

*The Gospel of*  
**Sri Ramakrishna**

*Translated into  
English with an Introduction*

*by*

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(1942)



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Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center

—neither creating nor  
 Purusha, the Imper-  
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 the Personal God. But  
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#### DEVOTEES

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 distribution among the wandering monks.

l books, yet he possessed an encyclopedic  
 religious philosophies. This he acquired from  
 innumerable holy men and scholars. He had a unique  
 assimilation; through meditation he made this knowledge a part  
 of his being. Once, when he was asked by a disciple about the source of  
 his seemingly inexhaustible knowledge, he replied: "I have not read; but I  
 have heard the learned. I have made a garland of their knowledge, wearing  
 it round my neck, and I have given it as an offering at the feet of the  
 Mother."

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that when the flower blooms the bees come  
 to it for honey of their own accord. Now many souls began to visit  
 Dakshineswar to satisfy their spiritual hunger. He, the devotee and aspirant,  
 became the Master. Gauri, the great scholar who had been one of the first  
 to proclaim Sri Ramakrishna an Incarnation of God, paid the Master a visit  
 in 1870 and with the Master's blessings renounced the world. Narayan  
 Shastri, another great pundit, who had mastered the six systems of Hindu  
 philosophy and had been offered a lucrative post by the Mahārājā of Jaipur,  
 met the Master and recognized in him one who had realized in life those  
 ideals which he himself had encountered merely in books. Sri Ramakrishna  
 initiated Narayan Shastri, at his earnest request, into the life of sannyās.  
 Pundit Padmalochan, the court pundit of the Mahārājā of Burdwan, well  
 known for his scholarship in both the Vedānta and the Nyāya systems of  
 philosophy, accepted the Master as an Incarnation of God. Krishnakishore,  
 a Vedāntist scholar, became devoted to the Master. And there arrived  
 Viswanath Upadhyaya, who was to become a favourite devotee; Sri Rama-  
 krishna always addressed him as "Captain". He was a high officer of the  
 King of Nepal and had received the title of Colonel in recognition of his  
 merit. A scholar of the *Gītā*, the *Bhāgavata*, and the Vedānta philosophy,  
 he daily performed the worship of his Chosen Deity with great devotion.  
 "I have read the Vedas and the other scriptures", he said. "I have also met a  
 good many monks and devotees in different places. But it is in Sri Rama-  
 krishna's presence that my spiritual yearnings have been fulfilled. To me he  
 seems to be the embodiment of the truths of the scriptures."

The Knowledge of Brahman in nirvikalpa samādhi had convinced Sri  
 Ramakrishna that the gods of the different religions are but so many readings  
 of the Absolute, and that the Ultimate Reality could never be expressed by  
 human tongue. He understood that all religions lead their devotees by dif-  
 fering paths to one and the same goal. Now he became eager to explore  
 some of the alien religions; for with him understanding meant actual  
 experience.

#### ISLĀM

Toward the end of 1866 he began to practise the disciplines of Islām.  
 Under the direction of his Mussalmān guru he abandoned himself to his  
 new sādhanā. He dressed as a Mussalmān and repeated the name of Āllāh.

His prayers took the form of the Islāmic devotions. He forgot the Hindu gods and goddesses—even Kāli—and gave up visiting the temples. He took up his residence outside the temple precincts. After three days he saw the vision of a radiant figure, perhaps Mohammed. This figure gently approached him and finally lost himself in Sri Ramakrishna. Thus he realized the Mussalmān God. Thence he passed into communion with Brahman. The mighty river of Islām also led him back to the Ocean of the Absolute.

#### CHRISTIANITY

Eight years later, some time in November 1874, Sri Ramakrishna was seized with an irresistible desire to learn the truth of the Christian religion. He began to listen to readings from the Bible, by Sambhu Charan Mallick, a gentleman of Calcutta and a devotee of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna became fascinated by the life and teachings of Jesus. One day he was seated in the parlour of Jadu Mallick's garden house<sup>6</sup> at Dakshineswar, when his eyes became fixed on a painting of the Madonna and Child. Intently watching it, he became gradually overwhelmed with divine emotion. The figures in the picture took on life, and the rays of light emanating from them entered his soul. The effect of this experience was stronger than that of the vision of Mohammed. In dismay he cried out, "O Mother! What are You doing to me?" And, breaking through the barriers of creed and religion, he entered a new realm of ecstasy. Christ possessed his soul. For three days he did not set foot in the Kāli temple. On the fourth day, in the afternoon, as he was walking in the Panchavati, he saw coming toward him a person with beautiful large eyes, serene countenance, and fair skin. As the two faced each other, a voice rang out in the depths of Sri Ramakrishna's soul: "Behold the Christ, who shed His heart's blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for love of men. It is He, the Master Yogi, who is in eternal union with God. It is Jesus, Love Incarnate." The Son of Man embraced the Son of the Divine Mother and merged in him. Sri Ramakrishna realized his identity with Christ, as he had already realized his identity with Kāli, Rāma, Hanumān, Rādhā, Krishna, Brahman, and Mohammed. The Master went into samādhi and communed with the Brahman with attributes. Thus he experienced the truth that Christianity, too, was a path leading to God-Consciousness. Till the last moment of his life he believed that Christ was an Incarnation of God. But Christ, for him, was not the only Incarnation; there were others—Buddha, for instance, and Krishna.

#### ATTITUDE TOWARD DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

Sri Ramakrishna accepted the divinity of Buddha and used to point out the similarity of his teachings to those of the Upanishads. He also showed great respect for the Tirthankaras, who founded Jainism, and for the ten Gurus of Śikhism. But he did not speak of them as Divine Incarnations. He was heard to say that the Gurus of Śikhism were the reincarnations of King

<sup>6</sup> This expression is used throughout to translate the Bengali word denoting a rich man's country house set in a garden.

Janaka of ancient India of Tirthankara Mahāvīra burnt morning and evening.

Without being for thus realized the idea to follow any doctrine of God. So he became the ideas and ideals of said he, "all religions followed the paths of same God toward which paths. You must try Wherever I look, I see Mohammedans, Brāhmins that He who is called Primal Energy, Jesus, names. A lake has seen and call it 'jal'; at another call it 'pāni'. At a third is not 'jal', but only 'j' under different names climate, temperament own path. If he since him! He will surely 1

In 1867 Sri Ramakrishna effect of his austerities companions of his ten villagers were happy and truthful Gadadhara that had come over here now fourteen years of ment was much beyond her husband's state of God and to live with fully both as his disciples experiences of these pitcher full of bliss v

On January 27, 1867 and twenty-five persons northern India. At Varanasi itants of a village requested his rich parents Mathur demurred at he would not go on their miseries. He a

Janaka of ancient India. He kept in his room at Dakshineswar a small statue of Tirthankara Mahāvira and a picture of Christ, before which incense was burnt morning and evening.

Without being formally initiated into their doctrines, Sri Ramakrishna thus realized the ideals of religions other than Hinduism. He did not need to follow any doctrine. All barriers were removed by his overwhelming love of God. So he became a Master who could speak with authority regarding the ideas and ideals of the various religions of the world. "I have practised", said he, "all religions—Hinduism, Islām, Christianity—and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects. I have found that it is the same God toward whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once. Wherever I look, I see men quarrelling in the name of religion—Hindus, Mohammedans, Brāhmos, Vaishnavas, and the rest. But they never reflect that He who is called Krishna is also called Śiva, and bears the name of the Primal Energy, Jesus, and Allāh as well—the same Rāma with a thousand names. A lake has several ghāts. At one the Hindus take water in pitchers and call it 'jal'; at another the Mussalmāns take water in leather bags and call it 'pāni'. At a third the Christians call it 'water'. Can we imagine that it is not 'jal', but only 'pāni' or 'water'? How ridiculous! The substance is One under different names, and everyone is seeking the same substance; only climate, temperament, and name create differences. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him! He will surely realize Him."

