghoshpara again and again

And then addressing Narayan, he says, "The adopted mother of Haripada came here. I warned Haripada about her. She belongs to the Ghoshpara sect. I asked her, "Have you found your supporter [man]?" She said, "Yes, so and so Chakravarti."

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Oh! Nilkantha came that day. What a spiritual mood he was in! He said that he would come again and sing. Today they are dancing over there. Please go and have a look. (To Ramlal) There is no oil. (Peeps into the container) No, there is no oil in the container.

Chapter III

Union of Purusha and Prakriti – who were Radha and Krishna? Adyashakti

**Vedantavagish, Dayananda Saraswati, Col. Olcott,
Surendra and Narayan**

Sri Ramakrishna is now pacing back and forth – from inside his room to the southern verandah. Next he goes to the western semi-circular verandah to have a glimpse of the Ganges.

Effect of good and bad environment: images, trees and young boys

After awhile he sits down on the smaller cot. It is three o'clock. The devotees come in and sit down again on the floor. Thakur sits silent on the smaller cot. From time to time he glances at the wall of the room where a number of pictures hang. To his right is the picture of Goddess Vinapani (Saraswati) and close by, the picture of Nitai and Gaur singing devotional songs with devotees. In front of Thakur, there are the pictures of Dhruva, Prahlada, and an image of Mother Kali. To his right on the wall is the image of Mother Rajarajeshvari, and on the back wall that of Jesus raising the drowning Peter. Suddenly Thakur says to M., "Look here, it is good to keep the picture of sadhus and sannyasins in the room. When you wake up in the morning, it is good to see the face of a sadhu or a sannyasin instead of other people. To have English pictures on the wall – pictures of rich men, or a king, or a queen, or a prince, or a

European couple strolling together – gives rise to rajas.”

“The company you keep makes your character. That is why even pictures influence you. After all, birds of a feather flock together! A paramahansa keeps a few boys with him. He allows boys five or six years old to be near him. In the state of a paramahansa, one likes the company of children. Children are not subject to the gunas – sattva, rajas, or tamas.

“When you see a tree, you are reminded of a hermitage where rishis practice austerities.”

A brahmin from Sinthi enters the room. He salutes Thakur. He has studied Vedanta in Kashi.

Sri Ramakrishna — How do you do? It’s been a long time since your last visit.

The Pundit (smiling) — Household duties, sir. And you know well that it is hard to find time.

The pundit sits down and talks to Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna — You were in Kashi for a long time. Tell me what you saw there. Tell me something about Dayananda^[244].

The Pundit — I did meet Dayananda. You also met him.

Sri Ramakrishna — I went to meet him in a garden

on the other side of the Ganges. Keshab Sen was supposed to come that day and he was very eager to meet Keshab – like a chatak bird anxious for a drop of rainwater. He is a great scholar. He made fun of the Bengali language, calling it '*Gauranga Bhasha*' (the language of Gaur.) He believes in gods but Keshab didn't. Dayananda said, 'God has created so many things, can He not create gods as well?' But he believed in the formless God too. When Captain repeated the name of Rama, Dayananda said, 'You could just as well have repeated sandesh, sandesh.'

The Pundit — Religious scholars had long discussions with Dayananda in Kashi. At the end, all of them stood against him. The discussion rose to such a pitch that he had to flee to save himself. All of them shouted with one voice: 'Despise what Dayananda said!'

**Sri Ramakrishna and Theosophy – do Theosophists
yearningly seek the Lord?**

(The Pundit continues) "I also met Colonel Olcott. He says that each one is a great soul. And that there exist the regions of the moon, the sun and the stars – that the subtle body can go to these regions. He talked about such other things. Well sir, how do you find Theosophy?"

Sri Ramakrishna — Bhakti is the one thing needed – love for the Lord. Do they (the Theosophists) seek bhakti? If so, it is good. If their ideal is God-realization, it is good. Just by believing in the lunar, the solar and the stellar regions, and in great souls,

does not mean that one is seeking the Lord. One should practice spiritual disciplines to gain bhakti for His lotus feet; one must call for Him with a longing heart.

Saying so, Sri Ramakrishna begins to sing a song of Ramprasad.

Song –

How can you, O my mind, know God, groping
as you are like a mad man in a dark room?

He can be grasped only through ecstatic love; it
is impossible to grasp Him otherwise.

The great yogi communes with God from age to
age to attain ecstatic love.

As soon as love arises, He draws the soul as a
magnet draws a piece of iron.

“God is not to be found in any religious text,
philosophy, or in the Vedanta. You will not succeed
unless you are restless for Him.”

Song –

Neither through the *Vedas*, the *Tantras*, nor the
six systems of philosophy can you know Him.

He is adroit in the bliss of divine love and
dwells within as everlasting joy.

“You need to have deep longing for God. Listen to
this song.”

Can everybody have the vision of Radha?[\[245\]](#)

**Avatars also engage in *sadhana* to serve as examples
to mankind – God-realization is possible only through**

sadhana

“Sadhana (spiritual disciplines) is essential. Can one see the Lord quickly, without any effort?”

“Somebody asked, ‘Why can’t I have the vision of the Lord?’ The answer to his question came to my mind. ‘If you want to catch a big fish,’ I said to him, ‘you have to make arrangements for it. First prepare the bait and take the rod and line in your hand. At the smell of the bait, fish will come up from deep waters. The movement of the water will show that a big fish is coming.’”

“If you want to eat butter, how will it help you to go on repeating, ‘There is butter in the milk.’ You will have to work hard churning the milk to get the butter. You can’t have the vision of the Lord just by repeating that the Lord exists. You have to practice *sadhana*.”

“Even Bhagavati (the Mother of the Universe) practiced penance seated on five skulls to serve as an example to mankind. Sri Krishna was the Supreme Brahman Himself. He also performed austerities for the instruction of mankind after he found the Radhayantra^[246].”

**Radha indeed is the Primeval Power and Prakriti –
Purusha and Prakriti – Brahman and His Power are
inseparable**

“Sri Krishna is Purusha^[247] and Radha is

Prakriti^[248]. She is the *Chitshakti*^[249], the Primeval Power. Radha is Prakriti endowed with the three gunas. She embodies the qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas. It is like peeling an onion. At first its skin is dark red, then lighter red, and inside it is white. The Vaishnava scripture talks of ‘Kam-Radha’, ‘Prem-Radha’ and ‘Nitya-Radha’. Chandravali was ‘Kam-Radha’, Srimati (another name of Radha) was ‘Prem-Radha’ and Nanda had the vision of ‘Nitya-Radha’ with Gopal (baby Krishna) in her lap^[250].

“The *Chitshakti* and Brahman of Vedanta are identical – like water and its wetness. The moment you think of the wetness of water, you are reminded of water. And the moment you think of water, you must think of its wetness. Take the example of the snake and its wriggling movement. The moment you think of the serpentine movement, you are reminded of the snake. When do I call Him Brahman? When He is inactive and unattached to work. A man may put on clothes, yet he remains the same man as when he was naked. He was naked, now he is clothed. He may again take off his clothes. The snake has poison inside, but it does not affect the snake. It is poison only for him who is bitten by the snake. Brahman Himself is unattached to work.

“Prakriti shows its grandeur where there is name and form. Sita said to Hanuman, ‘Dear child, I, myself, am Rama in one form and Sita in another. I, myself, am Indra – and also Indrani in another form. I am Brahma in one form and Brahmani in the other. Similarly, I am Rudra in one form and

Rudrani in another [\[251\]](#).’ All names and forms are the manifestation of the power of *Chitshakti*.

Indeed, it manifests itself everywhere – in meditation as well as in the one who meditates. As long as I am conscious that I am meditating, I am in Her jurisdiction. (To M.) You must internalize all this. You must hear the *Veda* and the *Purana* and carry out what they instruct.

(To the Pundit) “It is good to associate with sadhus every now and then. Man always suffers from the disease of worldliness. The company of sadhus mitigates it to a large extent.”

**Instruction to Vedantavagish: associate with sadhus;
none is mine; attitude of a servant**

“I and mine! Jnana (spiritual wisdom) is the belief: ‘Oh, Lord, it is You who do everything. Only You are my own. Besides, all these – home, family, near and dear ones, friends and the whole universe – all are Yours. Indeed, everything is Yours.’ And ajnana (nescience) is the belief: ‘I do all this; I am the doer. It is my home, my family, my sons, my friends and all worldly activities.’

“A guru was explaining to his disciple that only the Lord was his own and none else really belonged to him. The disciple said, ‘Sir, my mother and my wife have so much love for me. If they don’t see me, it is all darkness for them. Oh, how they love me!’ The guru said, ‘You are mistaken. Let me show you that none of these is yours. Take some of these pills with you. Swallow them when you go home and lie down. People will think that you are dead, but you will remain conscious of the external

world. You will be able to see and hear everything. Then I will visit your home.’

“The disciple did as he was instructed. As soon as he reached home, he swallowed the pills and lay down. He appeared unconscious. His mother, his wife, and other members of the family began to wail. Just then his guru arrived in the guise of a physician. When they told him why they were grieving, he said, ‘There is medicine for it. It will bring him back to life and he will get up. But let me tell you that my medicine first has to be taken by one of his relatives before it is given to him. The person who swallows it will die first. You are all here: mother, wife and so on. I am very sure that one of you will take the pill and save the young man.’

“The disciple heard all this. First the physician called the mother who was wallowing in grief. He said, ‘Mother, no more wailing for you. Just take this medicine and your son will be saved. But you will die.’ The mother took the pills in her hand and began to think about it. After a great deal of reflection, she cried, ‘My son, I have other sons and daughters! I am wondering what will happen to them if I die! Who will look after them and feed them?’ Next the physician called the wife and gave her the medicine. The wife was also weeping bitterly. She took the medicine in her hand. She had heard that she would die if she took it. With tears in her eyes, she said, ‘I say, he has already met his destiny. Tell me, what will happen to my little children? Who will protect them? How can I take this medicine?’ By this time, the disciple had recovered from the effects of the medicine. He had

understood that nobody was really his own. He immediately got up and left with his guru. The guru said to him, ‘There is none but the Lord who is your own.’

“So the right thing is to act upon that which endears Him to you, that which develops bhakti for His lotus feet. You see, this world is ephemeral. There is no real stuff in it.”

The householder cannot renounce completely – jnana cannot enter the inner apartments, but bhakti can

The Pundit (smiling) — Sir, I feel total dispassion (*vairagya*) when I come here and see you. I feel like going away and leaving the world.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, why renounce? You people should renounce the world mentally. Live in your household with a spirit of nonattachment.

“Surendra brought his bedding, intending to stay here from time to time. For one or two days, he did come and stay. Then his wife said to him, ‘You may go wherever you like during the day but at night you must not leave home.’ Surendra was helpless – he could not spend the night away from his home!

“And look here, it is futile to just reason. Be restless for Him and learn to love Him. Reasoning and jnana are like men who can only enter the outer rooms. But bhakti is like women who can go into the inner apartments.

“You have to establish a specific kind of relationship with the Lord to attain Him. Sanaka

and other rishis nurtured the *shanta* (peaceful) attitude, while Hanuman had the *dasa* (servant) attitude. Sridama, Sudama and the cowboys of Braja took up the *sakhya* attitude (of a friend), while Yashoda had the *vatsalya* (filial) attitude – she took the Lord as her son. Srimati (Radha) took up the *madhura* attitude (that of a sweetheart).

“Oh, God! You are the Lord, I am your servant. This bhava is the *dasa* (servant) attitude. It is a very good attitude for a spiritual aspirant.”

Pundit — Yes, sir.

Chapter IV

Instructions to Ishan – Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga – signs of jnana

The Pundit from Sinthi has gone. Twilight is fast approaching. Music for the arati begins in the Kali Temple. Thakur bows before the pictures of the deities. He sits on the smaller cot, preoccupied with some thought. A number of devotees come in again and sit on the floor. There is silence in the room.

An hour has elapsed when Ishan Mukherji and Kishori arrive. They salute Thakur and take their seats. Ishan is very fond of rituals like *purashcharana*^[252] described in the holy books. He is a Karma Yogi. Thakur now talks.

Sri Ramakrishna — It is no use repeating, ‘Jnana, jnana.’ There are two signs that mark the attainment of spiritual knowledge. One is *anuraga*, that is, love for God. You may reason and discuss, but if you

have no love for the Lord, no devotion for Him, it is all futile. The second sign is the awakening of the Kundalini power. As long as the Kundalini lies dormant, one does not gain jnana. You may read book after book and reason them out but have no restlessness for God. That is not a sign of jnana.

“When the Kundalini power awakens, one experiences bhava^[253], bhakti^[254] and *prema*^[255]. This is called Bhakti Yoga.

“Karma Yoga is an extremely difficult path. By practicing Karma Yoga, one gains many occult powers – power to perform miracles.”

Ishan — I am going to meet Hazra Mahashay.

Thakur remains silent. After awhile Ishan returns to the room, accompanied by Hazra. Thakur is still seated silently. After awhile Hazra says to Ishan, “Let’s go. He is going to meditate.” Both Ishan and Hazra leave.

Thakur is still seated silently. Shortly he begins to meditate. He counts japa on his fingers, then he touches his fingertips first to the top of his head, then to his forehead, his throat, his heart and lastly his navel.

Is he meditating on the Primeval Power through the six spiritual centres? Is this the communion with God talked about in the Shiva Samhita and other holy texts?

Chapter V

**The path of nivritti^[256] – karma falls off after
God-realization**

Instructions to Ishan: arise and awake – path of Karma Yoga is extremely difficult

Ishan goes to the Kali Temple with Hazra. Thakur has been meditating. It is about 7.30 p.m. Just then Adhar comes in.

After awhile Thakur goes for the *darshan*^[257] of Mother Kali. After Her darshan he picks up some flowers offered at the feet of the deity and brings them to touch his forehead. Next he pays obeisance to the Mother, circumambulates round Her and fans Her with the *chamara*^[258]. He is filled with divine emotion. Coming out of the shrine, he sees Ishan performing sandhya with *koshakushi*^[259].

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — Are you still here? Have you been performing evening worship? Listen to this song.

Filled with divine emotion Sri Ramakrishna sits beside Ishan and sings in a sweet voice –

What need of going to the Ganges, Prabhas, Kashi, Kanchi if the lips can utter ‘Kali, Kali’ when my life ebbs away?

He who utters Kali in all the three *sandhyas*^[260] needs no daily ritualistic worship.

Worship itself follows his footsteps but can never overtake him.

Charity, kindness and vows no longer appeal to him.

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 gods, Mahadeva Himself?

“How long does one have to perform evening worship and other rituals? As long as one does not develop bhakti for His lotus feet, as long as the eyes do not fill with tears while repeating His name, and as long as the hair of one’s body does not stand on end.”

Says Ramprasad: Knowing the truth that Kali is the Supreme Brahman, I bowed before both bhakti and salvation and gave up all ideas of what *dharma* and *adharma* are.

“The blossom falls off as soon as the fruit appears. When one develops bhakti, when one attains the Lord, sandhya and other rituals fall off.

“When the daughter-in-law of the house is pregnant, the mother-in-law gradually frees her from work. When she has been pregnant for nine months, her mother-in-law does not allow her to work at all. When the infant is born, the mother only attends to it, taking it in her lap. She doesn’t have to attend to any other work. Similarly, when one has attained the Lord, one gives up rituals like sandhya.

“By leisurely playing the drum at a slow beat, you cannot attain much. A deep dispassion (*vairagya*) is needed. Stretching the year to fourteen months is

futile. It seems you have no firm determination, no grit. You are like flattened rice soaked in milk. Be up and doing! Gird your loins!

“That is why I don’t like the song, ‘Fasten thyself to Hari, O Brother. You will sooner or later succeed.’ I don’t like this ‘you will sooner or later succeed’. I want deep dispassion. I say the same to Hazra.”

Sri Ramakrishna and principle of yoga – ‘lust and greed’ are impediments to yoga

“You ask me why you don’t develop deep dispassion. There is a reason for it. You have a strong desire for sense enjoyments, your mind is filled with *pravritti*^[261]. I say the same to Hazra. In the countryside before they bring water to the fields, they make mud ridges on all four sides of the field so that water can’t flow out. They are mud ridges, but they have water outlets here and there. There are holes. Water is brought with full force to the field, but it goes out through the holes. Our desires are like these holes, these outlets. You may be practicing *japa* (repetition of God’s name) and austerities, but at the back of your mind, you have desires for sense enjoyments. From the outlets of desire, everything leaks out.

“One catches fish with a bamboo trap. Ordinarily bamboo is straight, but when bent to the ground, it acts as a fish trap. Desire for sense enjoyments is the fish, so the mind remains bent toward the world. If there is no desire, the mind naturally orients upward, toward the Lord.

“Do you know how? Like the needles of a scale.

Because of the weight of 'lust and greed,' the upper needle does not align itself with the lower needle. Thus one strays from the path of yoga. Haven't you seen the flame of a lamp? It flickers by just a puff of air. The state of yoga is like the flame of a lamp where there is no wind.

“Our mind is spread out in different directions. A part of it has reached Dacca, a part Delhi and another part Coochbehar. You have to collect this mind and concentrate it to a point. If you want a cloth worth sixteen annas [\[262\]](#), you have to pay this amount to the cloth merchant. Even if there is a slight obstacle, yoga is not possible. If the telegraph wire is broken, howsoever small the break may be, it will not convey your message.”

Trailokya and the power of faith – work without expectation of reward – compel yourself to say: You are my Mother

“You are living a householder's life. What harm is there in that? But one has to surrender the fruit of one's actions completely to the Lord. One must not expect any reward whatsoever.

“Even so, the fact is that the desire for bhakti is not to be counted as desire. It is all right to desire bhakti and to pray for it.

“You have to employ the *tamas* of bhakti. You must force the Mother.”

The lawsuit between the Mother and the son shall gain great momentum, says Ramprasad.

I shall only lie restfully when the Mother, having pardoned me, raises me in Her arms.

“Trailokya once said, ‘As I have taken birth in her family, I have a right to her property.’

“I say, you have your own Mother. She is no artificial Mother, She is not even a godmother. Whom can you force, if not Her? Just say –

Mother, am I a prematurely born child of weak constitution? I am not afraid of Your red angry eyes!

This time I am going to file a suit in the court of Srinath (Shiva) and I will be awarded the decree on just one point.

“She is your own Mother. Compel Her! If you are a part of someone, you are also attracted by him. Because I am a part of the Divine Mother, She attracts me. He who is a genuine worshipper of Shiva receives a portion of Shiva. Some of Shiva’s characteristics enter into him. He who is a genuine Vaishnava is endowed with some of elements of Narayana. Besides, you have no worldly duties now. Take to meditation for some days. You have seen that there is no real substance in the world.”

Thakur sings in his sweet, melodious voice –

O my mind, just think about it. Nobody really belongs to anyone in the world. There is mere illusion in the world.

Don’t forget the *Dakshina*^[263] Mother Kali by getting ensnared in Her maya.

It is just for two or three days that people call you the lord, the master.

They will cease to call you the master when the

Master in the form of death arrives.

Just think about it. Will your friends and relatives accompany you when you are dying?

This beloved wife of yours will sprinkle Ganges water on you to evade evil.

Arbitration, leadership, desire to build hospitals and dispensaries, desire to have fame and learning – all these mark the early stages of life – God-realization after giving up the pacifier

“What are you doing as the leader, arbitrator and such things? I hear that they select you as their arbitrator to settle their disputes and quarrels. You have been doing this for a long time. Let them who care to do it, do it. Now give more and more of your mind to God’s lotus feet. They say, ‘Ravana died in Lanka while Behula wept her heart out[264]!’

“The same was said by Sambhu. He said, ‘I will found hospitals and dispensaries.’ He was a devotee. So I said to him, ‘Will you ask Bhagavan for hospitals and dispensaries when you have His vision?’

“Keshab Sen asked me, ‘Why can’t I see the Lord?’ I replied, ‘You are busy with name and fame, scholarship and so on. That’s why you don’t see Him.’ As long as the infant continues to suck on the pacifier, the mother does not come to him. After awhile the infant throws away the pacifier and cries aloud. The mother then takes down the rice pot from the fire and comes to it.

“You are engaged in arbitration. The Mother says

to Herself, ‘My son is doing fine as a leader. Let him enjoy himself.’ ”

All this time Ishan has been holding Thakur’s feet. He says humbly to him, still holding his feet, “It is not that I have been doing all this willfully.”

Mahamaya at the root of all desires – that’s why one takes to *karmakanda*[\[265\]](#)

Sri Ramakrishna — I know, it is the Mother’s game. Her sport indeed! Mahamaya wants to keep everybody bound to the world. You know how it is? “Many boats float on the ocean of the world. How many of them sink!” Again, “Out of a hundred-thousand kites, only one or two have their strings cut through and are thus set free; oh, how then You laugh and clap Your hands!” Similarly, out of a million people, only one or two attain liberation. All the rest remain bound by the Mother’s will.

“Haven’t you seen the game of hide and seek? It is the Grand-dame’s will that the game should continue. If everybody were to touch the Grand-dame, the game would not continue. So the Grand-dame does not want everybody to touch her.

“You see, in large shops big sacks of rice are placed as high as the roof. Besides rice, lentils are also stored there. To save them from mice, the shopkeeper puts some sweetened puffed rice in a straw basket. They taste sweet and have their own smell, so all the mice busy themselves eating from the basket, not knowing about the big sacks. Similarly, man is enchanted with ‘lust and greed’

and does not seek the Lord.”

Chapter VI

Sri Ramakrishna has no desire other than devotion to God

Sri Ramakrishna — Rama said to Narada, ‘Please ask me for a boon.’ Narada said, ‘Rama, there is nothing that I need. What boon can I ask for? But if you grant me a boon, please grant that I may have pure love for your lotus feet. And that I may never be deluded by your world-bewitching maya.’ Rama said, ‘Narada, ask for some other boon.’ Narada again said, ‘No, Rama! I don’t want anything else. Only grant that I may have pure love for your lotus feet.’

“I prayed to the Divine Mother, saying –

Mother, I don’t ask for worldly esteem,

I don’t ask for the eight occult powers, Mother.

O Mother, I don’t want a hundred powers!

Nor do I ask for creature comforts, Mother.

Only grant, O Mother, that I may gain pure love for Your lotus feet.

“The *Adhyatma (Ramayana)* says this: Lakshmana asked Rama, ‘Rama, you live in so many *bhavas* (spiritual states) and aspects. On which aspect should I meditate?’ Rama said, ‘Brother, know for certain that wherever you find *urjita* (ecstatic, deep) bhakti, my presence is there.’ In *urjita* bhakti one laughs, weeps, dances and sings. If you see such bhakti developed in a person, know for certain that

the Lord has manifested in him. Chaitanya Deva reached that state.

The devotees listen to Thakur, speechless with wonder. They hear all these words as if they were a celestial message from above. Some of them say to themselves, “Sri Ramakrishna says, ‘One laughs, weeps, dances and sings in ecstatic love.’ But it is not that only Chaitanya Deva had reached this state. Thakur also has this very state. Does it mean then that the Lord Himself has manifested here at this spot?”

Thakur continues to shower his nectarine words – words relating to the path of *nivritti*^[266]. He continues what he has been telling Ishan in his deep serious voice.

Ishan must beware of sycophants – Sri Ramakrishna and doing good to the world

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ishan) — Don’t let flatterers deceive you. Flatterers gather around a worldly man.

“Vultures gather where they find the carcass of a dead cow.”

The worldly teach observance of rituals but the all-renouncing ones instruct contemplation on the lotus feet of the Lord

“There is no real substance in worldly people. They are like a heap of cow dung. Flatterers come to them and say, ‘You are so generous and wise. You are so devout.’ These are not just words, but bamboo sticks thrust at them. What folly! So many

householders keep the company of brahmins and pundits day and night just to hear their flattery!

“Worldly men are slaves of these three: They are the slaves to their wives, to money, and to their masters. What real substance do they have in themselves? A certain person, I shall not name, earns eight hundred rupees a month. But he is a slave to his wife. He rises when she orders him to rise, and he sits down at her bidding.

“What is the use of being a leader, or an arbitrator? You have engaged yourself in enough acts of kindness and welfare work. It is quite another class of people who engage in such activities. It is the time for you to give your mind to the lotus feet of the Lord. Attaining Him, nothing remains to be attained. God comes first. Acts of kindness, welfare work, doing good to the world, emancipating mankind – all these are secondary. Why worry about them?

“Ravana died in Lanka while Behula wept her heart out [\[267\]](#)!

“It is the same with you. It would be nice if an all-renouncing person imparts to you spiritual instructions. But it would not be right to take the advice of a worldly man, whether he be a brahmin, a pundit, or anybody else.”

Ishan be inebriated – this is the Mother’s instruction

“Be inebriated! Be mad in the ecstatic love of the Lord! Let people say that Ishan has gone mad and that he cannot attend to anything now. When you become inebriated in this way, they will not

approach you for leadership, or arbitration. Throw away your *koshakushi* (utensils for ritualistic worship). Live up to the name of Ishan (an appellation of Shiva).”

Ishan — “O Mother, make me mad with Thy love. What need have I of knowledge or reason?”

Sri Ramakrishna — Madness, or otherwise? Shivanath said, ‘Too much contemplation on the Lord makes one lose one’s head.’ I rejoined, ‘What do you mean? Can one ever become unconscious by thinking of Consciousness? He is the nature of Eternity, Purity and Consciousness, through whose power of perception one perceives everything and through whose Consciousness all is made conscious.’ He said that it happened to Mr. Kirni – too much contemplation had made him go insane. This is possible since these people dwell on worldly matters. A line in a song says, ‘Such thoughts have filled the body and driven out jnana.’ The jnana that is talked of here means the knowledge of the external.

With his hands touching the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, Ishan sits there listening to all his words. He casts his glance now and then on the stone image of Kali in the centre of the temple. In the light of the earthen lamps the Mother appears to be smiling, manifesting Herself within the image. She seems happy to be hearing the *Veda*-like *mantra* of Sri Ramakrishna in a physical form.

Ishan (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Everything you have

said with your holy lips is coming from there.

Sri Ramakrishna — I am an instrument, She is the Being who uses the instrument; I am the house and She the dweller; I am the chariot, while She is the charioteer; I move the way She drives me; I speak the way She makes me speak.

“In the Kaliyuga (age of Kali) one does not hear celestial voices from above. But She certainly talks through the lips of a child, or a mad person.

“No person can become a guru. Everything happens by the will of the Lord. When His grace dawns, the vilest sin, a long-lasting sin, or long-lasting ignorance is dispelled in a moment.

“When a light is suddenly brought into a room that was dark for a thousand years, does the darkness vanish little by little, or does it disappear instantly? Surely, the moment the light is brought in, all darkness is dispelled.

“What can a man do? He can talk a great deal – but eventually everything rests with the Lord. It is like the lawyer, who says, ‘I have said all I have to say. The rest is in the hands of the judge.’

“Brahman is inactive. When, however, He creates, preserves and dissolves, or performs any activity, He is called Adyashakti (Primeval Power). We have to please this Adyashakti. Don’t you know what the Chandi says? The gods sang a hymn in praise of Adyashakti, for it is only when She is pleased that Hari will wake up from His slumber of yoga.”

Ishan — Yes, sir. Brahma and other gods sang this hymn of praise at the time of the slaying of Madhu

and Kaitabha (the two demons).

Song –

Mother, You are the mystic words ‘Svaha’ and ‘Vashat^[268]’ uttered while performing *homa*^[269] and *yajna*. You are Svadha^[270], the mystic word, uttered during observance of *shraddha*^[271].

You are the inmost Self of the mantra. You are the nectar of immortality. O Everlasting One, You are the three lengths of time for pronouncing a vowel sound.

And You are eternal and unutterable. You are especially manifest in the half matra (consonant).

O Goddess, You are Savitri^[272], the Primeval Mother. You created the universe, and it is supported by You. You are sustaining it, and ultimately You will devour it.

You, the embodiment of the universe, are the creator while creating it, the preserver in sustaining it, and at the end, You are the destroyer during its dissolution.

Chapter VII

**Sri Ramakrishna and *karmakanda*^[273] –
karmakanda is hard, so the path of Bhakti Yoga is
more suitable**

The devotees are seated all around Sri Ramakrishna in front of the Kali Temple. Speechless with wonder, they have been listening to the words issuing from the holy

lips of Thakur.

