

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 prasad¹.

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 Brahmo 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

¹ Sacramental food which has been offered to the deity

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*¹ 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 Kaviraj² of Natagore was sent for. Krishnakishore said to him, ‘My good brother! Do please cure me of my disease, but not of my Om³!’

“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.

¹ Long cloth for covering the body

² An Ayurvedic physician

³ Omkar, the Vedic symbol for the Supreme Being

“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 Captain¹ 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*². He was performing *japa*³ 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.

¹ 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.

² A brick landing stair on the bank of a river, a pond, or a reservoir

³ Repetition of the Name

“ ‘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. Rakhal, M., Narendra’s Brahmo 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 Sundaram¹ manifests Itself 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*², 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!

¹ Absolute Truth, Absolute Good and Absolute Beauty are one

² A red-legged partridge which enjoys moonbeams

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*¹ and cymbals. Narendra and other
devotees sing the kirtan, forming a circle around Sri
Ramakrishna. Now they sing – 'Get absorbed in the

¹ Drum

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 Nahabat¹. 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.

¹ Music tower

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*¹**

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.

¹ Know that Self alone and discard all other talks. Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.5

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*¹ 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!)

¹ Divine sport

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*¹, *tagi*, *tagi*, *tagi*.” And sometimes he says, “Thou art Brahman, Thou art Shakti (Divine Power); Thou art Purusha²; Thou art Prakriti³; Thou art *virat*⁴; Thou art *svarata*⁵; Thou art *Nitya* (the Absolute); Thine is the whole *lila*; Thou art the twenty-four cosmic principles.”

In the meanwhile, early morning *arati*⁶ 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

¹ Tagi means a renouncer. It is formed by reversing the word “Gita”.

² The Self, the Absolute, Spirit. Pure Consciousness, the witness of the changes of Prakriti

³ Primordial Nature, composed of the gunas, the material of the universe of mind and matter

⁴ Personified vastness

⁵ One who is self-illuminated and illumines others

⁶ Singing of devotional songs along with waving of lights before the sacred images

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 Narayana¹!” 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*² 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

¹ Salutations to the Lord

² 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 Vindiyachal on this day of Bhadra never to return.

great eagerness, “Go to the banyan tree and meditate on the Lord. Shall I give you an *asana* (mat)?”

Narendra and his Brahmo 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 Brahmo 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*¹, 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.”

¹ Kundalini; the serpent power

**The Brahmo 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*¹ and no *bhajan*²; 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.”

¹ Practice of spiritual disciplines

² Singing of devotional hymns

**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.

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 Bhavatarini¹ faces the entrance to the temple garden. The *sawai*² is being played beautifully in the natmandir, in *prabhati*³ 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, Rakhal 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.

¹ The Divine Mother, saviour of mankind from the bonds of the world

² A wooden wind instrument

³ Matin; morning song

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 darshan¹ of the dual images of Radha and Krishna. To his left are the twelve Shiva temples. He offers obeisance, thinking of Sadashiva².

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

¹ 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.

² An appellation of Lord Shiva

*paramahansa*¹. 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

¹ Highest class among saints who have attained final knowledge and sanctity

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 Brahman¹.

Sri Ramakrishna and avatarhood – Sri Ramakrishna and harmony of religions

The Resident of Dakshineswar — Is the *Anahata Shabda*² always sounding within and without?

¹ The sound of Om

² Unstruck sound of Om

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 Sachchidananda¹ 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

¹ Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute

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 cubits¹." 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

¹ 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

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 prasad.

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, Rakhai, Bhavanath, M. and a number of other devotees are inside the room. Rakhai's father is also in the room.

Thakur addresses a Vaishnava goswami¹ 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.

¹ A Vaishnava guru or preceptor

“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 Sachchidananda¹. The *Vedas* say that He is both with form² and formless³, with attributes⁴ as well as attributeless⁵.

“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.’

¹ Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute

² *Sakara*

³ *Nirakara*

⁴ *Saguna*

⁵ *Nirguna*

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 dispassion¹ 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 Rakhal's father and the devotees) — Oh, what a mood Rakhal 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

¹ Vairagya; nonattachment

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 five¹ and the six².

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

¹ Five elements collectively, namely: earth, water, fire, air and space

² Six passions

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 speak 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).

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 Mahakala¹.

¹ Shiva, the Absolute

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 God¹. He said, 'Repeat the Name. Say Rama, Rama.'