In 1867 Sri Ramakrishna returned to Kāmārpukur to recuperate from the effect of his austerities. The peaceful countryside, the simple and artless companions of his boyhood, and the pure air did him much good. The villagers were happy to get back their playful, frank, witty, kind-hearted, and truthful Gadadhar, though they did not fail to notice the great change that had come over him during his years in Calcutta. His wife, Sarada Devi, now fourteen years old, soon arrived at Kāmārpukur. Her spiritual development was much beyond her age and she was able to understand immediately her husband's state of mind. She became eager to learn from him about God and to live with him as his attendant. The Master accepted her cheerfully both as his disciple and as his spiritual companion. Referring to the experiences of these few days, she once said: "I used to feel always as if a pitcher full of bliss were placed in my heart. The joy was indescribable."

#### PILGRIMAGE

On January 27, 1868, Mathur Babu with a party of some one hundred and twenty-five persons set out on a pilgrimage to the sacred places of northern India. At Vaidyanath in Behar, when the Master saw the inhabitants of a village reduced by poverty and starvation to mere skeletons, he requested his rich patron to feed the people and give each a piece of cloth. Mathur demurred at the added expense. The Master declared bitterly that he would not go on to Benares, but would live with the poor and share their miseries. He actually left Mathur and sat down with the villagers.

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## ADVICE TO HOUSEHOLDERS

August 13, 1887

**T**HE MASTER WAS CONVERSING with Kedar and some other devotees in his room in the temple garden. Kedar was a government official and had spent several years at Dacca, in East Bengal, where he had become a friend of Vijay Goswami. The two would spend a great part of their time together, talking about Sri Ramakrishna and his spiritual experiences. Kedar had once been a member of the Brāhmo Samāj. He followed the path of bhakti. Spiritual talk always brought tears to his eyes.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. Kedar was very happy that day, having arranged a religious festival for Sri Ramakrishna. A singer had been hired by Ram, and the whole day passed in joy.

The Master explained to the devotees the secret of communion with God.

**MASTER:** "With the realization of Satchidānanda one goes into samādhi. Then duties drop away. Suppose I have been talking about the ostād and he arrives. What need is there of talking about him then? How long does the bee buzz around? So long as it isn't sitting on a flower. But it will not do for the sādḥaka to renounce duties. He should perform his duties, such as worship, japa, meditation, prayer, and pilgrimage.

"If you see someone engaged in reasoning even after he has realized God, you may liken him to a bee, which also buzzes a little even while sipping honey from a flower."

The Master was highly pleased with the ostād's music. He said to the musician, "There is a special manifestation of God's power in a man who has any outstanding gift, such as proficiency in music."

**MUSICIAN:** "Sir, what is the way to realize God?"

**MASTER:** "Bhakti is the one essential thing. To be sure, God exists in all beings. Who, then, is a devotee? He whose mind dwells on God. But this is not possible as long as one has egotism and vanity. The water of God's grace cannot collect on the high mound of egotism. It runs down. I am a mere machine.

(To Kedar and the other devotees) "God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach it by stone stairs or by wooden stairs or by bamboo steps or by a rope. You can also climb up by a bamboo pole.

"You may say that there are many errors and superstitions in another religion. I should reply: Suppose there are. Every religion has errors. Everyone thinks that his watch alone gives the correct time. It is enough to have yearning for God. It is enough to love Him and feel attracted to Him. Don't you know that God is the Inner Guide? He sees the longing of our heart and the yearning of our soul. Suppose a man has several sons. The older boys address him distinctly as 'Bābā' or 'Pāpā', but the babies can at best call him 'Bā' or 'Pā'. Now, will the father be angry with those who address him in this indistinct way? The father knows that they too are calling him, only they cannot pronounce his name well. All children are the same to the father. Likewise, the devotees call on God alone, though by different names. They call on one Person only. God is one, but His names are many."

Thursday, August 24, 1882

Sri Ramakrishna was talking to Hazra on the long northeast verandah of his room, when M. arrived. He saluted the Master reverently.

MASTER: "I should like to visit Iswar Chandra Vidyāsāgar a few times more. The painter first draws the general outlines and then puts in the details and colours at his leisure. The moulder first makes the image out of clay, then plasters it, then gives it a coat of whitewash, and last of all paints it with a brush. All these steps must be taken successively. Vidyāsāgar is fully ready, but his inner stuff is covered with a thin layer. He is now engaged in doing good works; but he doesn't know what is within himself. Gold is hidden within him. God dwells within us. If one knows that, one feels like giving up all activities and praying to God with a yearning soul."

So the Master talked with M.—now standing, now pacing up and down the long verandah.

MASTER: "A little spiritual discipline is necessary in order to know what lies within."

M: "Is it necessary to practise discipline all through life?"

MASTER: "No. But one must be up and doing in the beginning. After that one need not work hard. The helmsman stands up and clutches the rudder firmly as long as the boat is passing through waves, storms, high wind, or around the curves of a river; but he relaxes after steering through them. As soon as the boat passes the curves and the helmsman feels a favourable wind, he sits comfortably and just touches the rudder. Next he prepares to unfurl the sail and gets ready for a smoke. Likewise, the aspirant enjoys peace and calm after passing the waves and storms of 'woman and gold'.

"Some are born with the characteristics of the yogi; but they too should be careful. It is 'woman and gold' alone that is the obstacle; it makes them deviate from the path of yoga and drags them into worldliness. Perhaps they have some desire for enjoyment. After fulfilling their desire, they again direct their minds to God and thus recover their former state of mind, fit for the practise of yoga.

"Have you ever seen the spring trap for fish, called the 'satkā-kal'?"

M: "No, sir, I haven't seen it."

MASTER: "They pole is fastened in this end a line with When the fish s regains its upright

Again, take a side, the lower ne is the mind, and t

"Unless the mi worldliness that al flame. If that flar yoga.

"Woman and you see. What is flesh, fat, entrails,

"Sometimes I u tion. Once I had on my finger, and procured all these to myself after a robe." Then I too more. Again I said and this, smoking away once for all again."

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MASTER (to M. absorbed in the S him. His eyes are mother bird hatch there is a vacant l

M: "I shall try

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MASTER: "Perf Vidyāsāgar is eng without desiring ε

M: "Yes, sir. B one's duties? Can Hindi couplet: 'V there Rāma cann

MASTER: "All,

"I had to practise each religion for a time—Hinduism, Islām, Christianity. Furthermore, I followed the paths of the Śāktas, Vaiṣṇavas, and Vedāntists. I realized that there is only one God toward whom all are travelling; but the paths are different.

"While visiting the holy places, I would sometimes suffer great agony. Once I went with Mathur to Raja Babu's drawing-room in Benares. I found that they talked there only of worldly matters—money, real estate, and the like. At this I burst into tears. I said to the Divine Mother, weeping: 'Mother! Where hast Thou brought me? I was much better off at Dakshinesvar.' In Allāhābād I noticed the same things that I saw elsewhere—the same ponds, the same grass, the same trees, the same tamarind-leaves.