Now Thakur rises. He comes to the platform in front of the temple and offers obeisance by prostrating himself to the Mother. All devotees immediately come to him and lie on the ground at his feet. They all seek the dust of his feet. When they have made salutations at his feet, Thakur comes down from the platform and, accompanied by M., talks to him as he goes toward his room.

Sri Ramakrishna (singing, to M.) —

Says Ramprasad: Knowing the truth that Kali is the Supreme Brahman, I bowed before both bhakti and salvation and gave up all idea of what is dharma^[274] and what is adharma^[275].

“Do you know what dharma and adharma are? Dharma means ritualistic religion. For example, giving away in charity, performing *shraddha*^[276], feeding the indigent and so on.

“This kind of dharma is known as *karmakanda*. It is an extremely difficult path. It is very difficult to perform *nishkama karma*^[277]. So one is asked to pursue the path of bhakti.

“Somebody observed *shraddha* in his house. A number of people were partaking of the feast. A butcher was taking a cow to slaughter. The cow was so hard to control that the butcher was completely out of breath. It occurred to him, ‘Why not eat with these people partaking of the *shraddha* feast? After eating, I can force the cow away.’ He did so – but when he slaughtered the cow, the fellow who had arranged that *shraddha* feast incurred the sin of

slaughtering a cow.

“So I say, the path of bhakti is better than *karmakanda*.”

Thakur enters his room accompanied by M. He is humming a tune. What he had just been saying about the path of *nivritti* (non-worldliness) is expressed in the tune. Thakur is humming the lines –

At the end, Mother, may I just have a garland of bones and a pot of hemp [\[278\]](#).

Thakur sits on the smaller cot. Adhar, Kishori and other devotees enter and sit on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — I saw Ishan. There was no marked spiritual progress in him. What do you think? He has performed *purashcharana* for five months. It would have brought a lot of change in any other person.

Adhar — It was not right to have said all those things to him in our presence.

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you saying? He is a man of great japa! How can words affect him?

After awhile Thakur says to Adhar, “Ishan is a very benevolent person. Besides, he performs so much japa and austerities.”

Thakur is silent for awhile. The devotees sitting on the floor look at him intently.

Suddenly Thakur refers to Adhar, “You have both, yoga [\[279\]](#) and *bhoga* [\[280\]](#).”

[233] A measure of unit equivalent to 320 sq. cubits

[234] Baby Krishna

[235] Mendicant minstrels of Vaishnava sect

[236] Motherhood (or Shakti) and Fatherhood (or Brahman)

[237] Female principle of God

[238] Festival of dancing of Krishna with Radha and the gopis

[239] Meaning people from another part of town; it is an another locality

[240] Lala Babu, the pride of Bengal, was Krishna Chandra Singh of Pikepara. He developed dispassion (vairagya) in his youth. He had an estate yielding seven lakhs of rupees annually. At the age of thirty, he renounced all his possessions and went to live in Mathura. In his fortieth year, he took to the life of holy begging. He died at the age of forty-two. His wife, Rani Katyayani, was childless. His guru was Krishnadas Babaji, the translator of Bhaktamala into Bengali.

[241] Tendencies inherited from one's past births

[242] Qualities that lead Godward

[243] Qualities that cause action, which in turn pull the mind away from God

[244] Dayananda Saraswati (1824 -1883). He was in Ananda Bagh in Kashi in 1869 holding discussions. From December 1872 to March 1873, he stayed in Tagore's Pramod garden house in Nainal Bagan in Calcutta. It was then Sri Ramakrishna, Keshab and Captain met him. Perhaps Captain also met Thakur during that time.

[245] For complete song, refer Section XII, Chapter III

of this volume

[246] A mystic diagram symbolizing Radha

[247] Male aspect of God

[248] Female aspect of God

[249] Power of Divine Consciousness

[250] Kam-Radha is amorous love; Prem-Radha is pure and ecstatic love and Nitya-Radha, everlasting love.

Nanda was the foster father of Sri Krishna.

[251] Indrani, Brahmani and Rudrani are the consorts of Indra, Brahma and Rudra

[252] The methodical increase and decrease of the repetition of the holy mantra.

[253] Ecstasy

[254] Devotion and love for God

[255] Intense love for God

[256] Non-worldliness

[257] To see and pay homage

[258] A fan made of the white hair from the tail of the chamari yak, used in Hindu ritual worship

[259] A kosha is a small water container, a kushi is a small spoon for removing water from it. Both are usually made of copper and are used in ritualistic worship.

[260] At dawn, noon and twilight hour

[261] Worldliness

[262] Equivalent to one Rupee

[263] Bestower of happiness and bliss

[264] Behula was unrelated to Ravana and lived many years later. This saying shows how man gives way to totally irrelevant matters.

[265] Work; activity

[266] Non-worldliness

[267] Behula was unrelated to Ravana and lived many

years later. This saying shows how man gives way to totally irrelevant matters

[268] Svaha and Vashat are mystic syllables uttered while offering oblations to gods

[269] Sacrificial fire

[270] Svadha is a mystic syllable uttered while offering oblations to ancestors

[271] A religious ceremony in which meals are offered to the deceased ancestors

[272] The presiding deity of Om

[273] Ritualistic work and rites

[274] Righteousness

[275] Unrighteousness

[276] Respectful offering and well wishing to departed ancestors

[277] Work without the expectation of reward

[278] Hemp and a necklace of bones are characteristics of Shiva, the embodiment of renunciation

[279] Communion with God

[280] Desire of sense enjoyments

Section XX

Sri Ramakrishna in Samadhi with Devotees in the Dead of Night of the Kali Puja in Dakshineswar

Chapter I

**M., Baburam, Gopal, Haripada, Niranjan's relative,
Ramlal and Hazra**

It is Saturday, 18 October, 1884, the occasion of the Kali Puja. The worship will start at ten or eleven o'clock at night. A number of devotees intend to see Sri Ramakrishna in this deep dark night of the new moon. They are coming in hurriedly.

M. has come alone about eight in the evening. Reaching the garden, he sees that the great celebrations at the Kali Temple have already started. The glow from the lamps in the Temple light up the shrine beautifully. Every now and then the music of the *roshan chowki*^[281] is heard. The employees of the Temple move about quickly from one place to another in the garden. The villagers of Dakshineswar have heard that there will be a celebration tonight at the Kali Temple of Rasmani. Late at night, a musical play will be staged. Many people from the village – old men, women and children – frequently come to the Temple for the darshan of the deity.

The Chandi was recited earlier in the evening by Rajnarayan. Thakur, full of divine joy, heard it with the devotees. Today the Mother of Universe will be worshipped, so Thakur is overwhelmed with joy.

Arriving at eight o'clock, M. finds Thakur seated on the smaller cot with a number of devotees sitting on the floor facing him. They are Baburam, the Younger Gopal, Haripada, Kishori, a young man related to Niranjan and another young man from Ariadaha. Ramlal and Hazra come and go intermittently.

The relative of Niranjan is seated in front of Thakur. He is meditating as Thakur had asked him to do.

M. salutes Thakur and sits down. After awhile, Niranjan's relative salutes Thakur and takes his leave. The other young man from Ariadaha offers his obeisance and rises to leave with him.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Niranjan's relative) — When will you come next?

The Devotee — Possibly on Monday, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna (lovingly) — Do you need the lamp? Would you like to take it with you?

The Devotee — No, sir. I don't live far from the garden. I don't need it.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the young man from Ariadaha) — Are you also leaving?

The Boy — Sir, I have a slight cold.

Sri Ramakrishna — Then you must cover your head on your way home.

They both salute Thakur again and leave.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna with devotees, in the dead of night at the Kali Puja in Dakshineswar – in the joy of devotional songs

It is a deep dark night of the new moon and the worship of the Mother of the Universe is being performed. Sri Ramakrishna is leaning against a pillow on his cot. He is in a pensive mood. He says a word or two to the devotees now and then.

Suddenly he looks at M. and the devotees and says, “Oh, how that young man meditates!”
(To Haripada) “I say, what a meditation it was!”

Haripada — Yes, sir. He was just like a log of wood.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Kishori) — Do you know him? He is a cousin of Niranjan.

Again there is complete silence. Haripada is gently stroking Thakur’s feet. Thakur had heard the Chandi sung late in the afternoon. It is as though it now comes spontaneously from

him. He softly sings –

Is there anybody who knows Kali, She who is the consort of Kala^[282]? Even the six schools of philosophy do not reveal Her.

The yogi meditates on Her at the *Muladhara*^[283] and *Sahasrara*^[284].

A goose and a gander go about in this wilderness of lotuses and associate with each other. They are Kala and His consort.

My Divine Mother is the most beloved of Shiva (the Absolute), even as Sita is the most beloved of Rama.

She appears in Her majesty in each *ghat* (finite being) as an individual, just as She pleases. She is *Ichhamai*^[285].

It is the Mahakala (Spirit of Eternity, Absolute) that knows the greatness of my Divine Mother – greatness, which is hidden from the view of ordinary beings. Who else can know to such an extent?

My Divine Mother gives birth to the Universe – now think of Her greatness!

Says Prasad (the psalmist): ‘To think that one can know Her is to think that one can swim across the mighty ocean. People only laugh at the idea.’

I understand this well enough with my mind, but alas, my *prana* (heart) will not see this. It is a dwarf aspiring to get to the moon.

Thakur sits up. It is the day of the worship of the Mother, so he is going to recite Her name. Next he sings with great enthusiasm –

Song –

All this is the sport of my mad Mother (whose maya has deluded the three worlds). All this is the infallible secret play of that lady.

She Herself is mad, mad is Her husband, and so are both of Her disciples.

One cannot see in what form She is, what attributes are Her's, how She conducts Herself, or what Her *bhava* (mood) is.

With burning poison in his throat Shiva chants Her name.

She starts a controversy between God Personal and God Impersonal.

She breaks one clod of earth with another.

This lady is happy with everything except work which angers Her.

Says Prasad, 'Float the raft patiently on the sea of life.

It will drift up with the tide and drift down when it ebbs.'

Thakur is intoxicated with divine love as he sings the songs. He says, "All these songs indicate the state of divine inebriation." He then sings –

1. O Kali! I am going to devour You this time...

2. Therefore, I ask You, O Kali...

3. O ever blissful Kali, the enchantress of the heart of almighty Mahakala.

You dance alone. And You sing alone, clapping Your hands.

O Mother, You are the first Cause, the Eternal One, in the form of the Void and wearing the moon on Your forehead.

When the universe did not exist, where did You find Your string of severed human heads?

You alone are the Mover in everybody; we are but instruments in Your hands.

We move as You make us move; we speak as You make us speak.

But the restless Kamalakanta gently chides You, saying,

‘Mother, the Destroyer of all, holding Your sword, now You have devoured both my virtue and vice!’

4. If I die uttering, ‘Victory to Kali, victory to Kali!’

I shall assuredly attain Shivahood. Then what is the use of going to Benares?

Infinite are my Mother Kali’s forms. Who can find the end of Kali?

Knowing a little of Her greatness, Shiva lies prostrate at Her red-hued feet.

As the song ends the two sons of Rajnarayan come and salute Thakur. Rajnarayan had chanted the Chandi in the evening in the natmandir. His two sons had chanted with him. Thakur sings the song again with the boys.

All this is the sport of my mad Mother.

The younger boy says to Thakur, “Can’t we have that song again, ‘O Lord, so full of compassion...’ ”

Sri Ramakrishna says, “Gaur and Nitai, you two brothers...” Saying so, he sings the song.

Song –

O Lord, Gaur and Nitai, you two brothers are so full of compassion [\[286\]](#)...

The song ends. Ramlal enters the room. Thakur says to him, “Sing a little. It is the day of the worship of Kali.” Ramlal sings –

Who is this Woman who lights the battlefield?

Her body is like a dark storm cloud. And Her teeth flash like lightening.

Her hair is disheveled and She runs about fearlessly among the gods and the demons.

She destroys the demons with terrible laughter on Her face. Thus She flashes like lightening in battle.

The drops of diligence falling on Her body of red lotuses look beautiful!

Beholding Her Sea of Beauty, the moon has shed its lustre.

Is it impossible that Shiva, who enthralls the Universe, is lying at Her feet as though dead?

Kamalakanta wonders who this Woman with the gait of an elephant can be.

2) Who is this Woman in the midst of the battlefield, dark as the sky at midnight?

She who is floating like a blue lotus on the red sea of blood...

3) The bee of my mind drinks deep at the blue lotus-like feet of Mother Shyama [\[287\]](#) ...

The music and the dance end. The devotees again sit on the floor and Thakur sits on the smaller cot.

He says to M., “You were not here. How nice the Chandi was!”

Chapter III

In samadhi, on the occasion of Kali Puja – voice from above concerning intimate disciples

Some of the devotees go into the Kali Temple for darshan of the deity. Others, having paid their homage, sit alone on the ghat steps on the bank of the Ganges and silently recite the Name. It is about eleven o'clock deep in the night. The Bhagirathi (Ganges) flows toward the north in flood tide. One has glimpses of the dark-coloured water under the light of the lamps on the bank.

Ramlal comes to the Mother's shrine with a book titled *Rituals of Worship* to place in the shrine. Seeing Mani looking eagerly at the Mother, he says, “Would you like to come in?” Mani enters the shrine gratefully. He sees the Mother beautifully decorated. The shrine is well lit. There are two lamps in front of Her and chandeliers hang from the ceiling. The offerings of worship fill the floor of the shrine. At Mother's feet are hibiscus flowers and vilwa leaves. The priest in charge of clothing Her has decorated the Mother with various garlands. Mani sees a *chamara* (yak tail fly whisker) hanging in front of him. It suddenly comes to his mind how Sri Ramakrishna fans the Goddess with the same *chamara*. Hesitatingly he asks Ramlal whether he can

use the *chamara* for awhile. Ramlal permits him to fan the Mother with it. The worship has not yet started.

All those devotees who had gone out return to Sri Ramakrishna's room and assemble there.

Beni Pal has sent an invitation for Thakur to visit the Sinthi Brahma Samaj the next day. He had, however, made a mistake in the letter concerning the date.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Beni Pal has sent an invitation. But I would like to know why he has given this date?

M. — Sir, there is a mistake. The letter has not been written carefully.

Thakur is now standing in the room with Baburam beside him. He is talking about Beni Pal's letter. He touches Baburam and at once passes into samadhi.

The devotees stand all around Sri Ramakrishna. They gaze in speechless wonder at this great saint in samadhi. His left leg is extended and his neck is bent a little forward. He has placed his hand at the nape of Baburam's neck, near the ear.

After some time he comes out of samadhi. He stands with his hand on his cheek, appearing worried.

Smiling a little, he addresses the devotees —

Sri Ramakrishna — I have seen how far you all have advanced. I have seen Rakhai, him (Mani), Surendra, Baburam, and many others.

Hazra — Me?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes.

Hazra — Is there still much bondage?

Sri Ramakrishna — No.

Hazra — Did you see Narendra?

Sri Ramakrishna — No, I didn't see him. But I can say this, that he is a bit entangled. But I saw that everybody will succeed.

(Casting his glance at Mani) "I saw that all were hiding themselves."

The devotees are speechless and listen to the wonderful words of Thakur, as though a voice from above.

Sri Ramakrishna — But I passed into that mood when I touched him (Baburam).

Hazra — Who comes first?

Sri Ramakrishna doesn't reply. After awhile, he says, "All are not like Nityagopal."

Thakur is still thoughtful. He stands in the same mood.

He adds, "I wish Adhar Sen had less work. But then I am afraid his British boss might scold him. He might say, 'What is all this nonsense?'" (All smile a little.)

Thakur returns to his seat. The devotees are sitting on the floor. Baburam and Kishori gently stroke Thakur's feet.

Sri Ramakrishna (looking at Kishori) — Why so much service today!

Ramlal enters and prostrates himself to salute Thakur. He takes the dust of his feet in a deep devotional mood. He is going to offer worship to the Mother.

Ramlal (to Thakur) — May I go now?

Sri Ramakrishna — Om Kali, Om Kali. Offer the puja very carefully. Then you have to sacrifice a ram.

It is a deep dark night. The puja has begun. Sri Ramakrishna comes to watch the worship. He witnesses the puja, standing near the image of Mother Kali. Now the sacrifice. People stand in rows. The sacrificial ram has been consecrated before the Deity. Now the animal is being taken away for slaughter.

Sri Ramakrishna leaves the shrine and returns to his room. He is not in a frame of mind to see the animal slaughtered.

Some devotees stayed in the Mother's shrine till two o'clock. Haripada comes to the Kali Temple and says, "Let's go. They are asking for us. The food is ready." The devotees take the prasada of the Goddess and sit down wherever they can find a place.

It is morning. The *mangalarati*^[288] of the

Mother has been performed. In front of the Mother is the natmandir. A musical play is being staged there. The Mother is watching it. Sri Ramakrishna arrives from the bigger brick courtyard of the Kali Temple to see the play. He is accompanied by Mani. Mani is about to leave.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why are you leaving now?

Mani — You are going to Sinthi this evening. I also plan to be there, but I am going home first.

While talking they reach the Mother's shrine. The natmandir is not far away. A theatrical performance is going on there. Mani prostrates and takes the dust of Thakur's feet.

Thakur says, "Well, you may leave now. Just bring two pieces of simple cloth for me to use with my bath."

[281] A symphony of sanai and other instruments

[282] The Spirit of Eternity

[283] Muladhara is the first lotus with four petals and is the root of the Sushumna in the spine. The Kundalini is coiled up at the Muladhara lotus.

[284] Sahasrara is the lotus of a thousand petals which is the goal of the spiritual energy (Shakti) awakened by the yogi at the Muladhara. When the Shakti reaches the Sahasrara and becomes united with Shiva or Brahman, the result is samadhi, Brahmajnana.

[285] She has Her own way in everything

[\[286\]](#) For complete song refer Section XII, Chapter III

[\[287\]](#) For complete song refer Section II, Chapter VII of this volume

[\[288\]](#) Waving of lights before the deity at dawn

Section XXI

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees in the House of a Marwari Devotee

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna at the Burrabazar house of a Marwari devotee

Today Sri Ramakrishna has made an auspicious visit to 12 Mallick Street in Burrabazar. The Marwari devotees are celebrating the Annakuta^[289] festival to which he has been invited. A couple of days earlier he had enjoyed the Shyama Puja (Diwali) in Dakshineswar with the devotees. The next day, again accompanied by devotees, he had gone to the Brahmo Samaj festival in Sinthi. Today is Monday, 20 October, 1884, the second lunar day of the bright fortnight in the month of Kartik. In Burrabazar they are still enjoying Diwali (the festival of lights).

At about three o'clock M. goes to Burrabazar with the Younger Gopal. He is carrying in one hand the two pieces of cloth Thakur had asked him to purchase. They are wrapped in a piece of paper. As they reach Mallick Street, they see a big crowd. Bullock carts and horse drawn carriages have jammed the street. Coming to house number 12, he notices Thakur sitting in a carriage. It cannot move because of the traffic jam. Baburam and Ram Chatterji are also in the carriage. Thakur smiles when he sees M. and Gopal.

Sri Ramakrishna gets down from the carriage with Baburam. M. leads the way. Reaching the house of the Marwaris, they see a number of cloth bales lying in the courtyard. Every now and then goods are loaded into the bullock carts. Accompanied by the devotees, Thakur goes upstairs. The Marwaris take him to a room on the third level which contains an image of Mother Kali. Thakur offers It his salutations and takes his seat. He now talks to the devotees with a smile on his face.

A Marwari begins to gently stroke his feet. Thakur says, “No, no. No need for that.” Then reflecting for a few minutes, he says, “Well, you may do so for awhile.” All his words are full of compassion.

Thakur says to M., “What about your school?”

M. — Sir, it’s a holiday.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — And tomorrow we have recitation of the Chandi at Adhar’s house.

The Marwari devotee, the master of the house, sends a pundit (priest) to meet Thakur. The pundit salutes him and sits down. Thakur discusses many spiritual subjects with him.

Sri Ramakrishna’s desire – the desire for bhakti[\[290\]](#)
–meaning of bhava, bhakti and prema[\[291\]](#)

The topic of the conversation is now the avatar.

Sri Ramakrishna — The avatar incarnates for the devotees and not for the jnani.

The Pundit —

Paritranaya sadhunam vinashaya cha

dushkritam.

*Dharma sansthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge
yuge.*

(Gita
4:8)

[I am born age after age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of dharma.]

“The avatar comes, first, for the joy of the devotees, and second, to subjugate the wicked. But the jnani is free from all desires.”

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — But I am not free from all desires. I have the desire for bhakti.

The pundit’s son comes in at this moment, takes the dust of Thakur’s feet, and sits down.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well! What is your understanding of bhava[\[292\]](#) and what is bhakti?

The Pundit — Meditation on the Lord makes the mind tender. This is called divine fervour. It is like ice melting when the sun rises.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, what is *prema*?

The pundit speaks in Hindi. Thakur answers him in very sweet Hindi. In reply to Thakur’s question, the pundit explains the meaning of *prema* in his own way.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the pundit) — No, *prema* doesn’t

mean that. Prema means loving God in such a way that one forgets the world. To such an extent that one even forgets the body which is so dear. Chaitanya Deva had prema.

The Pundit — Yes, sir. It is the state in which one acts like a mad man.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, some people develop bhakti, but others don't. Why is this?

The Pundit — The Lord is impartial. He is the *Kalpataru*^[293]. He gives whatever one asks. Even so, one has to approach the *Kalpataru* to ask.

Since the pundit is speaking in Hindi, Thakur turns to M. and translates into Bengali.

The secret of samadhi

Sri Ramakrishna — Well tell me, how does one go into samadhi?

The Pundit — There are two kinds of samadhi: Savikalpa^[294] and Nirvikalpa. In Nirvikalpa samadhi the mind ceases to think.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes. The mind takes the form of the Reality. There is no distinction between the meditator and the object of meditation. And then there are two kinds of samadhi: *Chetana*^[295] and *Jada* samadhi^[296]. Narada and Shukadeva attained *Chetana* samadhi. What do you think?

The Pundit — That is so.

Sri Ramakrishna — And then there are *Unmana* samadhi^[297] and *Sthita* samadhi^[298]. What about them?

The Pundit keeps silent. He says nothing.

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, is it possible to gain occult powers by performing *japa* and austerities? For example, walking over the Ganges on foot?

The Pundit — It is indeed possible to attain occult powers, but the devotee doesn't want them.

After some more conversation, the pundit says, "I shall come to Dakshineswar for your darshan on the ekadashi day^[299]."

Sri Ramakrishna — Ah, you have a very good son.

The Pundit — Maharaj, a wave passes out over the surface of a river and another follows it. All is transitory.

Sri Ramakrishna — There is substance in you.

After some time the pundit salutes Sri Ramakrishna and says, "I have to perform worship. May I leave now?"

Sri Ramakrishna — No, no. Stay.

The pundit sits down again.

Sri Ramakrishna raises the topic of Hatha Yoga.

The pundit continues to speak in Hindi. Thakur says, “Though it is a kind of austerity, a sadhu practicing Hatha Yoga identifies himself with the body. He has no other thought than of the body.”

The pundit again asks for permission to leave. He is to perform worship.

Thakur now talks to the pundit’s son.

Sri Ramakrishna — After some study of *Nyaya*, the *Vedanta* and other systems of philosophy, one understands the *Srimad Bhagavata* better. What do you think?

The Son — True, sir. It is essential to study the Samkhya philosophy [\[300\]](#).

And thus the talk continues off and on for awhile.

Thakur lies down, leaning a bit on a pillow. The pundit’s son and some devotees sit on the floor. While reclining, Thakur hums the following song –

Fasten thyself to Hari, O Brother. You will sooner or later succeed.

Adverse circumstances will change.

It redeemed Anka, and it redeemed Banka. It has redeemed Srijana, the butcher.

It has redeemed Ganika by teaching Shuka, and it has redeemed Meera.

Chapter II

Is there no avatar now?

The master of the house comes and salutes Sri Ramakrishna. He is a Marwari devotee. He is very devoted to Thakur. The pundit's son is still there. Thakur asks, "Is the Panini grammar studied in this part of the country?"

M. — Yes, Panini!

Sri Ramakrishna — Are *Nyaya*, the *Vedanta* and the rest also studied?

The host doesn't answer Sri Ramakrishna, but asks him a question instead.

The Host — Maharaj, what is the way?

Sri Ramakrishna — Chanting His name and glories, associating with sadhus, and praying to Him with a longing heart.

The Host — Sir, bless us that worldliness may be substantially reduced in our minds.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — How much do you have? Eight annas (fifty percent)? (Laughter.)

The Host — Only you are aware of it, sir. Without the blessings of a *mahatma* (elevated soul), nothing can be achieved.

Sri Ramakrishna — If you please God, everyone else is pleased. It is He who dwells in a *mahatma's* heart.

The Host — When God is attained, nothing else remains to be attained. When He is attained, all

worldly work falls off. When one finds a rupee, one doesn't care to run after a pice [\[301\]](#).

Sri Ramakrishna — Some *sadhana* (spiritual practice) is essential. When you perform *sadhana*, you gradually feel joy in it. If there is a pot of treasure buried very deep in the ground and one wants to possess it, one has to work hard to dig it out. One perspires, but if the spade touches the pot while digging, one hears its metallic sound and feels joy. The louder it sounds, the more joy. Go on calling upon Rama and meditate on Him. Rama will arrange everything for you.

The Host — Maharaj, you, yourself, are Rama.

Sri Ramakrishna — What are you saying? The wave belongs to the river. The river does not belong to the wave.

The Host — Rama resides within *mahatmas*. Rama is not visible in any other form. These days there are no avatars.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — How do you know there is no avatar at the present time?

The host is silent.

Sri Ramakrishna — Not everyone can recognize an avatar. When Narada went to see Rama, Rama stood up and prostrated before him, lying on the ground, saying, 'We are worldly people. If *sadhus* like you don't visit us, how can we be sanctified?' And when he went to the forest to redeem the pledge [of his

father], he saw that a number of rishis had given up eating when they heard of Rama's exile. Many of them didn't know that Rama was himself the Supreme Brahman.

The Host — You, indeed, are that very Rama.

Sri Ramakrishna — For God's sake, you must not say such things!

Saying so, Thakur salutes him with folded hands and says, "That Rama dwells in all beings; that Rama exists everywhere in the world. I am your servant. That Rama Himself has become all human beings, birds and beasts."

The Host — Maharaj, we don't know this ...

Sri Ramakrishna — You are Rama whether you know it or not!

The Host — You are beyond attachment and hatred.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why? I paid an advance of three annas to a coachman who was to take me to Calcutta. But he never turned up. I became very angry with him. He was a bad man, indeed. How he made me suffer!

Chapter III

The worship of the Wearer of the peacock crown (Lord Krishna) at the Annakuta festival in Burrabazar

Sri Ramakrishna is resting for awhile. In the meantime, the Marwari devotees on the roof start

singing devotional songs for the festival of the Wearer of the peacock crown (Lord Krishna). A food offering has been arranged. Some devotees come to escort Sri Ramakrishna to have the darshan of the Deity. Seeing the image of Sri Krishna, Thakur salutes the Deity and takes some offered flowers to touch his head.

Thakur passes into ecstasy as he sees the Deity. Folding his hands, he says, "O Govinda, You are my vital breath, my very life! Victory to Govinda, to Govinda! Vasudeva, the embodiment of Sachchidananda! O Krishna, my Krishna. Jnana is Krishna, mind is Krishna, prana (vital breadth) is Krishna, atman (soul) is Krishna, body is Krishna, caste is Krishna, family is Krishna! O Govinda, You are my vital breath, my very life."

Uttering these words, Thakur goes into samadhi where he stands. Ram Chatterji holds him as long as he is in samadhi.

After quite some time, the samadhi ends. In the meantime, Marwari devotees have entered the room to carry the image of Sri Krishna outside. It is installed on a throne. A holy feast has been arranged outside for the occasion.

Thakur comes down from his samadhi. The Marwari devotees joyfully take the image of Sri Krishna, installed on a throne, out of the room.