¹ Bhakti

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 devotion¹, 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**

¹ Bhakti

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 Shankari¹, 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**

¹ An appellation of Goddess Durga

“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. ‘Janardhana¹ 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

¹ An appellation of Lord Vishnu, the vanquisher of demon Jana

“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 Brahmamayī¹.”

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.”

Chapter IV

Sri Ramakrishna and others sing – Sri Ramakrishna in samadhi

¹ All Blissful Mother of the Universe

Sri Ramakrishna asks somebody to sing. Ramlal and a brahmin brahmachari¹ of the Kali Temple sing in accompaniment with a *banya*².

Song –

O Kamalapati³, 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 Janardhana⁴. Lift the mount Govardhan of the weight of my sins⁵. 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 Vanshivatta⁶ 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)?

¹ An unmarried and celibate student practicing spiritual discipline

² A semi-circular instrument played along with the tabla (drum)

³ The husband of Kamala (Goddess Lakshmi).

⁴ An appellation of Lord Vishnu; the vanquisher of demon Jana.

⁵ Krishna had lifted the mount Govardhan on his finger. So lifting the weight of sins means to mitigate the effects of sins.

⁶ A banyan tree at Vrindavan under which Krishna played his flute.

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.¹

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

¹ This song was sung earlier too. See Section II, Chapter VII of this volume.

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 pot¹ 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

¹ In India, normally a pot containing ashes of cow dung and other substances are kept in maternity room to ward off evil spirits

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 nonattachment¹ 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],

¹ Vairagya

'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*¹ 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*², 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.

¹ A wheel shaped weapon of Lord Vishnu

² Milkmaid friend of Radha

“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.²

“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*¹ 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 Brahmastra² 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.

¹ Possessing the quality of sattva

² Weapon of Brahma (Lord the Creator)

“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 days¹.

"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

¹ 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.

'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.”

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 Annapurna¹ 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*² 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

¹ Divine Mother, the giver of food

² An esoteric word or words uttered inwardly at prayer

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 power¹ – 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.”

¹ Vibhu

**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*¹. 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

¹ Phlegm, wind and bile

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, Rakhai, Kedar, M., Ram, Manomohan and
other devotees are present. They have all taken
prasad 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
illuminated 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 Brahmajnanis¹ 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.

¹ Referring to the members of Brahma Samaj

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 Purusha¹ 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 Brahmamayi²,

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.

¹ The Self, the Absolute, Spirit. Pure Consciousness, the witness of the
changes of Prakriti

² 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*¹ 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, Narayana² is worshipped there daily.

¹ Expressing regret at separation as a result of insult hurled by a lover. Here it indicates pangs of separation of Radha from Krishna.

² Lord Vishnu

Ram first invited Sri Ramakrishna to his home on the Phuldolan¹ 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*². 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,

¹ 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.

² Place of pilgrimage

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 Shaktasur¹. 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 Chandravali², I will tell you of love.

One may gain liberation but rare indeed is bhakti.

¹ Dhenukasur and Shaktasur were demons sent by Kamsa to kill Sri Krishna

² One of the gopis at Vrindavan

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*¹. It is *avyabhicharini*² and single-minded bhakti. Do you know what *vyabhicharini*³ 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.

¹ Ecstatic love for the Lord

² Unalloyed; non straying

³ Disloyal to one's ideal; unchaste

“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.

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 savitri¹. The Phalaharini puja² 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 puja³ 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.

¹ On this day a fast is kept by Hindu married women

² On this day the Divine Mother is worshipped as the consumer of the karmas of the devotee

³ Worship of Goddess Durga

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 Rakhhal's head on his lap – Rakhhal is lying down. For some days, Thakur has regarded Rakhhal 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, "Rakhhal, 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 Bholanath¹, ‘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.

¹ Bholanath was a clerk in the Kali Temple. Later he became the treasurer.

**His Earlier Story: Worship of sundari¹ and kumari² –
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 Ramlila³. 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.

¹ A beautiful girl

² An unmarried young girl

³ Play of Lord Rama

“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*¹ 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

¹ A ring shaped sweetmeat with some filling in 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.²

"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*¹ 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

¹ One liberated in this very life

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 Brahmo 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*¹ 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. Rakhal 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 Vaishnavas² with the money you earn?

Bhagavati (smiling) — How can I say that³?

¹ A creeper used as a pot herb

² Followers of Sri Chaitanya; worshippers of Lord Vishnu

³ She means yes. In India people usually do not mention about their pious deeds.