"But one undoubtedly finds inspiration in a holy place. I accompanied Mathur Babu to Vrindāvan. Hriday and the ladies of Mathur's family were in our party. No sooner did I see the Kāliyadaman Ghāt than a divine emotion surged up within me. I was completely overwhelmed. Hriday used to bathe me there as if I were a small child.

"In the dusk I would walk on the bank of the Jamunā when the cattle returned along the sandy banks from their pastures. At the very sight of those cows the thought of Krishna would flash in my mind. I would run along like a madman, crying: 'Oh, where is Krishna? Where is my Krishna?'

"I went to Śyāmakunda and Rādhākunda<sup>14</sup> in a palanquin and got out to visit the holy Mount Govardhan. At the very sight of the mount I was overpowered with divine emotion and ran to the top. I lost all consciousness of the world around me. The residents of the place helped me to come down. On my way to the sacred pools of Śyāmakunda and Rādhākunda, when I saw the meadows, the trees, the shrubs, the birds, and the deer, I was overcome with ecstasy. My clothes became wet with tears. I said: 'O Krishna! Everything here is as it was in the olden days. You alone are absent.' Seated inside the palanquin I lost all power of speech. Hriday followed the palanquin. He had warned the bearers to be careful about me.

"Gangāmāyī became very fond of me in Vrindāvan. She was an old woman who lived all alone in a hut near the Nidhuvan. Referring to my spiritual condition and ecstasy, she said, 'He is the very embodiment of Rādhā.' She addressed me as 'Dulālī'. When with her, I used to forget my food and drink, my bath, and all thought of going home. On some days Hriday used to bring food from home and feed me. Gangāmāyī also would serve me with food prepared by her own hands.

"Gangāmāyī used to experience trances. At such times a great crowd would come to see her. One day, in a state of ecstasy, she climbed on Hriday's shoulders.

"I didn't want to leave her and return to Calcutta. Everything was arranged for me to stay with her. I was to eat double-boiled rice, and we were to have our beds on either side of the cottage. All the arrangements had been made, when Hriday said: 'You have such a weak stomach. Who will look after you?' 'Why,' said Gangāmāyī, 'I shall look after him. I'll nurse him.' As Hriday dragged me by one hand and she by the other, I remem-

<sup>14</sup> Places near Mathurā associated with the episode of Krishna and Rādhā.



~~transitory things as wealth, name, and creature comforts may become less and less every day.~~

(To the *goswāmi*) "With sincerity and earnestness one can realize God through all religions. The Vaishnavas will realize God, and so will the Śaktas, the Vedāntists, and the Brāhmos. The Mussalmāns and Christians will realize Him too. All will certainly realize God if they are earnest and sincere.

"Some people indulge in quarrels, saying, 'One cannot attain anything unless one worships our Krishna', or, 'Nothing can be gained without the worship of Kālī, our Divine Mother', or, 'One cannot be saved without accepting the Christian religion.' This is pure dogmatism. The dogmatist says, 'My religion alone is true, and the religions of others are false.' This is a bad attitude. God can be reached by different paths.

"Further, some say that God has form and is not formless. Thus they start quarrelling. A Vaishnava quarrels with a Vedāntist.

"One can rightly speak of God only after one has seen Him. He who has seen God knows really and truly that God has form and that He is formless as well. He has many other aspects that cannot be described.

"Once some blind men chanced to come near an animal that someone told them was an elephant. They were asked what the elephant was like. The blind men began to feel its body. One of them said the elephant was like a pillar; he had touched only its leg. Another said it was like a winnowing-fan; he had touched only its ear. In this way the others, having touched its tail or belly, gave their different versions of the elephant. Just so, a man who has seen only one aspect of God limits God to that alone. It is his conviction that God cannot be anything else.

(To the *goswāmi*) "How can you say that the only truth about God is that He has form? It is undoubtedly true that God comes down to earth in a human form, as in the case of Krishna. And it is true as well that God reveals Himself to His devotees in various forms. But it is also true that God is formless; He is the Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. He has been described in the Vedas both as formless and as endowed with form. He is also described there both as attributeless and as endowed with attributes.

"Do you know what I mean? Satchidānanda is like an infinite ocean. Intense cold freezes the water into ice, which floats on the ocean in blocks of various forms. Likewise, through the cooling influence of bhakti, one sees forms of God in the Ocean of the Absolute. These forms are meant for the bhaktas, the lovers of God. But when the Sun of Knowledge rises, the ice melts; it becomes the same water it was before. Water above and water below, everywhere nothing but water. Therefore a prayer in the *Bhāgavata* says: 'O Lord, Thou hast form, and Thou art also formless. Thou walkest before us, O Lord, in the shape of a man; again, Thou hast been described in the Vedas as beyond words and thought.'

"But you may say that for certain devotees God assumes eternal forms. There are places in the ocean where the ice doesn't melt at all. It assumes the form of quartz."

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KEDAR: "It is said in the *Bhāgavata* that Vyāsa asked God's forgiveness for his three transgressions. He said: 'O Lord, Thou art formless, but I have thought of Thee in my meditation as endowed with form; Thou art beyond speech, but I have sung Thee hymns; Thou art the All-pervading Spirit, but I have made pilgrimages to sacred places. Be gracious, O Lord, and forgive these three transgressions of mine.'"

MASTER: "Yes, God has form and He is formless too. Further, He is beyond both form and formlessness. No one can limit Him."

Rakhal's father was sitting in the room. At that time Rakhal was staying with the Master. After his mother's death his father had married a second time. Now and then he came to Dakshineswar because of Rakhal's being there. He did not raise much objection to his son's living with the Master. Being a wealthy man of the world, he was always involved in litigation. There were lawyers and deputy magistrates among Sri Ramakrishna's visitors. Rakhal's father found it profitable to cultivate their acquaintance, since he expected to be benefited by their counsels in worldly matters.

Now and then the Master cast a glance at Rakhal's father. It was his cherished desire that Rakhal should live with him permanently at Dakshineswar.

MASTER (to Rakhal's father and the devotees): "Ah, what a nice character Rakhal has developed! Look at his face and every now and then you will notice his lips moving. Inwardly he repeats the name of God, and so his lips move.

"Youngsters like him belong to the class of the ever-perfect. They are born with God-Consciousness. No sooner do they grow a little older than they realize the danger of coming in contact with the world. There is the parable of the homā bird in the Vedas. The bird lives high up in the sky and never descends to earth. It lays its egg in the sky, and the egg begins to fall. But the bird lives in such a high region that the egg hatches while falling. The fledgling comes out and continues to fall. But it is still so high that while falling it grows wings and its eyes open. Then the young bird perceives that it is dashing down toward the earth and will be instantly killed. The moment it sees the ground, it turns and shoots up toward its mother in the sky. Then its one goal is to reach its mother.

"Youngsters like Rakhal are like that bird. From their very childhood they are afraid of the world, and their one thought is how to reach the Mother, how to realize God.

"You may ask, 'How is it possible for these boys, born of worldly parents and living among the worldly-minded, to develop such knowledge and devotion?' It can be explained. If a pea falls into a heap of dung, it germinates into a pea-plant none the less. The peas that grow on that plant serve many useful purposes. Because it was sown in dung, will it produce another kind of plant?

"Ah, what a sweet nature Rakhal has nowadays! And why shouldn't it be so? If the yam is a good one, its shoots also become good. (*All laugh.*) Like father like son."

## The Master

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MASTER (to M.):

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<sup>6</sup> The six passions.