Food is offered to the Deity while the Marwari devotees put up a curtain. After the offering of food, arati is performed and music starts. Sri Ramakrishna fans the image with a *chamara*.

Now the brahmins are fed. All this takes place on the roof in the presence of Thakur. The Marwaris earnestly request him to eat. Thakur sits down to eat and the devotees also partake of

the prasad.

On the main road of Burrabazar – passing through Diwali scenes

Thakur takes his leave. It is already dusk. The road is very crowded. Thakur says, “Let’s get out of the carriage. It can go by a back street.” He has only gone a little distance when he sees a betel-leaf seller huddled inside his small shop in front of a house. To enter it one has to bend one’s head. Thakur says, “How troublesome it is to be shut in such a tiny space! Strange is the nature of householders! And they are full of joy in such a life!”

After making a detour, the carriage reaches the party. Thakur again gets into it with Baburam, M. and Ram Chatterji. The Younger Gopal sits on the roof of the carriage.

A beggar woman with a boy in her arms approaches the carriage and asks for alms. Thakur notices her and says to M., “Do you have any money with you?” Gopal gives her a pice.

The carriage rolls through Burrabazar. There is a lot of hustle and bustle because of Diwali (the festival of lights). It is a dark night, but the whole bazaar is illuminated with lights. Passing through the lane of Burrabazar, the carriage reaches the Chitpur Road. This street is also well lit and terribly crowded with men lined up like ants. The crowd eagerly watches the shops so beautifully decorated on both sides of the road. Some of them are sweetmeat shops where various kinds of sweets are artistically arranged on metal plates. Other shops sell scents and roses decorated in various ways with pictures. Well-dressed shopkeepers sprinkle rose water on those who pass by with sprinklers. The carriage

reaches a scent shop. At the sight of the pictures and illumination, Thakur expresses his joy like a five-year-old child. There are crowds all around. Sri Ramakrishna calls out, "Please try to go farther." He laughs as he says it. Laughing loudly, he says to Baburam, "I say, try to move forward! What's the matter with you?"

'Go forward' – Sri Ramakrishna cannot hoard under any circumstance

The devotees are amused. They understand that Thakur is saying, "Go forward toward the Lord. Don't be satisfied with where you are." It is as the brahmachari who said to the woodcutter, "Go forward." When the woodcutter went farther, he saw a forest of sandalwood trees. After a few days, going still farther, he came across a mine of silver. Next he went ahead and found a gold mine. Ending at last with pearls and jewels! So Thakur exhorts again and again, "Proceed! Go forward!" The carriage rolls on. Thakur has noticed that M. has brought some pieces of cloth for him. Two short unbleached ones and two washed ones. But Thakur had only asked him to buy the short cloths. Thakur says, "Leave me the short cloths. Keep the others yourself. You may give me one."

M. — Right, sir. I shall take one of them back.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, take both of them for the time being.

M. — As you please.

Sri Ramakrishna — You can bring the cloths when I need them. You see, yesterday Beni Pal brought

some food to take back in the carriage for Ramlal. I told him not to give me anything to carry. I cannot hoard.

M. — Yes sir, it doesn't matter. I shall take both the bleached ones back.

Sri Ramakrishna (affectionately) — If any desire arises in my mind, it is indeed for the good of you all. You are my own. I shall ask for it when I need it.

M. (humbly) — It will be as you wish.

The carriage now reaches the shop where *chillum*^[302] is sold. Sri Ramakrishna says to Ram Chatterji, "Ram, please buy a pice worth of *chillum*."

Sri Ramakrishna now talks about a devotee.

Sri Ramakrishna — I told him that I was going to Burrabazar the next day and I would like to meet him there. Do you know what he said? 'The tram ticket will cost four pice. How can I come?' Yesterday I went to Beni Pal's garden. He acted like a preacher, though nobody had asked him to lecture. He began to sing so that people would know that he was one of the Brahmos. (To M.) Tell me, what do you think of that? He said that he would have to spend an anna^[303] to come to Burrabazar!

Now the topic of the conversation turns again to the *Annakuta* festivity arranged by the Marwari devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the devotees) — What I saw

here is exactly like it is in Vrindavan. Rakhal and others are seeing all this there. The Annakuta (mound of cereals) there is much higher; there is also a greater crowd; and there is the Govardhan Mount. There are such differences.

Hindu Ideal – the Sanatana Dharma[\[304\]](#)

“The upcountry people of India have such great devotion to God! Have you noticed? They possess the real bhava (spirit) of the Hindus. Indeed theirs is the Sanatana Dharma (eternal religion). Did you notice the immense joy with which they carried the divine image? It was joy at the thought of carrying the throne of Bhagavan on their shoulders.

“The Hindu ideal indeed is Sanatana Dharma. All the religions that you see now have come about by God’s will. And by His will they will disappear, they will not last. So I say, ‘Salutations at the feet of even the devotees of today.’ The Hindu ideal has ever been and will last forever.”

M. has to return home. He takes the dust of Thakur’s feet and gets down from the carriage near Sobhabazar. Thakur proceeds joyfully in the carriage.

[\[289\]](#) Annakuta means a stupendous heap of cereals. In this festivity a large quantity of food is offered to the Deity and distributed among indigents.

[\[290\]](#) Devotion and love for God

[\[291\]](#) Ecstatic love

[\[292\]](#) Divine fervour

[\[293\]](#) The wish-fulfilling tree of heaven

[294] In *Savikalpa* samadhi the aspirant retains the distinction between self and God

[295] In *Chetana* samadhi the aspirant retains consciousness of his I-ness as he communes with God

[296] In *Jada* samadhi the aspirant appears like an inert object as he communes with God

[297] In *Unmana* samadhi the functioning of the mind does not totally cease as the aspirant communes with God

[298] In *Sthita* samadhi the aspirant gets fully established in the Self

[299] Eleventh day of the lunar fortnight

[300] One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy founded by Kapila. Samkhya postulates two ultimate realities, Purusha and Prakriti. Declaring that the cause of suffering is man's identification of Purusha with Prakriti and its products, Samkhya teaches that liberation and true knowledge are attained in the supreme consciousness, where such identification ceases and Purusha is realized as existing independently in its transcendental nature.

[301] Hundred pice equal one Rupee

[302] Bowl of hookah which holds tobacco and cinder

[303] Sixteen annas constitute one Rupee

[304] Eternal Religion

Section XXII

Sri Ramakrishna at Panchavati in Dakshineswar with Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar and reading from *Devi Choudhurani*

Saturday, 27 December, 1884, seventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of Paush. The devotees are on Christmas holidays, so a number of them have come to see Sri Ramakrishna. Many of them came in the morning. When M. and Prasanna arrive, they see that Sri Ramakrishna is in the southern courtyard near his room. They salute him by touching his feet.

This is Sarada^[305] Prasanna's first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna says to M. "Why haven't you brought Bankim with you?"

Bankim is a schoolboy whom Thakur had met in Baghbazar. Noticing him from a distance, he had said, "He is a fine boy."

A number of devotees have arrived, among them Kedar, Ram, Nityagopal, Tarak and Suresh (Mitra). Other young devotees are also present.

After some time, Thakur goes to the Panchavati with them. The devotees surround him, some standing, others seated. Thakur is sitting on the brick platform at the foot of the Panchavati with his face toward the southwest. Smiling, he asks

M., “Have you brought the book?”

M. — Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna — Read a portion of it. I would like to hear it.

Sri Ramakrishna and duties of a king

The devotees are eager to see the book. It is *Devi Choudhurani*. Thakur has heard that *Devi Choudhurani* contains accounts of *nishkama karma*^[306]. He has also heard of Bankim, its writer. He will be able to gauge the author’s state of mind by hearing what he has said in the book. M. says, “A girl had fallen into the hands of dacoits. Her maiden name was Prafulla; later she became

Devi Choudhurani. The dacoit into whose hands she fell was called Bhavani Pathak. He was a good man at heart. He made Prafulla practice *sadhana*^[307] and *bhajan*^[308]. He also taught her how to perform *nishkama karma*. This dacoit used to rob the wicked and distribute the money to the poor in charity. He said to Prafulla, “I conquer the wicked and protect the good.”

Sri Ramakrishna — This is the duty of a king.

M

. — At another place the book talks of *bhakti*. Bhavani Pathak sent a girl named Nishi to live with Prafulla. She had great love for God. She used to say that Sri Krishna was her husband. Prafulla was already married, though she lived alone with her mother; her father had died. Prafulla’s neighbours had accused her falsely and ostracized her, so Prafulla’s father-in-law would not take her to his house. Instead, he made his son marry again. But Prafulla was very

fond of her husband. On hearing the following account, you will be able to follow the story –

Nishi — I am the daughter of Bhavani Pathak. He is my father. He has dedicated me in a way.

Prafulla — In what way?

Nishi — Completely to Sri Krishna.

Prafulla — How do you mean?

Nishi — My beauty, youth and soul are all His.

Prafulla — Is he your husband?

Nishi — Why not? He is my husband who has full right to me.

Prafulla heaved a sigh and said, “I can’t tell. You have never seen your husband, that is why you are saying so. Had you seen your real husband, your mind would never have gone to Sri Krishna.”

The stupid Brajeswar (Prafulla’s husband) didn’t know [that his wife loved him so much].

Nishi said, “Any girl can be attracted to Sri Krishna, for He is possessed of infinite beauty, infinite youth, infinite splendour and infinite qualities.”

This young lady was Bhavani’s disciple, but Prafulla was illiterate. She didn’t say anything in reply. The fathers of the Hindu social law knew that the Lord is infinite and that the infinite cannot be placed within the small cage of the heart, though the finite can be. They knew that

the infinite Lord of the Universe dwells within the cage of the heart as Sri Krishna. A husband is clearly finite. Thus the first step to pure love is to take the husband as the Lord Himself. That is why a Hindu woman looks upon her husband as the deity himself. All other societies are inferior to the Hindu society from this point of view.

Prafulla was an ignorant girl. She could not understand any of this. She said, “Friend, I can’t understand all these arguments. You haven’t yet told me your name.”

The friend said, “Bhavani Thakur has given me the name of Nishi (night). I am Nishi, the sister of Deva (day). One day I will take you to meet Deva. But please listen to what I was saying. The Lord alone is the supreme husband. A woman’s husband is the deity to her. Sri Krishna is the husband of them all. Why should we have two deities, two gods? If you divide the little bhakti of this small heart into two, what else will remain?”

Prafulla — What do you mean? Is there a limit to a woman’s bhakti?

Nishi — There is no limit to a woman’s love. But bhakti is one thing, love another.

What comes first, spiritual disciplines or education?

M. — Bhavani made Prafulla practice spiritual disciplines.

“During the first year, Bhavani did not let any man enter Prafulla’s house. Nor did he allow her to talk to a man outside. The next year he removed the restriction of speaking to a man, but he still did not let one enter her house. In the third year, when Prafulla’s

head was shaved, Bhavani Thakur took a few select disciples with him to her house. Prafulla, with her shaven head and eyes cast down, talked with them about the scriptures.

“After this she began her formal education. She studied grammar, *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumar* (*Kumar Sambhava*), *Naishadha* and *Shakuntala*. She also studied some *Samkhya* philosophy, *Vedanta* and *Nyaya*.”

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know what this means? People like the author of this book believe that jnana is impossible without education. They think that first one should learn how to read and write, that the Lord comes later. In other words, they think that reading and writing are necessary for knowing the Lord. But if you wish to talk to Jadu Mallick, what use is it to know how many houses, how much wealth, how many company shares he has? What is the need of this information? One must somehow enter Jadu Mallick’s house and talk to him, whether one flatters his gatekeepers or is pushed aside by them. If you wish to know about his property or riches, you can know it by asking Jadu Mallick directly! Then you will know it very easily. Rama comes first, His splendour, the world, come later. That is why Valmiki repeated the sacred word Mara: Ma means Ishvara, and ra signifies the world, His splendour.

The devotees drink the nectar of Thakur’s words,
speechless with wonder.

Chapter II

**Sri Ramakrishna and *nishkama karma* – dedicate result
to God and cultivate bhakti**

M. — When she had finished her studies and practiced spiritual disciplines for quite some time, Bhavani Thakur went to see Prafulla again. He intended to impart to her the knowledge of *nishkama karma* (selfless work). He recited the following verse from the Gita –

*Tasmad asaktah satatam karyam karma
samachara,*

Asakto hy acharan karma param apnoti purushah.

(Gita
3:19)

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

“There are three characteristics of nonattachment:

“(1) Control of the senses, (2) Lack of egotism and (3) Dedication of the fruit of action to Sri Krishna.

“One cannot practice religion without giving up egotism. He recited another verse from the Gita –

*Prakriteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah,
Ahamkara vimudhatma karta aham iti manyate.*

(Gita 3:27)

[The Gunas of Prakriti perform all karma. With the understanding clouded by egoism, a man thinks, ‘I am the doer.’]

“Then he asked her to surrender all the fruits of action to Lord Krishna. He recited from the Gita –

Yat karoshi yad asnasi yaj juhoshi dadasi yat.

*Yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kurushva mad
arpanam.*

(Gita
9
:27)

[Whatever you do, whatever you eat,
whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you
give away, whatever austerity you practice,
oh son of Kunti, do it as an offering to Me.]

“He talked to Prafulla of the three characteristics of
nishkama karma (selfless work).”

Sri Ramakrishna — These are nice words from the
Gita. They cannot be refuted. But note this. The
author speaks of offering the fruits of action to Sri
Krishna, but not cultivating bhakti for Him.

M. — That has not been emphasized here.

**Calculating intelligence does not move one forward –
one must take a plunge**

“Now they talked of how to make use of wealth.
Prafulla said, ‘All wealth must be offered to Sri
Krishna.’ ”

Prafulla — When I have made an offering of all my
work to Sri Krishna, I offer my riches to him too.

Bhavani — All?

Prafulla — Yes, all.

Bhavani — But it is impossible to remain unattached

to work. Attachment creeps in when you have to earn your food. You have two alternatives: you can either live on alms – or you will have to preserve your body with the help of money. Even a person living on alms becomes attached to it. So you must use your money to maintain your body.

M. (smiling to Sri Ramakrishna) — That much is calculating intelligence!

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, this is calculating intelligence – a business-minded intellect! But he who wants the Lord takes a plunge at once. He doesn't calculate that so much is needed for preserving the body.

M. — Next Bhavani asked her how she would offer her wealth to Sri Krishna. Prafulla replied, 'Sri Krishna dwells in all beings. So I will distribute my wealth amongst them.' Bhavani said, 'Good. Very good.' And then he began to recite more verses from the Gita.

*Yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi
pashyati,*

*Tasya aham na pranashyami sa cha me na
pranashyati.*

*Sarvabhuta sthitam yo mam bhajati ekatvam
asthitah,*

Sarvatha vartamanah api sa yogi mayi vartate.

*Atmaupamyena sarvatra samam pashyati yah
Arjuna,*

Sukham yadi va dukham sa yogi paramo matah.

(Gita 6:30-3)

[He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me is never lost to Me, nor do I become lost to him.

He who is established in oneness and worships Me abiding in all beings, that yogi lives in Me, whatever his mode of living may be.

That yogi, Oh Arjuna, is regarded as the supreme, who judges pleasure or pain everywhere by the same standard that he applies to himself.]

Sri Ramakrishna — These are marks of the highest class of devotee.

Worldly men and their language – influence of one’s natural instincts

M. continues to read.

“A great deal of labour is required for charity to all beings. Some display of dress, sense enjoyments and luxury are necessary. Bhavani, therefore, said, ‘Sometimes one needs a bit of shopkeeping.’ ”

Sri Ramakrishna (displeased) — One needs shopkeeping! Words reveal a man’s true nature. If a person worries night and day about worldly affairs and continues to deceive people, his words convey that attitude. He who eats radish, belches radish. Instead of talking of shopkeeping, he could have said it in a much better way, namely, ‘One must act as if one is the doer, knowing very well that one is not the doer.’ The other day somebody was singing a song

that talked of ‘profit’ and ‘loss’. I asked the fellow to stop singing it. What one worries about night and day gushes forth in whatever he says!

Chapter III

The way to God-vision – life of Thakur spoken with his own holy lips

The reading of the book continues. Now the topic is God-realization. Prafulla has now become Devi Choudhurani. It is the seventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Vaishakha. Devi is seated in a houseboat and talking with Deva. The moon has risen. The boat is anchored on the Ganges. Devi and her two friends are seated on the roof of the boat. They are discussing whether the Lord can be seen. Devi said, “Just as the nose perceives the fragrance of flowers, similarly the mind perceives the Lord. ‘The Lord is visible to the mind.’ ”

Sri Ramakrishna — Perception by the mind! God is not visible to this mind, but to the purified mind! Then this mind disappears. Even one who has the least trace of attachment to sense objects does not succeed. When the mind is purified, you may call it the pure mind, or the pure Atman.

Telescope of yoga – Sri Ramakrishna on fidelity to husband

M. — The author says later that the mind cannot perceive the Lord easily. Prafulla says, ‘To perceive Him you need a telescope. And this telescope is yoga (communion).’ Next, as in the *Gita*, she talks of the three kinds of yoga: Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and

Bhakti Yoga. It is with the telescope of these yogas that one sees the Lord.

Sri Ramakrishna — This is very fine. These are the words of the *Gita*.

M. — At last Devi Choudhurani met her husband. She said to him, ‘You are my God. I was trying to learn how to worship another God, but I could not. You have taken the place of all my gods.’

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — ‘Couldn’t learn’! This is called *pativrata dharma* (fidelity of a chaste woman to her husband). This, too, is a path.

The reading of the book is over. Thakur smiles.
The devotees wait eagerly for him to say something.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing, to Kedar and other devotees) — From one point of view, *pativrata dharma* is not bad. We worship the Lord in an image. Can’t we worship Him in a living person? It is He who is sporting as man.

His earlier story – state of Brahmajnana in Thakur and his seeing the Lord in all creatures

“What states have I passed through! I was filled with the bhava of Hara and Gauri (Shiva and Parvati) for a long time. I also spent many days in the bhava of Radha and Krishna, as well as Sita and Rama. When I was in Radha’s bhava I used to repeat, ‘Krishna, Krishna.’ And when in the state of Sita, I would repeat, ‘Rama, Rama.’

“Even so, there was no end to His sport! After going

through all these states, I said, ‘Mother, there is separation in all these states. Pray grant me the state in which there is no separation.’ After that I stayed in the bhava of Indivisible Sachchidananda for quite some time. I removed the pictures of gods from my room.

“I began to see Him in all creatures. My offering of worship dropped. It was only this bel tree to which I used to come to pick a few leaves. One day when I was going to pick a leaf, a little bark of the tree was detached. I saw that the tree was filled with consciousness! I felt sad in my heart. I tried to pick durva grass but couldn’t. I had to force myself to pick it.

“I cannot cut a lemon. The other day I did it with great difficulty, uttering ‘Victory to Kali!’ Just as an animal being slaughtered for sacrifice to the Goddess. One day when I was gathering flowers, She showed me that the flowers on the tree were Virat^[309]. I saw that the worship was over and there were bouquets of flowers on the forehead of Virat! I could not pick any flowers then.

“God sports as a human being. I see man as the veritable Narayana. Just as by rubbing pieces of wood you get fire, similarly one has the vision of the Lord in man when his love for God becomes very intense. If the bait is of good quality, big carp gulps it eagerly.

‘When you are intoxicated with ecstatic love, you see God in all beings. The gopis (milkmaids) saw Sri Krishna in all beings – saw everything filled with Sri Krishna. They would say, ‘We indeed are Krishna!’ This was their state of intoxication with God. Looking at trees, they would say, ‘These are hermits practicing austerities, they are meditating on Sri Krishna.’

Seeing dry grass they would say, ‘Just see, the hair of the earth is standing on end at the touch of Sri Krishna.’

“A chaste and devoted wife looks upon her husband as God. Why not? If you can worship God in an image, why not in a living person?”

Avirbhava[\[310\]](#) **in an image – when does one see the Lord in man? The *nityasiddha* (ever-perfect) and the world**

“Three things are necessary for God’s *avirbhava* in an image: one, the devotion of the priest; two, a beautiful image; and three, the devotion of the master of the house. Vaishnavcharan said, ‘At the end of one’s life, one’s interest becomes centered in God’s sport as a human being.’

“Yet it has to be noted that unless you have had God-vision, you cannot see Him in this way (sporting as a man). Do you know what the marks of God’s vision are? One acquires the nature of a child. Why does one acquire a child’s nature? Because the Lord Himself has the nature of a child. So he who has God’s vision acquires a child’s nature.”

Way to God-realization – deep dispassion and realization that He is your own Father

“You must see Him in this way. The question is how to realize God. Deep dispassion is the means. One should be able to say, ‘What? You are the Father of the universe! Am I not a part of the world? How dare You not be kind to me, You rascal!’

“One develops the qualities of him whom one worships. If one worships Shiva, one acquires his

nature. Say there is someone who is a devotee of Rama, who meditates day and night on Hanuman. He thinks that he has become Hanuman. At the end, his faith becomes firm like the pole star. He begins to feel that he has grown a short tail.

“One who is born into the spiritual heritage of Shiva acquires jnana, the nature of Shiva, and one who is born into the spiritual heritage of Vishnu acquires bhakti, the nature of Vishnu. They who belong to Shiva have the nature of a jnani and they who belong to Vishnu conduct themselves as devotees.”

Chaitanya Deva is an incarnation – common man is feeble

M. — But what about Chaitanya Deva? You said that he had both jnana and bhakti.

Sri Ramakrishna (displeased) — It was different with him. He was an incarnation of the Lord. There is a lot of difference between him and ordinary beings. He had such dispassion that when Sarvabhauma poured sugar on his tongue, it did not get wet and was carried away by the wind. He was always in samadhi! What a great victor of lust! And you compare him with a common man! The lion mates only once in twelve years, though it eats meat. On the other hand, the sparrow eats grain and mates night and day. It is the same with the avatar and the common man. The common man may give up lust, but he probably indulges in intercourse once in awhile. He cannot control himself. (To M.) Why be ashamed? He who attains God looks upon an ordinary being as a worm! ‘One cannot succeed spiritually if one has shame, hatred, or fear.’ These are all bonds. You know there

are ‘eight bonds[\[311\]](#).’

“The *nityasiddhas* (ever-perfect ones) have no fear of the world. Worldly life is like a game of chess for them; as in the game, they do not fear what the next move will bring.

“The *nityasiddha* may live a worldly life if he so desires. Some people can wield two swords at the same time. They become such an expert that if a sword strikes against a stone, the latter flies away at its blow.”

Yoga is the way to God-vision – marks of a yogi

The Devotee — Sir, in what state of mind does one have the vision of the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — One can attain nothing unless one concentrates the mind to a point. The Bhagavata mentions that Shukadeva would walk around looking like a soldier with a bayonet. He would see neither this way nor that – his eyes were glued to his goal, Bhagavan. This is called yoga.

“The chatak bird drinks only rainwater. Let the Ganges, the Jamuna, the Godavari and other rivers be full of water. Let the seven seas also be full of water. But it will not take water from any of these. It will only drink the rainwater from the cloud of *swati nakshatra*[\[312\]](#).

“He who has attained such yoga can have the Lord’s vision. Till the curtain rises in a theatre, the audience talks of their homes, their offices, their schools and so on. As soon as the curtain rises, all talk stops at once. Then all eyes are fixed on the play. Even if one speaks a word or two after a long time, one talks only

about the play.

“The man inebriated by wine talks only of the joy of drunkenness.”

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna in Panchavati – avatar cannot be attributed to any guilt

Nityagopal is seated in front of Thakur. He is always absorbed, in a state of bhava, and doesn't utter a word.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Gopal! You are always silent!

Nityagopal (like a child) — I ... don't ... know.

Sri Ramakrishna — I understand why you don't speak! For fear you might commit a mistake.

“Certainly, indeed. Jaya and Vijaya were the doorkeepers of Narayana. They stopped Sanaka, Sanatana and other rishis from entering Narayana's palace. Because of this offense, they had to take birth thrice in this world.

“Sridama was the doorkeeper of Viraja^[313] in Goloka^[314]. Radha went to the house of Viraja and tried to enter. She wanted to catch Sri Krishna. Sridama stopped her, and Radha cursed him: ‘Get away! You will be born as a demon in the mortal world!’ Sridama also cursed her. (All smile a little.)

“But you must know that if a boy holds his father's hand, he can fall into a pit. But when the father holds the boy's hand, he need have no fear.

“The story of Sridama is given in the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*.”

Kedar Chatterji lives in Dhaka. He is a government official. Formerly he was posted in Calcutta. He is a great devotee of Thakur. He has come across a number of devotees in Dhaka. They come to him occasionally to receive instruction. The devotees don't come to see him empty-handed. They bring a lot of sweetmeats and so forth as offerings.

Sri Ramakrishna's various moods and states for all types of people

Kedar (very humbly) — Can I eat what they bring me?

Sri Ramakrishna — There is no harm if they bring out of bhakti for the Lord. But if there is some motive behind it, it is not good.

Kedar — I have told them that I am free from all cares. I have said, ‘He [Sri Ramakrishna] who has bestowed grace on me knows everything.’

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — That is true. All kinds of people come here. So you find various moods here.

Kedar — What need have I to know so much?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — No, my dear, you must have a little of everything. If a person starts a grocery shop, he must keep a little bit of all kinds of things in his shop: *masur dal* (a kind of lentils), tamarind and so on.

“An expert musician can play a little on all instruments.”

Thakur goes out to Jhautala to ease himself. A devotee takes the wash pot and leaves it there.

The devotees stroll around. Some of them walk toward Thakur’s room, the others return to the Panchavati. Coming back, Thakur says, “I had to ease myself two or three times. I ate at Mallick’s house. He is such a worldly man, my stomach was upset!”

Sri Ramakrishna, the man of samadhi, is reminded of his betel box

Thakur’s betel box is still lying on the platform in the Panchavati. There are one or two other articles left as well.

Sri Ramakrishna says to M., “Bring that box and the other articles to my room.” Saying so, Sri Ramakrishna goes south toward his room. The devotees follow him. One of them holds the betel box, the other the wash pot and so on.

Thakur rests at midday. Some devotees arrive and sit down. Thakur is leaning against a small pillow on the smaller cot. A devotee asks him –

Can the bhava of the jnani and of the devotee be in the same person? Practice of spiritual disciplines is needed

“Sir, can one know the Lord’s attributes through knowledge?”

Thakur says, “Not through ordinary knowledge. You cannot know Him by that. You need to practice spiritual disciplines. And you must adhere to one attitude, for instance that of a servant. The rishis have the *shanta* bhava (of

peace and serenity). Do you know the attitude of the jnani? To meditate on one's own real Self. (Laughing to a devotee) What is your attitude?"

The devotee doesn't reply.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — You have both attitudes: you want to meditate on your own real Self – and you certainly have the attitude of the servant toward his master. Am I not right?

The Devotee (smiling, but diffidently) — Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — That is why Hazra says I can read the thoughts of people. This only comes about in a very advanced stage. Prahlada had reached that state.

“But practice of any attitude requires one to perform karma.

“A person pricks his hand with a thorn of the plum tree and his hand bleeds profusely. But he says, ‘Nothing has happened to me, it hasn't pricked me.’ On further enquiry, he says, ‘It is all right, I am fine.’ What use is merely saying it? One has to develop this attitude by practice.”

The devotees listen to the nectarine words of Thakur.

[\[305\]](#) Later Swami Trigunatitananda

[\[306\]](#) Work done without expectation of reward

[\[307\]](#) Spiritual practices

[\[308\]](#) Devotional singing

[\[309\]](#) Omnipresent God; all-pervading Spirit

[\[310\]](#) The Divine presence manifesting in the image of the Deity

[\[311\]](#) Hatred, shame, ancestry, pride, fear, secretiveness, caste and grief

[\[312\]](#) A particular conjunction of stars

[\[313\]](#) A woman companion of Sri Krishna

[\[314\]](#) The Abode of Vishnu

Section XXIII

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees at Dakshineswar on Dolayatra Day

Chapter I

Dolayatra Day, Sri Ramakrishna and Bhakti Yoga

It is Dolayatra, Holi^[315], and the birthday of Mahaprabhu (Sri Chaitanya). Sunday, 1 March, 1885, nineteenth day of Falgun and the full moon day. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on the smaller cot and is in samadhi. The devotees sit on the floor with their eyes fixed on him. Mahimacharan, Ram Dutta, Manomohan, Nabai Chaitanya, Narendra, M. and other devotees are there.