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.

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. Rakhal, Hazra and M. are seated close to him. Hazra has the attitude of 'Soham'¹.

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

¹ I am That

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*¹, 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”

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

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.

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 *hamsa* (swan), I am a *rajahamsa* (king swan) – so I shall take milk¹.

“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 understood².

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.

¹ Hamsa has two meanings, one a swan and the other a desireless ascetic

² Alexander Pope, 2nd verse of “The Universal Prayer”

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 life¹.

“ ‘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

¹ Except ye be born again ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven – Christ (John 3)

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 elements¹, or the twenty-four cosmic principles².’ Shancara 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,

¹ Earth, water, fire, air and space

² 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.

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*¹. 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

¹ Suspension of breath

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*¹ and *nityasiddha*²

“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

¹ One perfected by devotional practices

² One perfected from birth; ever-perfect

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?"

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, Rakhal 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 means¹.

“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

¹ A saying of Tulsidas, a great sage and poet of India

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 Vedantists¹?

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*² 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

¹ Believers in the non-dual Brahman

² The performance of japa a certain number of times each day, methodically increasing and decreasing the amount

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 sanai¹ while he was on the river embankment, he said, ‘He who has realized Brahman goes into samadhi hearing such music.’”

Chapter II

¹ A wooden flute

Sri Ramakrishna, the Guru, in Dakshineswar – he exhibits the state of a *paramahansa*¹

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 Dhanavantri².

O Mother Shankari³, O great physician, what delirious fever I suffer, in spite of the grace of Thy feet.

¹ Highest class of saints who have attained supreme knowledge and sanctity

² An excellent physician; the name of the physician of heaven (according to Hindu mythology)

³ An appellation of Goddess Durga

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 case¹. 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.

¹ Meaning the outer sheath, the body

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 fetters¹. 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.

¹ Hatred, shame, ancestry, pride, fear, secretiveness, caste and grief

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?"

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'¹**

**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 Brahmo Samaj and their daughters study there. One can see deep into the school building from the road.

¹ A song by Jaydeva

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 Rakhai 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 Rakhhal, he says) “Rakhhal, 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, Rakhhal, 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*¹, 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).

¹ Adjuncts; semblances; the limitations imposed on the Self through ignorance by which one is bound to life.

“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 evolution¹.

“Why do I care so much for Rakhai, Narendra and the other young men? Hazra said, ‘Why do you go about

¹ 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.

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 Purusha¹ is indeed Prakriti². 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*

¹ Male aspect of God

² Female aspect of God

(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 Brahmos 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*¹ 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).

¹ Beyond the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas

“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-ness¹. 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

¹ The false ego that says ‘I am the doer’

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 Basra¹ rose to give it the benefit of the night dew. The dew adds freshness and strength to the plant. I think

¹ A superior quality rose

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 bhakti¹.’

“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

¹ Sincere love unmixed with worldly desires of any kind, e.g., the wealth of the body, pleasure, money, fame etc.

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 Brahmo 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.

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, Rakhai, 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 causal¹ state, in the enjoyment of the causal.

3. The innermost state – his mind would merge into the Great Cause².

“This conforms beautifully to the five sheaths (*koshas*) of the *Vedas*. The gross body is concerned with

¹ *Karana*

² *Mahakarana*

the *annamaya*¹ and the *pranamaya*² sheaths. The subtle body means the *manomaya*³ and the *vijñanamaya*⁴ sheaths. The causal body corresponds to the *anandamaya*⁵ 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

¹ Gross physical sheath sustained by food

² 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.

³ Sheath of mind which receives sense impressions

⁴ Sheath of intellect which discriminates or wills

⁵ Body of bliss, so-called because it is nearest to the Blissful Atman

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*¹.

“You are my own, my near and dear one. Why else would you come here so often? While listening to the

¹ The eleventh day of the lunar fortnight

kirtan (devotional songs), I saw Rakhali 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 –
tulasi 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*¹ 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.

¹ One sixteenth of the power of divinity

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 Shyamalasundara¹ and he knew no other gods or goddesses. At dawn he regularly sat down for four hours to worship Him.

¹ An appellation of Lord Krishna

“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 neck¹ 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.