<sup>7</sup> The human body.

'dal' grows in a stagnant pool. But, brothers, we want 'dal', we want a sect. Really and truly, I tell you that we want a sect.'"

MASTER: "What nonsense! Shame on him! What kind of sermon is that?"

The conversation drifted to the desire of some people for praise.

MASTER: "They took me to Keshab's house to see a performance of the *Nimā-sannyās*. I heard, that day, someone speaking of Keshab and Pratap as Chaitanya and Nityānanda. Prasanna asked me, 'Who are you then?' Keshab looked at me to see what I would say. I said to him, 'I am the servant of your servant, the dust of the dust of your feet.' Keshab said with a smile, 'You can't catch him!'"

RAM: "Sometimes Keshab used to say you were John the Baptist."

A DEVOTEE: "But Keshab also said you were the Chaitanya of the nineteenth century [said in English]."

MASTER: "What does that mean?"

DEVOTEE: "That Chaitanya has been incarnated again in the present century of the Christian era, and that you are he."

MASTER (*absent-mindedly*): "What of it? Can you tell me now how my arm can be cured? This arm is worrying me so much."

They talked about Trailokya's music. Trailokya sang devotional songs in Keshab's Brāhmo Samāj.

MASTER: "Ah! How nice his songs are!"

RAM: "Do you think they are genuine?"

MASTER: "Yes, they are. Otherwise, why should I be so drawn to them?"

RAM: "He has composed his songs by borrowing your ideas. While conducting the worship Keshab Sen described your feelings and realizations, and Trailokya Babu composed songs accordingly. Take this song, for instance:

There is an overflow of Joy in the market-place of Love;  
See how the Lord sports with His own in the ecstasy of Bliss!

He saw you enjoying divine bliss in the company of devotees and wrote songs like this.

MASTER (*with a smile*): "Stop! Don't torment me any more. Why should I be involved in all this?" (*All laugh.*)

GIRINDRA: "The Brāhmos say that the Paramahamsadeva has no faculty for organization [said in English]."

MASTER: "What does that mean?"

M: "That you don't know how to lead a sect; that your intellect is rather dull. They say things like that." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*to Ram*): "Now tell me why my arm was hurt. Stand up and deliver a lecture on that. (*Laughter.*)"

"The Brāhmos insist that God is formless. Suppose they do. It is enough to call on Him with sincerity of heart. If the devotee is sincere, then God, who is the Inner Guide of all, will certainly reveal to the devotee His true nature.

"But it is not good to say that what we ourselves think of God is the only truth and what others think is false; that because we think of God as

formless, therefore I we think of God as formless. Can a mar

"This kind of fric Vaishnava says, 'My My Bhagavati is th

"Once I took Vais a very learned Vaisl

the other hand, wa in a friendly discuss only Saviour.' No :

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"I see people wl another. Hindus, M rel with one anothe who is called Krist

again, who is calle a thousand names.'

"Truth is one; or the same Truth; th lake has many ghā it 'jal'. From anoth

call it 'pāni'. From 'water'. (*All laugh 'pāni'*), or that it is

It would indeed b tion among sects, t injure and kill on this is not good. E if they have since

(*To M.*) "This Tantras—seek Hi That which is call ananda Siva in the Krishna in the Pu

The Master wa home.

MASTER (*to M M*): "No, sir."

MASTER: "You made from cow's

A long convers was a devout Vā

married a second stepmother lived

formless, therefore He is formless and cannot have any form; that because we think of God as having form, therefore He has form and cannot be formless. Can a man really fathom God's nature?

"This kind of friction exists between the Vaishnavas and the Śāktas. The Vaishnava says, 'My Keśava is the only Saviour', whereas the Śākta insists, 'My Bhagavati is the only Saviour.'

"Once I took Vaishnavcharan to Mathur Babu. Now, Vaishnavcharan was a very learned Vaishnava and an orthodox devotee of his sect. Mathur, on the other hand, was a devotee of the Divine Mother. They were engaged in a friendly discussion when suddenly Vaishnavcharan said, 'Keśava is the only Saviour.' No sooner did Mathur hear this than his face became red with anger and he blurted out, 'You rascal!' (*All laugh.*) He was a Śākta. Wasn't it natural for him to say that? I gave Vaishnavcharan a nudge.

"I see people who talk about religion constantly quarrelling with one another. Hindus, Mussalmāns, Brāhmos, Śāktas, Vaishnavas, Śaivas, all quarrel with one another. They haven't the intelligence to understand that He who is called Krishna is also Śiva and the Primal Śakti, and that it is He, again, who is called Jesus and Allāh. 'There is only one Rāma and He has a thousand names.'

"Truth is one; only It is called by different names. All people are seeking the same Truth; the variance is due to climate, temperament, and name. A lake has many ghāts. From one ghāt the Hindus take water in jars and call it 'jal'. From another ghāt the Mussalmāns take water in leather bags and call it 'pāni'. From a third the Christians take the same thing and call it 'water'. (*All laugh.*) Suppose someone says that the thing is not 'jal' but 'pāni', or that it is not 'pāni' but 'water', or that it is not 'water' but 'jal'. It would indeed be ridiculous. But this very thing is at the root of the friction among sects, their misunderstandings and quarrels. This is why people injure and kill one another, and shed blood, in the name of religion. But this is not good. Everyone is going toward God. They will all realize Him if they have sincerity and longing of heart.

(*To M.*) "This is for you. All scriptures—the Vedas, the Purānas, the Tantras—seek Him alone and no one else, only that one Satchidānanda. That which is called Satchidānanda Brahman in the Vedas is called Satchidānanda Śiva in the Tantra. Again it is He alone who is called Satchidānanda Krishna in the Purānas."

The Master was told that now and then Ram cooked his own food at home.

MASTER (*to M.*): "Do you too cook your own meals?"

M: "No, sir."

MASTER: "You may try it. With your meals take a little clarified butter made from cow's milk. That will purify your body and mind."

A long conversation ensued about Ram's household affairs. Ram's father was a devout Vaishnava and worshipped Krishna daily at home. He had married a second time when Ram was quite young. Both the father and the stepmother lived with Ram at Ram's house. But Ram was never happy with

in a river or lake. We bow down to God and not to man. God is God—not, man is God.

"God cannot be known through reasoning. All depends on faith. Of course, I am repeating to you what Sri Ramakrishna says."

Dr. Sarkar presented M. with one of his books, *The Physiological Basis of Psychology*. He wrote on the first page "As a token of brotherly regards."

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room with the devotees. He was talking to a Christian devotee named Misra. Misra was born of a Christian family in northwestern India and belonged to the Quaker sect. He was thirty-five years old. Though clad in European dress he wore the ochre cloth of a sannyāsi under his foreign clothes. Two of his brothers had died on the day fixed for the marriage of one of them, and on that very day Misra had renounced the world.

MISRA: "It is Rāma alone who dwells in all beings."

Sri Ramakrishna said to the younger Naren, within Misra's hearing: "Rāma is one, but He has a thousand names. He who is called 'God' by the Christians is addressed by the Hindus as Rāma, Krishna, Śvara, and by other names. A lake has many ghāts. The Hindus drink water at one ghāt and call it 'jal'; the Christians at another, and call it 'water'; the Mussalmāns at a third, and call it 'pāni'. Likewise, He who is God to the Christians is Allāh to the Mussalmāns."