Thakur's samadhi ends, yet he is still full of divine fervour. Thakur says to Mahimacharan, "My dear sir, do tell me about the love of Hari." Mahima recites –

If God is worshipped with devotion, what is the need for asceticism?

If He is not worshipped, what again is the need for asceticism?

If the Lord is worshipped within and without, what is the need of asceticism?

If He is not so realized, asceticism will be of little avail.

Desist, O my child, desist from the practice of

further austerities.

Go your way at once to Shiva – the ocean of
divine knowledge.

From Him you learn how to love the Lord.
Such love has been spoken of by the
worshippers of Vishnu^[316] – a love that never
fails.

A love that, like a dagger, cuts asunder the
fetters of the world.

“The *Narada Pancharatra* speaks of it. A voice
from heaven said these words to Narada when he
wanted to practice austerities.”

***Ishvarakoti* – Shukadeva’s samadhi breaks – Hanuman and Prahlada**

Sri Ramakrishna — There are the *jivakoti*^[317] and
the *Ishvarakoti*^[318]. The bhakti of the *jivakoti* is
ritualistic: It consists of worshipping with a
prescribed number of articles, or repeating the name
of God so many times, or performing so much
purashcharana. Ritualistic worship leads one to
knowledge of God, when the self merges in the
Universal Soul never to return.

“The case is different with the *Ishvarakotis*. For
them it is like involution and evolution. Saying,
‘Not this, not this,’ they get to the roof top and find
that the staircase is made of the same material –
bricks, lime and brick dust – as the roof itself. So
they walk up and down the staircase and sometimes
rest on the roof.

“Shukadeva was in samadhi – in nirvikalpa

samadhi, jada samadhi. Bhagavan sent Narada to Shukadeva since he was to narrate the Bhagavata to Parikshit. Narada observed that Shukadeva was seated like a stone, absolutely dead to the world of the senses. Narada began to play upon the *vina*[\[319\]](#), singing and praising the form of Lord Hari in four verses. The first verse caused the hair of Shukadeva's body to stand on end. The second brought tears to his eyes. Then he saw, realized within himself, the spiritual form of the Lord. After jada samadhi, he again had the vision of the form of the Lord. Shukadeva belonged to the class of *Ishvarakotis*.

“Hanuman realized God without form and God with form and passed his days in meditating on a particular form of the Lord, viz., the form of Rama. This form was made of spirit and bliss everlasting.

“Prahlada sometimes lived in the attitude of Soham (I am That) and at other times in the attitude of a servant of God. How can such a person live without love of God? One should, therefore, cherish the attitude of the servant and master – ‘Thou art the Master, I am Thy servant’ – to taste the bliss of the Lord. The attitude of the lover is: Thou, oh Lord, art the *rasa*[\[320\]](#) and I the enjoyer of the *rasa*[\[321\]](#).

“There is no harm in keeping the ‘ego of devotion,’ or the ‘ego of knowledge,’ or the ‘ego of a child.’ Shankaracharya retained the ‘ego of knowledge’ for the purpose of teaching mankind.

“The self or ego of the child is not attached to things of the world. The child is beyond all gunas – he is not subject to any guna. He gets out of temper, but soon there is not a trace of anger left in him. He

builds a playhouse now, and forgets all about it the next moment. His fondness for his playmates knows no bounds, but if he loses sight of them for awhile, he forgets all about his old friends. The child is not subject to any of the three gunas – sattva, rajas and tamas.

“The devotee cherishes the attitude: ‘Thou art my Lord, and I Thy devotee.’ Such I-ness is the ‘ego of devotion.’ Why does the devotee retain the ‘ego of devotion’? It has a meaning. Since one cannot get rid of one’s I-ness, let the rascal remain the ‘I of a servant’ or the ‘I of a devotee.’

“You may reason a thousand times, but the ego cannot be shaken off. The ego is like a water jar and Brahman is the shoreless ocean in which the water jar is merged. There is water inside the water jar as well as outside – all water everywhere. The water jar that you cannot shake off is the self or ego of the devotee. As long as there is the water jar [or ego] there are both I and You; one feels ‘Thou art my Bhagavan, I Thy devotee,’ ‘Thou art the Lord, I am the servant of the Lord.’ You may carry your reasoning to the highest point, but the self or ego still remains. But, of course, if there is no water jar, it is a different matter.”

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna teaches Narendra about sannyasa

Narendra comes in, falls at the feet of Thakur and sits down. Sri Ramakrishna talks with him. During the course of conversation, he comes down from the smaller cot and sits on a mat spread on the floor. The room is by this time

filled with devotees and visitors.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — Are you doing well? Is it true that you are a constant visitor at Girish Ghosh's house?

Narendra — Yes, sir. I do go to see him, off and on.

Girish is a new disciple who met Sri Ramakrishna a few months ago. Thakur often speaks of the greatness of his faith, a faith which, he often says, cannot be girt about with both arms; and his longing for the Lord is as intense as his faith. At home he always thinks about Thakur and is, as it were, drunk with divine joy. Narendra often visits him, as do many other devotees, especially Haripada and Devendra. Girish talks to them only about Thakur. He is a man of the world, a householder. On the other hand, Thakur sees that Narendra will forsake worldly life. He will renounce 'lust and greed'. Thakur talks to Narendra.

Sri Ramakrishna — Is it really true that you often go to see Girish Ghosh at his house?

Eligibility for sannyasa – dispassion at a young age – class to which Girish belongs – Ravana and demons have yoga and bhoga

“One may wash a cup that contains garlic many times, but the smell of garlic will not leave the cup. The boys who have not touched 'lust and gold' are pure vessels. When a person is rubbed with the garlic of 'lust and gold' for a considerable time, the

smell of garlic persists in him.

“They are like mangoes pecked at and defiled by crows. Such a mango cannot be offered to Bhagavan. It is suspect even for personal use. It is as different as new earthen pots and the pots in which milk was once turned into curds. It is not safe to keep pure milk in vessels that once contained curds. The chances are that the milk will turn sour.

“They form a class by themselves. They have both yoga and bhoga^[322]. It is like the attitude of Ravana who married the charming daughters of the Nagas and the Devas. Nevertheless, he attained Rama in the end.

“The asuras (demons) enjoyed worldly pleasures, but they attained Narayana in the end.”

Narendra — Girish Ghosh has given up his old associates.

Sri Ramakrishna — He is a bull castrated in old age. I saw it in Burdwan. When I saw a bullock going toward a cow, I asked, ‘What is this? It is a bullock!’ The cart driver then said to me, ‘Sir, it was castrated in old age. So it still has the old samskaras (inherent tendencies).’

“Some sannyasins were seated at a certain place when a woman chanced to pass by. They continued to meditate on God as before, but one of them looked at her out of the corner of his eye. This man was the father of three boys when he became a sannyasin.

“If you make a solution of garlic in a cup, will it not be hard to remove the garlic smell from the cup? Is it possible to make the babui plant bring forth mangoes? Of course, it is possible for a person who possesses occult powers to do this miracle. But it is not everybody who can attain miraculous powers.

“Does a man of the world, a householder, have enough time to spare for God? A certain man wanted to engage a Bhagavata pundit^[323] to explain the Bhagavata to him. His friend said, ‘Well, I know a good Bhagavata pundit, but there is one problem with him. He has some lands under cultivation which he has to look after every day. There are four ploughs and eight bullocks always at work. He has to look after them every day and has no time to spare.’ The man who wanted the pundit said, ‘I am not looking for a Bhagavata Pundit with ploughs and bullocks to look after, who has no time to spare. I am in quest of a learned pundit who can recite and explain the Bhagavata to me.’

“A certain king used to hear a pundit recite the Bhagavata everyday. At the end of the lesson for the day, the pundit would say to the king, ‘Sir, do you understand?’ The king would only reply, ‘It is for you, first of all, to understand its meaning.’ Every day when he got home, the pundit would think about what the king had said, if he understood the meaning himself. This fellow used to practice sadhana and bhajan. He felt an awakening of spirit within himself in the course of a few days. Then he saw that the only real thing was the worship of the lotus feet of God, that all else is illusion. Being sick of the world and its pleasures, he gave it up. He sent a message to the king, saying, ‘Oh, king, I have

indeed understood at last the true meaning (of the Bhagavata).’

“But do not, therefore, think that I look down upon them [men of the world]. Oh, no. I bring the knowledge of Brahman to use: that everything is but a manifestation of God. That all are Narayana. That all female generative organs are those of the Mother. Then I see no difference between a prostitute and an ideal wife who sets an example to others of conjugal love and devotion.”

Everybody is customer of *kalai* pulse (lentils), that is influenced by female beauty and wealth

“Alas, I look in vain for customers who want something higher than *kalai* pulse. Everybody runs after ‘lust and gold.’ They are attracted by female beauty and power of wealth. But even the seat of Brahma (Lord the Creator) appears not worth striving for after the vision of the Lord.

“A certain person said to Ravana, ‘You have been going to Sita in so many different disguises, why don’t you approach her assuming the form of Rama?’ Ravana replied, ‘If I once behold Rama in the recess of my heart, Rambha and Tilottama (heavenly damsels) appear to me like ashes of the dead burnt at the crematorium. Then I can spurn even the high position of Brahma, not to speak of the beauty of another man’s wife.’

“Verily these customers, every one of them, seek for *kalai* pulse. It is given to pure souls alone to attain pure love for the Lord, to have one aim and to have the mind fixed on the Lord.”

The Nepalese lady, handmaiden of the Lord – servitude of worldly man

(To Manomohan^[324]) “I must tell you, though you may take offense. I said to Rakhal, ‘I would be more pleased to hear that you have plunged yourself into the Ganges and have been drowned than to have heard that you have been anybody’s servant for the sake of money or worldly goods!’

“A young Nepalese lady once came here. She played on the *esraj*^[325] beautifully and chanted the name of Lord Hari. When someone asked if she had married, she replied, ‘Why should I take another master? I am already the handmaiden of Bhagavan.’

“With ‘lust and greed’ always around you, how is it possible to realize God? It is very hard indeed to live unattached in their midst. In the first place, one is a slave of one’s wife. In the second place, one is a slave to money. And in the third place, one is a slave to him whom one serves for the sake of his living.

“A fakir lived in a cottage in a certain forest. It was during the time when Akbar was the emperor of Delhi. Many resorted to this holy man. It occurred to him that he should treat his visitors with hospitality. But he thought, ‘How can I do it without money? Let me go to Emperor Akbar. He is known for his kindness to holy men.’ When he arrived, Akbar was saying his Namaz and the fakir took his seat in the prayer room. He heard Emperor Akbar saying at the end of the Namaz, ‘Oh Allah! Grant me wealth, make me rich! And grant me this

and that.’ At once the fakir arose and was about to steal out of the room when the Emperor beckoned to him to be seated again. At the end of the Namaz, Akbar asked the fakir, ‘You came and sat there. Why did you want to leave?’ The fakir said, ‘It is not something I should say to you. May I take your leave now?’ When the emperor repeatedly pressed him, the fakir said, ‘Many people visit my cottage, so I came to ask you for some money.’ Akbar asked, ‘Why were you leaving then?’ The fakir said, ‘When I saw that you yourself were a beggar, begging for wealth and riches, I thought to myself, why shall I go begging of a person who is himself a beggar? I had better beg of Allah.’ ”

His earlier story: Hriday Mukherji’s abusive language – Thakur’s state of sattva

Narendra — These days Girish Ghosh only thinks about these things.

Sri Ramakrishna — That is very nice. But why does he pollute himself with such abusive language? My present state of mind can’t stand such rudeness. When there is a thunderclap, grosser objects are not so affected by it, but glass shutters move to and fro and rattle. My present nature is sattvic; it can’t stand noise and clamour. That is why my Divine Mother sent Hriday away. He had recently grown too rough for me. He would shout abusive language at me.

Does Narendra believe in avatar? Narendra belongs to the class of the renouncers – he has lost his father

“Did you agree with what Girish Ghosh says [as to God being incarnate in man]?”

Narendra — I didn't say anything. He said that he believes in avatars (divine incarnations). I thought it as well not to say anything.

Sri Ramakrishna — How great is his faith! Don't you think so?

The devotees' eyes are fixed on Thakur. He is sitting on a mat spread on the floor. M. is close to him. In front of him is Narendra and the other devotees are seated around them.

Thakur looks lovingly at Narendra without saying a word.

After awhile he says to Narendra, “My child, you cannot attain the end of life without renunciation of ‘lust and greed’.” Saying this, he becomes filled with divine emotion. He continues to look at Narendra with unspeakable love and sings, intoxicated with bhava –

Afraid am I to speak the word to you; equally afraid am I not to speak it.

The fear that arises in my mind is that I may lose you, yes, be robbed of you, my wealth, my treasure!

Knowing well your mind, we shall teach you the *mantra* (holy name) that is to bring you to the Beloved.

Now ready yourself to receive that *mantra* which enabled us on many occasions to steer the ship safely to land.

Thakur seems to be afraid that Narendra will leave him, that someone might pluck him out of his hand. Narendra is in tears as he looks at Thakur.

A visitor who has come to see Thakur for the first time is seated near him and watches everything.

The (visitor) Devotee — Sir, if ‘lust and gold’ are to be given up, how should the householder, who has a family to bring up, solve this problem?

Sri Ramakrishna — You are at liberty to live that way [with your wife and children]! What has passed between us does not concern you.

Thakur grants fearlessness and encouragement to the householder devotee

Mahimacharan sits speechless, holding his peace.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — Go on! Go deeper! You will get sandalwood. Go deeper still and you will come upon a silver mine! Yes, deeper still and you shall come upon a gold mine! Move on still further and you shall be placed in the midst of diamonds, rubies and sapphires! Yes, go forward!

Mahimacharan — Sir, something holds us back and keeps us from moving on.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — Why? Let the reins be cut asunder by the sword of His holy name! His name is capable of cutting in twain the bonds of

Death.

After the death of his father, Narendra has been put to great trouble. He has passed through many trials and great suffering. Thakur looks at him from time to time, and says to him, “Have you already turned out to be a *chikitsaka*^[326]?”

A *vaidya* is a physician who has succeeded in killing a hundred patients.

A *chikitsaka* is a physician who has dispatched at least a thousand into eternity. (All laugh.)

What is Thakur referring to? That, at this age, Narendra has experienced a lot in life? That he has had a lot of contact with joy and sorrow?

Narendra smiles and keeps silent.

Chapter III

Dolayatra festival – Thakur offers coloured powder on Radhakanta, Mother Kali and devotees

Nabai Chaitanya is singing, the devotees are all seated. Thakur, who has been sitting on the smaller cot, suddenly rises and goes out of the room. The devotees remain sitting and the music continues.

M. accompanies Thakur toward Kali’s shrine through the brick courtyard. At first he enters the Radhakanta temple and pays his obeisance by lying prostrate on the ground. Seeing him do so, M. also pays his obeisance. There is coloured powder in a big tray in front of the deity. Sri Ramakrishna has not forgotten that it

is the day of the Dolayatra festival [\[327\]](#).

Taking a little powder from the tray, he applies it on the images of Radha and Shyam, and offers his obeisance once again.

Now he proceeds toward Kali's shrine. He first climbs up the seven steps and stands on the platform. Having had the Mother's darshan, he enters the shrine. He offers some coloured powder to the Mother. After offering his obeisance, he returns from the shrine. Standing on the platform of the shrine, he says to M., "Why haven't you brought Baburam with you?"

Thakur walks back across the brick courtyard. With him are M. and another person carrying the tray of coloured powder. Entering his room, he applies some coloured powder on all the pictures except two – his own photograph and the picture of Jesus. Now he comes to the verandah where he finds Narendra seated at the entrance to the room. He is talking with some devotees. Thakur applies some coloured powder on Narendra's body and enters the room. M. accompanies him. He also receives the holy coloured powder.

Sri Ramakrishna enters and applies coloured powder on the bodies of all the devotees. They all salute him.

It is already afternoon. The devotees stroll around. Thakur talks with M. in a whisper. There is no one near. He talks to him about the boy disciples, "Well, everybody says, 'I am getting on well with my meditation.' How is it that Paltu can't fix his mind on God?"

"What do you think of Narendra? Isn't it true that there is no guile in him? But he has received several

blows from the world lately. The light within him is a little hidden under the shadows of the world. But this state of things won't last long.”

Thakur now and then steps into the corridor where Narendra is talking with a Vedantist.

Gradually the devotees come back to Thakur's room. Thakur asks Mahimacharan to recite a hymn of praise to God. He recites from the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, third ullas (chapter), saying –

In the lotus of my heart do I worship God the
Absolute whom Hari (God, the preserver), Hara
(God, the destroyer) and
Brahma (God, the creator) all desire to know and upon whom
yogis meditate with a view to realization. He is attributeless,
undifferentiated, destroyer of the fear of birth and death, of
the nature of Existence and Knowledge and the primal seed
of the entire universe.

Be not afraid of the household

After reciting one or two more hymns, Mahimacharan recites the hymn to Shankaracharya which describes the world as a deep well and a wilderness. Mahimacharan is a householder devotee –

O great Lord Shambhu^[328], with the moon on
your crest, the slayer of Kamadeva^[329], with
trident in hand, the unmoving Lord of the
mountains!

O consort of Uma, the Lord of all creatures!
You who destroy the fear of the distressed! O
Lord of the universe, protect me from the sea of
misery of the world.

O heartthrob of Parvati! You wear the moon on your forehead, Lord of every being! Lord of goblins! O you, the Lord of Parvati!

O Vamadeva, the self-existent one! Rudra, who carries a bow in his hand, protect me from the deep forest of worldly misery.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahima) — Why do you say that the world is a well or a deep dense forest? These epithets are all very good for a beginner. Away with all fear when you are fastened to God! Then you may say:

Verily is this world a mansion of joy.

Let me pass my days eating, drinking and rejoicing.

Janaka, the royal sage, how great was his power! Was there anything in which he was found wanting – spiritual, or temporal?

Ah, no! He was loyal to both matter and spirit and drank his cup of milk at the same time!

“Fear of what? Hold him fast! Never mind that it is ‘a deep, dense forest overgrown with weeds and thorns’! Put on a pair of shoes and walk on in the thorny forest. Away with fear! He who touches the Grand Dame (the Divine Mother) in the game of hide and seek is spared from the necessity of taking any further part in this play.

“King Janaka wielded two swords: one of jnana (true knowledge), the other of karma (work). He who is an expert in handling these swords has nothing to fear.”

Such conversation on spiritual matters continues. Thakur is sitting on the smaller cot. M is seated close to it.

Thakur (to M.) — What he has said has drawn my mind away from lighter matters.

Thakur talks of Mahimacharan and of the verses recited by him on Brahmajnana. Nabai Chaitanya and other devotees sing again. Thakur joins them this time and, surcharged with deep devotional feelings, begins to dance during the kirtan.

At the end of the kirtan, Thakur says, “Chanting of the Lord’s name with love is the one thing needed. All the rest is of little value. Prema and bhakti is the reality, all else is unreal.”

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna on the day of Holi festival – secret talk

It is already evening. Thakur has gone to the Panchavati. He talks to M. about Binode, a student at M.’s school. At times Binode goes into bhava while meditating on the Lord. That is why Sri Ramakrishna has great love for him.

Now Thakur returns to his room, talking to M. As they approach the Bakultala ghat he says, “Well, some of them talk of me as an avatar. What do you think?”

Talking thus, they reach the room. Taking off his slippers, Thakur sits on the smaller cot. Close to the smaller cot, to the east, is a foot

mat. M. sits on it and talks with Thakur. Thakur repeats his question. The other devotees are sitting at some distance. They don't understand what the two are talking about.

Sri Ramakrishna — What do you say about it?

M. — Sir, I too feel the same way. You are just like Chaitanya Deva.

Sri Ramakrishna — Is it full, or a part, or *kala*[\[330\]](#) of it? Give me your 'weight.'

M. — I don't understand 'the weight.' Yet God's power has incarnated itself in you. He surely dwells in you.

Sri Ramakrishna — True. Chaitanya Deva asked for divine power.

Thakur is silent for awhile. Then he says, "But what about the six-armed one[\[331\]](#)?"

M. reflects, "Chaitanya Deva assumed the form of the six-armed one. The devotees saw him like this. Why has Thakur mentioned this subject?"

His earlier story: Thakur becomes surcharged with madness for the Lord – he weeps before the Divine Mother – he doesn't like reasoning and argumentation

The devotees are seated in the room at some distance. Narendra is engaged in a discussion.

Ram Dutta has recovered from a recent illness.
He is engaged in a hot discussion with
Narendra. Thakur watches them talking.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — I don't like such
discussions. (To Ram) Please stop! You are not
perfectly restored to health. Well, go on softly. (To
M.) All this is not at all to my liking. I used to cry
to the Divine Mother, 'Oh, Mother, one man says,
'It is thus, it is thus,' another man says, 'It is
something else.' Reveal to me, Mother, what the
truth is!'

[315] Festival of colours

[316] God the preserver

[317] The ordinary human being

[318] Eternally free and perfect souls, born on earth for
the good of mankind

[319] A stringed musical instrument

[320] Bliss, sweet like nectar

[321] "Surely by grasping the flavour (rasa), the
individual soul becomes blessed. Who indeed, would
breathe, who would remain alive, if this Bliss were not in
the ether." Taittiriya Upanishad 2.7

[322] Enjoyment of the world

[323] A scholar well-versed in scriptures

[324] A householder disciple. Rakhal has married his
sister.

[325] A kind of violin

[326] A physician of many years' standing

[327] Holi; festival of colours

[328] An appellation of Lord Shiva

[\[329\]](#) The god of love

[\[330\]](#) One sixteenth of divine energy

[\[331\]](#) Shadbhuja; a form of Lord Vishnu

Section XXIV

Sri Ramakrishna arrives at a Devotee's House in Calcutta – Festivity at Girish Ghosh's House

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna at Balaram's house with his intimate disciples

**Narendra, M., Jogin, Baburam, Ram, Bhavanath,
Balaram and Chunilal**

24 April, 1885, Friday, the 10th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Vaishakh. Sri Ramakrishna has come to Calcutta today. About one o'clock, M. sees him sleeping in Balaram's drawing room. One or two devotees are also resting close to him.

Sitting beside him, M. gazes at the sleeping childlike figure. He says to himself, "What a wonder! He is such a great saint and even he is lying overcome by sleep like a common man. He, too, has assumed the nature of a human being."

M. gently fans him. After some time, Sri Ramakrishna's sleep breaks. He sits up, his clothes are disheveled. M. prostrates before him and takes the dust of his feet.

First evidence of Sri Ramakrishna's illness – April

Sri Ramakrishna (affectionately to M.) — How are you? I don't know, but there is a hard lump in my throat. I felt very uncomfortable early this morning. How can I be cured? (Worried) They made some mango pickle and I ate some of it. (To M.) How is your wife doing? The other day she was looking rather ill. Give her something cold to drink.

M. — Something like coconut milk, sir?

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, water sweetened with sugar candy will do her good.

M. — I moved back to my parents' home on Sunday.

Sri Ramakrishna — Very nice! It will be more convenient at your father's home. Your father and other relatives are there. You won't have to bother so much about the household.

While talking, Thakur's mouth becomes dry. Childlike as he is, he asks M., "I feel dryness in my mouth. Do you all feel the same way?"

M. — Jogin babu, does your mouth feel dry?

Jogindra — No. Perhaps he is feeling hot because of the heat.

Jogindra of Ariadaha is an intimate disciple of Thakur. Later, he renounced the world.

Thakur is sitting in disheveled clothes. Some of the devotees laugh.

Sri Ramakrishna — I am sitting like a mother ready to suckle a baby. (All laugh.) Well, my mouth is dry. Should I eat a pear, or a *jamrul* (a kind of juicy fruit similar to a star apple)?

Baburam — Let me get a *jamrul* for you.

Sri Ramakrishna — You don't need to go out in the hot sun.

M. is fanning him.

Sri Ramakrishna — Please don't fan me anymore. You have been doing it for a long time.

M. — But sir, I am not inconvenienced.

Sri Ramakrishna (tenderly) — Not feeling inconvenienced!

M. is a teacher in a nearby school. Finding a little time after class, he has come to meet Thakur at one o'clock. Now he rises to go back to his school. He takes the dust of Thakur's feet.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Are you going back now?

A Devotee — His school isn't over yet. He has come here during school hours.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — He is like a housewife with seven or eight children. She remains busy night and day with her household chores. But now and then she finds time to come to serve her husband. (All laugh.)

Chapter II

At Balaram's house in the company of intimate disciples

When M.'s school closes at four o'clock, he comes to Balaram Babu's house. He sees Thakur seated in the outer room with a smile on his face. Knowing that Thakur has arrived, the devotees arrive one by one. The Younger Naren and Ram are there, as is Narendra. M. salutes Thakur and sits down. Because of the lump in his throat, Balaram has sent Thakur soft corn flour pudding on a tray from inside the house.

Sri Ramakrishna (seeing the corn flour pudding, to Narendra) — Oh, this is tasty stuff! A real mouth-watering sweet. Eat, eat it! (All laugh.)

Time has come for Thakur to go to Girish's house. Girish has arranged a festival to celebrate Thakur's visit to his home. Thakur is coming down from Balaram's second level room. He is accompanied by M. and a couple of other devotees. At the entrance porch they see a beggar from western India singing a song. Hearing the name of Rama, Thakur stops. He is facing south. In no time his mind turns inward. He stands there in this bhava for some time. He says to M., "A beautiful tune!"

A devotee gives four pice to the beggar.

Thakur enters Bosepara Lane. Laughing, he says to M., “Well, you know what these people say? The rascals say, ‘The Paramahamsa’s battalion is coming!’ ” (All laugh.)

Chapter III

Difference between an avatar and a spiritually perfected man – discussion between Mahima and Girish

Thakur enters Girish’s parlour with the devotees. Girish has invited many devotees. Most of them are already there. When Thakur arrives, they stand up. He sits down with a smile on his face. The devotees also sit down. Girish, Mahimacharan, Ram, Bhavanath and others are there. A number of devotees have accompanied Thakur, among them Baburam, Jogin, both the Narendras, Chunilal and Balaram.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — Talking about you to Girish, I said, ‘There is a very deep person. You are only knee deep.’ Now please prove that I was right. Argue with one another and do not compromise. (All laugh.)

Mahimacharan and Girish begin a discussion. Soon Ram says, “Stop, stop! Let’s have kirtan instead.”

Sri Ramakrishna (to Ram) — No, no. This, too, is important. They are Englishmen! Let me see what they say.

Mahimacharan believes that anybody can become Sri Krishna by practicing sadhana. Girish, on the other hand, believes that Sri Krishna was an avatar and however many spiritual disciplines a man may practice, he can never equal an avatar.

Mahimacharan — Do you know what I mean? It is like a bel tree becoming a mango tree if the obstructions are removed. And they can be removed by the practice of yoga.

Girish — You may say whatever you like but this cannot be done by means of yoga or anything else. Only Krishna can become Krishna. If anyone has all the attributes of another person, then he is none other than that person. If someone has the bhava of Radha, she is none other than Radha. So if I see all the attributes of Sri Krishna in somebody, then I will realize that I am seeing Sri Krishna himself.

Mahimacharan cannot carry on the discussion any longer. At the end he almost agrees with Girish.

Mahimacharan (to Girish) — Yes, both views are true. The path of jnana is by His will and the path of *prema* bhakti, too, is by His will. As he says, one may take different paths, but one reaches the same destination.

Sri Ramakrishna (aside to Mahima) — Why, is he not right that both views are true?

Mahima — Sir, what he says is right. Both views

are correct.

Sri Ramakrishna — Did you notice how great his [Girish's] faith is? He even forgot to drink water! Had you not agreed to his view, he would have torn your throat like a dog gulps meat. It is nice you had a discussion and have come to know each other. I have also learned a lot from it.

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna in the joy of kirtan

The kirtan singer has arrived with his musicians and is seated in the middle of the room. The kirtan begins with a sign from Thakur – he has granted his permission.