¹ One puts a piece of cloth round one’s neck to indicate humility

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 Brahmajñana (the knowledge of Brahman). Janaka asked him first to pay his *dakshina*¹. Shukadeva said, ‘How is the teacher’s fee due before the instruction is given?’ Janaka laughed and said, ‘When you have gained Brahmajñana, you will not be able to differentiate between the guru and the disciple. So I ask for the teacher’s fee in advance!’ ”

¹ A fee or gift given to the teacher

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."

Section XII

Sri Ramakrishna with Devotees at Dakshineswar

Chapter I

It is the full moon day of the month of Agrahayana¹, the Sankranti², 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. Rakhai 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,

¹ Eighth month of the Hindu calendar

² The last day of the month

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 Pushpaka¹ 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*² for him who has realized God. Sandhya ends in the Gayatri³. The recitation of the Gayatri is enough.

¹ It is the chariot of Kubera which can fly through air at great speed

² Worship and meditation performed at dawn, noon, and sunset by orthodox Hindus

³ 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

Gayatri ends in Omkar¹. 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 effort².'

“The real brahmin is he who has no desire – he accepts food even from a *dome*³. 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

has given birth to all worlds. May He direct the rays of our intelligence toward the path of good.”

¹ The Vedic symbol for the Supreme Being

² Gita 4:22

³ A caste of Hindus whose duty is to cremate the dead

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*¹ – Sri Ramakrishna
prohibits *vamachara*²**

(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.”

¹ Karma which is stored up and begun to bear fruit

² Religious practice, prescribed in the Tantra, to be performed by a man in collaboration with a woman.

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. Rakhai, 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*¹. 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.

¹ A particular conjunction of stars

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*¹ 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

¹ To chant the name of Lord Hari

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.

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 Milk¹.

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

¹ According to Hindu mythology, the Lord rests on the Ocean of Milk (ocean of Great Cause) after the end of each creation

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 Kashi¹.

“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 elements¹, nor the senses. He is

¹ Benares; a holy place of the Hindus

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

¹ Namely earth, water, fire, air and ether

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 Ram¹. 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.”

¹ Ram Chatterji, the attendant of Sri Radhakanta in the temple

**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 discrimination¹ and nonattachment², 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 darshan³ 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

¹ *Viveka*

² *Vairagya*

³ Act of seeing in order to pay homage

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’¹ 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?

¹ The word has two meanings: ‘sedge’ and ‘sect’

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 hand¹ 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.”

¹ 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.

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 Brahmans, the
Vaishnavas and the Shaktas on sectarianism**

“The Brahmans insist that God is formless. Let them say so. It is enough to call on Him sincerely. If you are sincere, He, being *antaryami*¹, 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.’

¹ God as the Inner Controller

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. Rakhal 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. Ramprasanna¹ 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.”

¹ Ramprasanna is a devotee from Ariadaha and the son of Krishnakishore

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*¹. 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

¹ Places of pilgrimage

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 Simhavahini¹. He replied, 'Sir, I didn't know that I was supposed to offer *pranami*.'²

“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.”

¹ 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 Theatre¹ 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!

¹ The premises of the Star Theatre is now the Kohinoor Theatre

“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 Prahlada, ‘Ask for a boon.’ Prahlada replied, ‘I have had Your vision. I need nothing else.’ But Bhagavan would not listen. Then Prahlada 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 Khattangadharini¹ 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*!’

¹ Divine Mother wearing a dress of a particular kind of grass

(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 rajasic¹ 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!

¹ People endowed with the quality of rajas

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 Vibhu¹ 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.)

¹ All-pervading Consciousness

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 enemies¹. 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.

¹ The six passions: lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy

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 avatars¹ 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!

¹ 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)

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 Banmali¹.

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.

¹ An appellation Sri Krishna; one wearing a garland of wild flowers

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 darshan¹ 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

¹ To see and pay homage

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 prasada 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 ...¹

Mani sings with him.

Mahendra intends to go on pilgrimage. This is the topic of conversation with Thakur.

¹ For the complete song, see Section XII, Chapter III of this volume

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?

Section XV

Sri Ramakrishna in Sadharan Brahmo 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* puja¹ 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 Brahmo 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

¹ The autumnal worship of Goddess Durga on the seventh day of the lunar fortnight

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*¹ and *kalia*² 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.

¹ A highly spiced fish dish of rice and meat cooked in clarified butter

² A rich curry of fish

“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*¹ and *nirguna*². 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).”

¹ With attributes

² Without attributes

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 understanding¹ – 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

¹ *Kutastha* intellect

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 too¹. 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*² soaked in syrup.”