MISRA: "Jesus is not the son of Mary. He is God Himself. (To the devotees) Now he (pointing to Sri Ramakrishna) is as you see him—again, he is God Himself. You are not able to recognize him. I have seen him before, in visions, though I see him now directly with my eyes. I saw a garden where he was seated on a raised seat. Another person was seated on the ground, but he was not so far advanced."

"There are four door-keepers of God in this country: Tukārām in Bombay, Robert Michael in Kashmir, himself [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] in this part of the country, and another person in eastern Bengal."

MASTER: "Do you see visions?"

MISRA: "Sir, even when I lived at home I used to see light. Then I had a vision of Jesus. How can I describe that beauty? How insignificant is the beauty of a woman compared with that beauty!"

After a while Misra took off his trousers and showed the devotees the gerruā loin-cloth that he wore underneath.

Presently Sri Ramakrishna went out on the porch. Returning to the room, he said to the devotees, "I saw him [meaning Misra] standing in a heroic posture." As he uttered these words he went into samādhi. He stood facing the west.

Regaining partial consciousness, he fixed his gaze on Misra and began to laugh. Still in an ecstatic mood, he shook hands with him and laughed again. Taking him by the hands, he said, "You will get what you are seeking."

MISRA (with folded hands): "Since that day I have surrendered to you my mind, soul, and body."

Sri Ramakrishna was laughing, still in an ecstatic mood.

In the

The Master resumed devotees. He told them came down at the time Sri Ramakrishna and Dr. Sarkar arrive samādhi. When his inebriation and then DOCTOR: "Yes." MASTER: "I am not. The doctor realized. Therefore he said, 'Sri Ramakrishna is

I drink no ordinary. As I repeat my mantra, it so intoxicates me. First my guru gave me. My longing is for knowledge, the And when it is mantra, Taking the Mother. Drink of this Wine of yours.

As the doctor listened to Sri Ramakrishna again we the doctor's lap. A few and withdrew his foot. you said the other day! about our illness if not Him." As Sri Ramakrishna he went into ecstasy and I could not have put my has peace who has taste there in it? What is the 'O mind, know Rāma! V The devotees were in state of ill health. He said 'The Wine of Heavenly Narendrar was sent for

Be drunk, O mirror. Roll on the ground. Fill the arching. Singing Hari's st. Dance in the narrow. Swim day and night. Slay desire with

NARENDRA: "As regards food, one should take whatever comes."

MASTER: "What you say applies only to a particular state of the aspirant's mind. No food can harm a jñāni. According to the *Gītā*, the jñāni himself does not eat; his eating is an offering to the Kūṇḍalīnī. But that does not apply to a bhakta. The present state of my mind is such that I cannot eat any food unless it is first offered to God by a brāhmin priest. Formerly my state of mind was such that I would enjoy inhaling the smell of burning corpses, carried by the wind from the other side of the Ganges. It tasted very sweet to me. But nowadays I cannot eat food touched by anybody and everybody. No, I cannot. But once in a while I do. One day I was taken to see a performance of a play at Keshab's house. They gave me luchi and curries to eat. I didn't know whether the food was handed to me by a washerman or a barber; but I ate quite a little. (*All laugh.*) Rakhāl had asked me to eat.

(*To Narendra*) "With you it is all right. You are in 'this' as well as in 'that'.<sup>6</sup> You can eat everything now. (*To the devotees*) Blessed is he who feels longing for God, though he eats pork. But shame on him whose mind dwells on 'woman and gold', though he eats the purest food—boiled vegetables, rice, and ghee.

"Once I had a desire to eat dāl cooked in a blacksmith's house. From my childhood I had heard the blacksmiths say, 'Do the brāhmins know how to cook?' I ate the dāl, but it smelt of the blacksmith. (*All laugh.*)

"I received the Allāh mantra<sup>7</sup> from Govinda Rai. Rice was cooked for me with onions<sup>8</sup> in the kuthi. I ate some. I ate curry in Mani Mallick's garden house, but I felt a kind of repulsion to it.

"When I went to Kāmārpukur, Ramlāl's father was frightened. He thought I might eat at any and every house. He was frightened to think I might be expelled from the caste; so I couldn't stay long. I came away.

"Both the Vedas and the Purānas describe pure food and conduct. But what the Vedas and the Purānas ask people to shun as impure is extolled by the Tantra as good.

"Oh, what a state of mind I passed through! I would open my mouth, touching, as it were, heaven and the nether world with my jaws, and utter the word 'Mā'. I felt that I had seized the Mother, like a fisherman dragging fish in his net. Let me recite a song:

This time I shall devour Thee utterly, Mother Kālī!  
For I was born under an evil star,  
And one so born becomes, they say, the eater of his mother.  
Thou must devour me first, or I myself shall eat Thee up;  
One or the other it must be.

I shall besmear my hands with black,<sup>9</sup> and with black my face;  
With black I shall besmear the whole of my body.  
And when Death seizes me, with black I shall besmear his face.

<sup>6</sup> That is to say, Narendra was attentive both to the world and to the spiritual life.

<sup>7</sup> The Master was referring to his initiation into Islām.

<sup>8</sup> The Mussalmāns generally relish onions, which are forbidden to orthodox brāhmins.

<sup>9</sup> Black is the colour of Kālī's complexion.

O Mother, I shall  
I shall install Thee  
And make Thee of  
You may say that b  
With Kāla,<sup>10</sup> Her f  
Braving His anger,  
To show the world  
Come what may, I  
Or lose my life atte

"I almost became mad—  
Narendra began to sin

O Mother,  
What need

Listening to the song,  
to the normal plane, he  
agamani. He sang, intoxi

Tell me, my Umā  
house? . . .

He said to the devotees  
that is why I feel such a  
KEDAR: "Lord, you are  
Sri Ramakrishna looke  
mood:

Ah, friend! I have  
mad. . . .

Again he became ecs  
Vijay suddenly stood up  
divine love, began to da

The music was over.  
votees sat down. All eye  
versing with the devotec  
humbly in a soft, sweet  
were sitting by the Mas

KEDAR (*humbly*): "H

MASTER (*tenderly*):

almond oil. I have heard

KEDAR: "I shall, sir."

MASTER (*to Chunilal*)

CHUNILAL: "Everyth

Rakhāl are well at Vrīn  
MASTER: "Why have

day or two before com  
<sup>10</sup> Śiva, the Absolute.  
<sup>11</sup> Consort of King Him

NOTE  
→

men of the family. The devotees were strolling outside in the moonlight. M. and Binode were pacing the street south of the house and recalling the various incidents in the life of their beloved Master.

Sri Ramakrishna had returned to Balam's house. He was resting in the small room to the west of the drawing-room. It was quite late, almost a quarter to eleven.

Sri Ramakrishna said to Jogin, "Please rub my feet gently." M. was sitting near by. While Jogin was rubbing his feet the Master said suddenly: "I feel hungry. I shall eat some farina pudding."

The brāhmani had accompanied the Master and the devotees to Balam's house. Her brother knew how to play the drums. Sri Ramakrishna said, "It will serve our purpose to send for her brother when Narendra or some other singer wants to sing."

Sri Ramakrishna ate a little pudding. Jogin and the other devotees left the room. M. was stroking the Master's feet. They talked together.

MASTER (*referring to the brāhmani and her relatives*): "Ah! How happy they were!"

M: "How amazing! A similar thing happened with two women at the time of Jesus. They too were sisters, and devoted to Christ. Martha and Mary."

MASTER (*eagerly*): "Tell me the story."