Ram (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Please tell us what song you would like to hear.

Sri Ramakrishna — What can I say? (After a short reflection) All right, let it be of love for God^[332].

The musician sings of the attraction incited before the first acquaintance with the lover.

O my Gaur, the jewel among twice-born brahmins,

You chant 'Radha, Radha' as you weep and roll on the ground.

Gauranga is chanting Radha's name with such gusto!

Lo! Ganges of tears flow from his red eyes.

He rolls on the ground again and again.

He utters Radha's name and faints repeatedly,
His hair stands on end and his voice cracks.
Says Basu^[333], 'Why is Gaur so restless?'

The kirtan continues. Radha's friends describe her state when she sees Sri Krishna for the first time on the bank of the Jamuna.

She comes outside her home a hundred times –
now in, now out.

Out of tune with everything and breathing
deeply, she looks at the Kadamba grove.

(Why has Radha become like this?)

Has she neither fear of the elders nor of the
wicked? Has she attained some god?

She is ever so restless; she cannot even hold her
dress, or her headdress.

She sits, then stands up with a start and her
jewels fall off.

She is a princess, young in age, and a virtuous
wife as well.

What does she crave, what is in her mind? I
don't know her ways.

It seems she is trying to reach out to the moon.

Says Chandidas^[334], very humbly, 'She has
fallen into Krishna's trap.'

The kirtan continues. Radha's *sakhis*
(milkmaid friends) say to her –

Song –

Tell us, fair Radha, what is ailing you.

We see you distracted. Why are you tracing on the ground with your toenail?

Your golden countenance has turned pale, your finery has all fallen off.

Both of your eyes are red, your lotus-like face has withered.

O *sakhi*, why so? Our heart will break if you don't tell.

Hearing this, young Radha replies: I wish to gaze upon the face of the son of Jadu (Krishna).

The musician sings again. Hearing the sound of the flute ringing, Srimati (Radha) becomes like one mad. Srimati says to her milkmaid friends –

O friend! Who lives in the Kadamba forest?
Whose music do I hear?

How has it penetrated through my ears to the heart?

Entering my heart, it has made me forget my duties. I have gone crazy.

My heart is restless, I can hardly breathe, and tears stream down my face.

I wonder who is playing the music.

Without seeing him, my heart is pierced in two and I cannot stay at home.

My soul is yearning for him, I long for his vision.

Says Uddhava Das, 'You will be relieved only when you behold him.'

The music continues. Radha's soul is yearning

for Krishna's sight. Srimati (Radha) says –

I heard a wondrous sound coming out of the
Kadamba grove.

The next day, hearing about him from a
minstrel, I was thrilled to my heart.

Another day, O my beloved friend, you uttered
the sweet name of Krishna, sweetest of all
names.

(Ah! Honey sweet, indeed, is the name of
Krishna.)

I heard his virtues being chanted by wise men.

I am a weak and simple girl of the family,
having, alas, to bear the sternness of elders.

He is such a lover! His love grows and grows.
How can I contain myself?

The more I reflect, the more I am convinced
that I cannot survive.

Says Uddhava Das, 'May somebody tell you
how to meet that lover (Krishna).'

Hearing, "Ah! Honey sweet, indeed, is the
name of Krishna," Thakur cannot contain
himself. He loses all external consciousness
and merges in samadhi. The Younger Naren
stands on his right. As he regains a little
awareness, he utters, "Krishna, Krishna," in a
sweet voice. His eyes are filled with tears.
Slowly he returns to his seat.

The musicians sing again. Vishakha runs out to
get a picture of Sri Krishna and places it before
Radha. It is a picture of the world-bewitching
form. Seeing the picture, Radha says, "I have
been in this plight since I saw him on the bank
of Jamuna. I see the same person in the

picture.”

The kirtan continues. Radha chants –

He whom I saw on the bank of the Jamuna, I
see in this picture.

He whose name Vishakha spoke is written on
the picture.

He whose flute sends out its music is surely the
jewel among the joyous.

He whose qualities were narrated by the
minstrel, full of ecstatic love, has stolen my
heart.

But for him none else is mine.

So saying, Radha fell into a swoon. Her friends
raise her up.

Restored to her senses, she says, “Show me him
whom I just saw.”

And the friends assure her. So says
Ghanashyam Das.

Thakur stands up again. The devotees join him
in singing the kirtan.

1) Behold, the two brothers who shed tears on
chanting Hari’s name have come.

They who weep and make others weep, they
who ask for *prema* (ecstatic love) even after
receiving blows,

They who are Kanai and Balai of Braja, they
who would steal butter in Braja,

They who are indifferent to caste, they who
embrace even the lowest of the lowly,

They who are themselves inebriated and who
inebriate others,

They who chant Hari's name though they are none other than Hari Himself,

They who redeemed Jagai and Madhai, they who don't distinguish between a friend and a stranger,

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

2)Behold, the whole of Nadia is shaking under the waves of the divine love of Gaur!

Thakur again goes into samadhi. Gaining outer consciousness, he sits down again.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — I don't remember which way I was facing.

Chapter V

Narendra and Sri Ramakrishna – conversation about Hazra – Narayana in the form of a deceitful person

Sri Ramakrishna resumes the conversation after he comes down from ecstasy.

Narendra (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Hazra has now become a good man.

Sri Ramakrishna — You don't know. There are people who hide a brick under their armpit to strike others and repeat Rama on their lips.

Narendra — No sir, I asked him all about everything. He has denied it.

Sri Ramakrishna — He has single-minded devotion. He performs some japa and austerities. But he is a man who doesn't pay fare to the coachman.

Narendra — No sir, he says he paid...

Sri Ramakrishna — Where did he get the money?

Narendra — Perhaps he got it from Ramlal – or some other person.

Sri Ramakrishna — Did you ask him about all these things?

“I prayed to the Divine Mother, ‘Mother, if Hazra is a deceitful person, please remove him from here.’ And I told Hazra about it. After a few days he came and said to me, ‘See, I am still living here.’ (Thakur and the others all laugh.) But later he did leave.

“Hazra's mother sent me a message through Ramlal, ‘Will Ramlal's uncle [Sri Ramakrishna] please send Hazra back home? I have cried so much that I have gone blind.’ I tried to persuade Hazra in various ways. I said, ‘Your mother is old. Go and see her once.’ But he did not. At last his mother cried herself to death.”

Narendra — This time he will go to his village.

Sri Ramakrishna — He will go now, the mean fellow! Go on, you don't understand. Gopal told me that Hazra was in Sinthi for a number of days. They used to provide him with rice, ghee and other provisions. He would say, ‘Do I eat such inferior

rice and ghee?’ He went to Bhatpara with Ishan and asked Ishan to fetch water for his toilet. This annoyed the brahmins.

Narendra — I asked him about that too. He said that Ishan Babu had offered to do it himself. Besides, so many brahmins of Bhatpara honoured him.

Sri Ramakrishna (laughing) — That is the result of his japa and austerities.

“And, you know what? It depends on physical traits. A dwarfish stature and dents here and there on the body are bad signs. Such a person takes a long time to attain jnana.”

Bhavanath — Stop this, sir. Let’s not continue such talk.

Sri Ramakrishna — No, it is not that. (To Narendra) You say that you can read a man’s character. That’s why I am telling you about it. What do I think of Hazra and others like him? I believe that just as there is Narayana in the form of holy men, so there is also Narayana in the form of the deceitful person, or Narayana in the form of a rogue. (To Mahima) What do you say? Is everybody Narayana (God)?

Mahimacharan — Yes sir, all are Narayana.

Chapter VI

Sri Ramakrishna and the ecstatic love of the gopis

Girish (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Sir, what is meant by *ekangi* prema?

Sri Ramakrishna — *Ekangi* is one-sided love. For instance, water doesn't care for the swan, but the swan loves water. Besides *ekangi*, there are *sadharani*, *samanjasa* and *samartha* kinds of love. *Sadharani* prema is that in which the lover desires his own happiness irrespective of whether or not it makes the other person happy. This is like the bhava of Chandravali^[335].

“As for *samanjasa* love, you want to make your counterpart as well as yourself happy. This is a superior kind of love.

“But the highest love of all is *samartha*. It is like Radha's love. She was happy only if Krishna was happy. In this kind of love one feels that the other person must be happy, whether or not oneself is happy.

“This bhava of the gopis is the highest kind of love.

“Do you know who the gopis were? When Ramachandra was roaming in the forest, there were six thousand rishis seated there on whom Ramachandra cast his loving glance. They began to yearn to meet him. In some *Puranas* it is stated that those very rishis became the gopis.”

A Devotee — Sir, who is an intimate disciple^[336]?

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know how it is? There are inner pillars and outer pillars in the natmandir. They who remain ever close to their master are the

intimate disciples.

**Harmony between Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga –
Rama and Bharadvaja – Thakur’s earlier story: his
extraordinary vision – goes beyond God with form –
the Holy Mother in Dakshineswar**

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahimacharan) — The jnani neither wants God with form nor His avatar^[337]. While wandering in the forest, Ramachandra came across a number of rishis. They received Rama in their *ashrama*^[338] with great respect. They said, ‘Rama, our lives are blessed to see you today. But we know you as Dasharatha’s son. Bharadvaja and the other rishis say that you are an avatar. But we do not hold this view. We only meditate on that very Akhanda Sachchidananda^[339].’ Rama was happy and smiled at this.

“Oh, what a state I was in! My mind merged into the Absolute. I was in this state for so many days! I forsook all bhakti and devotees and became inert. I saw that my own head was formless and that my soul was about to leave my body. I was wondering whether I should get Ramlal’s aunt [the Holy Mother] here.

“I asked for all the pictures and portraits in my room to be removed. Later, when I regained outer consciousness, when my mind came down to a lower level, I began to feel very uneasy and restless. At last I said to myself, ‘How shall I live?’ Then my mind was directed to bhakti and the company of devotees.

“At that time I went about asking people what had

happened to me. Bholanath^[340] said to me, ‘The *Mahabharata* talks of it: how a man would occupy his mind after coming down from samadhi. He needs bhakti and the company of devotees – otherwise, where would he rest his mind?’ ”

Chapter VII

Can one return from the state of samadhi – life of Thakur spoken with his own holy lips – Koar Singh

Mahimacharan (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Sir, can one return to the normal plane from samadhi?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahima) — I will tell you when you are alone. You are the only one who deserves to know.

“Koar Singh^[341] asked me the same question. There is a great difference between Ishvara (the Lord) and jiva (the embodied soul). A jiva can at most attain samadhi by practicing *sadhana* (spiritual disciplines) and *bhajan* (singing of devotional songs). But when the Lord incarnates Himself as a human being, He can return to the normal plane even after samadhi. The jiva, you may say, belongs to the class of a king’s officer. He can go only to the outer court of the king’s palace. The king’s palace is a seven-storied building. His son can move up and down all the seven stories; he can also come out of the palace. Everybody says that no one returns after samadhi. Then what about Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and other sages? They retained their ‘I of knowledge’ after coming down from samadhi.”

Mahimacharan — That is so. Otherwise, how could they have written holy books?

Sri Ramakrishna — And then there were Prahlada, Narada and Hanuman. They, too, retained bhakti after samadhi.

Mahimacharan — True, sir.

Jnana and philosophical discussions – jnana after samadhi – ‘I of knowledge’

Sri Ramakrishna — Indulging in philosophical discussions, some people feel that they have become very great. Perhaps they have studied a little Vedanta. When you have attained true knowledge, your I-ness disappears. In other words, you attain samadhi, you become one with Him and lose all your egotism. Without attaining samadhi, you do not develop true knowledge. You become one with Him on attaining samadhi. Then your ego vanishes.

“Do you know what it is like? Just as at midday when the sun shines directly overhead, a man does not see his shadow anywhere around him. When you have gained true knowledge, attained samadhi, the shadow of egotism disappears.

“If, after attaining true knowledge, one’s I-ness persists, know it to be either the ‘I of knowledge,’ or the ‘I of devotion,’ or the ‘I of a servant.’ This is not the ‘I of ignorance.’

“Besides, there are two paths, one of jnana and the other of bhakti. Go by either path and you will

reach Him. The jnani looks at Him in one way, the devotee in another. The God of the jnani is all splendour, while that of the devotee is all sweetness.”

Sri Ramakrishna and narration of destruction of demons in Markanday Chandi – its significance

Bhavanath, seated close to Sri Ramakrishna, listens to all his words. Bhavanath is a great follower of Narendra and used to visit the Brahmo Samaj regularly.

Bhavanath (to Sri Ramakrishna) — I have a question to ask. I don't understand the Chandi. In the Chandi, the Goddess slaughters everybody, one after the other. What does it mean?

Sri Ramakrishna — It is all Her sport. I also used to think about it the same way. Then I saw that it was all maya (illusion). Her creation is, indeed, maya – and so is Her destruction.

Leaf plates have been laid on the terrace to the west of the room. Girish escorts Thakur and the other devotees to the terrace. It is the tenth day of the bright fortnight of Vaishakh. The whole creation seems to be smiling. The terrace is flooded with moonlight. With Sri Ramakrishna seated in front of them, the devotees joyfully eat prasad^[342].

Thakur seems mad, calling Narendra's name. Narendra is seated in the front row with other devotees. Every now and then Thakur enquires about him. Before he is halfway through the meal, he suddenly takes some curd and

watermelon juice from his plate and carries it to Narendra. “Narendra, just eat this little bit,” he says. Like a child, Thakur returns to his seat to finish eating.

[\[332\]](#) Bhakti

[\[333\]](#) Author of the song

[\[334\]](#) Author of the song

[\[335\]](#) One of the milkmaids in Braja

[\[336\]](#) Antaranga

[\[337\]](#) Divine incarnation

[\[338\]](#) Hermitage

[\[339\]](#) Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute

[\[340\]](#) Bholanath Mukherji was then a clerk in Rasmani’s temple. Later he became the treasurer of the temple.

[\[341\]](#) A police officer

[\[342\]](#) Sacramental food

Section XXV

Sri Ramakrishna in the Company of Devotees at Shyampukur

Chapter I

The Doctor and M. – what is the essence?

Thursday, 29 October, 1885, the sixth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Aswin. It is 10:00 a.m. Thakur is ill, so he is living in the Shyampukur neighbourhood of Calcutta. He is under the treatment of a doctor (Dr. Sarkar) who lives in Sankharitola. An attendant of Thakur is talking with the doctor at the latter's house. His duty is to visit the doctor daily to apprise him of Thakur's condition.

The Doctor — You know, Dr. Behari Bhaduri said that Goethe's spirit left the body, but he could still see it! That is very strange.

M. — The Paramahansa Deva says that we need not bother ourselves with such matters. We come to earth to develop love of God for His lotus feet. He says: Somebody went to an orchard to eat mangoes. He took a piece of paper and pencil and began to count and record how many trees, branches and leaves were in the orchard. An employee of the orchard saw him. He asked him what he was doing. The man said, 'I am counting how many trees,

branches and leaves there are. And I have come here to eat mangoes.’ The employee of the orchard said to him, ‘If you have come to eat mangoes, eat them. Why do you need to count how many leaves and branches there are?’

The Doctor — The Paramahansa has gone to the essence of it, it appears.

The Doctor talks of various matters concerning his homeopathic hospital, such as how many patients visit it daily. He also shows M. a list of the patients. He tells him that Dr. Salzar and many other doctors discouraged him in the beginning and wrote against him in monthly magazines.

The Doctor and M. are now sitting in a carriage on the way to visit a number of the Doctor’s patients. His first visit is in Chorbagan, then Mathaghasha Lane and Pathuriaghata. After seeing all these patients, he will visit Sri Ramakrishna. The Doctor visits the Tagore’s of Pathuriaghata. He is delayed for some time there. On returning to the carriage, he again begins to talk.

The Doctor — I was talking with that gentleman about the Paramahansa. It was about Theosophy and Colonel Olcott. The Paramahansa is cross with this gentleman. Do you know why? This man thinks he knows everything.

M. — No, why should he be cross with him? But I did hear that they met once. The Paramahansa Deva talked about spiritual matters with him. Maybe he did say, ‘Yes, I know all this.’

The Doctor — This gentleman has donated thirty-two thousand, five-hundred rupees to the Science Association.

The carriage rolls on. It goes via Burrabazar.
The Doctor talks about the service being rendered to Sri Ramakrishna.

The Doctor — Are you thinking of sending him back to Dakshineswar?

M — No, that would be very inconvenient for the devotees. If he is in Calcutta, they can regularly visit him and look after him.

The Doctor — But it is very expensive here.

M. — That is no problem for the devotees. They want to serve him as best they can. One would have to bear the expenses there as well as here. The worry is that they wouldn't be able to nurse him if he goes back.

Chapter II

Sri Ramakrishna in the company of Dr. Sarkar, Bhaduri and others

Dr. Sarkar, Bhaduri, Dukari, the Younger Naren, M. and Shyam Basu

The Doctor and M. reach a two-storied building in Shyampukur. The building has two big rooms upstairs with verandahs facing the

front – one running east-west and other north-south. The Doctor finds Sri Ramakrishna sitting with a smile on his face in the first room. Doctor Bhaduri and many devotees are with him.

The Doctor feels his pulse and enquires about his painful condition. Gradually, they begin to talk about spiritual matters.

Bhaduri — You know what it's like? It's all like a dream!

The Doctor — Is it all a delusion? The question is, whose delusion is it, and why? Besides, if you know that it's all delusion, why do you talk about it? I can't believe that God is real and creation is unreal.

Soham and attitude of a servant – jnana and bhakti

Sri Ramakrishna — 'You are the Lord and I am Thy servant.' This is a very nice attitude. As long as you take your body to be real, you have the feeling of 'I' and 'You'. Then the attitude of a servant to the Lord is the right attitude. The perception that I am He is not right.

“And what's more? Whether you look at a room from one side or from the middle, it is all the same.”

Bhaduri (to the Doctor) — All the things I have said are in the Vedanta. One can know them only when one studies the scriptures.

The Doctor — But has he [Sri Ramakrishna]

become so learned after studying the scriptures? He says the same thing that's written in the scriptures. Can't one be wise without reading the scriptures?

Sri Ramakrishna — But brother, I have heard so much!

Doctor — Mere hearing can bring about many misunderstandings. It is not that you have only heard.

Now the topic of conversation changes.

'He is mad' – Thakur allows others to take dust of his feet

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — Perhaps you said, 'He [Thakur] is mad.' That is why these people (pointing at M. and others) don't want to go to you.

The Doctor (looking at M.) — What! I only talked about your [Thakur's] egotism. Why do you allow people to take the dust of your feet?

M. — People weep if they're not allowed to.

The Doctor — They should be made to understand that it is their mistake.

M. — But why? There is Narayana (God) in all created beings.

Doctor — I have no objection to that. You should take the dust of everybody's feet.

M. — There is greater manifestation of His power in some than in others. There is water everywhere, but there is more of it in ponds, streams and the sea. Can you show the same respect to a new graduate in science as you do to Faraday?

Doctor — I like that. But why do you call him God?

M. — Why do we greet each other with namaskar? Because there is Narayana in the hearts of all. You haven't experienced these things, and you haven't thought much about them.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — Certain objects have more light. I have already told you that the rays of the sun fall one way on the ground, another way on trees, and quite another way on glass. On a mirror there is more light. And then think about this: are there devotees here at the same level as Prahlada? The heart and soul of Prahlada were dedicated to God.

The Doctor remains silent, as do the others.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — See, you are attracted to this [me]. You said to me that you loved me.

Sri Ramakrishna and the worldly being – ‘You are greedy, fond of sense pleasures and proud’

The Doctor — I say this to you because you are a child of nature. People salute you by touching your

feet. I feel hurt by it. I say to myself: he is such a good man and they are spoiling him. Keshab Sen's followers used to do the same to him. Listen to what I say.

Sri Ramakrishna — Why should I listen to you? You are greedy, fond of sense pleasures, and proud.

Bhaduri (to the Doctor) — In other words, you are a *jiva*^[343]. The nature of an embodied being is this: to earn money, to desire name and fame, to be fond of sense enjoyments, and to be proud. All embodied beings behave this way.

The Doctor — If you say so, I'll just examine your throat and leave. What concern do I have with anything else? But when there is a discussion, I must argue properly.

They are all silent.

Involution and evolution – three kinds of devotees

After awhile, Thakur again talks with Bhaduri.

Sri Ramakrishna — You know, he [Dr. Sarkar] is following the path of involution by saying, 'Not this, not this.' He is discriminating in this way: the Lord is neither the embodied soul, nor the world. God is there even without His creation. When he [Dr. Sarkar] follows the path of evolution, he will accept everything.

“If you peel off the sheaths of a banana tree, one after the other, you reach its pith.

“The layers of sheath are different from the pith. Neither is the pith the sheath, nor the sheath the pith. At the end, the man sees that the sheath cannot exist without the pith and the pith cannot exist without the sheath. God has Himself become the twenty-four cosmic principles, He Himself has become man. (To the Doctor) There are three kinds of devotees: inferior, mediocre and superior. The inferior class of devotee says, ‘God is out there.’ He sees the Lord separate from His creation. The devotee of the mediocre class says, ‘The Lord is *antaryami*[\[344\]](#).’ He sees the Lord in the heart of all beings. The superior devotee sees that God Himself has become everything. That He alone has become the twenty-four cosmic principles. He sees that everything is filled with God, above and below.

“Please study the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata* and the *Vedanta*. Then you will understand all this.

“Doesn’t God exist within His creation?”

The Doctor — No, he doesn’t exist in a particular object. He exists everywhere. So he can’t be sought after.

The topic of conversation turns to something else. Sri Ramakrishna remains in an ecstatic mood. This can lead to the aggravation of his disease.

The Doctor (to Sri Ramakrishna) — You must control your bhava. I also experience deep bhava. I can dance longer than you.

The Younger Naren (laughing) — What will you do

if your bhava increases a little more?

Doctor — My controlling power will also increase with it.

Sri Ramakrishna and M. — You say so.

M. — Can you tell what one experiences in bhava?

After awhile, the topic revolves around money.

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor) — I have no desire for it [money], you already know that. Am I pretending? No, that is not the case.

The Doctor — Even I don't want it! I keep money in an unlocked box. As for you, of course, there is no question.

Sri Ramakrishna — Jadu Mallick is absent-minded. When he sits for a meal, he absent-mindedly eats anything that is placed before him, whether the food is cooked deliciously or is bad. Even when somebody tells him not to take some article of food because it doesn't taste good, he says, 'Does it really taste bad? Yes, you are right!'

Thakur is perhaps hinting that it is one thing to be absent-minded after contemplation on the Lord and quite another thing to be absent-minded after thinking of worldly things.

Glancing at the devotees and pointing at the Doctor, Sri Ramakrishna laughs and says,

“You see that when an article is *siddha* [\[345\]](#)

(boiled), it becomes soft. He [the Doctor] was so hard. Now he is softening a little inside.”

The Doctor — When an article is *siddha* (boiled), its exterior also softens. But in my case, that hasn't happened so far in this birth. (All laugh.)

The Doctor is ready to leave but he talks again to Thakur.

The Doctor — People take the dust of your feet. Can't you stop them?

Sri Ramakrishna — Can everybody realize Akhanda Sachchidananda (Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute)?

The Doctor — So you will not say what is right.

Sri Ramakrishna — Inclinations are different from man to man. And all men are not equally fit.

The Doctor — Then what are they?

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know what the difference in inclinations means? Some like to eat fish gravy, others fried fish, others pickled fish, yet others take fish cooked with rice. Then there is also the difference of competency. I say first learn to aim at the banana plant, then at the wick of a lamp, and then at a flying bird.

Vision of the Indivisible – vision of Dr. Sarkar and Hariballab

It is evening. Thakur is absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord. He is so very ill, but it seems his illness has been put aside. Three or four of his intimate disciples seated close by look at him intently. Thakur remains in this state for quite some time.

Now Thakur returns to the normal plane. Mani is seated close to him. Thakur says to him privately, “See, the mind merged into the Indivisible Brahman – and I saw so many things! I saw the Doctor. He will succeed spiritually, but after some time. He will not need much more instruction. And I saw another person. It came to my mind that I should attract him, too. I shall tell you about him later.”

Various instructions to householders

Shyam Basu, Dr. Dukari, and one or two other devotees have arrived. Thakur is now talking to them.

Shyam Basu — Oh, what a wonderful thing you told us the other day!

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — What was that?

Shyam Basu — About what remains when one goes beyond *jnana* (knowledge) and *ajnana* (ignorance).

Sri Ramakrishna (smilingly) — Vijnana! The knowledge of many things is ignorance. Jnana consists of knowing that the Lord dwells in all beings. Knowing the Lord intimately is vijnana. Talking with the Lord, knowing Him as your near

and dear one, is called vijnana.

‘There is the element of fire in wood, and fire is the essence. Knowing this is jnana. Burning this fire-wood, cooking rice over it, eating it, and then becoming strong is vijnana.’

Shyam Basu (smiling) — And you said something about the thorn.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Yes, when a thorn pricks your foot, you look for another thorn to take it out. With the latter thorn you take out the former one and then throw both of them away. In the same way, to take out the thorn of ajnana, you have to acquire the thorn of jnana. When ignorance is dispelled, you throw away both knowledge and ignorance.

“Then comes vijnana.”

Thakur is pleased with Shyam Basu. Shyam Basu is quite an elderly person and is now keen to meditate on the Lord for some days. Hearing of the Paramahansa Deva [meaning Sri Ramakrishna], he has come to see him. He had seen him once before.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Shyam Basu) — Give up worldly matters completely. Talk of nothing else but God. When you come across worldly people, leave quietly. You have lived a worldly life for so long. You have seen that it is all hollow within, that the Lord is the only substance. Everything else is non-substance. The Lord is the only Reality, all else is ephemeral. What is this worldly life? It is like the

fruit of the hog-plum tree. You feel like eating it, but what substance has it inside? If you eat kernel and rind, it gives you indigestion.

Shyam Basu — True, sir. What you say is indeed true.

Sri Ramakrishna — You have engaged in worldly matters for so long. If you give your mind to this confusion any more, you will not be able to contemplate the Lord. Passing some days in solitude is essential. The mind will not settle down unless you live in solitude. You should arrange for a place of meditation a little away from your home.

Shyam Basu remains silent for awhile. Perhaps he is reflecting on something.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — And see, you have lost all your teeth, so why celebrate Durga Puja now? (All laugh.) Someone asked, ‘Why don’t you celebrate the Durga Puja now?’ The other fellow replied, ‘Because now I have no teeth. I have lost the strength to chew goat meat.’

Shyam Basu — What sweet words!

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — In worldly life sugar and sand are mixed together. Like an ant, you must leave the sand and sift out the sugar. Only the adept can sift the sugar out. Arrange for a solitary place to contemplate Him – a place for meditation. Do please arrange it. I shall visit you there once.

Everybody remains silent for awhile.

Shyam Basu — Sir, is there birth after death? What will happen at the end of this life?

Sri Ramakrishna — Ask the Lord about it and call on Him sincerely. He will tell you. He will certainly make you understand. If you talk to Jadu Mallick, he himself will tell you how many houses, how much money, and how many company shares he possesses. It's not right to try to know all this beforehand. First attain the Lord. He will make you understand what you want to know.

Shyam Babu — Sir, how many misdeeds a man does while leading a worldly life! How many sins he commits! Can this man attain the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna — If a man practices spiritual disciplines before quitting his body, if he casts off his body while calling upon the Lord, while practicing spiritual disciplines, sins can never touch him. The elephant's nature is to smear itself again with dust after being bathed, but if the mahut pushes it inside its stable just after washing it, the elephant cannot soil itself.

Thakur is suffering enormous pain! The devotees are amazed how he, the compassionate one, the sea of motiveless grace, grieved at the sufferings of mankind, night and day thinks of the welfare of humanity. He is encouraging the devotee, he grants him fearlessness, by telling him, "If one quits one's body while calling upon the Lord, one is never touched by sins."

[\[343\]](#) An embodied soul

[\[344\]](#) Inner Controller

[\[345\]](#) Siddha also means to become perfect

Section XXVI

Sri Ramakrishna in Cossipore Garden House with Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna in Cossipore garden house – Girish and M.