Vijay — There [in Dacca] we only talk of you³. He is now very eager to see you.

¹ Whatever being is glorious, prosperous, or powerful, know that to have sprung but from a spark of My splendour. (Gita 10:41)

² Bengali sweetmeat made of fried cheese

³ 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.

After some time, Thakur rises. The Brahmo devotees salute him. Thakur returns their salute. He gets into the carriage. He is to go to Adhar's house for the darshan¹ of the image of the Goddess.

¹ 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 Mahashtami¹ 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 Rakhal 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

¹ The eighth lunar day of the bright fortnight of Aswin or Kartik which is the second day of the autumnal worship of Goddess Durga

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*¹ 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
Karanandamayi² – rajarshi³ and brahmarshi⁴ –
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.”

¹ The eight day of either fortnight of the lunar month

² The Divine Mother, giver of divine inebriation

³ A royal ascetic sage

⁴ One who has attained Brahman and teaches its essence to others

“Gross, subtle, causal¹ and Great Cause². 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*³ – 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

¹ Karana

² Mahakarana

³ Spiritually perfect since birth

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*¹ 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.

¹ A godly person endowed with Supreme Knowledge

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'.¹)

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

¹ Such a person is put in exalted spiritual states – his Kundalini reaches to higher spiritual centres.

wine. The *charanamrita*¹ 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 barber² who brought the food to me. (All laugh.) I ate it heartily. Rakhal asked me not to eat so much. (To Narendra) You will succeed now. You are in ‘this’ as well as in ‘that’³! You may eat everything now.

¹ The water in which the Deity is bathed

² Washermen and barbers are considered to be belonging to a low caste

³ Meaning that Narendra is attending to both the spiritual life and the worldly life

(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*¹.”

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*

¹ A holy food consisting of boiled rice with clarified butter

“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 Kala¹ by eating Kali, I tell you that I am not afraid of it.

I will defy him while uttering the name of Kali.

¹ Shiva, the consort of Kali

I shall eat the vegetables of the *Dakinis* and *Yoginis*¹.
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?²

While listening to the song, Sri Ramakrishna again
goes into samadhi.

When he comes down from the samadhi, he
takes up the mood of Girirani³ and sings the
*agamani*⁴ 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.

¹ The spirits of destruction

² For complete song see Volume I, Section XII

³ Wife of King Himalaya and mother of Uma

⁴ Any of the songs about the coming of Uma, Shiva's wife, to her
father's house

Thakur glances in another direction and begins to sing the following song in a casual manner –

O *sakhi*!¹ 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*². He roams about with it, saying, ‘Here is nectar.’³

Again going into an ecstatic mood, Thakur sings –

You are the river of nectar, O Mother Shyama! Who can fathom your various moods?³

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.

¹ The milkmaid friend of Radha

² Mendicant water pot

³ For the full song see M. the Apostle and the Evangelist, Vol. 1, Section 13, Chapter 2

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, Rakhai 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*¹. 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 steps.

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, "Haribol², 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?

¹ Bliss of divine inebriation

² Repeat the name of Hari

Now Thakur prays –

“Oh, Rama! Oh, Rama! I am without bhajan¹, 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 Nirranjan, M. and

¹ Singing of devotional songs

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.

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 Puja¹ day. It is early morning. The *mangalarati*² of Mother Kali has already been performed. The *roshan chowki*³ 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*⁴, *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

¹ The third day of Durga Puja

² Waving of lights before the deity at dawn

³ Symphony of sanai and other musical instruments

⁴ The spontaneous joy of ecstasy

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*¹ are skeptics and *Ishvarakotis*² 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'¹. Either give him the right

¹ Ordinary human beings

² Godmen

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. Hriday² 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 Shibu³ 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

¹ Thakur referred himself to ‘this place’

² 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.

³ Shivaram, nephew of Thakur

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 Dhanavantri¹ 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.

¹ The name of the physician of heaven

My mind knows nothing but Thy lotus feet¹.

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!

¹ For complete song, see Section IV, Chapter III of this volume

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 Sarvamangala¹ of Golaka², the Katyayani³ 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.

¹ One who is the source of all good; an appellation of Goddess Durga

² Part of heaven which is the abode of Narayana

³ A name of Goddess Durga

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 prasada, 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*¹. He does not encourage this practice. In fact, he ~~laughed~~ 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

¹ Practice of Tantrik rituals in collaboration with a woman

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*¹. 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 brothers² 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

¹ A kind of indoor game in which each player tries to get into heaven and on a false step falls into hell.