M: "Jesus Christ, like you, went to their house with His devotees. At the sight of Him one of the sisters was filled with ecstatic happiness. It reminds me of a song about Gaurānga:

My two eyes sank in the sea of Gorā's heavenly beauty  
And did not come back to me again;  
Down went my mind, as well, forgetting how to swim.

"The other sister, all by herself, was arranging the food to entertain Jesus. She complained to the Master, saying: 'Lord, please judge for Yourself—how wrong my sister is! She is sitting in Your room and I am doing all these things by myself.' Jesus said: 'Your sister indeed is blessed. She has developed the only thing needful in human life: love of God.'"

MASTER: "Well, after seeing all this, what do you feel?"

M: "I feel that Christ, Chaitanyadeva, and yourself—all three are one and the same. It is the same Person that has become all these three."

MASTER: "Yes, yes! One! One! It is indeed one. Don't you see that it is He alone who dwells here in this way."

As he said this, Sri Ramakrishna pointed with his finger to his own body.

M: "You explained clearly, the other day, how God incarnates Himself on earth."

MASTER: "Tell me what I said."

M: "You told us to imagine a field extending to the horizon and beyond. It extends without any obstruction; but we cannot see it on account of a wall in front of us. In that wall there is a round hole. Through the hole we see a part of that infinite field."



MASTER: "Tell me what that hole is."

M: "You are that hole. Through you can be seen everything—that Infinite Meadow without any end."

Sri Ramakrishna was very much pleased. Patting M.'s back, he said: "I see you have understood that. That's fine!"

M: "It is indeed difficult to understand that. One cannot quite grasp how God, Perfect Brahman that He is, can dwell in that small body."

The Master quoted from a song:

Oh, no one at all has found out who He is;  
Like a madman from door to door He roams,  
Like a poor beggar He roams from door to door.

M: "You also told us about Jesus."

MASTER: "What did I say?"

M: "You went into samādhi at the sight of Jesus Christ's picture in Jadu Mallick's garden house. You saw Jesus come down from the picture and merge in your body."

Sri Ramakrishna was silent a few moments. Then he said to M.: "Perhaps there is a meaning in what has happened to my throat [referring to the sore in his throat]. This has happened lest I should make myself light before all; lest I should go to all sorts of places and sing and dance."

Sri Ramakrishna began to talk about Dwija.

MASTER: "He didn't come today. Why?"

M: "I asked him to come. He said he would. I don't know why he didn't."

MASTER: "He has great yearning. Well, he must be someone belonging to this.<sup>6</sup> Isn't that so?"

M: "Yes, sir, it must be so. Otherwise, how could he have such yearning?"

Sri Ramakrishna lay down inside the mosquito curtain. M. fanned him. The Master turned on his side. He told M. how God incarnates Himself in a human body. He told him, further, about his, M.'s, spiritual ideal.

MASTER: "At the beginning I too passed through such states that I did not see divine forms. Even now I don't see them often."

M: "Among all the forms God chooses for His līlā, I like best His play as a human being."

MASTER: "That is enough. And you are seeing me."

<sup>6</sup> Meaning the circle of the Master's devotees.

## THE M

SRI RAMAKRISHNA  
Dwija and he  
four o'clock in

After returning  
Now he was staying  
staying at the temple

Sri Ramakrishna  
quently diagnosed  
his mind. Day and  
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God. He encouraged  
and warned them  
indifferent to his  
fulfilment of his ideal

Dwija was about  
father had married  
eswar; but his father

Dwija's father had  
krishna. Today he  
business firm in Calcutta

MASTER (to Dwija)  
here.

"I ask people to  
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it under earth or in

"I ask people to  
the jack-fruit after  
them.

"If the 'unripe'  
should first attain to



Consciousness. Again, if you direct the mind to worldly duties, such as the acting of a play, it will be coloured by worldliness."

Sri Ramakrishna had rested on his bed only a few minutes when Hari,<sup>1</sup> Narayan, Narendra Bannerji, and other devotees arrived from Calcutta and saluted him. Narendra Bannerji was the son of the professor of Sanskrit at the Presidency College of Calcutta. Because of friction with other members of the family, he had rented a separate house where he lived with his wife and children. Narendra was a very simple and guileless man. He practised spiritual discipline and, at the time of meditation, heard various sounds—the sound of a gong, and so on. He had travelled in different parts of India and he visited the Master now and then.

Narayan was a schoolboy sixteen or seventeen years old. He often visited the Master, who was very fond of him.

Hari lived with his brothers at their Bāghbāzār house. He had studied up to the matriculation class in the General Assembly Institution. Then he had given up his studies and devoted his time at home to the contemplation of God, the reading of the scriptures, and the practice of yoga. He also visited the Master now and then. Sri Ramakrishna often sent for Hari when he went to Balaram's house in Bāghbāzār.

MASTER (to the devotees): "I have heard a great deal about Buddha. He is one of the ten Incarnations of God.<sup>2</sup> Brahman is immovable, immutable, inactive, and of the nature of Consciousness. When a man merges his *buddhi*, his intelligence, in *Bodha*, Consciousness, then he attains the Knowledge of Brahman; he becomes *buddha*, enlightened.

"Nangtā used to say that the mind merges in the *buddhi*, and the *buddhi* in *Bodha*, Consciousness.

"The aspirant does not attain the Knowledge of Brahman as long as he is conscious of his ego. The ego comes under one's control after one has obtained the Knowledge of Brahman and seen God. Otherwise the ego cannot be controlled. It is difficult to catch one's own shadow. But when the sun is overhead, the shadow is within a few inches of the body."

A DEVOTEES: "What is the vision of God like?"

MASTER: "Haven't you seen a theatrical performance? The people are engaged in conversation, when suddenly the curtain goes up. Then the entire mind of the audience is directed to the play. The people don't look at other things any longer. *Samādhi* is to go within oneself like that. When the curtain is rung down, people look around again. Just so, when the curtain of *māyā* falls, the mind becomes externalized.

(To Narendra Bannerji) "You have travelled a great deal. Tell us something about the *sādhus*."

Narendra told the story of two yogis in Bhutān who used to drink daily a pound of the bitter juice of neem-leaves. He had also visited the hermitage of a holy man on the bank of the Narmadā. At the sight of the Bengali

<sup>1</sup> A monastic disciple of the Master, later known as Swami Turiyananda.

<sup>2</sup> Hindu mythology speaks of ten Incarnations of God.

Babu dressed  
hidden under

MASTER: "constantly qu

BANNERJI: living in the  
of hemp."<sup>3</sup>

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MASTER: I tell you?  
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MASTER: book calle  
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<sup>3</sup> Many w

GIRISH (to the devotees): "Pundit Shashadhar said to him [meaning the Master]: 'Please bring your mind to bear on the body during samādhi. That will cure your illness.' And he, the Master, saw in a vision that the body was nothing but a loose mass of flesh and bones."

MASTER: "Once, a long time ago, I was very ill. I was sitting in the Kālī temple. I felt like praying to the Divine Mother to cure my illness, but couldn't do so directly in my own name. I said to Her, 'Mother, Hriday asks me to tell You about my illness.' I could not proceed any farther. At once there flashed into my mind the Museum of the Asiatic Society, and a human skeleton strung together with wire. I said to Her, 'Please tighten the wire of my body like that, so that I may go about singing Your name and glories.' It is impossible for me to ask for occult powers."