Moonlight bathes the Cossipore garden house, its garden paths and trees. On the eastern side of the house is a ghat^[346] of the reservoir. To the west of the reservoir is a two-storied house. From the ghat's landing one can see light coming from a window of a second story room. One can see Sri Ramakrishna illuminated in it, sitting on his bed in the middle of the room. One or two devotees sit close to him, or go from this room to another. Thakur is ill and has been brought to the garden house for treatment. His devotees have gathered to nurse him. From the ghat, one also sees three lights of the lower story of the building. One light emanates from the southern room where the devotees stay. Another comes from the middle room, which is Holy Mother's. She has also come to nurse Thakur. The third light comes from the kitchen, which is on the northern side of the house. From the southeastern corner of this two-storied house, a path leads east down the middle of the garden to the ghat of the reservoir. It is bordered, particularly on the south, by numerous fruit and flowering trees.

In the moonlight Girish, M., Latu and another couple of devotees can be seen seated on the landing steps of the reservoir. They are talking about Thakur. It is Friday, 16 April, 1886, the fourth day of Vaishakh, 1293 (B.Y.), the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra.

After awhile, Girish and M. stroll the garden path and talk.

M. — What a beautiful moonlit night! This phenomenon has been going on for millions of years.

Girish — How do you know?

M. — There is uniformity in nature and its ways don't change. Western scientists see new planets with the help of a telescope. They have seen mountains on the moon.

Girish — It's hard to understand. I don't believe it.

M. — Why not? One can see correctly with the help of a telescope.

Girish — How do I know that they have seen it correctly? Perhaps they see it this way because of the light which passes through something that may be there between the earth and the moon.

The young devotees are always at the garden house to serve Thakur. Narendra, Rakhal, Niranjan, Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Kali, Jogin, Latu and other devotees are living there. Those of the devotees who are family men come

every day and sometimes stay at night. Other devotees come off and on. Today Narendra, Kali and Tarak have gone to the garden of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. Narendra will meditate there under the Panchavati tree and carry out spiritual practices. He is accompanied by one or two brother disciples.

Chapter II

Thakur in company of Girish and other devotees – his affection for devotees

Girish, Latu, M., Baburam, Niranjana and Rakhal

Girish, Latu and M. go upstairs and find Thakur sitting on his bed. Sashi and one or two other devotees are there to nurse him. Baburam, Niranjana and Rakhal join them one after the other.

It is a big room. Medicines and articles of daily use have been placed close to Thakur. The door to the room at the top of the stairs faces north. In front of this door, there is also a southern door in the room by which one goes to a small roof terrace. Standing on the terrace one sees the trees, the bushes and flowers, the moonlight, and the not-very-distant main road.

The devotees have to stay awake at night. They do so in turns. After hanging a mosquito net and putting Thakur to sleep, those who are to spend the night in the room sit or lie down on a mat spread toward the eastern edge of the room. Thakur often cannot sleep because of his suffering, so those who nurse him have to spend hours of the night sitting up.

Today Thakur is a little better. The devotees enter and offer him obeisance by prostrating on the floor. Then they take their seats in front of him.

Thakur asks M. to bring the light closer. He talks to Girish affectionately.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish) — Are you keeping well? (To Latu) Give him a smoke and fetch a betel leaf for him.

After some time, he says, “Bring some refreshments for him.”

Latu — I have given him a betel leaf. I am going to the shop to fetch snacks.

Thakur is sitting up. A devotee had brought many garlands of flowers to offer him. He had put them around Thakur’s neck one by one. Thakur has Lord Hari within his heart, so it is He who is being worshipped. The devotees look at him with wonder. Thakur takes two garlands from his neck and gives them to Girish.

Every now and then he asks, “Have the refreshments been brought?”

Mani is fanning Thakur. Kept close to him is a sandalwood fan which had been offered to him by a devotee. Thakur has given that fan to Mani and it is with it that Mani is fanning him. Thakur takes another two garlands from his neck and gives them to Mani while he is fanning.

Latu talks to Thakur about a devotee. A child

of this devotee, seven or eight years old, had died about a year and a half ago. A number of times the boy had seen Thakur joyfully singing devotional songs with his devotees.

Latu (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Last night, he [M.] wept bitterly when he saw the boy's book [\[347\]](#). The mother has gone almost insane at the loss of her son. She thrashes her children and knocks them down. She quarrels with her husband because he sometimes stays here.

Hearing about this sorrowful incident, Sri Ramakrishna is worried, but he doesn't speak.

Girish — Arjuna, who received the instructions of the *Gita*, fainted when he heard of Abhimanyu's loss. It is no wonder he is so distressed at the loss of his son.

How to attain the Lord in worldly life?

Refreshments have been brought for Girish: hot kichuris [\[348\]](#), luchis [\[349\]](#) and sweets from Fagu's shop in Baranagore. Thakur asks for refreshments to be placed in front of him and thus make them prasad (a holy offering). Then he gives the food to Girish with his own hands, saying, "Nice kichuris, these."

Girish is sitting in front of Thakur. He is to be served water from an earthen pot at the southeastern corner of Thakur's bed. It is summer, the month of Vaishakh. Thakur says, "Do have some nice cool water there."

Thakur is very ill. He hasn't even the strength

to stand up.

What do the devotees see? Struck with wonder, they watch Thakur, who has no cloth around his waist – he is naked as a child – moving from his bed. He himself wants to give Girish water. The devotees stop breathing – that Thakur himself would pour water into Girish’s glass! Taking a little water from the glass in his hand, he wants to make sure that it is cool. He finds that it is not sufficiently cold. But, thinking that better water is not available, he gives the same water rather unwillingly to Girish.

Girish is eating, the devotees are seated around him. Mani is fanning Thakur.

Girish (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Deben Babu has decided to renounce the world.

Thakur cannot always speak. He finds it painful. Touching his lower lip with his finger, he indicates as if to ask, “How will his family [wife and children] manage? How will they live and eat?”

Girish — I don’t know what they intend to do.

Everybody is silent, but Girish continues talking as he eats the refreshments.

Girish — Well sir, which way is more difficult: to renounce the world painfully, or to call upon Him while living in the household?

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Don’t you know what the *Gita* says? One truly attains the Lord if one

attends to worldly work in a detached spirit, if one lives the worldly life after knowing everything to be illusory.

“People who renounce the world painfully belong to an inferior class.

“Do you know what a householder jnani is like? It is as if he is in a glass house from where he can see inside as well as outside.”

Again everybody is silent.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — The kichuri is hot and it is very nice indeed.

M. (to Girish) — It is from Fagu’s shop. He is famous for it.

Sri Ramakrishna — Famous!

Girish (still eating, smiling) — Nice kichuri it is!

Sri Ramakrishna — Then only take the kichuri and don’t eat the luchi. (To M.) But kichuri is a rajasic food.

Girish begins to talk about other things while he is still eating.

Difference between the mind of a worldly man and a genuine renouncer

Girish (to Sri Ramakrishna) — Well sir, at times the mind rises so high – and then it falls so suddenly! Why is this?

Sri Ramakrishna — This does happen when one leads a worldly life. The mind is first up, then down. First you feel so strong – and then so weak. You see, it is because one has to live amidst ‘lust and greed’. In worldly life the devotee contemplates the Lord and repeats His name – but then he gives his mind to ‘lust and greed’. He is like a housefly. Sometimes it sits on sandesh, at other times on a festering wound – and even on excreta.

“It is different with *tyagis* (those who have renounced the world). Taking their mind from ‘lust and greed,’ they give it to the Lord and only sip the sweetness of Hari’s name. A genuine man of renunciation doesn’t like anything but the Lord. When he hears worldly talk, he gets up and leaves. He only listens to Godly matters. The genuine renouncer talks of nothing but the Lord.

“The bee sits only on flowers, for it drinks honey. It likes no other thing.”

Girish goes to the smaller terrace to wash his hands.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — God’s grace is essential. Only with God’s grace can one fix one’s mind fully on Him. He has eaten a lot of kichuris. Please go and tell him not to eat anything else today.

Chapter III

Avatar is beyond the injunctions of the *Vedas* – ritual worship and inebriation in love of God

Girish comes back to the room and sits in front of Thakur. He is chewing a betel leaf.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish) — Rakhal and others know very well what is right and what is wrong, what is real and what is unreal. If they lead a family life, they do so intentionally. Rakhal has a wife and a son has been born to him too, but he has understood that all this is illusory and perishable. Rakhal and others will not get attached to the world.

“They are like mud fish. It lives in mud but its body is not stained by the mud.”

Girish — Sir, I do not understand all this. If you want, you can make everybody unattached and pure. You can transform everyone, whether one is worldly or a man of renunciation. I say that when the Malaya breeze blows, it transforms ordinary wood into sandalwood.

Sri Ramakrishna — Unless there is substance inside, it cannot turn into sandalwood. The cotton tree and a few others do not turn into sandalwood.

Girish — I never heard of that.

Sri Ramakrishna — This is the law.

Girish — Nothing in you is according to law!

The devotees sit silent as they listen to him. At times the fan in M.'s hand ceases to move.

Sri Ramakrishna — Yes, it is possible. When the river of bhakti overflows, there is pole deep water in the fields.

“When a man is inebriated with God’s love, he does not accept injunctions of the *Vedas*. He picks *durva* grass and doesn’t pick it up from the earth. He picks whatever comes in his hands. While gathering tulsi leaves, he wantonly breaks its branches! Ah, what states of mind I have passed through!

(To M.) “Nothing more is needed after one has attained bhakti!”

M— True, sir.

Sita and Radha – different attitudes toward God in incarnations of Rama and Krishna

Sri Ramakrishna — One should adopt one particular attitude toward God. God in His incarnation as Rama demonstrated the attitudes of *shanta*^[350], *dasya*^[351], *vatsalya*^[352] and *sakhya*^[353]. In the incarnation as Krishna, you have all these attitudes, as well as *madhura*^[354].

“Radha cherished the *madhura* bhava toward Krishna, a romantic attitude. Sita had a pure and chaste attitude, without the least trace of an illicit nature.

“It is all God’s lila (divine sport), with different attitudes at different times.”

An insane woman used to accompany Vijay to the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. She would sing songs on Sri Krishna and Brahman for

Thakur. Everyone called her Pagli [meaning crazy woman]. Now she occasionally visits the Cossipore garden house and creates trouble by wishing to meet Thakur. The devotees have to be very careful about her.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish and other devotees) — Pagli cherishes the *madhura* bhava toward me. Once she went to Dakshineswar and suddenly started weeping. I asked her why she was crying. She replied, ‘I have a headache.’ (All laugh.)

“She went there again another day. I had just sat down to eat. She blurted out, ‘Won’t you be kind to me?’ I went on eating in a light mood. She then said, ‘Why do you push me out of your mind?’ I asked, ‘What is your bhava?’ She replied, ‘*Madhura* bhava.’ I said, ‘I look upon all women as manifestations of the Divine Mother. All women are my mothers.’ She then said, ‘I don’t know all that.’ Then I called out to Ramlal and said, ‘Oh, Ramlal! Just listen to what she is saying – about my pushing her out of my mind.’ She still has that attitude.”

Girish — Blessed is Pagli! Even if she goes mad, or receives a beating from the devotees, she thinks of you twenty-four hours a day! She may cherish any bhava toward you, but she can never come to grief!

“Sir, what can I say! Oh, what I was and what I have become by meditating on you! I was so indolent. Now that laziness has turned into resignation at the feet of the Lord. I used to be a sinner, now I have become humble. What else can I say!”

The devotees remain silent. Rakhali feels sorrow as he mentions about Pagli. He says, “I am sorry. She creates a row and suffers so much for it.”

Niranjan (to Rakhali) — You have a wife. That’s why you feel that way for her. As for us, we could kill her.

Rakhali (irritated) — How brave of you! And you talk like this before him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna]!

Instructions to Girish – attachment for money – its right use – earnings of a physician

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish) — ‘Lust and greed’ constitute worldly life. Many people think of money as though it were the blood in the body! But if you try too hard for it, you can perhaps one day lose it altogether.

“In my native village they make mud ridges around the fields. You know what these ridges are. Some make them with great care on all four sides of the field. Such ridges can be washed away by an overflow of rain water. But those who keep one end of the enclosure open can control flooding by building up that side with a mixture of sod [mud and grass], so that the water seeps out slowly. This allows a deposit of rich soil, which in turn yields a big paddy!”

Right use of money

“They who make the right use of money, that is,

spend it on the service of the deities, of sadhus and devotees, and give it away in charity, succeed. Only they really achieve their goal.

“I cannot eat food brought by a physician or a Kaviraj. People who make money on other people’s suffering earn not money, but blood and puss!”

Saying this, Thakur names two physicians.

Girish — Rajendra Dutta has a very open hand and a charitable disposition. He does not accept a penny from anybody. He engages himself in charity and meditation.

[346] Steps and landing of a reservoir or river, made of brick

[347] It was M.’s son who had died

[348] Kind of pancake made of flour and pulses

[349] Fried bread

[350] Attitude of peace and serenity as practiced by rishis of yore

[351] Attitude of a servant toward his master

[352] Attitude of a mother toward her child

[353] Attitude of friendship

[354] Attitude of a lover

Section XXVII

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees in Cossipore Garden House

Chapter I

**Rakhal, Sashi, M., Narendra, Bhavanath, Surendra,
Rajendra and Dr. Sarkar**

Cossipore garden. Rakhal, Sashi and M. are walking on the garden path in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna is ill. He has come to the garden house for treatment. He is in a second story room. The devotees nurse him there. It is Thursday, 22 April, 1886, the day before Good Friday.

M. — He is a like child – beyond the three gunas [\[355\]](#).

Sashi and Rakhal — Thakur has said that this is his natural state.

Rakhal — It is as though he were in a tower from where he can see everything and know everything, but others can't go there.

M. — He said, 'In this state one constantly has the Lord's vision.' One's mind in this state is like dry wood which catches fire immediately because there is no sap of worldliness.

Sashi — He said to Charu that there are many kinds of intelligence. The intelligence that leads to Bhagavan is the right intelligence. The intelligence that enables one to make money, build a house, or become a Deputy [Magistrate] or an attorney is *chirebeja* intelligence. It is unsubstantial, like thin and watery curd which only soaks roasted rice in watery curd. It is not superior, well-set thick curd. The intelligence that leads to the attainment of Bhagavan is superior, like well-set and thick curd.

M. — Ah, how wonderful!

Sashi — Kali Tapasvi^[356] asked Thakur, ‘What is bliss like? The Bhils^[357] also have this joy. Though uncivilized, they sing and dance joyfully.’

Rakhal — He said, ‘What! Is the bliss of Brahman the same as sense pleasure? Ordinary beings lead lives of worldly pleasure. But unless one is completely rid of the attachment to the senses, one cannot attain the bliss of Brahman. On the one hand, you have the joy of money, the joy of the senses, and on the other, there is the bliss of God-realization. Can these two ever be the same? The rishis enjoyed the bliss of Brahman.’

M. — Kali nowadays meditates on the Buddha. So he talks of that which is beyond all joy.

Rakhal — The topic of Buddha was also mentioned to Thakur. He said, ‘Buddha was an avatar. What comparison can be made with him? Nothing but

greatness can come out of the great.’ Kali replied, ‘But it is His power that manifests in everything. Both the bliss of Brahman and worldly pleasures are manifestations of His power.’

M. — And what did he [Thakur] say?

Rakhal — He said, ‘What are you saying? Is the power to beget a child the same as the power through which one attains the Lord?’

Sri Ramakrishna in company of devotees – ‘lust and greed’ are great obstacles

Thakur is seated with the devotees in the hall of the second story of the garden house. His condition is getting worse. Dr. Mahendra Sarkar and Dr. Rajendra Dutta have come to examine him and try to help him with their treatments. Narendra, Rakhal, Sashi, Surendra, M., Bhavanath and many other devotees are in the room.

The garden house belongs to the gentlemen of Pikepara. Its rent is sixty to sixty-five rupees. The younger men have been living in the garden house and nursing Thakur night and day. The householder devotees come there regularly and also sometimes stay at night. They are also keen to serve him both day and night but they have duties – they have to attend to one work or another. They cannot stay there all the time to nurse him. Each one contributes as much as he can for the expenses of the garden house, but most of the expenses are borne by Surendra. Actually, the rental agreement of the garden house has been drawn in his name. A brahmin cook and a

maidservant have been engaged permanently.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Dr. Sarkar and others) —
There are a lot of expenses here.

The Doctor (pointing toward the devotees) — They are all prepared to pay. They don't have a problem bearing the expenses.

(To Sri Ramakrishna) — Now see, 'gold' is essential.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — Why don't you reply to him?

Thakur has asked Narendra to answer, but Narendra remains silent. The Doctor continues to speak.

Doctor — You need 'gold'. And 'woman' is also needed.

Dr. Rajendra — His wife cooks for him.

Dr. Sarkar (to Thakur) — Don't you see?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — It's big trouble!

Dr. Sarkar — If there are no troubles, everybody can be a *paramahansa*.

Sri Ramakrishna — When a woman touches my body, I feel hurt. The spot she touches twinges, as if a horned fish has stung it.

Doctor — I can believe it! But can one do without it?

Sri Ramakrishna — When I touch money, my hand twists and my breathing stops. There is no harm in using money to lead a spiritual life, to serve deities, and to spend on sadhus and devotees.

“But one forgets the Lord if one leads a worldly life of maya in the company of a woman. A woman is none other than a form of the maya of the Mother of the Universe. When you have understood this correctly, you no longer wish to lead a worldly life. It is only when you have realized that all women are forms of the Mother that you can lead a spiritual life in the world. And without God-realization, you cannot know what a woman is.”

Thakur has been feeling a little better under homeopathic treatment.

Dr. Rajendra — When you get well, you must practice medicine as a homeopath. Otherwise, what is the use of your getting well? (All laugh.)

Narendra — Nothing like leather! (He means to say that for a cobbler there is nothing in the world as good as leather.) (All laugh.)

The doctors leave after some time.

Chapter II

Why has Sri Ramakrishna renounced ‘lust and

gold’?

Thakur is talking with M. about his state of mind with regard to women.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — They [the doctors] say that I can’t get along without ‘lust and gold’. They don’t understand my state of mind.

“As soon as my hand touches the body of a girl, it twists and gives a trembling sensation.

“If I sit close to them and talk amicably, some sort of veil appears between us which is impossible to cross.

“If I am alone and a young woman comes in, I immediately fall into the state of a child and regard her as mother.”

M., seated close to Thakur’s bed, listens to all his words with wonder. A little distance from the bed, Narendra is talking with Bhavanath. Bhavanath is married; he is looking for a job. He cannot come to the Cossipore garden house to see Thakur often. Sri Ramakrishna worries about his having entered family life. Bhavanath must be twenty-three or twenty-four years old.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — Give him enough courage.

Narendra and Bhavanath glance at Thakur and smile softly. Thakur points at Bhavanath and says again, “Be a brave man! Don’t be deceived by her crying behind the veil, weeping as she blows her nose!” (Narendra, Bhavanath and M. laugh.)

“Keep your mind fixed on Bhagavan. He is a brave man indeed who, while living with his wife, does not have physical relations with her. Talk only about spiritual matters with your wife.”

After awhile, Thakur again beckons Bhavanath and says, “Take your meal here today.”

Bhavanath — As you please. Don’t worry about me. I am quite all right.

Surendra comes in and sits down. It is the month of Vaishakh. The devotees bring garlands of flowers to Thakur every day in the evening. He wears them all around his neck, one on top of the other. Surendra is seated and is silent. Thakur is pleased with him and gives him a two-stranded garland. Surendra bows to Thakur, brings it to touch his forehead, and puts it around his neck.

Everyone gazes at Thakur without speaking a word. Surendra then salutes Thakur and rises to take his leave. When going out, he calls to Bhavanath, “Please hang the straw curtain. It’s very hot.” Surendra has brought a curtain of straw because of the heat in Thakur’s hall on the second level during the day.

Chapter III

Sri Ramakrishna in the Cossipore garden with Hirananda and other devotees

**Thakur instructs: ‘All that exists is none but You’ –
character of Narendra and Hirananda**

Cossipore garden house. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting in the hall on the upper floor. Hirananda, M. and one or two other devotees are seated in front of him. Hirananda had come with two friends. He is from Sindh^[358], where he has been living since finishing college in Calcutta. Coming to know that Sri Ramakrishna was ill, he has come to see him. The Sindh province is about twenty-two hundred miles from Calcutta. Thakur has been very anxious to see Hirananda.

Pointing to Hirananda, Thakur perhaps means to tell M. with signs that the young man is indeed very good.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you know him?

M. — Yes sir.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Hirananda and M.) — Both of you, please talk. Let me hear you.

Seeing that M. is silent, he says to him, “Is Narendra here? Please call him in.”

Narendra comes upstairs and sits down near Thakur.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra and Hirananda) — Both of you, do talk for awhile.

Hirananda is silent but, after some hesitation, he begins to talk.

Hirananda (to Narendra) — Well, why does a devotee suffer?

Hirananda's words are honey sweet. Whoever has heard him has realized that his heart is full of love.

Narendra — The scheme of the universe is devilish! I could have created a better world!

Hirananda — Can you appreciate happiness if there is no sorrow?

Narendra — I am not giving a scheme for the universe. It is simply my opinion of the present scheme.

“But nothing remains to be done if you believe that our only refuge is in pantheism^[359]. Everything is God. Putting one's faith in this resolves everything. God alone is the doer.”

Hirananda — It is so easy to say all this.

Narendra chants the six stanzas on Nirvana.

Om, I am not the mind, the intellect, the ego, or the *chitta*^[NN1]^[360]. Nor am I 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^[361], nor *pancha vayu* (the five vital airs), nor the seven elements, nor *pancha kosha*^[362] (the five sheaths). Nor speech, nor hands, nor feet, nor genital organ, nor anus. I am pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the all-good.

I have neither attachment, nor antipathy.
Neither have I greed nor infatuation. I have
neither vanity nor pride. 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 or vice, neither happiness or
sorrow. I am not mantra, nor place of
pilgrimage, not *Veda* or *yajna*. I am not food or
an edible article, neither am I the eater. I am
pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva,
the all-good.

Neither have I death, nor doubt, nor distinction
of caste. I have neither father nor mother. I have
no birth. I have neither friend nor relation,
neither master nor disciple. I am pure
Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the
all-good.

I am changeless, formless, and present in all the
senses as the all-pervading power. I am beyond
a companion, beyond salvation. I am pure
Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva, the
all-good.

Sri Ramakrishna says to Hirananda by a sign to
reply.

Hirananda — It is the same room, whether you see
it from a corner or by standing in the middle. One
experiences the same God, whether one says, ‘Oh
God, I am your servant!’ or, ‘I am He, Soham!’
You can enter a room through one door – and you
can enter it through other doors as well.

Everyone is silent. Hirananda says to

Narendra, “Please sing a song.”

Narendra hums the tune and then sings the five stanzas of *kaupin*[\[363\]](#).

He who is always engaged in the words of Vedanta, he who is content with the grains of holy begging, he who roams about with a griefless conscience; such a person, clad in a loincloth, is the only blessed one.

He who sits under the shelter of a tree, he who uses his palms as a plate, and he who considers wealth to be as insignificant as the beggar’s patched wrapper; such a person, clad in a loincloth, is the only blessed one.

He who is content with inner bliss, he who controls the cravings of his senses, he who delights night and day in the bliss of Brahman; such a person, clad in a loincloth, is the only blessed one.

As soon as Thakur hears, “He who delights night and day in the bliss of Brahman,” he exclaims in a whisper, “Ah!” and makes a sign as if to say, “This, indeed, is a mark of a yogi.”

Narendra completes the five stanzas of *kaupin*:

He who witnesses the moods of the body and the rest, he who witnesses his own real Self as the Atman, he who does not care to remember the within, the middle or the without; such a person, clad in a loincloth, is the only blessed one.

He who chants the holy word Om, who feels that he himself is Brahman, he who lives on alms and wanders everywhere; such a person, clad in a loincloth, is the only blessed one.

Narendra sings again –

Remember Him who is full of bliss, the support
of this universe and the Formless one.

He is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind
and the Speech of speech.

He who is beyond speech, Life of life, Him you
must adore.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Narendra) — And that one,
'All that exists is none but You.'

Narendra sings this song –

We have given our hearts to You. All that exists
is none but You.

We have found You alone as our own. You are
all that exists.

You are the abode, the assurance of our hearts.
Is there a heart where You do not dwell?

You are in every heart. You are all that exists.

Whether sages or humans, whether Hindus or
Muslims, you have created them all. All that
exists is none but You.

In Kaaba or temple, You are worshipped
everywhere. All bow to You. All that exists is
only You.

From heaven to earth and from earth to high
heaven, wherever I cast my glance, I find You
there. You are all there is.

I thought and I pondered, I looked all around.
Nowhere did I find anybody like You. Jafar
then realized that You are all there is.

Hearing the words, “You are in every heart,” Thakur says by a sign that God exists in every heart, that He is *antaryami*^[364]. “Wherever I cast my glance, I find You. You are all there is.” Hearing this, Hirananda says to Narendra, “You are all. Now only You, You alone. Not me, but You.”

Narendra — Give me one and I will give you a million (by putting ‘0s’ (zeros) after the figure one). You are indeed I, I am indeed You, there is nothing else besides I^[365].

Saying this, Narendra recites some verses from Ashtavakra Samhita. Everybody present sits silently.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Hirananda, pointing to Narendra) — He seems to be walking with an unsheathed sword in his hand.

(To M., pointing at Hirananda) “What serenity! Like a king cobra with its hood down, seated quietly before a snake charmer.”

Chapter IV

Thakur worships himself – secret talk – present M. and Hirananda

Sri Ramakrishna is in an introspective mood. Hirananda and M. are sitting close to him. There is complete silence in the room. Thakur’s body is racked with terrible pain. Watching him, the hearts of the devotees are pierced. But he himself is seated with a smile

on his face, making everyone forget his suffering.

Devotees have brought flowers and garlands as their offerings. Narayana (God) dwells in Thakur's heart. The devotees are, as it were, worshipping Him. Thakur takes a flower and places it on his head, then on his throat, heart and navel – as if a child is playing with flowers.

When he is overtaken by a divine mood, he says that the *mahavayu*^[366] rises within him. He says that one experiences the Lord when the spiritual current rises. He now talks to M.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — I didn't notice the current ascend my body.

“Now I am in the mood of a child. That is why I am playing with the flowers this way. Do you know what I see? I feel as if this body is a frame made of splints of bamboo and covered with a piece of cloth. The frame moves. Somebody dwells within who makes it move.

“The inside is hollow, like the shell of a pumpkin when its pulp and seeds are scooped out. There are no passions like lust etc. inside my body. Within, it is all very clean and ...”

Thakur finds it painful to speak. He is very weak. M. anticipates what Thakur wants to say and speaks it for him, “You see Bhagavan within your body.”

Sri Ramakrishna — I see Him both within and without as Indivisible Sachchidananda. Indeed, it is

Sachchidananda who dwells both within, taking the cover [of the body] as its support, and without. This is what I perceive.

M. and Hirananda listen to this account of the vision of Brahman. After awhile, Thakur looks at them and speaks.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M. and Hirananda) — I feel that you are all my very own. No one appears to me as a stranger.

Sri Ramakrishna and state of yoga – vision of Indivisible Absolute

“I see that everyone is moving his head as if covered by a sheath [referring to their bodies].

“I see that when the mind unites with God, all physical pain is cast aside^[367].

“Now I see that the Indivisible Absolute is only covered with skin and this sore in the throat is outside it.”

Thakur is silent again, but after awhile he says, “Consciousness takes on the nature of matter and matter takes on the nature of Consciousness.” When the body is diseased, you begin to feel as if you, yourself, have taken ill.

Hirananda requests further explanation. M. says, “When the hand gets scalded by hot water, you say that your hand has been burned by water. But that is not the case. It is the heat that has scalded your hand.”

Hirananda (to Thakur) — Please tell us why the devotee suffers.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do you mean bodily?

Both of them wait for what Thakur will say.

Thakur says, “Do you understand?”

M. whispers to Hirananda.

M. — It is to teach mankind. Here is an illustration. Though he is suffering so much bodily, his mind is one-hundred percent united with the Lord.