² 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.

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 circle of Bhairavis 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 Bhairavi¹ mystic circle – every Bhairava² 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.

¹ A female aspirant of the Tantrik sect

² A male aspirant of the Tantrik sect

“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 Rakhai. 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 him¹.

“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 Bharati² 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.

¹ 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)

² The guru of Chaitanya Deva who initiated him into sannyasa

“When I was at Vrindavan I did not want to return. It was arranged for me to stay with Gangama¹. 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.

¹ A great woman saint of Vrindavan

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.¹

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.

¹ For complete song refer Section I, Chapter II of this volume

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.

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 Vina¹, 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.

¹ A stringed musical instrument

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 Ida¹, the Pingala², the Sushumna³, the Vajra, the Chitrini⁴ are all pulsating because of the Sahasrara⁵.

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 Manipura⁶.

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.

¹ The spiritual column on the left side of the spine

² The spiritual column on the right side of the spine

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Thousand-petalled lotus in the cerebrum, the abode of Shiva

⁶ The third centre in the Sushumna

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 Brahmarandra¹. 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.

¹ The spiritual opening at the top of the head through which yogis say the soul leaves the body when merged with the Absolute

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 obligations¹. 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

¹ 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.

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.)

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*¹ 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.

¹ A measure of unit equivalent to 320 sq. cubits

“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 Gopala¹ –
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 baul² 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

¹ Baby Krishna

² Mendicant minstrels of Vaishnava sect

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 Father¹. 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.'"

¹ Motherhood (or Shakti) and Fatherhood (or Brahman)

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 Prakriti¹ 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 rasa². 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

¹ Female principle of God

² Festival of dancing of Krishna with Radha and the gopis

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 Vamanpara¹ 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 Babu² and Rani Bhavani – sattva
guna results from samskaras³**

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.

¹ Meaning people from another part of town; it is an another locality

² 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.

³ Tendencies inherited from one’s past births

“And then look at Lala Babu, a very wealthy man. Unless one has good samskaras from a previous birth, can one have such dispassion 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 guna¹ 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 rajas² 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

¹ Qualities that lead Godward

² Qualities that cause action, which in turn pull the mind away from God

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 Dayananda¹.

¹Dayananda 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

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

was then Sri Ramakrishna, Keshab and Captain met him. Perhaps Captain also met Thakur during that time.

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?¹

Avatars also engage in *sadhana* to serve as examples to mankind – God-realization is possible only through *sadhana*

¹ For complete song, refer Section XII, Chapter III of this volume

“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 Radhayantra¹.”

**Radha indeed is the Primeval Power and Prakriti –
Purusha and Prakriti – Brahman and His Power are
inseparable**

“Sri Krishna is Purusha² and Radha is Prakriti³. She is the *Chitshakti*⁴, the Primeval Power. Radha is Prakriti endowed with the three gunas. She embodies the

¹ A mystic diagram symbolizing Radha

² Male aspect of God

³ Female aspect of God

⁴ Power of Divine Consciousness

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 lap¹.

“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 another².’ 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

¹ 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.

² Indrani, Brahmani and Rudrani are the consorts of Indra, Brahma and Rudra

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*¹ 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 bhava², bhakti³ and *prema*⁴. 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.

¹ The methodical increase and decrease of the repetition of the holy mantra.

² Ecstasy

³ Devotion and love for God

⁴ Intense love for God

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 nivritti¹ – 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.

¹ Non-worldliness

After awhile Thakur goes for the *darshan*¹ 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*². He is filled with divine emotion. Coming out of the shrine, he sees Ishan performing sandhya with *koshakushi*³.

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*⁴ 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?

¹ To see and pay homage

² A fan made of the white hair from the tail of the chamari yak, used in Hindu ritual worship

³ 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.

⁴ At dawn, noon and twilight hour

“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*¹. 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 annas², you have to pay this amount to the cloth merchant. Even if there is a slight obstacle, yoga is not

¹ Worldliness

² Equivalent to one Rupee

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*¹ 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

¹ Bestower of happiness and bliss

feet. They say, ‘Ravana died in Lanka while Behula wept her heart out!’¹

“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*²

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

¹ Behula was unrelated to Ravana and lived many years later. This saying shows how man gives way to totally irrelevant matters.

² Work; activity

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*¹. He continues what he has been telling Ishan in his deep serious voice.

¹ Non-worldliness