"At first Hriday asked me—I was then under his control—to pray to the Mother for powers. I went to the temple. In a vision I saw a widow thirty or thirty-five years old, covered with filth. It was revealed to me that occult powers are like that filth. I became angry with Hriday because he had asked me to pray for powers."

Ramtaran began to sing:

Behold my *vinā*, my dearly beloved,  
My lute of sweetest tone;  
If tenderly you play on it,  
The strings will waken, at your touch,  
To rarest melodies.  
Tune it neither low nor high,  
And from it in a hundred streams  
The sweetest sound will flow;  
But over-slack the strings are mute,  
And over-stretched they snap in twain.

DOCTOR (to Girish): "Is it an original song?"

GIRISH: "No, it is an adaptation from Edwin Arnold."

Ramtaran sang from the play, *The Life of Buddha*:

We moan for rest, alas! but rest can never find;  
We know not whence we come, nor where we float away.  
Time and again we tread this round of smiles and tears;  
In vain we pine to know whither our pathway leads,  
And why we play this empty play.

We sleep, although awake, as if by a spell bewitched;  
Will darkness never break into the light of dawn?  
As restless as the wind, life moves unceasingly:  
We know not who we are, nor whence it is we come;  
We know not why we come, nor where it is we drift;  
Sharp woes dart forth on every side.

How many drift about, now gay, now drowned in tears!  
One moment they exist; the next they are no more.  
We know not why we come, nor what our deeds have been,  
Nor, in our bygone lives, how well we played our parts;

Like water in a stream, we cannot stay at rest;  
Onward we flow for evermore.

Burst Thou our slumber's bars, O Thou that art awake!  
How long must we remain enmeshed in fruitless dreams?  
Are you indeed awake? Then do not longer sleep!  
Thick on you lies the gloom fraught with a million woes.  
Rise, dreamer, from your dream, and slumber not again!  
Shine forth, O Shining One, and with Thy shafts of light  
Slay Thou the blinding dark! Our only Saviour Thou!  
We seek deliverance at Thy feet.

As Sri Ramakrishna listened to the song he went into samādhi.  
Ramtaran sang again:

Blow, storm! Rage and roar! . . .

When the song was over, Sri Ramakrishna said to the singer: "What is this? Why this decoction of bitter neem-leaves after the rice pudding? The moment you sang—

Shine forth, O Shining One, and with Thy shafts of light  
Slay Thou the blinding dark!

I had a vision of the Sun. As He arose, the darkness vanished, and all men took refuge at His feet."

Ramtaran sang again:

O Mother, Saviour of the helpless, Thou the Slayer of sin!  
In Thee do the three gunas dwell—sattva, rajas, and tamas.  
Thou dost create the world; Thou dost sustain it and destroy it;  
Binding Thyself with attributes, Thou yet transcendest them;  
For Thou, O Mother, art the All.  
Kāli Thou art, and Tārā, and Thou the Ultimate Prakriti;  
Thou art the Fish, the Turtle, the Boar, and all other Avatārs;  
Earth, water, air, and fire art Thou, and Thou the sky,  
O Mother of the Absolute!

The Sāmkhya, Pātanjala, Mimānsaka, and Nyāya  
For ever seek to fathom Thee and know Thine inmost nature;  
Vedānta and Vaiśeshika are searching after Thee;  
But none of them has found Thee out.  
Though free of limitations, beginningless and without end,  
Yet for Thy loving bhaktas' sake Thou wearest varying forms.  
The terrors of this world Thou dost remove, and Thou dost dwell  
Alike in present, past, and future.

Thou dost appear with form, to him who loves Thee as a Person;  
Thou art the Absolute, to him who worships formless Truth.  
Some there are who speak alone of the resplendent Brahman;  
Even this, O Blissful Mother, is nothing else but Thee!  
Each man, according to his measure, makes his image of the Truth,  
Calling it the Highest Brahman.  
Beyond this does Turiya shine, the Indescribable;  
O Mother of all things, who dost pervade the universe,  
Every one of these art Thou!

Then he sang:

Dear friend,  
No more care  
Oh, shame  
I try to me  
Wearing I  
But it is all  
flow

And hold  
That shine

I think of  
Him alone  
Oh, shame  
I try to off  
But the ra  
less

And all my  
By the sig

Sri Ramakrishna  
The musician

O Mother,  
I beg of Thee  
Then I shall  
And I shall  
And Thou  
ha:

The singing was  
There was a deep  
meditation. He said  
krishna said, "A  
ness."

MANOMOHAN  
son, "I don't care  
DOCTOR: "Ah,  
when you have

MASTER (smiling)  
DOCTOR: "Yes  
say a few things

MASTER: "You  
as he said, 'God  
sincerity.'

"Why am I so  
a little boiling is

<sup>1</sup> Krishna.

<sup>2</sup> Śyāmā.

<sup>3</sup> A man forget  
Incarnation,



## THE MASTER AND BUDDHA

Friday, April 9, 1886

IT WAS FIVE O'CLOCK in the afternoon. Narendra, Kali, Niranjan, and M. were talking downstairs in the Cossipore garden house.

NIRANJAN (*to M.*): "Is it true that Vidyāsāgar is going to open a new school? Why don't you try to secure employment there for Naren?"

NARENDRA: "I have had enough of service under Vidyāsāgar."

Narendra had just returned from a visit to Bodh-Gayā, where he had gone with Kali and Tarak. In that sacred place he had been absorbed in deep meditation before the image of Buddha. He had paid his respects to the Bodhi-tree, which is an offshoot of the original tree under which Buddha attained Nirvāna.

Kali said, "One day at Gayā, at Umesh Babu's house, Narendra sang many classical songs to the accompaniment of the mridanga."

Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed in the big hall upstairs. It was evening. M. was alone in the room, fanning the Master. Latu came in a little later.

MASTER (*to M.*): "Please bring a chāddar for me and a pair of slippers."

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER (*to Latu*): "The chāddar will cost ten ānnās, and then the slippers—what will be the total cost?"

LATU: "One rupee and ten ānnās."

Sri Ramakrishna asked M., by a sign, to note the price.

Narendra entered the room and took a seat. Sashi, Rakhai, and one or two other devotees came in. The Master asked Narendra to stroke his feet. He also asked him whether he had taken his meal.

MASTER (*smiling, to M.*): "He went there [referring to Bodh-Gayā]."

M. (*to Narendra*): "What are the doctrines of Buddha?"

NARENDRA: "He could not express in words what he had realized by his tapasyā. So people say he was an atheist."

MASTER (*by signs*): "Why atheist? He was not an atheist. He simply could not express his inner experiences in words. Do you know what 'Buddha' means? It is to become one with Bodha, Pure Intelligence, by meditating on That which is of the nature of Pure Intelligence; it is to become Pure Intelligence Itself."

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

NARENDRA: "Yes, sir. There are three classes of Buddhas: Buddha, Arhat, and Bodhisattva."

MASTER: "This too is a sport of God Himself, a new *lilā* of God."

"Why should Buddha be called an atheist? When one realizes Svarupa, the true nature of one's Self, one attains a state that is something between *asti*, *is*, and *nāsti*, *is-not*."

NARENDRA (to M.): "It is a state in which contradictions meet. A combination of hydrogen and oxygen produces cool water; and the same hydrogen and oxygen are used in the oxy-hydrogen blowpipe."

"In that state both activity and non-activity are possible; that is to say, one then performs unselfish action."

"Worldly people, who are engrossed in sense-objects, say that everything exists—*asti*. But the *māyāvādīs*, the illusionists, say that nothing exists—*nāsti*. The experience of a Buddha is beyond both 'existence' and 'non-existence'."