Hirananda — Yes, this is like Christ at the time of his crucifixion. Even so, it is a mystery why he is suffering so much.

M. — As Thakur says: It is the will of the Divine Mother. She is sporting in this manner. ‘Wherein established he is not shaken even by the heaviest affliction.’ (Gita 6:22).

Both Hirananda and M. talk in whispers. Thakur again makes a sign asking what they are talking about. Hirananda does not understand what Thakur means. Thakur, therefore, again makes the sign to ask what he has to say.

Hirananda — He is saying that your illness is for the instruction of humanity.

Sri Ramakrishna — This is nothing more than his guess. (To M. and Hirananda) My state is changing.

I am asking myself not to say this to everyone: 'May you be illumined!' During the age of Kali, people are so sinful! I have to take the burden of their sins upon myself.

M. (to Hirananda) — He will not say it until the time is ripe. He will say it only to those whose time is ripe for enlightenment.

Chapter V

Worldliness^[368] and non-worldliness^[369]? He instructs Hirananda that non-worldliness alone is right

Hirananda is gently stroking Thakur's feet with his hand. M. is seated close by. Latu and one or two other devotees are going in and out of the room. Today is Friday, 23 April, 1886, Good Friday. The time is about 1 p.m. Hirananda has had his meal here today. Thakur has been very keen that Hirananda stay
s on.

Hirananda talks to Thakur as he strokes his feet. A smile plays on his face and his words are as sweet as before, as if he is consoling a child. Thakur is unwell. He is under the regular treatment of a physician.

Hirananda — Why do you worry so much? Have faith in the doctor and rest assured. You are just a child.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — How can one believe the doctor? He [Dr. Sarkar] said that I can't recover.

Hirananda — Then why worry so much? Let be what may.

M. (to Hirananda, aside) — He is not worrying about himself. It is for the good of the devotees that his body must be saved.

It is very hot, especially so as it is noon. A straw curtain has been hung. Hirananda rises and adjusts the position of the curtain. Thakur looks on.

Thakur (to Hirananda) — Do please send a pajama.

Thakur is reminding him to send a pajama because Hirananda has said that the pajamas worn in his region would be very comfortable for Thakur.

Hirananda has not eaten well. The rice was not well cooked. Hearing about it, Thakur is very sad and says repeatedly to Hirananda, “Would you like a snack?” Though he himself is suffering so much and cannot talk comfortably, he asks him again and again.

And then he asks Latu, “Did you eat the same rice?”

Thakur cannot keep his dhoti on his body. He remains almost naked like a child. Hirananda is accompanied by two Brahmo devotees so Thakur pulls the dhoti over his waist again and again.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Hirananda) — Do you people consider me uncivilized when my dhoti falls off?

Hirananda — This is not your concern. You are a child.

Sri Ramakrishna (pointing with his finger at Priyanath, a Brahma devotee) — He says otherwise.

Hirananda will take his leave to depart. After a stay of one or two days in Calcutta, Hirananda is preparing to return to his place of work in Sindh. He has worked as the editor of two newspapers, the Sindh Times and the Sindh Sudhar, for four years, since 1884. A native of Sindh, he completed his B.A. in 1883. He was in Calcutta for his education. While in Calcutta, he visited Keshab Sen regularly and talked with him. From time to time he used to visit Sri Ramakrishna and stay with him at the Kali Temple.

Hirananda is tested – worldliness or non-worldliness

Sri Ramakrishna (to Hirananda) — Suppose you don't go back?

Hirananda (smiling) — Oh no, there is nobody there to do my work! I have taken service there.

Sri Ramakrishna — What is your salary per month?

Hirananda (smiling) — There is not much money in these jobs.

Sri Ramakrishna — But how much?

Hirananda laughs but Thakur insists.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do stay on here.

Hirananda doesn't reply.

Sri Ramakrishna — What use is work?

Hirananda keeps silent.

After talking awhile longer, Hirananda prepares to leave.

Sri Ramakrishna — When will you return?

Hirananda — I will return home day after tomorrow, on Monday. I shall come to see you on Monday morning.

Chapter VI

M., Narendra, Sarat and others

M. is seated close to Thakur. Hirananda has just left.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — A very fine man, isn't he?

M. — Yes, sir. He has a sweet nature.

Sri Ramakrishna — He says that he lives about twenty-two hundred miles from here. He has come to see me from so very far away!

M. — Yes, sir. Unless one has real love, one doesn't do that.

Sri Ramakrishna — He wants very much to take me there.

M. — The journey is very tiring. The train takes four or five days.

Sri Ramakrishna — He has three university degrees!

M. — Yes, sir.

Thakur is rather tired. He wishes to rest now.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) — Please open the window blinds and spread the mat.

Since it is so very hot, Thakur has asked M. to open the window blinds. He has also asked him to spread a thin mat over the bedding.

M. is fanning him. Thakur dozes off.

Sri Ramakrishna (after a short sleep, to M.) — Did I sleep?

M. — Yes, for awhile.

Narendra, Sarat and M. are talking with each other. They are seated toward the east of the hall below.

Narendra — It is amazing that one learns so little,

even after studying for so many years! But people complain that they have not attained Bhagavan after practicing spiritual disciplines for just a few days! Is attaining Bhagavan so easy? (To Sarat) You have attained peace and so has Master Mahashay [M.], but I have attained nothing.

M. — You may then prepare the cattle feed and I will go to the palace. Or, I go to the palace and you may prepare the cattle feed. (They all laugh.)

Narendra (smiling) — He [the Paramahansa Deva] heard this story [\[370\]](#) and laughed when he heard it.

Chapter VII

Sri Ramakrishna in the assembly of Narendra and other devotees

It is dusk. A number of devotees assemble in the hall upstairs: Narendra, Sarat, Sashi, Latu, Nityagopal, Kedar, Ram, M., Suresh and others.

Nityagopal is first to arrive. As soon as he sees Thakur, he bows his head to touch his feet as a mark of adoration. Having taken a seat, Nityagopal says in a childlike manner, “Kedar Babu has arrived.”

Kedar has come to see Thakur after a long time. He had gone to Dhaka on official work. Hearing of Thakur’s illness, he has come to see him. As soon as Kedar enters, he sees Thakur greeting the devotees.

Kedar takes the dust of Thakur’s feet, brings it to touch his forehead and distributes it joyfully

among all the others. The devotees bow as they accept the dust.

He is going to give it to Sarat when the latter rises and takes the dust of Thakur's feet himself. M. smiles. Thakur also smiles as he looks at M. The devotees sit silent. They see Thakur in a divine mood. At times he exhales, as if to control his bhava. At last he says to Kedar by a sign, "You must hold a discussion with Girish Ghosh." Girish rubs his nose and ears [\[NN2\]](#) and says, "Sir, I rub my nose and ears. When I didn't know who you were, I used to argue with them. But now it is quite different." (Thakur smiles.)

Pointing his finger at Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna draws Kedar's attention to him and says, "He has renounced everything!" (To the devotees) Kedar once said to Narendra, "You may argue and reason now, but in the end you will roll on the ground chanting the name of Lord Hari." (To Narendra) "Take the dust of Kedar's feet."

Kedar (to Narendra) — Take the dust of his [Sri Ramakrishna's] feet. That will do.

Surendra is seated behind the devotees. Sri Ramakrishna smiles a little as he looks at him. He says to Kedar, "Oh, what a fine nature he has!" Kedar, understanding what Thakur means, moves toward Surendra and sits beside him.

Surendra is a somewhat proud man. Some of the devotees have been trying to collect donations from the less intimate devotees to meet the expenses of the garden house.

Surendra's pride is hurt at this. He bears most of the expenses of the garden house.

Surendra (to Kedar) — Can I sit near so many holy men? One of them [referring to Narendra] went to Bodh Gaya for a few days in the garb of a monk to meet great sadhus.

Sri Ramakrishna tries to pacify Surendra,
“Yes, yes. They are mere children. They can't understand what is good.”

Surendra (to Kedar) — Doesn't Gurudeva [referring to Sri Ramakrishna] know the inner feeling of all of us? He is not pleased with money, he is satisfied only with right feeling.

Thakur nods to indicate his agreement with Surendra. Hearing that Sri Ramakrishna only cares for right feeling, Kedar also expresses his happiness.

The devotees bring food and place it before Thakur. Thakur tastes it lightly with his tongue and asks for the prasad to be given to Surendra in the palm of his hand and then to others.

Surendra goes downstairs. The prasad will be distributed there.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Kedar) — Go downstairs and make him [Surendra] understand. Go immediately and ask them not to argue.

Mani is fanning Thakur. Thakur says, “Won't you eat prasad?” He sends Mani downstairs to take prasad.

It is nearing dusk. Girish and M. stroll on the bank of the reservoir.

Girish — Are you writing something about Thakur?

M. — Who told you?

Girish — I heard it. Will you let me read it?

M. — No, I won't give it to anybody until I have understood it myself. I have written it for myself, not for others.

Girish — What do you mean?

M. — You may have it after my death.

**Thakur is ocean of motiveless grace – Amrita, a
Brahmo devotee**

A light is lit in Thakur's room after dusk. Amrita Basu, a Brahmo devotee, has come to meet him. Thakur is very eager to see him. M. and a few devotees are there. There is a garland of bel^[371] and jasmine flowers placed over a plantain leaf in front of Thakur. It is silence in the room, as though a great yogi is sitting absorbed in communion with God. Thakur lifts the garland again and again, as if he wants to wear it.

Amrita (affectionately) — Shall I put it around your neck?

Thakur now has the garland around his neck. He has a long conversation with Amrita.

Amrita is about to leave.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do come again.

Amrita — Sir, I wish very much to visit you, but I have to come a long distance. I can't make it often.

Sri Ramakrishna — Do come. The carriage fare can be given from here.

Everybody is speechless to see Thakur's motiveless grace for Amrita.

Sri Ramakrishna and a devotee's wife and son

The next day, Saturday, 24 April. A devotee has arrived with his wife and seven-year-old son. A year ago he had lost an eight-year-old child. His wife had almost gone insane from grief, so Sri Ramakrishna had asked her to visit him now and then.

In the evening the Holy Mother comes to the hall upstairs with Thakur's dinner. The devotee's wife has accompanied her with a light.

While eating his dinner, Thakur enquires about her family affairs and asks her to come to the garden house and stay with the Holy Mother for a few days. This will alleviate her sorrow, he says. She also has an infant daughter, whom the Holy Mother later called Manmayi. Thakur asks her by a sign to bring the infant with her.

After dinner, the devotee's wife cleans the place where Thakur has eaten. After the Holy Mother goes downstairs, she speaks a few words with him, then salutes him and follows

the Holy Mother. It is about 9:00 p.m. Thakur is seated in the same room with the devotee. He has a garland around his neck. Mani is fanning him.

Thakur takes the garland off and holds it in his hand. He mutters a few words to himself and joyfully gives the garland to Mani.

Thakur has asked the sorrow-stricken devotee's wife [M.'s wife] to come and stay for a few days with the Holy Mother in the garden house. Mani has heard him say this.

[355] According to Samkhya philosophy, the three qualities of Prakriti (Nature), consisting of rajas, tamas and sattva

[356] Later Swami Abhedananda

[357] A savage tribe of India

[358] Now a province in Pakistan

[359] The doctrine that the universe, taken or conceived of as a whole, is God; or that all things are simply modes or manifestations of God

[360] Mind-stuff; it is the instrument that takes hold of some thought waves, absorbs them and sends them out as thoughts.

[361] The vital breath

[362] Annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijnanamaya kosha and anandamaya kosha.

[363] The loin cloth of a sannyasin

[364] Inner controller

[365] The microcosm is a perfect reflection of the macrocosm; the same Spirit animates both you and me.

[366] Spiritual current

[367] And having gained which, he thinks that there is no greater gain than that, wherein established he is not shaken by the heaviest affliction. Gita 6:22

[368] Pravritti

[369] Nivritti

[370] This story is taken from the life of Prahlada. Prahlada's father had invited two gurus, Shanda and Amarka, to come see him. The king wished to ask them why they taught Prahlada to repeat the name of Hari. The two gurus were afraid of going in the presence of the king. It is then that Shanda had said these words to Amarka, "I prepare the feed of cattle and you go to the palace, or you go to the palace and I prepare the feed of cattle."

[371] A tree whose flowers are sacred to Shiva

APPENDIX

Sri Ramakrishna in the Hearts of Devotees

Chapter I

Sri Ramakrishna's first monastery – spiritual disciplines and deep dispassion of Narendra and others

It is 7 May, 1887, the full moon day of the month of Vaishakh, Saturday afternoon.

Narendra and M. are talking, seated on a bedstead on the ground floor of a house in Guruprasad Chaudhury Lane in Calcutta.

This room is Mani's study. These days he is reading the *Merchant of Venice*, *Comus*, and *Blackies' Self-culture*. He is preparing a lesson to teach students in the school.

Many months ago Sri Ramakrishna left behind devotees drowning in the shoreless sea of the world; he returned home. The affectionate ties that had bound the married and unmarried devotees together during their months of service to Sri Ramakrishna could not, however, be snapped. Though the sudden disappearance of the pilot of the boat had left its passengers in fear, they now constitute but one soul, looking on one another as their own. They cannot survive without mutual company. They find conversation with other people distasteful; they only like to talk of him. They all wonder whether or not they will ever be able to see him again. He has said: If you call on God with

a yearning heart, He will hear your sincere cry and reveal Himself. He has assured them that God is bound to hear the sincere cry of their hearts. Whenever in solitude, they see the joyful image of Thakur. When they walk down a road, they weep, feeling alone and aimless. That is why Thakur said to Mani, "I feel pain in giving up the body, knowing that you people will wander around weeping on the way." A devotee says to himself, "He has left, but I am still here. I still have the desire to live in this perishable world. I could give up the body if I wanted. But I don't do it."

The young devotees had stayed at the Cossipore garden house and served Sri Ramakrishna night and day. As soon as Thakur had gone, despite their unwillingness, they returned home automatically, like mechanical dolls. Thakur never asked any of them to put on the external signs of sannyasa (of ochre cloth). Nor did he ask them to renounce their family names. They kept them for awhile after his passing away: Dutta, Ghosh, Chakravarti, Ghosal, etc. But Thakur had made them renounce the world within.

Two or three of them had no home to return to. Surendra said to them, "Brothers, where will you go? Let's rent a residence for you where you can live. Besides, we also want some place we can go to attain peace. Without it, how can we continue day and night in our family lives? You will stay there. I used to pay, howsoever little, for the service of Thakur in the Cossipore garden house. Now that can be spent for your room and board." For one or two months Surendra had paid thirty rupees a month. Gradually, when the other brothers joined the Math, he paid fifty or sixty rupees, still later

one hundred rupees a month. The house that was hired in Baranagore cost eleven rupees a month for rent and tax. A brahmin cook had to be paid six rupees a month. Remaining expenses incurred were for rice and lentils. The Elder Gopal, Latu and Tarak had no home to return to. The Younger Gopal was first to go to the Baranagore house, carrying Thakur's mattress (seat) and other goods from the Cossipore garden house. He was accompanied by a brahmin cook and Sashi. Sarat also stayed there the first night. Tarak was away in Vrindavan. After a few days, he returned and joined them. Narendra, Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Niranjan and Kali used to visit it from time to time. Rakhhal, Latu, Jogen and Kali were still away in Vrindavan. Kali returned after a month, Rakhhal after many months, and Jogen after a year.

Before long Narendra, Rakhhal, Niranjan, Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Jogen, Kali and Latu lived at the Math. They did not return home. Then Prasanna and Subodh came to stay. They were joined later by Gangadhar and Hari.

Blessed you are, Surendra! This first Math is your handy work – it is because of your ascetic will that this ashram has come into being. Making you his instrument, Sri Ramakrishna has given physical shape to his fundamental mantra, viz. 'renunciation of lust and greed.' It is through such young, pure and all-renouncing souls as Narendra and the other young men that he has resuscitated the Sanatana Dharma (Eternal religion) for the good of humanity. Brother Surendra, who can forget the debt one owes you? The brothers of the Math live like motherless children waiting for you to come.

Today they have paid the rent of the house and are left with nothing. They have nothing to eat. When will you come and supply their food? Who can restrain his tears when remembering your sincere love and affection?

Narendra and his companions yearn for God – their resolve to fast unto death

Narendra is talking with Mani in the same ground floor room in Calcutta. He is now the leader of the devotees. Every inmate of the Math has deep dispassion within. They are all restless to have the vision of Bhagavan.

Narendra (to Mani) — I am interested in nothing at all. Here I am talking to you, but I feel like leaving.

Narendra is silent for awhile. Then he says, “Shall I fast unto death?”

Mani — Yes, good! One does anything for Bhagavan.

Narendra — But if I am not able to control my hunger?

Mani — Then eat something and start again.

Again Narendra is silent for a few minutes.

Narendra — It seems that Bhagavan doesn't even exist. However much I have prayed, I have gotten no response.

“I saw so many mantras whose letters were

glittering like gold.

“How many times have I seen Kali’s form and so many other forms! Yet I feel no peace within.

“Will you give me six pice?”

Narendra intends to go to the Baranagore Math by carriage at Sobhabazar. He needs six pice for his fare.

In the meantime, Satu (Satkari) arrives by carriage. Satu is the same age as Narendra. He is very fond of the boys of the Math and often visits them. His home is in the vicinity of the Baranagore Math and he works in a Calcutta office. He owns a personal carriage. It is by this carriage that he has come from his office.

Narendra returns the money to Mani, saying, “Now I can go with Satu. Please give me something to eat.” Mani treats him to some snacks.

Mani gets into the same carriage with them to go to the Math. They arrive there at dusk. Mani sees how the brothers of the Math spend their days and what spiritual disciplines they practice. He visits the Math now and then to see how Sri Ramakrishna is revealing himself in the hearts of his disciples. He doesn’t find Niranjan there. The latter has only his mother alive; it is to see her that he has gone home. Baburam, Sarat and Kali are away in holy Puri. They intend to stay there for some more days and witness the Rathayatra (car festival).

**Sri Ramakrishna’s world of spirituality and
Narendra’s guardianship**

Narendra is looking after the brothers of the Math while, for many days, Prasanna^[372] has been carrying out spiritual practices. Narendra raised the question of fasting to him too. Narendra had gone to Calcutta. Taking advantage of it, Prasanna left for some unknown destination. When he returns, Narendra hears about it. Why did Raja let him go, he wants to know. The fact is that Rakhhal was not there. He had gone for a stroll from the Math to a garden in Dakshineswar. Everybody calls him Rakhhal Raja, Rakhhal Raja (king of cowherd boys) being another name of Sri Krishna.

Narendra — When Raja returns, I shall take him to task. Why did he let Prasanna leave? (To Harish)
You were lecturing standing with your feet apart; but you could not stop him.

Harish (in a very gentle voice) — Brother Tarak asked him not to go, but he did.

Narendra (to M.) — See how very difficult it is for me? Here, again, I have fallen into the world of maya. Where has that boy gone?

Rakhhal has returned from the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. He had gone there with Bhavanath.

Rakhhal tells Narendra that Prasanna has left a note for him. It is being read now: I am going to Vrindavan on foot. It is very difficult for me to stay here. My bhava (mood) is undergoing a change. I used to dream about my father, mother and other members of the family. Then

I saw the very form of maya [of woman]. I suffered a great deal, twice. That is why I went home. And it is also the reason I am going away from home. The Paramahansa Deva said to me, “The members of your family may say anything to you, but don’t trust them.”

Rakhal says, “Prasanna has left for these reasons. And he also said, ‘Narendra often goes home to enquire about his mother, brothers and sisters, and to fight his lawsuit. I fear that I may also wish to go home later, to follow his example.’ ”

Narendra remains silent.

Rakhal talks about going on pilgrimage. He says, “We have achieved nothing here. He [Thakur] talked to us about having the vision of Bhagavan. Have we succeeded?” Rakhal is lying down. Some of the devotees are sitting beside him, others are lying down.

Rakhal — Let’s go to the Narmada.

Narendra — How will it help to wander around? Do you think we will attain jnana by doing that?

A Devotee — Then why have we renounced the world?

Narendra — Since I haven’t been able to attain Rama, shall I establish a household with Shyam, and beget boys and girls? What are you talking about!

Saying this, Narendra gets up and leaves.
Rakhal remains lying there.

After awhile Narendra returns and sits down.

One of the brothers is having a lot of fun pretending to be afflicted at not seeing the Lord. He says, “Oh, brother! Do please bring me a dagger. There’s no sense in living any longer! I can’t bear the pain!”

Narendra (in a grave mood) — Here it is. Stretch your hand and take it. (All laugh.)

They again talk about Prasanna.

Narendra — Even here, we are involved in maya! Why, then, embrace sannyasa?

Rakhal — A book titled, ‘*Liberation and How to Attain it,*’ says that it is not right for monks to live together. It talks about a city of monks.

Sashi — I don’t believe in sannyasa. There’s no place inaccessible to me. There’s no place I can’t live.

Now they talk about Bhavanath. Bhavanath’s wife has been critically ill.

Narendra (to Rakhal) – It appears that Bhavanath’s wife has survived. That is why he came so quickly to Dakshineswar for a stroll.

Now they talk about the Kankurgachi garden. Ram is going to build a temple there.

Narendra (to Rakhal) — Ram Babu has made M. one of the trustees of the garden.

M. (to Rakhal) — But I don't know anything about it.

It is dusk. Sashi burns incense in Sri Ramakrishna's room. Next he burns incense before the deities in the other rooms, repeats the Name in a sweet voice and bows before the deities.

The arati is being performed. The brothers of the Math and other devotees stand with folded hands and witness the arati. Bells are rung. The devotees sing together the song of the arati –

Victory to Shiva Omkar, worship Shiva Omkar,
Brahma Vishnu Sadashiva,
Hara Hara Hara Mahadeva!

Narendra has introduced this song in the arati. The same song is sung to Viswanath (Shiva) in the holy city of Kashi.

Mani feels great joy seeing the devotees in the Math.

It is eleven at night when the meal is over. Everybody lies down to sleep. They very affectionately ask Mani to lie down with them.

It is past twelve. Mani has not been able to sleep. He is saying to himself, "Everything is here – it is the same Ayodhya, only Rama is missing." Mani rises quietly. It is full moon in the month of Vaishakh. Mani strolls alone on the bank of the Ganges. He is thinking of Sri Ramakrishna.

**Narendra and other brothers of the Math in
dispassion – readings from *Yogavashishtha* – joy of**

kirtan and dance

M. arrived at the Math on Saturday with the intention of staying until the following Wednesday. Today is Sunday, when the householder devotees generally visit the Math. The *Yogavashishtha* is normally read these days. M. has heard some text of the *Yogavashishtha* from Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna had prohibited taking up the attitude of Soham (as taught in the *Yogavashishtha*) as long as one retains body-consciousness. He had added that the right mood was to consider oneself the servant of God. M. wants to check whether or not it tallies with the thinking of the brothers of the Math. He begins to talk about the *Yogavashishtha*.

M. — Well, what does *Yogavashishtha* say about Brahmajnana?

Rakhal — Hunger and thirst, sorrow and happiness are all maya. The way out is to annihilate the mind completely.

M. — After the mind is annihilated, what remains is Brahman. Am I right?

Rakhal — Yes.

M. — Thakur said the same thing. Nangta (Totapuri) taught him this. Well, did you read that *Vashishtha* asked Rama not to renounce the householder's life?

Rakhal — Where is that? We haven't found it yet. He didn't accept Rama as an avatara.

The conversation goes on. Narendra, Tarak, and a devotee return from the bank of the Ganges. They wanted to go on a pleasure trip to Konnagar, but could not get a boat. They sit down. The conversation on the *Yogavashishtha* continues.

Narendra (to M.) — It says very nice things. Do you know about Lila?

M. — Yes, that story is in the *Yogavashishtha*. I have read a little of it. Lila attained Brahmajnana. Didn't she?

Narendra — Yes, and the dialogue between Indra and Ahalya? The story of king Viduratha turning into a chandala (a pariah; one of the lowest classes of Hindu untouchables.)

M. — Yes, I remember them.

Narendra — How nice the description of the forest is [\[373\]](#)!

**Brothers of monastery take daily dip in the Ganges
and perform worship of Guru**

Narendra and other devotees are going for a dip in the Ganges. M. will accompany them. Since the midday sun is overhead, M. takes an umbrella with him. Saratchandra of Baranagore is also with them. He is a young

householder brahmin with firm faith in religious conduct. He frequently visits the monastery. A few days ago in a mood of dispassion he had visited places of pilgrimage.

M. (to Sarat) — The sun is hot.

Narendra — This is an excuse for your umbrella.
(M. laughs.)

The devotees go along the path of the monastery with thin towels on their shoulders. They take their bath at the ghat to the north of Pramanik ghat. They are all dressed in gerua^[374]. It is the twenty-sixth of Vaishakh. The sun is very hot.

M. (to Narendra) — Ready for a sunstroke!

Narendra — Your body is an obstacle to developing renunciation, isn't it? You and Deven Babu...

M. laughs and says to himself, "Is it the body alone that is an obstacle?" The devotees return to the monastery after taking their bath and, washing their feet, enter Sri Ramakrishna's room. With great reverence they make offerings of flowers one by one at his lotus feet.

Narendra takes a little longer to enter the shrine. After bowing down to Guru Maharaj, when he tries to take some flowers in his hands, he finds the flower container empty. He exclaims, "No flowers!" There are a couple of vilwa leaves in the container. He smears the leaves with sandalwood paste and offers them

to Thakur. Ringing the bell once and offering his obeisance again, he goes back to the 'room of the danas'[\[375\]](#).'

The room of the danas, the shrine and the room of Kali Tapasvi

The brothers of the monastery call themselves *danas* and *daityas* (ghosts and demons) and the room where they meet they call 'the room of the danas'. They who practice meditation, or study religious texts in solitude live in a room to the south. Shutting the door from within, Kali stays in this room most of the time, so it is called the room of Kali Tapasvi by the brothers of the monastery. To the north of Kali Tapasvi's room is Thakur's shrine. To the north of it is the room where offerings are prepared for the gods and goddesses. Standing in the 'offering room' one can witness the arati. The devotees also have to pass through this room to offer obeisance to Thakur. To the north of the 'offering room' is the 'danas' room'. It is quite a long room. The devotees visiting the monastery are received here. To the north of the 'danas' room' is a small cell. The brothers call it their dining room. The devotees eat here.

Toward the eastern corner of the 'danas' room' is a courtyard where they eat during festivals. Exactly to the north of the courtyard is the kitchen.

There is a verandah to the east of Kali Tapasvi's room and the shrine. Toward the southwestern corner of the verandah is a library of an Association of Baranagore. All these rooms are on the first level. Between Kali

Tapasvi's room and the library is a staircase to the second level. Narendra and the brothers of the monastery sometimes use it to get to the roof in the evening. They sit there together and talk about spiritual matters. Sometimes they talk about Sri Ramakrishna, sometimes about Shankaracharya, Ramanuja or Christ and other times about Indian and European philosophy, the *Vedas*, the *Puranas* and the *Tantras*.

In the 'danas' room' Narendra sings the name and glories of Bhagavan in his sweet voice, rare even among gods. He gives music lessons to Sarat and his other companions. Kali takes lessons on playing the musical instruments. In this very room, filled with joy, Narendra sings kirtan with the brothers and they dance joyfully.

Narendra and propagation of religion – Dhyana Yoga and Karma Yoga

Narendra is seated in the 'danas' room'. Chunilal, M. and the brothers of the monastery are also there. They discuss the propagation of religion.

M. (to Narendra) — Vidyasagar says that he doesn't talk about the Lord to anyone for fear of being caned.

Narendra — For fear of being caned?

M. — Vidyasagar says: Imagine that we are in the presence of the Lord after death. Imagine that Keshab Sen is taken into His presence by Yama (the messenger of Death). Keshab Sen has certainly

committed some sin in the world. When this is proved, the Lord perhaps sentences him to twenty-five cane strokes! Then imagine that I am also taken to the Lord. I have been visiting Keshab's Samaj. I, too, have been guilty of a number of misdeeds. So I am also sentenced to a caning. I would probably say that I have done only what Keshab Sen instructed me to do. The Lord then asks the messengers to bring Keshab Sen again to his presence. Maybe when he comes before the Lord, He asks Keshab, 'Did you preach to him? You know nothing about the Lord yourself and you preach to others. Come up, messengers, and give him twenty-five more cane lashes.' (They all laugh.)

“So Vidyasagar says, ‘I cannot take care of myself. And on the top of it to receive lashes for others! (All laugh.) I understand nothing about the Lord, how can I lecture to others?’ ”

Narendra — How can he who has not understood this, understand other things?

M. — What other things?

Narendra — How could he who has not understood this, understand what compassion, what doing good to others, and so on, is? How has he understood school work? How did he understand that he has to establish schools for the education of boys, enter family life, marry and beget sons and daughters? How has he understood that all this is right?

“If you understand one thing rightly, you understand everything.”

M. (to himself) — True indeed. Thakur said that he who knows the Lord understands everything. He said to Vidyasagar that leading a family life, managing schools and all those things were the activities of rajas. Since Vidyasagar had compassion, Thakur told him, ‘It is the sattva of rajas. There is no harm in this rajas.’

The brothers of the monastery are relaxing after their meal. Mani and Chunilal talk to each other, sitting on the landing of the inner steps to the east of the ‘offering room’. Chunilal relates how he met Thakur for the first time in Dakshineswar. He also tells M. that, disgusted with family life, he left home once and visited places of pilgrimage. After a short time, Narendra comes and sits beside them. Now they talk about the *Yogavashishtha*.

Narendra (to Mani) — What about Viduratha turning into a chandala?

Mani — Are you talking of Lavan?

Narendra — Did you read it?

Mani — Yes, I read a little.

Narendra — Did you read the book here?

Mani — No, I read a little at home.

Narendra asks the Younger Gopal to bring a smoke [hubble-bubble]. The Younger Gopal is meditating.

Narendra (to the Younger Gopal) — I say, prepare a smoke. What do you mean by all this meditation? First of all karma, then meditation. (All laugh.)

To the west of the monastery building and just adjacent to it is a big plot with many plants and trees. M. is sitting alone under a tree when Prasanna appears. It is about three o'clock.

M — Where have you been all this time? We have all been worrying about you. Have you seen them? When did you come?

Prasanna — I just arrived and saw them.

M — You left a note saying, 'I am going to Vrindavan.' We were very worried about you. How far did you go?

Prasanna — As far as Konnagar. (Both of them laugh.)

M. — Please sit down and tell me. Where did you go first?

Prasanna — To the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. I stayed there for a night.

M (laughing) — What mood is Hazra Mahashay in these days?

Prasanna — Hazra was saying, 'What do you think of me?' (Both laugh.)

M. (laughing) — And what did you say?

Prasanna — I kept quiet.

M. — And then?

Prasanna — Then he asked me whether I had brought tobacco for him. (Both laugh.) He wanted me to do some work for him! (Laughter.)

M. — And where did you go next?

Prasanna — I finally went to Konnagar. I spent the night there, thinking that I would go further the next day. I asked some gentlemen if they would give me railway fare for Vrindavan.

M. — What did they say?

Prasanna — They said, ‘We can give you four annas or a rupee. But who can give you that much fare?’ (Both of them laugh.)

M. — What did you take with you?

Prasanna — A piece of dhoti and a picture of the Paramahansa Deva. I didn’t show his picture to anybody.

Conversation between father and son – who comes first: parents or the Lord

Sashi’s father has come. He wants to take his son away from the monastery. During the illness of Sri Ramakrishna, Sashi had nursed

him single-mindedly for about nine months. He had received his B.A. degree from college and won a scholarship on an entrance examination. His father is a poor brahmin, but a devout and religious man. Sashi is the eldest son of his parents and they have pinned great hopes on his earnings to alleviate their sufferings. Sashi, however, has renounced everything to attain Bhagavan. He weeps and says to his friends, “What can I do? I don’t understand anything. Alas! I have not been able to serve my parents in the least. What great hopes they had pinned on me! My mother didn’t have a single piece of jewelry to wear. How I wished I could buy jewelry for her! But I have done nothing. I feel such a great responsibility to return home, but Guru Maharaj has asked us to renounce ‘lust and greed’. So I can’t go that way.”

After Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal body, Sashi’s father thought that he would probably return home. But after staying home for a few days, he began visiting the monastery soon after it was established. And then he never returned home again. So his father visits it sometimes to bring him back, but it is impossible for him to return. Hearing that his father has come, Sashi escapes in another direction to avoid meeting him.

The father knows M. He talks to him as they stroll on the upper verandah.

The Father — Who is the leader here? It is Narendra who is at the root of all this trouble. These boys had all returned home and resumed their studies.

M. — There is no leader here. They are all equal.

What could Narendra have done? Who would come here unless he, himself, wanted to? Have we been able to completely renounce our homes?

The Father — You have done the right thing, brother. You have kept both sides [meaning spiritual and family life]. Can't one practice religion the way you are doing? We want Sashi to do what you are doing. Let him be here, as well as there. See how his mother is crying for him.

M. feels sad about it but does not say anything.

The Father — And why should he wander around looking for a sadhu? I can take him to a good sadhu. A sadhu visits Inder Narayana. He is a wonderful man. Let Sashi meet him.

Rakhal's dispassion[\[376\]](#) – sannyasi and woman

Rakhal and M. are pacing the verandah to the east of Kali Tapasvi's room. They are talking of Thakur and the devotees.

Rakhal (very keenly) — Master Mahashay, come. Let's practice sadhana.

“It is for this reason that I didn't return home. If somebody says, ‘You have not realized the Lord, so why continue to stay?’ Narendra has a good reply to this. He says, ‘If I have not attained Rama, shall I have to establish a household with Shyam and beget children?’ Ah! Everything that Narendra says is so beautiful. You should ask him.

M. — Quite right. I see, Rakhal, that you, too, have developed great yearning for God.

Rakhal — What shall I say, Master Mahashay? At midday I felt such great longing to go to Narmada. Master Mahashay, let's practice sadhana. We are achieving nothing without it. Look, even Shukadeva was afraid of worldly life. He fled as soon as he took birth. Vyasa Deva [his father] asked him to stay, but he wouldn't.

M. — The *Yoga Upanishad* says that Shukadeva was running away from the realm of maya. Yes, the conversation between Vyasa and Shukadeva is very nice. Vyasa asked him to stay in the family and practice dharma. Shukadeva replied that the ultimate goal was the lotus of Hari's feet. He was expressing his repulsion for family men marrying and living with a wife.

Rakhal — Many people think it's enough not to look at a woman. What is the use of lowering your eyes when you see a woman? Last evening Narendra said beautifully, 'As long as I have the feeling of lust, there is a woman there. When one is rid of lust, one sees no difference between a man and a woman.'

M. — Very right. Children are not conscious of the difference between a boy and a girl.

Rakhal — That is why I say that we must practice sadhana. How can one attain jnana without going beyond maya? Come on, let's go to the hall. So many gentlemen have come from Baranagore. Let's

go and hear what Narendra is telling them.

Narendra and resignation

Narendra is in conversation. M. does not enter the room. He listens to the bits of conversation while pacing the courtyard near the hall.

Narendra is saying, “There is no place or time for performing sandhya and other ritualistic worship.”

A Gentleman — Well sir! Can one attain Him through sadhana?

Narendra — His grace is needed. The *Gita* says –

*Ishvarah sarva bhutanam hriddese arjuna
tishthati,*

*Bhramayan sarva bhutani yantra arudhani
mayaya.*

*Tam eva saranam gaccha sarva bhavena
bharata,*

*Tatprasadat param santim sthanam prapsyasi
sashvatam.*

(Gita 18:61,
62)

[The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, Oh Arjuna, and by His maya causes all beings to revolve as though mounted on a machine.

Seek refuge in Him alone with all your heart, Oh Bharata. By His grace you will gain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode.]

“Without His grace, sadhana and bhajan are of no avail. Therefore, resign yourself to Him.”

The Gentleman — We will sometimes come and bother you.

Narendra — You may come whenever you feel like it.

“We go to the ghat in your neighbourhood for a dip in the Ganges.”

The Gentleman — We have no objection, but no one else should go there.

Narendra — If you wish, we won't go.

Gentleman — I didn't mean that – but if you see too many people going there, please stop going anymore.

Arati and Narendra reads from *Guru Gita*

The arati is being performed after dusk. The devotees fold their hands and together sing the hymn to Bhagavan, singing together, “Victory to Shiva Omkar.” After the arati the devotees go into the ‘danas’ room’. M. is seated there. Prasanna reads from the *Guru Gita*. Narendra enters and recites the text melodiously. He sings –

I salute the Sadguru^[377] who is the very image of the Bliss of Brahman, who is the giver of Supreme Joy and the embodiment of jnana,

He is beyond the dualities of happiness and sorrow, is like the sky, is the symbol of the dicta of the Upanishads such as Tattvamasi (You are that Brahman).

Who is one, eternal, pure, immovable, who is present in every intellect as the witness, who is beyond all moods and devoid of the three gunas.

Then he sings –

Shiva has proclaimed that there is none greater than the Guru, none better than the Guru.

Therefore, I shall only talk of the Guru, the image of Brahman.

I shall only sing His praises. I shall only meditate upon Him and offer Him my salutations again and again.

Narendra chants the *Guru Gita* melodiously. The minds of the devotees have settled motionless, like the flame of a lamp at a windless moment. How right Thakur was when he said, “The way the snake lies motionless, raising its hood when it hears the sweet sound of the flute, exactly like this, does He who dwells within the heart listens to Narendra.” Oh, what bhakti for the Guru of the brothers of the monastery!

Sri Ramakrishna’s love and Rakhal

Rakhal is seated in Kali Tapasvi’s room. Prasanna sits close to him. M. is also there.

Rakhal has left home, renouncing his wife and child. He has deep dispassion (*vairagya*) within. His only thought is to go alone to the

bank of the Narmada or to some other such place. Nevertheless, he advises Prasanna.

Rakhal (to Prasanna) — Why do you run from place to place? Here you have the company of sadhus. To leave it and go elsewhere! Besides, here you have the company of a man like Narendra. Where will you go from this place?

Prasanna — My parents live in Calcutta. I fear I might later be attracted by their affection. That's why I want to flee.

Rakhal — Do our parents love us the way Guru Maharaj [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] did? What have we done for him, that we deserve such love? Why was he so anxious for the good of our body, mind and soul? What have we done for him?

M. (to himself) — Ah, how right Rakhal is! That is why he [Sri Ramakrishna] is called the ocean of motiveless grace.

Prasanna — Do you not sometimes feel like going on pilgrimage?

Rakhal — I do feel at times that I should go to the bank of the Narmada for a few days. And sometimes I think that I should go and stay in a garden somewhere and practice sadhana. I also feel a desire to perform *panchatapa*^[378] for three days. But I don't want to go to a garden owned by worldly people.

Does the Lord exist?

Tarak and Prasanna are talking in the 'danas' room'. Tarak has lost his mother. Like Rakhal's father, his father has married a second time. Tarak was also married, but his wife is no more. Now the monastery is Tarak's home. Tarak, too, explains to Prasanna.

Prasanna — I have attained neither jnana nor prema. What can I hold onto?

Tarak — It may be difficult to attain jnana, but how can you say that you have not attained prema?

Prasanna — How can it be called prema if I am not able to weep for Him? Besides, what have I realized in all these days?

Tarak — Why, you have seen the Paramahamsa! How are you not going to have jnana?

Prasanna — What jnana shall I have? Jnana means to know. What shall I know? I am not even certain that God exists!

Tarak — Well, that is true. In the jnani's view, there is no God.

M (to himself) — Oh, what a state Prasanna is in! Thakur used to say that they who want Bhagavan fall into this state. Sometimes they feel that God exists and sometimes that He does not. I understand that Tarak is reading Buddhist philosophy these days. That is why he is saying that there is no God

according to the jnani. But Thakur used to say that both the jnani and the devotee will reach the same destination.

Chapter II

Narendra with his brother disciple – Narendra's innermost thoughts

The meditation room, i.e. the room of Kali Tapasvi. Narendra and Prasanna are talking to each other. Rakhal, Harish and the Younger Gopal are seated on one side of the room. The Elder Gopal is the last to arrive.

Narendra is reading the Gita and explaining the verses to Prasanna.

*Ishvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese arjuna
tishthati,*

*Bhramayan sarvabhutani yantrarudhani
mayaye.*

*Tam eva sharanam gaccha sarva bhavena
bharata,*

*Tatprasadat param santim sthanam prapsyasi
sashvatam.*

*Sarvadharmam parityajya mam ekam sharanam
vraja,*

*Aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami ma
shucah.*

(Gita 18:61, 62 and 66)

[The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, oh Arjuna; and by his maya causes all beings to revolve as though mounted on a machine.

Seek refuge in Him alone with all your heart, oh Bharata. By His grace you will gain supreme peace and the eternal abode.

Renounce all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sins; grieve not.]

Narendra — Note the words, ‘mounted on a machine.’ ‘By His maya, He causes all beings to revolve as though mounted on a machine.’ You want to know God. You are a mere insect, what can you know of Him? Just reflect, what is a man? It is said that the numberless stars you see are each a solar system. We are part of one solar system and even that is too big for us. This earth is just a very ordinary ball compared to the sun. And on this earth man wanders like an insect.

Narendra sings –

‘You are our Father, we Your little children’

O God, we are born in the dust of this earth and this very dust has blinded our eyes.

O Lord, we are born as infants to play in the dust. Pray, grant us fearlessness, You refuge of the weak!

If we once make a mistake, will You not lift us in your arms? Or will You go away and leave us?

O Lord, shall we lie unconscious on the earth, never to be raised? We are but little infants, a very small mind we have.

At every step, Father, we slip! Alas, why do You show us such an angry face? Why do we

see such a deep frown on it?

Father, pray don't be angry with us, such small beings. Tell us lovingly what we do wrong.

If, due to our mistake, we fall a hundred times, pray lift us each time, for we are but weaklings. What can we do?

Then he says to Prasanna, "Take refuge in Him! Resign yourself to His will and be at peace."

Surcharged with emotion, Narendra sings this song –

Self-surrender, the way

O Lord, I am Your servant, I am Your servant!
Your servant, am I!

You are the compassionate one, my
compassionate one! The only compassionate
one indeed.

From You I have received two pieces of bread
and a loincloth.

Now grant me love and devotion (bhakti) and
divine fervour so that I may sing Your name.

You are the compassionate one, showering
grace, the Master You are.

This time grant Your vision to me, the fakir, by
Your grace.

You are the compassionate one, showering
grace; I have accepted Your name.

Kabir, your slave, has taken refuge in You, who
takes across whoever takes refuge at Your feet.

“Don't you remember what he [Sri Ramakrishna]

said? ‘The Lord is a mound of sugar and you an ant. You get filled with just one grain of sugar, but you think of carrying away the whole mound to your home!’ And he said, don’t you remember, ‘Shukadeva was at the most a big black ant.’ So I tell Kali, ‘You fool! Do you want to measure the Lord with your inch-tape?’

“God is the ocean of compassion. Take refuge in Him. He will shower His grace on you. Pray to Him thus:

O Rudra, pray preserve me ever in your benevolent aspect.

Take me from illusion to reality.

Take me from the darkness of ignorance to the light of spiritual wisdom. Take me from death to Immortality.

Prasanna — What spiritual disciplines shall I practice?

Narendra — Just recite His name. Don’t you remember Thakur’s song?

God’s name, the way

(1) O Mother Shyama, Your name is my only haven.

Am I to worship you ritually with *koshakushi*^[379]? Or to lecture, showing my teeth?

Your name cuts asunder the bonds of Death. Shiva with matted hair has only propagated this.

I am just a slave to that matted-haired one.

What other service may I accept now?

Your name alone will bring that which is to be.
Why should I worry unnecessarily?

I have made Shiva and His words the basis of
my life.

(2) We are but little infants with a very small
mind.

At every step, O Father, we slip!

What is God? Is He compassionate?

Prasanna — You say that God exists. And then you
also say: Charvaka^[380] and many other religions
have said that the world has come into existence by
itself.

Narendra — Haven't you read chemistry? What
will a mere combination do? It is like the human
hand bringing oxygen, hydrogen and electricity
together to form water.

“Everybody accepts the intelligent force. There is
one supreme source of knowledge that runs
everything.”

Prasanna — How do you conclude that there is
compassion in Him?

Narendra — The *Vedas* say, ‘That which is Your
compassionate face.’

“John Stuart Mill also says the same thing. How
much more compassion must He have, who has
given compassion to the human being! Thakur said,
‘Faith is the basic thing.’ He dwells so close to us.

Your faith will take you across.”

Saying so, Narendra sings in a sweet voice –

Faith, the way

Where are you looking for Me, O man? Here, I am so close to you.

I am not in quarrels and mishaps, nor in the knife and chopper.

Nor am I in skin nor in hair, nor in bone nor in flesh.

Nor am I in the temple or mosque, in Kashi or Kailas.

Nor am I in Ayodhya or in Dwaraka. I am only in your faith.

Nor am I in rituals or in yoga, nonattachment (vairagya) or sannyasa.

If you look for Me, I shall be with you in no time.

I have my residence outside the town, my hut is in the Lord's shelter,

Says Kabir, 'Listen O brother, I am in all holy men.'

As long as you have desires, you disbelieve in God

Prasanna – You sometimes say that there is no God. Then how can you say all this now? You are not consistent. You keep changing your opinion! (Everyone laughs.)

Narendra — But this one thing I will never change, that as long as you have desires, you do not believe

in God. Some desire or the other always persists in man. Maybe you have the desire to study, to pass examinations, to become a learned man. A man cherishes one desire or the other.

Filled with devotion Narendra begins to sing –

I take refuge in the loving One, the supreme Father and Mother.

Victory to You, my God, victory to You, the bestower of all good.

Victory to my God, the dispeller of all calamity and sorrow, the support of the three worlds.

O Lord, You are beyond thought, infinite and immeasurable. You are beyond comparison.

O Lord, the God of the universe, omnipresent, all-pervading, the personification of true knowledge, the supreme soul; victory to You.

Victory to You, O adorable one, the compassionate one. I bow at Your feet, at Your feet I bow.

Victory to You, my God, You are the only refuge in life and death.

What shall we ask Thee in humble submission?

Pray, grant us the right thoughts in this world and the right ones in the next. Victory, Victory to You.

Narendra sings again, exhorting his brother disciples to drink from the cup of the Bliss of the Lord. God is very near to us, like musk to the deer.

Drink from the cup, O Avadhuta^[381], the sweet prema of the Lord. Let it intoxicate you.

You have spent your childhood in play and
your youth under the control of your wife.

In old age, you fell prey to phlegm and
flatulence – and you kept to bed, unable to
move.

The musk lies in the lotus of the musk-deer's
navel. How to make the animal understand this?

Without a real Guru, man roams about in vain
like a deer in the forest.

M. hears all these songs from the verandah.

Narendra rises. As he leaves the room, he says,
“My brain is heated from talking so long.”
Seeing M. on the verandah, he says, “Master
Mahashay! Please take some refreshments.”

A brother of the monastery says to Narendra,
“But you do say that there is no Bhagavan!”
Narendra laughs.

Narendra in deep dispassion – he runs down household life

The next morning, 9 May, M. is sitting under a
tree in the garden of the monastery. He is
thinking: Thakur has made the brothers of the
monastery renounce ‘lust and greed’. Ah, what
yearning they have for the Lord! This place has
become a veritable Vaikuntha (the abode of
Vishnu) and the brothers of monastery are, as it
were, Narayana. Thakur left not long ago, that
is why his divine mood is almost intact.

“It is the same Ayodhya, only Rama is not here.

“Thakur has made them renounce their homes, and
he has kept others in family life. Why? Is there no

way out for them?”

Narendra is looking down from the upper room. He sees M. seated alone under a tree. He comes downstairs laughing and says, “Hello, M.! What are you doing?” After a short conversation, M. says to Narendra, “What a sweet voice you have! Please sing a hymn.”

Narendra hums and sings a hymn in which a devotee prays for forgiveness for his sins. The householders have forgotten the Lord. How much sin they commit during their childhood, youth and middle age! Why don't they serve Bhagavan and meditate on Him with body, mind and speech?

I suffered immensely during my childhood. My body remained soiled with excreta and urine.

I was always longing to suck at my mother's breast. My limbs were incapable of work.

So many insects created by Your maya stung me. I would cry day and night because of disease, forgetting You, O Shankara!

Therefore, O Shiva! Mahadeva! O Shambhu! pardon my transgressions.

Beyond youth, when I became an adult, the five poisonous snakes of sound, sight, smell, taste and touch stung me at vital points.

They destroyed my sense of discrimination and I became engaged in the sensuous pleasures of wealth, wife and off-spring.

Forgetting again to meditate on You, my heart was filled with vanity and pride.

Therefore, O Shiva! Mahadeva! O Shambhu! pardon my transgressions, do pardon me.

Now in old age my senses have lost the power
of perception, the intellect its sharpness,

Afflictions, sins, diseases and bereavements
have broken my body.

My mind wanders, enfeebled by illusions,
infatuations and desires. It is bereft of
meditation on Sri Mahadeva.

Therefore, O Shiva! Mahadeva! O Shambhu!
pardon my transgressions, do pardon me.

In the morning after my bath, I never brought
Ganges water to wash Your image.

I never brought vilwa leaves from the forest to
worship You.

Nor did I make garlands of blooming lotuses
from the pond for You, nor did I offer you
incense and flowers.

Therefore, O Shiva! Mahadeva! O Shambhu!
pardon my transgressions, do pardon me.

O Lord Shankara! White is Your body covered
with ashes, white shine Your teeth when you
smile.

A white garland of human skulls in your hand,
with a white club.

White is the bull on which You ride, white
earrings dangle from Your ears.

Your matted locks appear white with the foam
of the Ganges and the white moon shines on
Your forehead.

You who are all white, all purity, forgive me
and bestow prosperity.

The recitation of the hymn is over and the

conversation resumes.

Narendra — You may talk of leading an unattached life of a householder and all that, but nothing can be achieved without renouncing ‘lust and greed’. Do you abhor carnal relations with your wife? Contacting parts of her body so full of worms, phlegm, fat and foul smell?

Fools find pleasure in a body filled with filth, the home of worms, naturally smelling foul, made of flesh, blood, bone and marrow. But the wise avoid it.

“He who does not relish the teachings of Vedanta, he who doesn’t drink the wine of the story of Hari, lives his life in vain.[\[NN3\]](#)”

“Listen to this song –

Give up infatuation, give up thinking
perversely, know Him and then alone you will
be rid of your pain.

For the sensory pleasures of four days, you
have forgotten the friend of your soul. What
irony!

“There is no way but to put on the loincloth and renounce the world.”

Saying so, Narendra hums the tune and sings the five stanzas of *kaupin*[\[382\]](#).

He who is always engaged in the words of Vedanta, he who is content with the grains of holy begging, he who roams about with a griefless conscience; such a person, clad in a loincloth, is the only blessed one...

Continuing, Narendra says, “Why should a man become bound to worldly life? Why should he be ensnared by maya? What is the true nature of man? He is that very Sachchidananda, pure Knowledge and Bliss, the image of Shiva.

Then he chants Shankaracharya’s hymn –

Om, I am not the mind, the intellect, the ego, or the chitta. 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.

Narendra chants another hymn, the eight stanzas on the glory of Sri Krishna.

O Madhusudana! I have taken refuge in you. Bestow your grace and redeem me from lust, sleep, sin, infatuation, the bondage of affection for wife and son, and the thirst for sense desires. Grant me devotion for your lotus feet.

Song –

Om, from the viewpoint of jnana, the attachment of a sickly man to the things of the world becomes feeble because of old age. But I am overwhelmed by the deep sleep of lust. Therefore, O Madhusudana, save me.

O Lord, you are my only refuge. There is no other way for me. I am stuck in the mire of sin. Therefore, O Madhusudana, save me.

I am ensnared by infatuation with wife, son and home. My desires give me no end of trouble. O Madhusudana, save this lowly man who has no shelter, who suffers trials and tribulations, who is a man without devotion.

I am tired of taking birth again and again on the long passage of this world. I don't wish to return again to this world. Therefore, O Madhusudana, save me.

Having been born again and again, I have seen the door of the feminine genital and suffered so much in the womb. Therefore, my Lord Narayana, I take refuge in you. Liberate me from the world and save me.

I pay my obeisance to you in fear of disease and death. I have performed no good deeds. I am only guilty of evil deeds. Therefore, I am stuck in the mire of sin. O Madhusudana, save me.

Though born a thousand times, I have not fulfilled the duties of a human being. Though I made so many promises, I have not acted on them. Therefore, O Lord, I am depraved. Pray save me.

If I am born again as man or woman, grant that I may have unswerving devotion [\[383\]](#) for your lotus feet. O Madhusudana save me.

M. (to himself) — What intense dispassion Narendra has! That is why all the brothers of the monastery are in this state of dispassion. Seeing them, the disciples of Thakur who are still leading a family life are inspired by the precept of renunciation of 'lust and greed'. Ah, what a state they are in! Why has he kept some of them in worldly life? Will he find a way out for them? Will he grant them intense dispassion – or keep them in the state of forgetfulness in the world?

After their meal, Narendra and a few brother disciples have gone to Calcutta. Narendra is to

return after dusk. The lawsuit about his ancestral home has not been settled yet. The brothers of the monastery cannot bear separation from him. They all await his return.

[372] Sarada Prasanna

[373] There was a king Padma by name whose queen was Lila. Lila, seeking immortality for her husband, worshipped Saraswati, the Goddess of learning. Lila received a boon from Her that the soul of her husband would remain confined in the void above in the room after his death. After the demise of her husband, Lila recalled Devi Saraswati to her mind. She manifested Herself and made Lila realize very well that the world is an illusion and that Brahman alone is the Reality. Saraswati Devi said, “Your husband, now known as Padma, was a brahmin, Vashishtha by name, in his earlier life. Only eight days ago he died. His soul is still hovering round here. At another place, he ruled a region for years as King Viduratha. All this is possible by the power of maya. In fact there is nothing like time or place. After this the queen accompanied Devi Saraswati and visited the aforesaid kingdoms of brahmin Vashishtha and king Viduratha, through the subtle body, in samadhi. By the grace of Devi Saraswati the knowledge of his previous birth came to the mind of Viduratha. Thereafter he died in battle and his soul entered the body of king Padma.

King Viduratha did not turn into a chandala. King Lavan, on the other hand, became a chandala. As a result of the magic of a magician he experienced the whole life of the chandala in a moment. The chief queen of a king, Ahalya by name, had fallen in love with a young man, Indra.

- [374] Ochre cloth worn by a monk
- [375] Room of the ghosts, or demons
- [376] Vairagya
- [377] Real preceptor
- [378] Practicing japa and meditation seated within five fires
- [379] A kosha is small water container, kushi a small spoon for taking out water from it. Both are usually made of copper and are used in worship.
- [380] The materialistic philosophy which holds that matter is the only reality; hence, denying the existence of God and soul
- [381] A hermit who worships Lord Shiva
- [382] The loincloth of a sannyasin
- [383] *Achala* bhakti

[NN1]chitta

[NN2]rub ears

[NN3]Sanskrit stanza missing

"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 : Worship 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

Ichhamaya : 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



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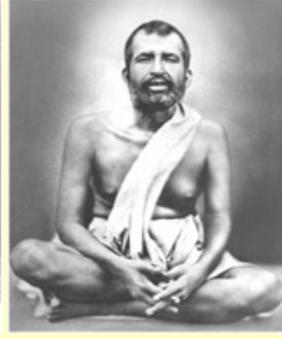
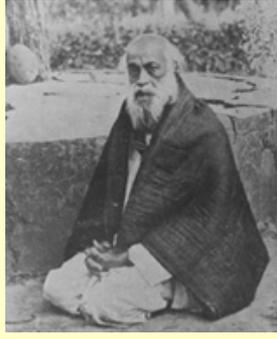
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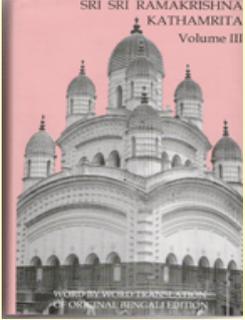
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