MASTER: "This 'existence' and 'non-existence' are attributes of Prakriti. The Reality is beyond both."

The devotees remained silent a few moments.

MASTER (to Narendra): "What did Buddha preach?"

NARENDRA: "He did not discuss the existence or non-existence of God. But he showed compassion for others all his life."

"A hawk pounced upon a bird and was about to devour it. In order to save the bird, Buddha gave the hawk his own flesh."

Sri Ramakrishna remained silent. Narendra became more and more enthusiastic about Buddha.

NARENDRA: "How great his renunciation was! Born a prince, he renounced everything! If a man has nothing, no wealth at all, what does his renunciation amount to? After attaining Buddhahood and experiencing Nirvāna, Buddha once visited his home and exhorted his wife, his son, and many others of the royal household to embrace the life of renunciation. How intense his renunciation was! But look at Vyāsa's conduct! He forbade his son Śukadeva to give up the world, saying, 'My son, practise religion as a householder.'"

Sri Ramakrishna was silent. As yet he had not uttered a word.

NARENDRA: "Buddha did not care for Śakti or any such thing. He sought only Nirvāna. Ah, how intense his dispassion was! When he sat down under the Bodhi-tree to meditate, he took this vow: 'Let my body wither away here if I do not attain Nirvāna.' Such a firm resolve!"

"This body, indeed, is the great enemy. Can anything be achieved without chastising it?"

SASHI: "But it is you who say that one develops sattva by eating meat. You insist that one should eat meat."

NARENDRA: "I eat meat, no doubt, but I can also live on rice, mere rice, even without salt."

After a few minutes Sri Ramakrishna broke his silence. He asked Narendra, by a sign, whether he had seen a tuft of hair on Buddha's head.

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MASTER: "A

NARENDRA: 'Sri Ramakris

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MASTER (to

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NARENDRA:

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MASTER: "S

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MASTER: "T

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NARENDRA:

MASTER: "I

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Great Energy.

"Just as a f

also does the

samādhi. One

movement of

NARENDRA: "No, sir. He seems to have a sort of crown; his head seems to be covered by strings of rudrāksha beads placed on top of one another."

MASTER: "And his eyes?"

NARENDRA: "They show that he is in samādhi."

Sri Ramakrishna again became silent. Narendra and the other devotees looked at him intently. Suddenly a smile lighted his face and he began to talk with Narendra. M. was fanning him.

MASTER (to Narendra): "Well, here you find everything—even ordinary red lentils and tamarind. Isn't that so?"

NARENDRA: "After experiencing all those states, you are now dwelling on a lower plane."

M. (to himself): "Yes, after realizing all those ideals, he is now living as a bhakta, a devotee of God."

MASTER: "Someone seems to be holding me to a lower plane."

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna took the fan from M.'s hand and said: "As I see this fan, *directly* before me, in exactly the same manner have I seen God. And I have seen—"

With these words he placed his hand on his heart and asked Narendra, by a sign, "Can you tell me what I said?"

NARENDRA: "I have understood."

MASTER: "Tell me."

NARENDRA: "I didn't hear you well."

Sri Ramakrishna said again, by a sign, "I have seen that He and the one who dwells in my heart are one and the same Person."

NARENDRA: "Yes, yes! *Soham*—I am He."

MASTER: "But only a line divides the two—that I may enjoy divine bliss."

NARENDRA (to M.): "Great souls, even after their own liberation, retain the ego and experience the pleasure and pain of the body that they may help others to attain liberation."

"It is like coolie work. We perform coolie work under compulsion, but great souls do so of their own sweet pleasure."

Again all fell into silence. After a time Sri Ramakrishna resumed the conversation.

MASTER (to Narendra and the others): "The roof is clearly visible; but it is extremely hard to reach it."

NARENDRA: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "But if someone who has already reached it drops down a rope, he can pull another person up."

"Once a sādhu from Hrishikesh came to Dakshineswar. He said to me: 'How amazing! I find five kinds of samādhi manifested in you.'

"Just as a monkey climbs a tree, jumping from one branch to another, so also does the Mahāvāyu, the Great Energy, rise in the body, jumping from one centre to another, and one goes into samādhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a monkey.

"Just as a fish darts about in the water and roams in great happiness, so also does the Mahāvāyu move upward in the body, and one goes into samādhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a fish."



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"Like a bird hopping from one branch to another, the Mahāvāyu goes up in the tree of the body, now to this branch and now to that. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a bird.

"Like the slow creeping of an ant, the Mahāvāyu rises from centre to centre. When it reaches the Sahasrāra one goes into samādhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of an ant.

"Like the wriggling of a snake, the Mahāvāyu rises in a zigzag way along the spinal column till it reaches the Sahasrāra, and one goes into samādhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a snake."

RAKHAL (*to the other devotees*): "Let us stop here. He has already talked a great deal. It will aggravate his illness."

Monday, April 12, 1886

About five o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the bed in his room in the Cossipore garden house. Sashi and M. were with him. He asked M., by a sign, to fan him. There was a fair in the neighbourhood in celebration of the last day of the Bengali year. A devotee, whom Sri Ramakrishna had sent to the fair to buy a few articles, returned.

"What have you bought?" the Master asked him.

DEVOTEE: "Candy for five pice, a spoon for two pice, and a vegetable-knife for two pice."

MASTER: "What about the penknife?"

DEVOTEE: "I couldn't get one for two pice."

MASTER (*eagerly*): "Go quickly and get one!"

M. was pacing the garden. Narendra and Tarak returned from Calcutta. They had visited Girish Ghosh's house and other places.

TARAK: "We have eaten a great deal of meat and other heavy stuff today."

NARENDRA: "Yes, our minds have come down a great deal. Let us practise tapasyā. (*To M.*) What slavery to body and mind! We are just like coolies—as if this body and mind were not ours but belonged to someone else."

In the evening lamps were lighted in the house. Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed, facing the north. He was absorbed in contemplation of the Mother of the Universe. A few minutes later Fakir, who belonged to the priestly family of Balaram, recited the Hymn of Forgiveness addressed to the Divine Mother. Sashi, M., and two or three other devotees were in the room. After the recital Sri Ramakrishna, with folded hands, very respectfully bowed to the Deity.

M. was fanning Sri Ramakrishna. The Master said to him by signs, "Get a stone cup for me that will hold a quarter of a seer of milk—white stone." He drew the shape of the cup with his finger.

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER: "When eating from other cups I get the smell of fish."

Tuesday, April 13, 1886

It was about eight o'clock in the morning. M. had spent the night at the garden house. After taking his bath in the Ganges he prostrated himself

before Sri Ramakrishna and took a seat. He had Master. Most of the Master's room.

Sri Ramakrishna

MASTER: "How d

RAM: "In you on

"Presently there w

The Master smile discussion about my

Sri Ramakrishna<sup>1</sup> intended to buy a ne

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Sri Ramakrishna

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MASTER: "Don't l

M: "Sir, these dev

M. bought the cu saluted the Master a

cup in his hands and Haldar, and several

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DR. SREENATH (Prakriti. Nobody car

MASTER: "Why, i takes refuge in Him

DR. SREENATH: " action performed in

MASTER: "No do it is cancelled by the

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future births."

DR. SREENATH: " fruit of karma."

Dr. Sreenath was MASTER (*to M.*):

between the Ísvarak sin. Why don't you

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<sup>1</sup> These slippers give Headquarters of the B